

Exploring the Practice of Art Therapy

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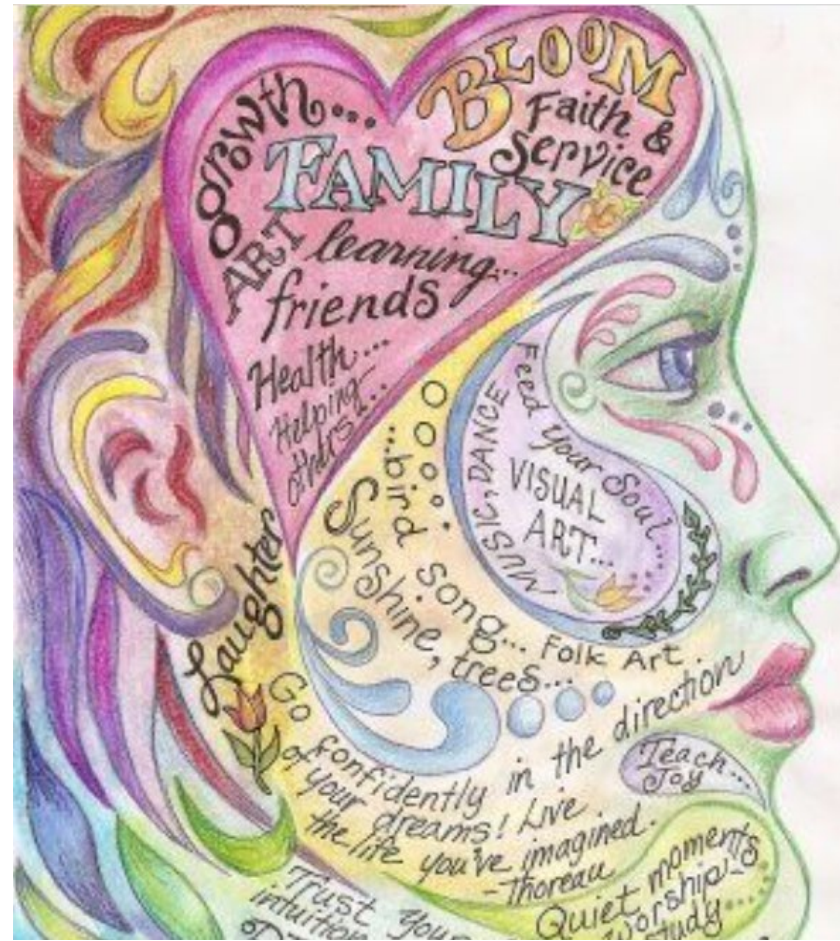
University of Bridgeport

HSCI 855 DL

Integrative/Complementary
Medicine

Dr. Steven Haffner

Spring 2022



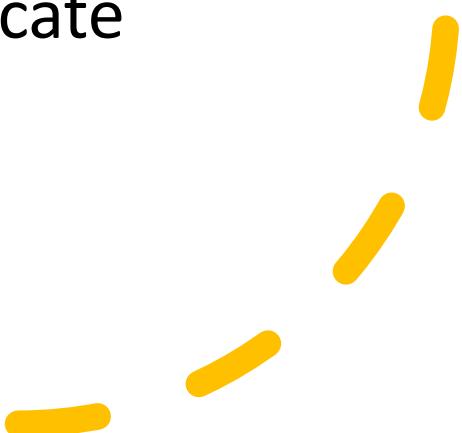


Defining Art Therapy

- “Art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.” (American Art Therapy Association, 2022)

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Other Definitions of Art Therapy

- Art therapy is also broadly referred to as “expressive arts therapy”
 - “Art therapy uses the process of creating, appreciating, and participating in art-centered activities to promote wanted changes” (Patterson, 2022)
 - It allows an individual to convey and express thoughts, feelings, insights, and experiences that may be difficult to communicate verbally (Patterson, 2022)
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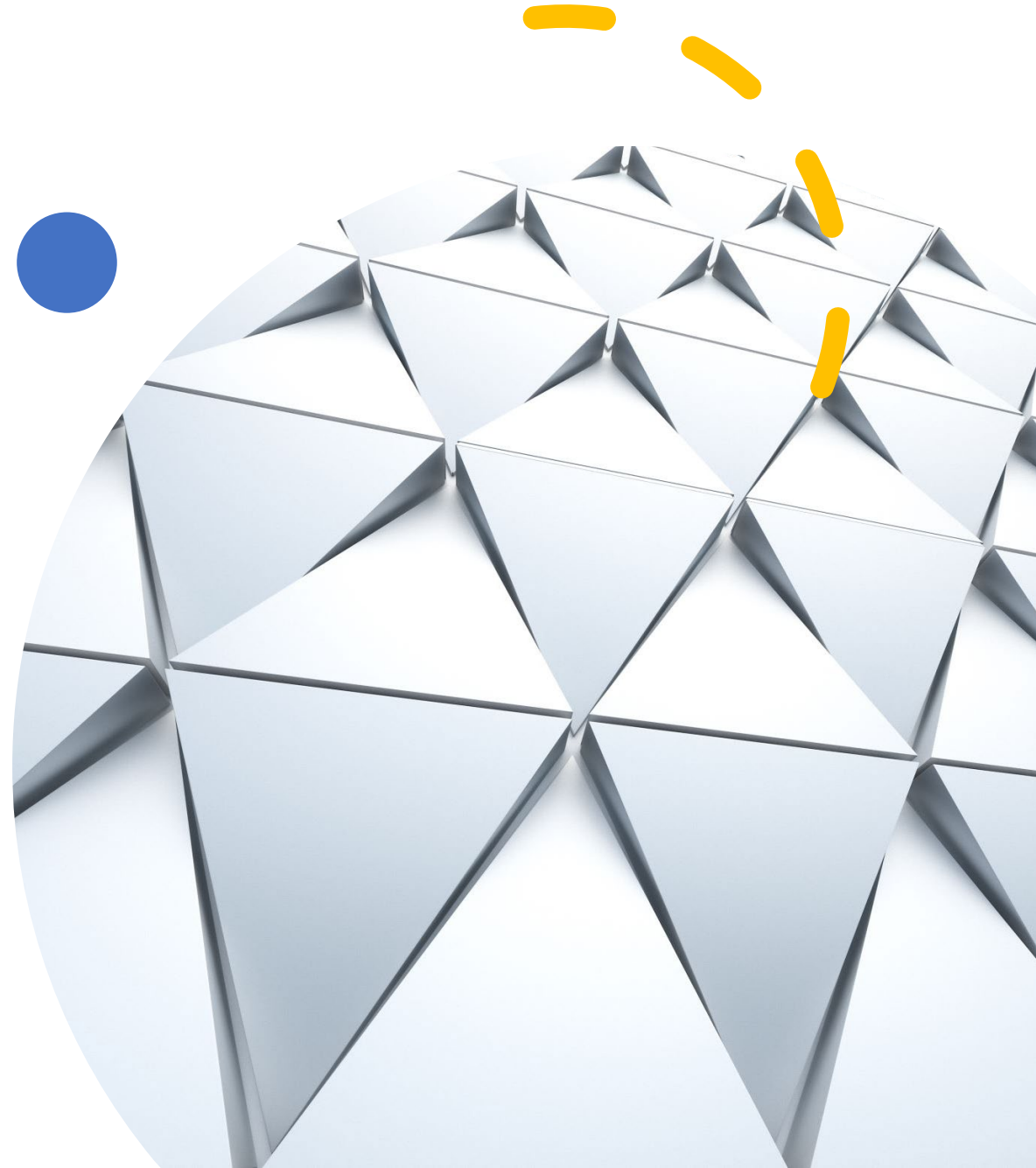
The History of Art Therapy

Originated in mid 20th century Europe

The term “art therapy” was coined in 1942 by British artist Adrian Hill

Art therapy was first used in sanatoriums that treated patients with tuberculosis and the practice later spread to mental hospitals

Edward Adamson studied the connection between artistic expression and emotional release and was responsible for bringing art therapy practice to mental hospitals (Adelphi Psych Medicine Clinic, 2019)



The History of Art Therapy

The British Association of Art Therapists was founded in 1964

The American Art Therapy Association was founded in 1969

The Professional Association for Art Therapy in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore were modeled after the British and American associations

Margaret Naumburg and artist Edith Kramer were notable American pioneers of art therapy and art therapy education (Adelphi Psych Medicine Clinic, 2019)



Conditions Treated with Art Therapy

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mental and emotional disorders
- Eating disorders
- Substance use disorders
- Family and relationship issues
- Abuse and domestic violence (Hu et al., 2021; Patterson, 2022)

Conditions Treated with Art Therapy

- Social and emotional difficulties associated with disability and illness
- Stress
- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Physical, cognitive, and neurological problems
- Psychosocial difficulties resulting from medical illness (Cherry, 2021; Patterson, 2022)



Conditions Treated with Art Therapy

- Developmental and intellectual disabilities – Art therapy can foster cognitive abilities, motor skills, and activities of daily living
- Physical disabilities – When used in combination with physical therapy, art therapy can enhance exercise for individuals with disabilities and provide motivation for physical activity
- Alzheimer's disease – Art therapy can enhance memory, ease frustration, and help patients maintain their focus on the present moment (Patterson, 2022)
- Art therapy has been found to improve blood pressure, heart rate, physical tension, and pain experiences (CCPA, 2012; Patterson, 2022)

Populations Who Use Art Therapy

- Children
- Adolescents
- Adults
- Elderly populations
- Groups of people including families, veterans, and individuals with chronic health issues (Cherry, 2021; Patterson, 2022)



Art Therapy Modalities and Techniques

Some people view art therapy through a limited lens and believe that it is confined to drawing, coloring, or painting. However, art therapy can be delivered through diverse forms including:

- Sand play
- Dance and movement
- Music writing and composition
- Playing music
- Reacting scenes through drama therapy (Patterson, 2022)





Art Therapy Modalities and Techniques

- Writing poetry, fiction, or creating stories based on life experiences
- Creating puppets
- Creating masks
- Collage
- Coloring
- Drawing (Cherry, 2021; Patterson, 2022)



Art Therapy Modalities and Techniques

- Doodling and scribbling
- Finger painting
- Painting
- Photography
- Sculpting
- Working with clay (Cherry, 2021)

Treatment Process

Therapy can help foster self-expression, and the expression of feelings, and emotions (Cherry, 2021)

Art therapy is delivered in two ways:

- Art in therapy – Art is one part of the treatment plan and is used to aid the therapeutic process by helping the therapist to enhance comfort, build rapport with the client, or facilitate certain goals
- Art as therapy – The total treatment plan is focused around a certain art. Hence the goal of treatment is to engage in a specific art form (Patterson, 2022)

Treatment Process

- Art therapy is often used in conjunction with other psychotherapy techniques such as group therapy or cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).
- Individuals participating in an art therapy session may analyze their artwork and discuss how it makes them feel
- Exploring their art creations can allow people to identify themes and conflicts that may be affecting their mental and emotional health, and behaviors (Cherry, 2021)

Principles of Therapeutic Change in Art Therapy

Principles of therapeutic change are empirically tested psychotherapy interventions that are associated with various strategies including:

- Facilitating professional bonds by demonstrating empathy
- Creating a therapeutic contract by establishing expectations of the client and therapist
- Intentional selection of art materials
- Structuring art therapy sessions
- Advancing the creative process (Potash, 2019)

Principle of Therapeutic Change: Art Materials

- Some clients have the tendency to gravitate toward art materials they feel more comfortable or familiar with, while others like to experiment with new materials
- Research has shown that the material properties of a medium can influence the therapeutic process

Example: The temperature of clay and the tactile aspects of the clay can have a significant impact on positive mood, regardless of what the client is creating (Potash, 2019)



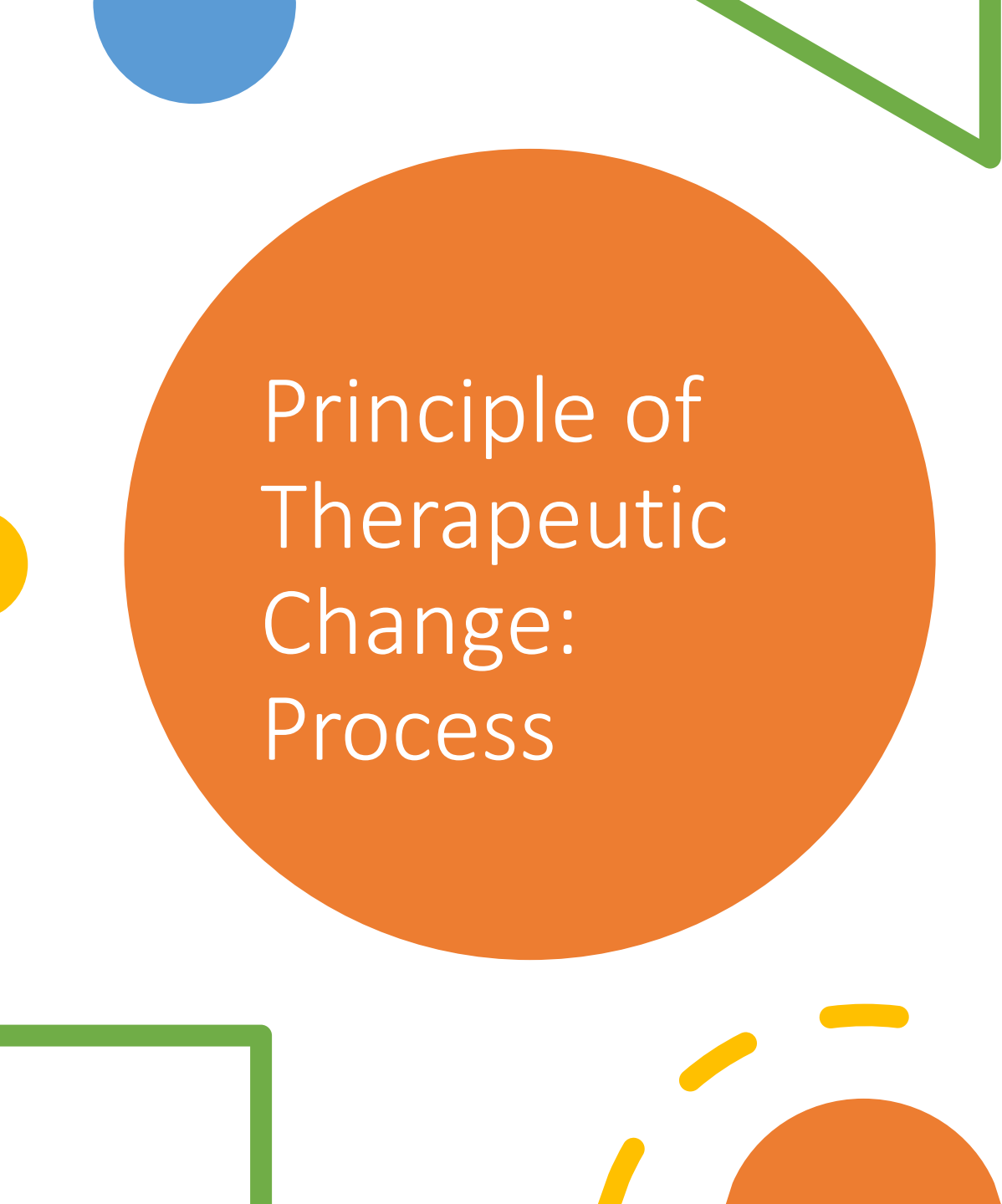
Principle of Therapeutic Change: Structure

- The role of structure in art therapy helps foster the therapeutic process and helps to maintain a balance between restriction and freedom of expression (Potash, 2019)
- Therapists can select and titrate the level of structure based on the client's needs to help them accomplish their treatment goals.

Examples of structure include:

- A therapist working with youth on the autism spectrum used puppetry as a structure to increase empathy in their clients. This was evidenced by increased emotional awareness and improved interpersonal interactions (Potash, 2019)





Principle of Therapeutic Change: Process

Process involves therapist engagement with a client which can be done through the guidance of many theories including psychoanalytic, person-centered, trauma-informed, and others. Adaptive Response Theory (ART) may also be used. ART provides a guide for client engagement on a spectrum that ranges from safety (belonging or bored) to threat (novelty or danger).

In turn, ART outlines the demonstration of individual feelings/dispositions, ranging from creative/expressive to locked/constricted (Potash, 2019).

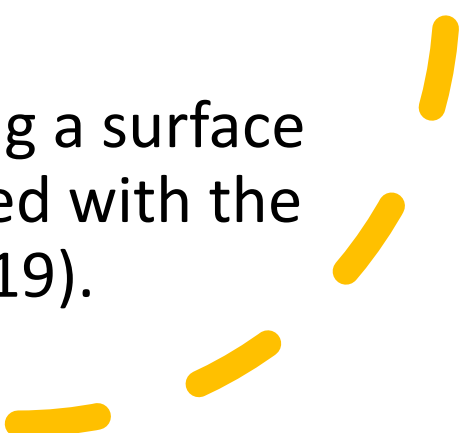


Examples of Process

An example of process would be using theories to guide comments during an art session with clients:

- “The colors and materials combined in a new way this week. That experiment seems to be paying off.”
- “That piece seemed to go through quite a transformation.”

Each comment is focused on providing a surface level observation that is also combined with the empathy of the therapist (Potash, 2019).





Principle of Therapeutic Change: Dynamics

- Art therapists must remember the importance of power dynamics when facilitating therapy
- Power dynamics can impact the therapeutic relationship and can be influenced by personal differentials between the therapist and client including:
 - Socioeconomic factors
 - Racial/cultural differences (Potash, 2019)



Principle of Therapeutic Change: Dynamics

When facilitating art therapy, the following factors must be considered by therapists to ensure that power dynamics are managed in a way that do not hinder the client's therapeutic goals:

- Maintaining time
- Controlling access to art supplies
- Facilitating process
- Commenting on client's artwork

“Art therapists must always scrutinize their choices with attention to power dynamics.” (Potash, 2019)



Effectiveness of Art Therapy

Trauma - In studies of adults who experienced trauma, art therapy was found to significantly reduce trauma symptoms and decrease levels of depression.

Cancer - One review of the effectiveness of art therapy found that this technique helped patients undergoing medical treatment for cancer improve their quality of life and alleviated a variety of psychological symptoms.

Depression - One study found that art therapy reduced depression and increased self-esteem in older adults living in nursing homes (Cherry, 2021; Patterson, 2022).

Effectiveness of Art Therapy

Music engagement aids in relaxation, anxiety, heart rates, and feelings of well-being

Visual arts has been found to improve depression, issues of grief and loss, stress levels, anxiety, social interactions, and feelings of self-worth

Movement-based expression can help with physical symptoms, body image, improve mood, and help with feelings of grief and loss

Expressive writing studies revealed that writing can improve anger levels, mood, pain perception, fatigue, relationship issues, sleep, and overall feelings of well-being (Patterson, 2022)


Effectiveness of Art Therapy

Some studies show that art therapy may be beneficial. However, findings on its effectiveness are mixed.

Most studies are small and render inconclusive results, hence more research is needed regarding the best application of art therapy, including when the modality should be used (Cherry, 2021).



Risks of Using Art Therapy

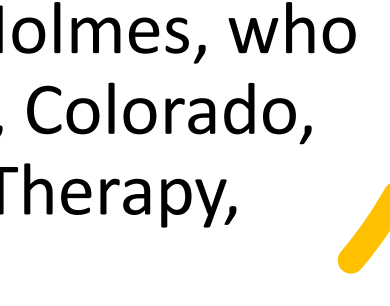


The risks associated with art therapy include the intensification of feelings and symptoms as the therapy process is carried out. As such, the goal of treatment is to help uncover feelings and then help to minimize their impact.

However, while there are inherent risks associated with using art therapy, the risk is reduced when a credentialed clinician provides therapy (Patterson, 2022).

Malpractice Insurance

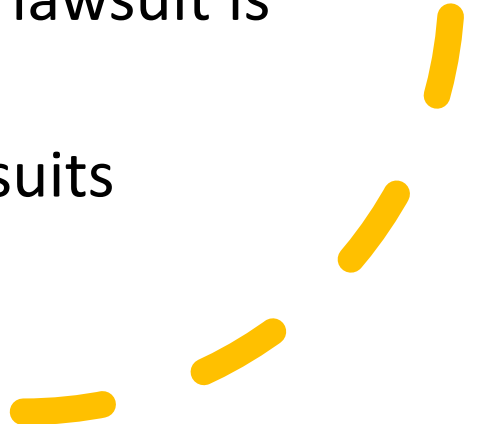
In general, therapists face the risk of being sued for malpractice for various reasons including:

- Failing to report child abuse
 - Being sexually involved with a client, even if the involvement is consensual
 - Neglecting their duty to warn – “Several therapists have been sued when their clients committed violent acts. For example, the psychiatrist who treated James Holmes, who shot several people in an Aurora, Colorado, movie theater, was sued” (GoodTherapy, 2019).
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Malpractice Insurance

- Therapists can also be sued if they fail to protect a client from self-harm. For instance, if a client makes a credible threat to commit suicide, and the therapist does not intervene, this could result in a lawsuit

Generally, malpractice insurance offers the following:

- Legal representation
 - Provides intervention services to protect a therapist and their practice when a lawsuit is threatened
 - Covers payment for the cost of lawsuits (GoodTherapy, 2019)
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Training and Education

A credentialed art therapist will have a master's degree in counseling, psychology, or a related field. They will also have specialized training and experience practicing art therapy.

Graduate level coursework is required, including training in the following areas:

- Creative process
- Psychological development
- Group therapy
- Art therapy assessment
- Psychodiagnostics
- Research methods
- Multicultural diversity competence (American Art Therapy Association, 2022)

Training and Education



Students who desire to work as art therapists must also complete the following:

- A minimum of 100 hours of supervised practicum
- 600 hours of supervised art therapy clinical internship
- Preparatory training in studio art (drawing, painting, clay, etc.)
- For advance graduate studies, foundational areas of study in psychology are required (American Art Therapy Association, 2022)
- Art therapy techniques may also be used by other mental health and physical health professionals who are not credentialed art therapists (Patterson, 2022).

Licensing/Certification

- The Art Therapy Credentials Board provides certification for qualified art therapists. To meet education requirements for certification, graduation from either a master's program approved by the Educational Programs Approval Board (EPAB) or accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is needed (American Art Therapy Association, 2022)
- Licensing to practice art therapy varies by state, with some states having no licensure requirements. To date, 13 states require licensing (American Art Therapy Association, 2022)

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