

But First, The Art
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Art is not new. We all have access to this; it is a shared gift. Using it as a way of healing and connecting with others has an ancient history with cultural roots deep and wide in humanity.

Process vs Product

Both process and product are important!

Process (the HOW)	Product (the WHAT)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focuses on what is going on in the room● Allows for someone to not be “good” at art● Gives space for using the materials to regulate and “just play” with them● Allows the opportunity for mood-shifting benefits of art-making to be present● Demonstrates how we sit with unfamiliar or challenging scenarios	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Serves as a record for treatment and allows for reflection● A visual timestamp in the journey of healing● Prompts conversations surrounding what is/is not within the art● Helps find repeating themes or ideas● Can provide the idea of completion/ownership● Acts as a third object inside of therapy● Can be destroyed, deconstructed, or remade

Why Art?

Art is a sensory experience, and that is how we learn to take in the world. When we get to communicate what happened to us in a sensory way, we can communicate more clearly with our whole being

- Creativity is a birthright.
- Visual parts of the brain formed first.
- Non-verbal communication speaks volumes and provides relief.

Art and the Brain

- Being exposed to visual novelty makes new neural pathways in our brain, which leads to new forms of making sense and healing
- Right brain while making art: facilitates accessing unprocessed emotions, boosts social + emotional learning, builds confidence in decision making, develops active affect regulation
- Left brain when making art builds the same things as the right brain above, but through language and verbal processing.
 - Incorporating art and talking (through describing, story telling, processing) strengthens communication skills and increases corpus callosum flexibility
- Making art together is a special kind of right-to-right hemispheric interpersonal connection

Considerations

Elements/Considerations

- Line, Form, Content
- Choice of material
- Relationship with space on the “page”
- Sensory preferences
- Ability to attend focus
- Ability to observe regulation skills/frustration tolerance
- Developmental stages of art making
- Fine/Gross motor skills
- A visual record of change over time

Structured vs Unstructured Materials

- Some materials support containment, and others support release. Depending on developmental stage, motor skills, and intention of the intervention, material choice is the foundation.

Cultural + Safety

- Providing representation (age, gender, race, etc) within images, and offering a wide range of skin tone colors supports ability for full self-expression
- Physical abilities may require alternative materials, such as pre-cut collage images, textured items, and thicker handled paint brushes
- Prior to using art materials, inquire about house/office rules and help provide accommodations (tablecloth, paper towels, meeting outside, etc)
- Inquire about the client and/or family’s history with art making
- Be aware of sharp tools and messy materials for those who are not coordinated enough to use safely, or require additional supports for safety concerns

Ideas for Talking to Someone About Their Art:

- Tell me about how you.....
- I notice how you...
- I’m curious how you....
- I wonder....
- I feel ____ getting to make this with you.

How Can I Use More Art in My Work & Life?

- Provide ways for your clients and families to communicate verbally and non-verbally. It could surprise them and you.
- Have art supplies available (even sticky notes + pen, whiteboard + dry erase markers) to help in moments that they feel stuck, or for the regulating experience
- Nature and recyclables are an accessible way to make more art (cereal boxes, leaves, sticks, junk mail).
- Provide containment through visual borders and lines to create safety
- Make art yourself! After a session, group, or difficult moment, and see what you can leave on the page (or dancefloor).

Art Directive: Assessment

<p>Verbal Joint Drawing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Large sheet of paper● Each member chooses their own color marker● Let them know they will have 7 minutes to draw together as a family	<p>Nonverbal Joint Drawing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Large sheet of paper● Each member chooses their own color● Same rules and timeframe....but no verbal communication allowed <p>Reflect with the family after both components are complete, asking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Which was more challenging?● Were there strengths that show up in life that they noticed show up in the art making?● Were there challenges that show up in life that showed up in the art making?
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<p>Helpful Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Crayons, markers, colored pencils● Thick or egg crayons for young children● Recycled materials (cardboard, egg cartons, containers, mail, cans)● Nature items (leaves, sticks, rocks)● Watercolor paints and brushes● Colorful pens● Whiteboard and dry erase markers● Coloring pages● Mandala coloring pages● Pencils with erasers● Tissue paper● Construction paper● Popsicle sticks● Glue and tape● Collage images (can be stickers, precut magazine images, cut out words)	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● ARTS (A Reason to Survive)● IEATA - International Expressive Arts Therapy Association● AATA - American Art Therapy Association● Journal of The American Art Therapy Association● The Arts in Psychotherapy Journal● UCLA Arts and Healing Initiative● @pierrad.b - Art Therapist● @andrea.nelson.art - Art Therapist● @dandelion_art_studio - Art Therapy Studio● @art.therapy.online - Art Therapy Resources
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