

Art Therapy: Enhancing The Lives Of Older Adults

Art therapy promotes wellbeing at every age. Active older adults relax, explore, share, and enjoy art therapy's creative and social aspects . . . it is rewarding, appealing, and fun! For older adults, art therapy helps individuals cope with complex age-related issues including mental and physical illness or limitation, lifestyle transition, end-of-life decisions, grief, expression and communication.



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Art Therapy: Engaging Older Adults In Creative Discovery & Healing

“Art therapy offers a wide range of psychological services that can be adapted specifically for each participant, helping to integrate meaningful yet difficult experiences. The struggle to find understanding and connectedness of unresolved issues finds release and expression through art therapy.”

—Janette Farrell Fenton, MA, MS, ATR-BC, LPC
Art Therapy Journal 17:1 (2000)

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MODEL ART THERAPY PROGRAMS

As we age, our bodies, minds, activities, families, friends, and living environments change in many different ways. Art therapy helps seniors in any setting, through any stage, by providing a safe, supportive, creative and positive experience to help ease transition, confusion, depression, fear, and pain.



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Day Care Facility

Living Independently for Elders (LIFE/UPenn) Philadelphia, PA

The LIFE program is a PACE program that provides all-inclusive care to low-income adults 55+. It is a center-based program with transportation provided. Clients require nursing home care but live in the community. At the center they receive medical care, all of their medications, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and mental health services.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Residential Facility

Hamilton Park Health Care Center Jersey City, NJ

A long-term care and sub-acute facility with a population of adults and older adults ranging in ages from 40-100+. The center offers rehabilitation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, hospice, and therapeutic recreation including art and music therapy seven days a week.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Residential Facility

Kendal at Oberlin Oberlin, OH

The philosophy is to offer each resident dignity and respect; that activity promotes wellness and that inactivity is harmful to both mind and body. All programs are based on the fact that residents are adults, capable of making decisions and choices, and must remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. Individuals receive motivation to maintain their highest level of independent functioning.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Hospice Program

Wisconsin Lutheran Care Center Milwaukee, WI

Art therapy services are offered on a group or one-on-one basis, depending on the client's needs. Those served are in hospice, rehabilitation, inpatient and outpatient, have Alzheimer's or other memory condition, or cancer.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Medical Program

TBI Solutions, LLC Southfield, MI

TBI is a day treatment and rehabilitation outpatient facility for those living with Traumatic Brain Injury. The art therapy program provides personalized treatment programs and

Medical Program . . . continued

TBI Solutions, LLC

incorporates strong therapeutic relationships with clients diagnosed with TBI and/or co-occurring disorders (substance-abuse, mental health, seizure, stroke, etc.).

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Mental Health Program

Atlantic Health System – Stroke Recovery Support Morristown, NJ

The art therapy program effectively engages the variety of clients served by Atlantic Health including those who have experienced vision loss, dementia, mood disorders, stroke, and those engaging in creative activities to maintain health.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Private Practice

Emery Mikel Huntington, NY

Within this private practice, the art therapist travels to retirement homes and community centers bringing art therapy to the elderly, people with Alzheimer's, dementia, and those with developmental disabilities. Groups create through different mediums including drawing, painting, mosaics, and quilting.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Private Practice

Raquel Farrell-Kirk Pembroke Pines, FL

The art therapist is an independent contractor and provides art therapy to groups on a regularly scheduled basis. Works with agencies such as senior centers, adult day care centers, assisted living facilities, etc. Promotes providing the clients with opportunities for decision-making, independence, and success.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

Special Events

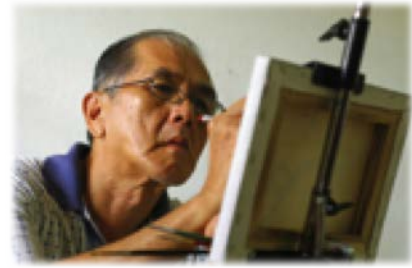
St. Barnabas Senior Living Services Chattanooga, TN

St. Barnabas develops and promotes an exhibit featuring the works of older adults participating in art therapy. Also offered is an expressive therapies program including art, music, and movement/dance therapies.

[Click here for more information on this model](#)

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

There are a number of accessible options for implementing an appropriate, thriving art therapy program.



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“Art therapy addresses many of the challenges facing older adults and can be adapted for practice in a variety of settings. It celebrates new skills and builds a renewed sense of life satisfaction while also providing a safe way to explore loss, depression, anxiety, and changes in health.”

-Toni Morley, ATR-BC, MFT

This user-friendly electronic toolkit was developed to assist the many diverse groups serving the older adult population throughout the nation in initiating or expanding an art therapy program. Credentialed art therapists hold either a master’s or doctoral degree in art therapy, and are best qualified to implement a beneficial, therapeutic, effective program.



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[Institute For Continuing Education-Art Therapy](#) (examples of available courses)

[#0302: Art Therapy & Neuroscience Blend](#)
[#0303: Young At Art](#)
[#0305: Secret World Of The Elderly](#)
[#0306: Artful Gerotranscendence](#)
[#0800: Medicaid & Medicare Top 10](#)

OUTCOMES & APPLICATIONS

There are a number of important social and health benefits that are advanced through art therapy. Research and study clearly reveal art therapy's positive impact with regard to health, cognition, social interaction, trauma, stress reduction, anxiety, confidence, abuse, and life's many challenges.



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Active Older Adults & Creative Pursuits

- ✍ Does art improve mood?
- ✍ Medical health and emotional effects of art stimulation in old age.

Caregivers & Support

- ✍ Art therapy with family caregivers of patients with cancer.
- ✍ Art therapy may improve quality of life in cancer patients.
- ✍ Art therapy with an oncology care team.
- ✍ Testing the efficacy of a creative-arts intervention.

End-Of-Life & Inspiration

- ✍ Understanding the near-death experience through art.
- ✍ The art of healing.

Grief & Healing

- ✍ Art, death, and transfiguration.
- ✍ Art therapy applications of dolls in grief recovery, identify, and community service.
- ✍ Development of an art psychotherapy model for unresolved grief.

Home Transition & Adjustment

- ✍ Using the creative mind to break through stalemates and advance treatment.
- ✍ Anxiety and art therapy.
- ✍ Home-based art therapy for older adults.

Memory Disorders & Communication

- ✍ Short-term intervention to enhance cognitive and affective functioning in seniors.
- ✍ Collage as a therapeutic modality for reminiscence in patients with dementia.
- ✍ Working with patients who have dementia.
- ✍ The effect of art therapy on cognitive performance.
- ✍ Creativity with dementia patients.

Mental Illness & Discovery

- ✍ Unresolved issues of motherhood for elderly women with serious mental illness.
- ✍ Creative art therapy groups: a treatment modality for psychiatric outpatients.
- ✍ Mandala artwork by clients with dissociative identity disorder.

Socialization & Outlook

- ✍ Inclusion of art therapy in the residential nursing home and a daycare facility had positive effects on the elderly.
- ✍ Exploring the benefits of group art therapy during 15 weekly sessions in a nursing home.
- ✍ Visual art dialogues with elderly persons.

Therapeutic Benefits & Wellness

- ✍ Art therapy and the potential it can offer to address the emotional needs of the frail elderly.
- ✍ Assessing stress reduction as a function of artistic creation and cognitive focus.
- ✍ Therapeutic qualities of clay-work in art therapy and psychotherapy.

LEARN MORE

Art therapy is utilized in a wide array of settings to promote wellbeing, socialization, communication, and healing; ease stress, pain, and loss; improve cognitive and motor skills; and empower through end-of-life and transition concerns.



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[American Art Therapy Association-Headquarters](#)

[Art Therapy Credentials Board](#)

[American Art Therapy Association-Chapters](#)

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Articles & Videos

Active Older Adults

- [Spring Is A New Beginning: Planting Creative Seeds](#)
- [Art Activities For Groups Of Seniors](#)

Bereavement

- [Healing Grief Through Art: Art Therapy Bereavement Group Workshops](#)
- [She Finds Peace, Hope In Her Art](#)

Caregivers & Support

- [Spotlight On Caregiving](#)
- [Art Therapy Can Improve Quality Of Life For Alzheimer's Patients](#)

End-Of-Life

- [Death And Dying Trends - Creativity At The End Of Life](#)
- [Benefits Of Art Therapy In Dementia And Hospice Patients](#)
- [Making Mandalas With The Elderly: The Ennis Court Project](#)

Illness

- [Minding Your Business: Youthful Aging Preserves Senior Independence](#)
- [Art As Therapy: Taking Rehab Outside The Lines](#)
- [Art Therapy For Diabetes - What The Heck?!](#)
- [Art Therapy Has Many Faces](#)

Memory Disorders

- [I Remember Better When I Paint](#)
- [Art Therapy For Alzheimer's: "I Remember Better When I Paint" Commentary](#)
- [Easing Alzheimer's Symptoms With Art Therapy](#)
- [Alzheimer's & Art Therapy](#)

Mental Illness

- [Treating Mental Illness: The Role Inpatient Care Plays](#)
- [Program Uses Art To Empower Mentally Ill](#)
- [Mental Health In America](#)

Therapeutic Benefits

- [Healthcare Patients Benefit From Art](#)
- [Beyond Words: Art Therapy With Older Adults](#)
- [Dr. Levine-Madori's TTAP Method](#)
- [The Healing Power Of Art](#)

Socialization

- [Art Therapy: Using The Creative Process For Healing & Hope Among Older Adults](#)
- [Mental Health & Art Therapy](#)

Wellbeing

- [The Creative Spirit In The Older Adult](#)
- [Art Therapy Wellness Solution](#)
- [Art Therapy As An Alternative Treatment](#)
- [The Benefits Of Art Therapy In Mental Health](#)

Bibliography

RESOURCES

Now, more than ever, valuable resources exist to assist in the funding, development, staffing, and implementation of a successful art therapy program. Public, private, nonprofit, health and research sectors, and others offer financial and organizational support.



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Fund A Program

Art therapy is a concrete and tangible healing modality that yields impressive results. In the words of Pablo Picasso, "Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life."

Useful Links* The American Art Therapy Association neither endorses any specific training, service, or provider listed; nor is responsible for the content found on the websites listed.

AARP

[Access America for Seniors](#)

[Administration on Aging](#)

[Alliance for Aging Research](#)

[Alzheimer's Association](#)

[Alzheimer's Foundation of America](#)

[American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry](#)

[American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging](#)

[American Association of Nurse Executives](#)

[American College of Health Care Administrators](#)

[American Federation for Aging Research](#)

[American Health Care Association](#)

[American Hospice Foundation](#)

[American Public Health Association - Aging & Public Health Section](#)

[American Public Health Association - Mental Health Section](#)

[American Society of Consultant Pharmacists](#)

[American Society on Aging](#)

[Assisted Living Federation Of America](#)

[Association for Death Education & Counseling](#)

[Association for Gerontology in Higher Education](#)

[Center to Advance Palliative Care](#)

[Centers for Disease Control - Healthy Aging for Older Adults](#)

[Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging Toolkit](#)

[Dartmouth College / C. Everett Koop Institute](#)

[Families USA](#)

[First Gov for Seniors](#)

[Gerontological Society of America](#)

[Gray Panthers](#)

[Hospice Foundation of America](#)

[Innovations in End-of-Life Care](#)

[International Art Therapy Association](#)

[Leading Age](#)

[Mayo Clinic](#)

[Medicare Rights Center](#)

[MEDLINEplus - Seniors' Health](#)

[Mental Health and Aging](#)

[National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys](#)

[National Association of Area Agencies on Aging](#)

[National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs](#)

[National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers](#)

[National Center for Creative Aging](#)

[National Center for Creating Aging - Capture Your Creativity](#)

[National Center for Health Statistics](#)

[National Center on Senior Transportation](#)

[National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce](#)

[National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare](#)

[National Council on Aging](#)

[National Guild for Creative Arts Education](#)

[National Hispanic Council on Aging](#)

[National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization](#)

[National Indian Council on Aging](#)

[National Institutes of Health - Older Adults Depression Suicide](#)

[National Institutes of Health - Senior Health](#)

[National Institute on Aging](#)

[National Senior Citizens Law Center](#)

[Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research](#)

[Sacred Seasons - Project of Hiddur Center for Aging and Judaism](#)

[SeniorHealthCare.org](#)

[Senior Helpers](#)

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration](#)

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration –](#)

[Promoting Emotional Health and Preventing Suicide](#)

[The American Geriatrics Society - Foundation for Health in Aging](#)

[The Dana Foundation](#)

[The Grief Recovery Institute](#)

