

# ART THERAPY

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# What is art therapy?

- Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication.
- Art therapy is a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the art therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem.



The therapist and client are in partnership in trying to understand the art process and product of the session. For many clients it is easier to relate to the therapist through the art object which, as a personal statement, provides a focus for discussion, analysis and self-evaluation. As it is concrete, it acts as a record of the therapeutic process, it cannot be denied, erased or forgotten and offers possibilities for reflection in the future. The transference that develops within the relationship between therapist and client also extends to the art work, giving a valuable 'third dimension' or three-way communication.



# Defining art therapy

- Defining art therapy has always been difficult because it is a hybrid, the child of both psychology and art.
- The definition of art therapy does not depend on *who* is being seen, any more than it is a function of *where* the work occurs, but rather *why* it is being offered. Thus the primary goal of the art activity must be therapy.



# Defining art therapy

- In the UK, the artist Adrian Hill is generally acknowledged to have been the first person to use the term 'art therapy' to describe the therapeutic application of image making.
- As the profession of art therapy has established itself, definitions have become more settled.
- From a contemporary perspective, art therapy may be defined as a *form of therapy in which creating images and objects plays a central role in the psychotherapeutic relationship established between the art therapist and client.*



# Definition of the British association of art therapists

Art therapy is the use of art materials for self-expression and reflection in the presence of a trained art therapist. Clients who are referred to an art therapist need not have previous experience or skill in art, the art therapist is not primarily concerned with making an aesthetic or diagnostic assessment of the client's image. The overall aim of its practitioners is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment. (BAAT, 2003)





# Definition of the American Art therapy association

- The therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development.

Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others, cope with symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art. (AATA, 2003)



# History of art therapy

- Although the roots of art in healing are ancient, the profession itself is quite young. As a profession, art therapy was officially recognized by the National Health Service in 1981.
- Many circumstances created a fertile environment for the birth of art therapy in the 20th century— especially the depth psychology of Freud and Jung, with its emphasis on the power of the unconscious and the language of the symbol. This led, in art, to movements like expressionism and surrealism, and in psychiatry to an interest in the spontaneous artwork of the mentally ill, some of whom were pacified by painting and drawing long before there were effective antipsychotic medications.





# Where do art therapists work?

- Art therapists work in hospitals, schools, special schools, clinics or day centers which tend to be located in the three main caring agencies of health, education and social services.





# Where do art therapists work?

- In a *Survey of conditions of service of registered art therapists* carried out by the British Association of Art therapists (1990), the distribution of employment reflected the main areas of work for the 64.4% of the membership who replied to the questionnaire.
  - National Health Service 54%
  - Social Services 15%
  - Education 7%
  - Adult/Higher Education 5%
  - Home office 2.5%
  - Non-statutory services 7%
  - Self-employed 2.5%

# Where do art therapists work?

- Today art therapy is a widely practiced in a wide variety of settings including:
  - hospitals
  - psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities
  - wellness centers
  - forensic institutions
  - schools
  - crisis centers
  - senior communities
  - private practice
  - other clinical and community settings



# Who benefits from art therapy?

- One of the main advantages of art therapy is that it offers the possibility of working with many different client groups.
- Art therapists work with children, young people, adults and the elderly.
- Clients may have a wide range of difficulties, disabilities or diagnoses. These include emotional, behavioral or mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, life-limiting conditions, neurological conditions and physical illnesses.
- Art therapy is provided in groups or individually, depending on clients' needs.





# Who benefits from art therapy?

- Individuals who can benefit from art therapy include:
  - those who have survived trauma resulting from combat, abuse, and natural disaster
  - persons with adverse physical health conditions such as cancer, traumatic brain injury, and other health disability
  - persons with autism, dementia, depression, and other disorders
- Art therapy helps people resolve conflicts, improve interpersonal skills, manage problematic behaviors, reduce negative stress, and achieve personal insight.





# Why art therapy?

- Art making is an innate human tendency, so much so it has been argued that, like speech and tool making, this activity could be used to define our species.



# Why art therapy?

- Although human communication may take many forms, in a society such as ours words tend to dominate. It is through words that most of us, in our daily lives at least, attempt to shape and give meaning to experience.
- Human experience cannot, however, be entirely reduced to words. Some experiences and emotional states are beyond words. It is here that art therapy offers a way of overcoming the frustration, terror and isolation such experiences may engender, by providing an alternative medium for expression and communication through which feelings might be conveyed and understood.

# Why art therapy?

- Art is a natural way to communicate
- Making art relieves tension
- Much of our thinking is visual
- A picture is worth a thousand words
- Some things are easier to “say” in art  
(overwhelming affects, preverbal and forbidden memories, “the dark side”, complex feelings and situations)
- Some things are easier to see in art



# The image in art therapy

- Images made in art therapy embody thoughts and feelings.
- The image is a mediator. It mediates between the inner world and outer reality, between the unconscious and conscious, holding and symbolizing past, present and future aspects of the client.



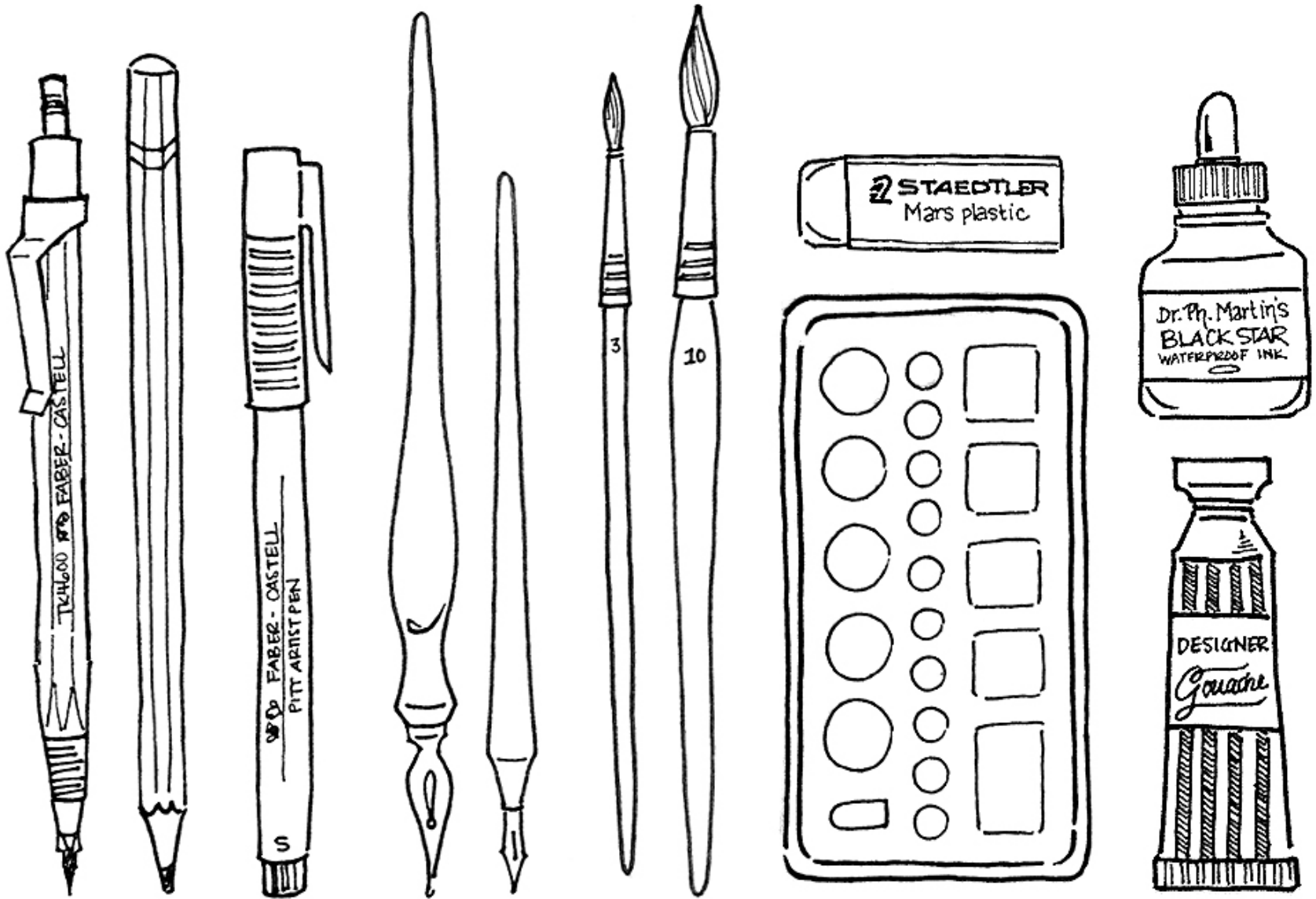
# The image in art therapy

- In a picture, ambivalence and conflict can be stated and contained.
- In art therapy the client tries to give form to what seems inexpressible or unspeakable through the process of making.





# Art therapy materials, mediums and methods



# Art therapy materials, mediums and methods



- The central use of art materials makes what happens in art therapy session different from all other psychotherapy approaches.
- Individuals in art therapy are encouraged to engage in some form of visual self-expression.

# *Drawing*



- Drawing is the most widely used medium in art therapy because of its portability, ease of use and easily standardized qualities.
- Drawing materials include pencils, crayons, markers, chalk, and oil pastels, and involve some sort of surface (usually various types of paper) on which to draw.
- With the increasing use of digital art media, drawing also takes place on computers, lap tops and even cellular phones with the use of specialized applications and software.



# *Painting*

- Painting materials include watercolors, tempera, finger paints, acrylics, oils, and inks and a tool (brush, pen, or even hands) with which to paint. Like drawing, it includes a surface such as canvas, watercolor paper, board or panels.
- Painting also can take place electronically on a computer screen via digital painting software.

# Clay



- Clay encourages three-dimensional thinking and the use of tactile senses.
- It includes material that comes from the earth, plasticine, Play-Doh, Fimo or homemade salt dough.
- Clay work can be a hands-on experience or can involve tools to form, mold, imprint, or decorate it before it hardens, in the case of ceramic or self-hardening clays. It may also include work on a potter's wheel or similar equipment.



# Collage

- Collage materials can include just about any material that can be adhered to a surface (paper, cardboard, canvas, or other backing) and can be two-dimensional (papers, magazine pictures, and photographs) or three-dimensional (wood scraps, yarn, fibers, cloth, natural materials etc.)



# Conclusion

- The general and big advantage of art therapy is the wide variety of clients, contexts, institutions, situations and problems where it can be applied.
- Also, art therapy offers access to information which is not accessible by using therapy which uses speech as a main medium of expression.
- However, in my opinion, the relationship between art therapy and other types of psychotherapy should be rather complementary than exclusive.



# List of literature

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**Thank you for  
your attention  
and participation**