

RESILIENCE PROJECT

(Counselling, Art Therapy)

Children, Adolescents, Young Adults, Families and Adults

creativity | psychological therapies | art therapy



Art Therapy Counselling

Art Therapy Counselling is an easy and enjoyable way to express a range of topics and emotions with a helping professional. On its own, Art Therapy has an enormous range of possibilities to address specific mental health problems to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. Art Therapy coupled with mental health counselling provides a multi-modal approach to getting better, staying well and improving health and wellbeing.

Three key benefits:

First up, art therapy is non-judgemental and not interpretative and is set up to be relaxing. Also, you do not need to have any art experience but if you do, the art therapy will be oriented to moving your art experience into therapeutic benefit. Specific art materials and techniques are used so you can explore and experiment experiencing the art process first hand. You follow your own lead once shown various strategies. There is freedom to use the art process how you wish.

Secondly, you can use art therapy to address one or more problems. Your therapist discusses how you can use Art Therapy alongside of various best practice psychological strategies. This allows you to use a hands on approach rather than using only talk therapy alone.

And thirdly, you can take away art therapy from the counselling sessions so that counselling benefits last far longer than the times that you attend counselling. You can set up an art space in the comfort of your own home, or create a mobile art therapy to have for the rest of your life. It can provide you with a new psychological therapy to use through challenging times. It can become part of your wellbeing self care maintenance and is highly adaptable to your needs.

Art Therapy Counselling helps young people to:

- Improve confidence
- Enhance and develop relationships
- Increase their productivity
- Open self awareness
- Use creativity and flexibility to solve problems
- Manage emotions and stress
- Learn resilience building skills
- Develop coping skills

- Use for self acknowledgment, self compassion and mindfulness
- Use to set and review goals and aims

How are sessions structured?

At the beginning of the therapy, you and your therapist may explore the problems you want to work on.

When you have agreed which problems you want to focus on and what your goals are, you may start planning the content of sessions and talking about how you could deal various problems.

During the session, you might work through art therapy exercises with your therapist to explore your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This may be supplemented with worksheets.

Art Therapy is a tool you can use to support yourself **in between sessions**. At the end of each session you might agree on some exercises to work on afterwards.

At the beginning of your next session your therapist might start by going over the conclusions from your previous session, and discuss what progress you've made with any work you agreed to do.

What might I learn?

Art Therapy Counselling provides focussed psychological strategies and teaches techniques and approaches to build on coping skills for dealing with different problems. You may learn ways of coping with different situations, thoughts, feelings and behaviours. For example:

It can be daunting when faced with a list of things you can't do, but Art Therapy Counselling can use the helping relationship to talk through and engage in art therapy strategies alongside to break up your goals into manageable chunks. It can also help children and young people to sort through confusions, explore identify formation and create life aims and set goals.

The therapist uses Art Therapy from Strengths Based, Trauma-Informed, Narrative Therapy, Expressive Art Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural and Positive Therapy perspectives. These approaches offer various techniques to for you to explore your hopes and wishes for good mental health. You will also learn how to make meaning of certain situations which are built from your past and present experiences as you look toward the future,

What to expect from the therapist?

Your therapist is a qualified, senior mental health professional with child and adolescent psychology specialty trainings in a wide range of counselling and art therapy models and is skilled at integrating various compatible approaches into a combined art therapy counselling approach.

Your therapist provides a non-judgmental approach and respects and values your unique identity. The aim is to develop a working relationship in collaboration with the therapist who takes in how you wish to work with various therapeutic options. You have a lot of freedom for how you wish to work and there is time to explore various approaches to find what fits for you as you take increasing leadership.

At various times your therapist will provide guidance, psychological education, art teaching to turn art making into various therapeutic approaches, listening to help you to express and clarify your thoughts, coaching to help you to set and achieve goals and psychological support as you experience unconditional positive regard, genuine interest and acknowledgement.

Can I do Art Therapy by myself?

Yes! It is recommended that you learn and experience the various approaches to make art therapy a regular supportive practice to aid your ongoing self awareness and therapy if not for relaxation and enjoyment of a non-judgmental creative process itself.

Setting up and maintaining an art therapy practice is part of the sessions with art therapy exercises, art material packs and art material lists available. You can take what you have learnt from the art therapy sessions into setting up your own goals and approaches for yourself. You may also attend ad hoc sessions for as long as you wish as part of building in strategies for maintaining good mental health and self care.

Skype, email and telephone follow up sessions are also available if you cannot physically get to an appointment. They require you to have set up your own art therapy space/or mobile kits with art materials and to have purchased art therapy counselling worksheets/manual if you need. It is not necessary to routinely see your art therapy images but at times you can upload your images and send via email or even post by mail to your therapist. Discussing and reviewing your experience of art therapy image making and explorations in line with your goals and mental health is a key part of the counselling process.

Art Therapy is usually more effective if you're working with a therapist which is how Art Therapy Counselling has been created with its origins in Art Psychotherapy (an approach that is based on the symbolic use of art as the therapy itself). To keep up to date with best practice in psychotherapy, Art Therapy Counselling draws its foundation from the schools of Positive Psychology (the science of flourishing and wellbeing), Trauma-informed and recovery based practices (creating trust in the affective and physical aspects of the person to guide ways to create and maintain their wellness whilst reducing the pressure to re-experience the traumatic event/s) and Expressive Art Therapies (to provide whole of brain, kinetic/affective methods for people to convey problem experiences without undue pressure on cognitive functioning and without expectation to use only words to re-present experience). Some specific Art Therapy strategies, exercises, techniques are suitable to try or use on your own but getting support from a therapist initially and at certain times is really important.

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Excerpt from Article: The Expressive Arts Continuum

The Expressive Therapies Continuum presents a model for applying art-based interventions in trauma-informed work. In particular, the ETC mirrors the neuro-developmental framework proposed by Bruce Perry.

In brief, the ETC proposes four levels of experience, moving from simple to more complex processing. These are: 1) kinesthetic/sensory (action), 2) perceptual/affective (form), 3) cognitive/symbolic (schema), and 4) creative which can occur at any single level of the ETC or may be the integration of functioning from all levels (Hinz, 2009; Lusebrink, 2010). The first three levels echo Perry's theory of neurosequential development from brainstem/mid-brain to limbic to cortex (2006)

The following summary provides a very basic overview of the ETC levels:

On the kinesthetic/sensory level, a person is generally interacting with an art form in an exploratory way. Kinesthetic aspects are characterized by movement and motor activity, while sensory aspects imply the use of tactile or other senses to explore media. Free movement or scribble drawings could be seen as kinesthetic; a hands-on experience with clay is an example of the sensory level. The details of what is created are not important, only the bodily expression of movement through the art form.

On the perceptual/affective level, an individual engages with an art form to develop form for ideas and to communicate emotions. This level reflects the person's ability to explore the structural properties of an art form and to imbue the form with feeling. For example, using lines and colors to create form through a painting is an expression at the perceptual level; creating a piece of music to convey an emotion is an example of the affective level. At this level, the individual is able to develop some reflective distance and to self-observe his or her process with the art form.

On the cognitive/symbolic level, a person uses an art form for problem solving, structuring, and, in some cases, meaning seeking. A person operating on this level is able to use analytic, logical, and sequential skills while engaging in the art process. This experience may lead to the symbolic level in which personal meaning can be explored. Clients working at the cognitive/symbolic level of the ETC may demonstrate the use of rational thought and intellect in the art process and may naturally look for meaning in their images and arts experiences.

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