

Introduction to Art Therapy for Seniors

What is art therapy?

Art therapy combines a non-verbal creative process with personal and interpersonal exploration. It is intended to help people integrate past experiences and cultivate well-being in their lives.

No art experience is required.

What would someone go to art therapy for?

People come to art therapy for a variety of reasons, including:

- a desire for greater self-awareness
- feelings of grief and/or loss
- stress and anxiety associated with life changes
- communication challenges
- physical health issues
- trauma, past and/or present
- creative blocks
- relationship or family challenges
- mental health challenges
- depression
- changes in or crisis of identity
- the intention to actively engage in one's own personal growth

What are some of the benefits of art therapy?

Art therapy has many benefits. Most of these benefits result from having a safe space to intentionally immerse oneself into a creative process while being supported by a trained art therapist. This can be in either a one-on-one or a group setting. Either way, safety and confidentiality are emphasized. Some benefits of art therapy for seniors are listed on the following page.

Personal expression and choice-making

Express feelings, thoughts, memories, fantasies, and dreams in a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere. This can aid in coming to terms with conflicting emotions and can help counteract a negative view of self

Make choices about what materials to use, what images to create, and what to speak about

Interpersonal communication and connection

Be listened to, witnessed and understood

Communicate through verbal and non-verbal means

Rekindle an interest in participating in the world through active art-making

Confidence and self-awareness

Connect with creative, physical, mental, and emotional aspects of yourself

Increase your self-knowledge and make sense of your emotional, mental, and physical realities

Life review and self-reflection

Explore and share memories, which can provide you an opportunity to forgive and heal past experiences and to achieve a sense of peace with yourself

Reinforce your sense of purpose and meaning in your life

Explore your sense of self identity in an environment of acceptance

Discover and create meaning by expressing your life story in new ways

Sensory, cognitive and perceptual stimulation

Maintain and even rebuild your cognitive and perceptual skills by stimulating the senses and engaging in social connection

Use the concrete, tactile nature of art-making to help to maintain small motor skills

Build on and maintain choice-making abilities and problem-solving skills