

Creativity and art-making can bring great pleasure and catharsis. I endlessly marvel at what a few brushstrokes or pencil lines (or a great many) can evoke and represent. Whether an exquisite masterpiece or the playful scribbles of a child, art has the power to move and inspire us. I have found that art is equally potent through life's ups and downs; being a means of expressing and venting the full spectrum of human emotions. I decided to become an art therapist after my own art-making helped get me through a serious depression, a long time ago. In my lowest moments I made spontaneous paintings, which, to my amazement, helped me recognise unexpected truths about myself, see what was not working in my life and ultimately enabled me to make decisions and changes for the better.

As a qualified art therapist I support others through a similar process of discovery and healing. Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that, together with the option of talking, uses art-making as the main form of exploration, expression and communication. But you do not need to be good at art, or even to produce finished pieces of work. Art therapy can benefit people of all ages, including those with disabilities, complex needs or for whom talking is difficult or impossible. Depression, loss, grief, trauma, abuse, anxiety and mental and physical illness can all be addressed in art therapy.

Some, like me, will find the emotional expression and personal insight to be the most helpful aspect of art therapy. For others the production of something creative can boost confidence, self-esteem and give a sense of purpose or worth where these may have been lacking. For some it is the sensory aspect of art-making that holds most benefit, allowing for play, exploration, being-in-the-moment, or regression, all of which can be very helpful sometimes. Others still may value the chance to find closure through art-making (or its destruction!) or perhaps capture and cherish precious memories into something that can be kept or perhaps, in time, shared.

In the painting featured here, I tried to depict Art therapy. The main large circle represents the safe space (both physical and metaphorical) where therapy takes place. The two circles within it represent myself as the therapist (on the right; offering warmth and care, being open and non-judgemental); and the client, on the left, who may be struggling in some way. Outside the main circle I represent the pleasures and challenges of life ...and include three other circles, portraying other people who might offer support when it's needed.



If you are wondering whether art therapy might be beneficial for you, please do get in touch.
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