



## Recent Trend of Art Therapy in the Light of Humanity and Expression Leading to Well-Being

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### Abstract

Recent trends of art therapy are described. The psychological strengths include flexibility, improvement, coping, adaptability, personal efficacy, positive experiences, happiness, and living a meaningful life. Studies of people who have continued art therapy have shown that attention, spatial processing, sequencing, and programming abilities tend to improve. Art therapy includes several factors, such as thoughts, values, primitive powers, images of society and family. It has two axes for inner-outer and mental-physical. As to recent topic, expressive art (ExA) therapy has been gradually known for various artistic techniques. Art therapy will be expected to contribute human well-being and happiness from now.

**Keywords:** Art therapy; Expressive art (ExA); Integrative Medicine Japan (IMJ); The American Art Therapy Association; Self-expression

### Commentary Article

Human history spans thousands to tens of thousands of years. Art has been born and developed during the period, and has continued to lead to healing of the mind. In other words, painting, sculpture, music, theater, and other activities have conveyed information to people of the time, strengthened and inspired people's hearts, and reduced fear and anxiety. In ancient Greece, a series of philosophers, including Aristotle, used poetry and theater to maintain and purify the soul. In the realm of culture so far, painting, theater, music, song, dance, and other forms of art are used as creative art therapy to cure or alleviate all kinds of illnesses for people of all ages [1]. The authors and collaborators have been involved in art therapy and medical activities of Integrative Medicine Japan (IMJ), Shikoku division for long [2].

On the other hand, since ancient times, medicines and treatments have been found in each era as essential for human survival. These are broadly divided into two categories, including i) physical aspects and ii) psychological/spiritual aspects. The physical improvement of each individual is influenced by the first aspect. On the other hand, each person's preparation to deal with the treatment process is influenced by the second aspect [3]. In modern

times, each medical facility was composed of units that were independent but interrelated and formed two components. Gradually, access and the shape of the facilities were discussed as issues. Furthermore, it changed to be able to complete treatment simply, quickly, in a comfortable environment, where various environmental stresses can be reduced during minimum time period.

It is important that the structure of a medical facility is not just for medical treatment and procedures, but also to support the mental and psychological aspects of patients. Therefore, from the perspective of the interior structure /design, appropriateness, cheerfulness, and the degree of healing are also important. Specifically, in addition to visual elements such as the overall visual form, light, color, and the expansion of the building, the impact on the five senses are considered. In other words, five senses are known as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, and there may also be a sixth sense that only some people have. These are amenities in medical and welfare facilities, and they are also connected to artistic structures and hospital art, playing the role of art, which can lead to the performance of art therapy [4].

Art therapy is one of the ancient forms of treatment. For patients with various health and medical problems, art therapy can be

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therapeutic. First, the aesthetic quality of artworks can improve a patient's mood, sense of well-being, self-esteem, and self-awareness [5]. Second, when people are deeply engaged in their favorite activities, physiological factors can relax such as heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. This means that both groups can maintain satisfactory states of mind and body. In other words, such healing environment in a facility would create a time and space with positive effect on treatment.

From the perspective of medical architecture, traditional facilities have often shown general shape of a cube or a rectangular prism. Such structure shape may affect the mental health of patients. In this way, by avoiding spaces and forms where the presence of a soul is not felt, the value and effect of art therapy may be more clear. According to the experience of art therapists, the space of art therapy is important and creates a safe and constructive atmosphere in which each patient can easily accept without feeling threatened [6]. The main artwork in the therapeutic process is a "visual representation" of problems and solutions, which helps to reduce stress and easily process emotions through visual and dramatic extrapolation.

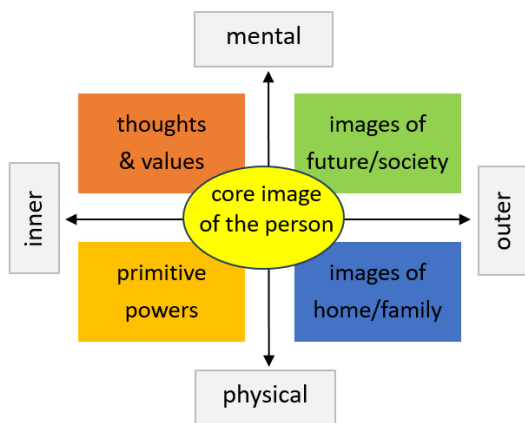


Figure 1: A possible explanation of the theory in the art therapy.

Art therapy is usually administered by a trained art therapist. It is a method of empowering the patient to express themselves and to recognize and resolve their inner conflicts through the use of art materials. The American Art Therapy Association announced the definition of art therapy in 2003. It is the use of art and the work process to improve the client's self-awareness and symptoms of illness or stress. Therapists believe that artistic activities can enhance the patient's mental abilities and positive emotions [7]. Of the several types, painting is the most important and expressive. In addition to some painting factors such as lines, images, and direction, some important elements would be the size of the image, the content of the painting, and the communication for mutual conversation. Through this series of processes, the patient's emotional characteristics, psychological pressures, failures, and

inner desires can be understood. In art therapy, Grunwald's Space-Disposition Theory has been known, which can become adequate reference [8] (Figure 1).

The psychological strengths of art therapy are known. They include flexibility, improvement, coping, adaptability, personal efficacy, positive experiences, happiness, and living a meaningful life [9]. Among them, research on the benefits of creative arts therapy is gradually increasing, including art, music, dance, movement, and theater. Art therapy in medical care includes multifaceted therapeutic elements. Therefore, the implementation of art therapy is a complex intervention for clients. Self-expression can be therapeutic through visual media. In addition, creative expression can help patients communicate anxious feelings to the therapist through a diagonal method of self-defense and self-healing process (Figure 2).

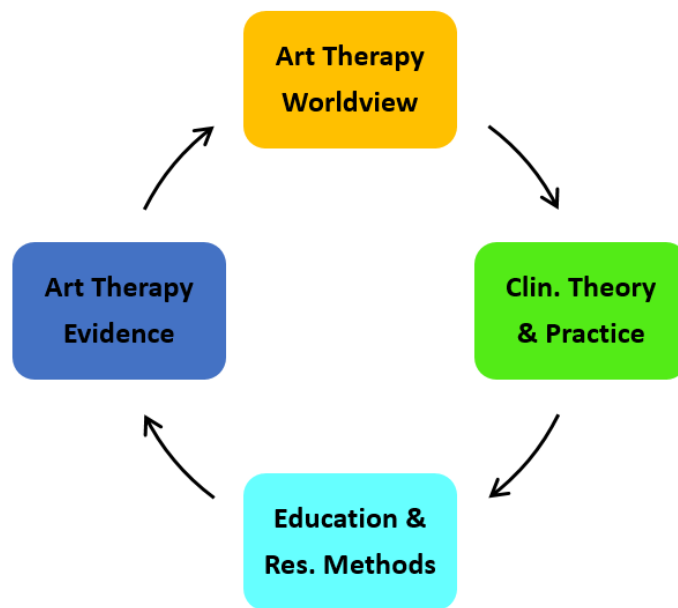


Figure 2: Integrated model for future art therapy practices.

Art therapy can help clients meet various cognitive, emotional, and performance needs. Studies of people who have continued art therapy have shown that attention, spatial processing, sequencing, and programming abilities tend to improve. Thus, art therapy is effective in promoting concentration, social interaction and focus, emotional expression, and mutual communication [10]. Art therapy can help clients meet various cognitive, emotional, and performance needs. Studies of people who have continued art therapy have shown that attention, spatial processing, sequencing, and programming abilities tend to improve. Thus, art therapy is effective in promoting concentration, social interaction and focus, emotional expression, and mutual communication [9].

During the past few decades, a new form of art therapy called "expressive art" has emerged from art studios [11]. In expressive

art (ExA) therapy, artistic expression is rooted in the phenomenological tradition, where artistic expression is perceived as something new and unknown. Expressive arts can give a new perspective on experiences and emotions, and thus show something new [12]. ExA therapy uses a variety of artistic techniques, including music, poetry, painting, and sculpture. Moving from one state to another opens up the possibility of examining emotions and bodily experiences from different angles.

In summary, recent perspectives of art therapy are described in this article. Art therapy includes several factors, such as thoughts, values, primitive powers, images of society and family. It has two axes for inner-outer and mental-physical. Further, expressive art (ExA) therapy has been gradually known for various artistic techniques. Art therapy is expected to contribute human well-being and happiness from now.

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