



# Art Therapy



**What is “Art Therapy?”** Art therapy is a form of therapy that provides individuals, of all ages and abilities, the opportunity to use the creative process to express and develop insight and understanding about life issues. Drawing, painting, and collage making are a few of the artistic processes that may be used in an art therapy session. Children naturally use visual communications to express their thoughts and experiences; particularly young children, as they have not yet developed the language skills necessary to express themselves verbally. Play is often incorporated into the art therapy session with children as it offers another natural way for the child to communicate and express his or herself.

Art therapy has been used with children and adults as method of understanding and coping with life’s problems for over one-hundred years. Art therapists integrate traditional psychotherapeutic theories and applications with the creative process in way that best serve the needs of the individual seeking services. This process can assist a person towards developing insight and coping skills, solving problems, resolving conflict, behavioral changes, and emotional healing. For those reasons and more, art therapy is used to treat social-emotional and mental health issues in a variety of clinical settings and with diverse populations.

**Who can provide “Art Therapy?”** As with any type of counseling or therapy, only a trained professional should provide this service for you and your child. “Registered Board Certified Art Therapists” have gone through extensive education and training to become credentialed by the Art Therapy Credentials Board of the American Art Therapy Association. Some questions to ask that may help you in choosing a professional are: *What is your training as a mental health professional? What mental health degree have you earned? Have you ever received formal education on working with children? To what extent? Have you ever received formal education on play therapy? To what extent? What process do you use to work with children?*

**When does a child need therapy?** In the process of growing up, children often experience difficulty coping at some time (at home, at school, with divorce and separation, with other children, etc.), or they exhibit behaviors which concern their parents or teachers. Some children may need more help than others in some areas. Generally, if you, your child's teacher, or pediatrician is concerned about your child's behavior or difficulty adjusting, play or art therapy may be the recommended approach to help your child.

**What do I tell my child about art therapy?** Tell your child during the first visit that he or she will be coming each week to talk, play, and make art with Miss Reina. You may tell them that it helps children to have someone special to talk and play with.

**What should I tell the therapist?** Parents are experts in relation to their children. The therapist job is to be your partner in helping your child and his or her emotional health. It is your job to report events to the therapist and is inappropriate to ask the child to recount events to the therapist, especially as a punishment. If you question the importance of an event, it never hurts to call the therapist and talk out the event. Parents will have an initial meeting with the therapist with the child present to gather information developmentally and socially about the child.

**How do I ask my child about his or her therapy session?** It is important to not pressure the child to talk about their sessions and work progress. Parents will be told by therapist anything that arises in session relating to the child’s safety or any other vital information. It is important to remember your child is granted privacy during his or her sessions in order to allow for self expression. Remember progress will take time and children will be allowed to work at their pace in order to build a trusting therapeutic relationship.

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