



What is art therapy?

Art therapy is a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the art therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem. A goal in art therapy is to improve or restore a client's functioning and his or her sense of personal well-being. Art therapy practice requires knowledge of visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms) and the creative process, as well as of human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.

Today art therapy is widely practiced in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centers, forensic institutions, schools, crisis centers, senior communities, private practice, and other clinical and community settings. During individual and/or group sessions art therapists elicit their clients' inherent capacity for art making to enhance their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Research supports the use of art therapy within a professional relationship for the therapeutic benefits gained through artistic self-expression and reflection for individuals who experience illness, trauma, and mental health problems and those seeking personal growth.

Who benefits from art therapy?

Art therapy is practiced in mental health, rehabilitation, medical, educational, forensic, wellness, private practice and community settings with diverse client populations in individual, couples, family, and group therapy formats. Art therapy is an effective treatment for people experiencing developmental, medical, educational, and social or psychological impairment. Individuals who benefit from art therapy include those who have survived trauma resulting from combat, abuse, and natural disaster; persons with adverse physical health conditions such as cancer, traumatic brain injury, and other health disability; and persons with autism, dementia, depression, and other disorders. Art therapy helps people resolve conflicts, improve interpersonal skills, manage problematic behaviors, reduce negative stress, and achieve personal insight. Art therapy also provides an opportunity to enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of art making.

How do I become an art therapist?

A master's degree is required for entry level practice in art therapy from institutions of higher education recognized by regional accreditation bodies approved by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Minimum educational, professional, and ethical standards for the

profession are established by the American Art Therapy Association, a membership and advocacy organization which serves its members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence, and developing and promoting knowledge in, and of, the field of art therapy.

The Association is dedicated to the belief that the creative process involved in the making of art is healing and life enhancing. The American Art Therapy Association's Education Committee establishes the Educational Standards used by the Educational Program Approval Board (EPAB) to review art therapy masters programs for compliance and accreditation. Approved programs can be found on the American Art Therapy Association's website. Educational requirements include theories of art therapy, counseling, and psychotherapy; ethics and standards of practice; assessment and evaluation; individual, group, and family art therapy techniques; human and creative development; multicultural issues; research methods; and internship experiences in clinical, community, and/or other settings.

How are credentials approved and maintained?

The Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc., (ATCB) the credentialing body for the profession of art therapy, confers and administers professional credentials to art therapy practitioners upon achieving a master's degree in art therapy. ATCB's mission is "to protect the public by promoting the competent and ethical practice of art therapy through the credentialing of art therapy professionals." Those who hold ATCB credentials are required to adhere to the [ATCB Code of Professional Practice](#).

The ATCB is an independent organization from the American Art Therapy Association and the Educational Programs Approval Board, grants professional practice credentials to art therapists at three levels: Registered (ATR) —granted upon completion of graduate education and postgraduate supervised experience; Board Certified (ATR-BC) —granted to Registered art therapists who pass a written examination and is maintained through continuing education; and Certified Supervisor Credential (ATCS) —offered to qualified Board Certified art therapists who have demonstrated substantial supervision qualifications.

How do I find a qualified art therapist?

Credentialed art therapists who meet the high level of education and experience required for the profession can be located through [Find-a-Therapist](#) or the American Art Therapy Association's [Art Therapist Locator](#). Credentials and education of a practitioner's can be verified through the [Art Therapy Credentials Board](#).

The American Art Therapy Association supports federal and state policies, legislation, regulations, judicial actions, and initiatives that encourage, promote, and support efforts to gain a professional art therapy license and licensure of art therapists.