ART THERAPY IN CANCER CARE: A VISUAL NARRATIVE

Kim McAndrews
MA, LMHCA, ATR-P

HeartTending® Art Therapy & Swedish Cancer Institute
➤ Discover what Art therapy is, and what Art Therapy is not.
➤ Understand the benefits Art Therapy can offer cancer patients, family members, and caregivers.
➤ Learn about HeartTending® Art Therapy & SCI Art Therapy Services
➤ Explore Additional Avenues of Art Therapy.
  • Art Therapy in Our Community
  • Art Therapy in Research
➤ Experience Art Therapy for yourself.
“Few things can create connection and grow our own capacities more meaningfully than immersing ourselves in each other’s stories.”

—Nina Simmons

Moonrise: The Power of Women Leading from the Heart
VISUAL STORYTELLING, through art making, fills the gap other treatments are unable to address.

(Malchiodi, 2003)
For some, the words...

ART & THERAPY
For some, the words...

ART & THERAPY

= Homer—The Scream by Poster Revolution
SAFE. KIND. NON-JUDGMENTAL.

➤ There’s **no wrong way** to make art.

➤ Be extra gentle with yourself.

➤ Try to refrain from comparison & critique.

➤ Process vs. product
Let’s experience...

BEING PRESENT WITH WHAT ARISES
Art Therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.
ART THERAPY IS . . .

- Facilitated by a professional, Master’s level, Art Therapist.
  - Mental Health Counselor
  - Marriage and Family Therapist
- Provides a safe environment for individuals, couples, and families to creatively express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

https://www.atcb.org/
https://arttherapy.org/

THEORY

Art AS Therapy vs. Art IN Psychotherapy
A theoretical foundation is necessary to inform the “lightening quick decisions” that characterize therapeutic work.

—Elenor Ulman

(as cited in Expressive Therapies Continuum, A Framework for Using Art in Therapy, by Lisa D. Hinz)

What *media*, under what *circumstances*, with which particular *individuals*?
ART THERAPY IS NOT . . .

➤ An art class
➤ Arts & crafts time
➤ Only for artists
➤ Only for kids
➤ Occupational or physical therapy
➤ Play time
➤ Pinterest projects, coloring, or, ‘how to do art therapy’ guide books

➤ Therapeutic Art Techniques vs. Art Therapy Benefits of both

thaneeya.com
Art Therapy helps to get out what’s in your brain and place it in front of you.
HOW ART THERAPY WORKS

➤ Non-verbal areas of the brain
➤ Emotional safety
➤ Decreasing stress
➤ Subconscious mind
➤ Externalization
ART EXPRESSION IS NOT A LINEAR PROCESS

It does not need to conform to the rules of language, such as grammar, syntax or logic.

A work of art can safely contain:

➤ complexity
➤ contradiction
➤ ambiguity
➤ confusion

Because, unlike language, art contains no rules about organization or structure.

(Malchiodi, 2007)
BENEFITS OF ART THERAPY

Research shows Art Therapy improves:

➤ Cognitive and emotional processing
➤ Self-esteem, self-awareness, resilience
➤ Social support systems
➤ Communication skills, conflict resolution
➤ Can help reduce symptoms of pain, anxiety, distress, and depression
➤ Feelings of well-being & quality of life
➤ Building of new neural pathways
➤ Heart rate, blood pressure (lowers)
➤ Slows nervous system & improves ability to respond
ART THERAPY IN CANCER CARE & SURVIVORSHIP

➤ Improved mood & decreased perception of pain
➤ Reduction in stress
➤ Increased sense of control
➤ Release through self-expression
➤ Increased self-discovery & self-esteem
➤ Meaning-making
➤ Increased connection to self, others, and community
➤ Increased feelings of hope
A CASE STUDY: BOUNDARIES

“Lisa”

Permission granted by client. Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.
“LISA” HOW I FEEL IMAGE #1
“LISA” HOW I WANT TO FEEL - EMBROIDERED IMAGES #3 & 4
As an art therapist and clinical mental health counselor, I work primarily with adult women who have a desire to explore and transform emotions and symptoms into authentic expressions through art making.

➤ **Individuals & Groups**

➤ **Collaboration with other Health Professionals**

Kim@HeartTending.com
Swedish Cancer Institute (SCI)
Art Therapy Services

First Hill, Edmonds, & Issaquah

Open to:
➤ SCI oncology patients, family members, & caregivers
➤ Oncology patients outside of SCI

All SCI Art Therapy services are funded through philanthropy and FREE of charge.

Arts & Wellness Groups
Drop-in: First Hill, Edmonds, & Issaquah

Individual Art Therapy
By appointment only: First Hill & Edmonds

Art, Music & Mindfulness
Collaborative Group with Art & Music Therapists
First Hill, Edmonds, & Issaquah

Kim.McAndrews@Swedish.org
Bonnie.Walchuk@Swedish.org
How to find a professional Art Therapist in the community

(Look for an ATR credential)

Evergreen Art Therapy Association: http://www.evergreenarttherapy.org/find-an-art-therapist-in-washington-state

Art Therapy Credentials Board: https://www.atcb.org/Home/FindACredentialedArtTherapist

American Art Therapy Association: https://arttherapy.org/art-therapist-locator/

Research

THANK YOU.

QUESTIONS?