

What people say

Art Therapy works, and is highly valued by those who have had the opportunity to experience it. Here are some of their comments.

'I had so much benefit ... real lasting benefits that I've been able to carry on with on my own, like a new way of doing things and different methods of coping. I think I got more from it than I ever thought possible.'

'I really feel that it has given me a lot more tools to deal with the things I need to deal with.'

'It's had a profound impact. I consider this to be the most successful thing that has happened to me in my mental health history. I've taken away what I did here and use it.'

'I don't feel a prisoner of my depression any more. I can't tell you how much that means. I'd rather die than go through another dark time like the last one. But this has shown me a new way of being and shown me a different way of coping with being me.'

'There have been enormous changes in how I cope now ... I don't think realistically I could have hoped for much more from it.'

'I've had profound and lasting benefits from this work.'

These users' views about the experience of art therapy are from clients at The Creative Therapies Service, Exeter, interviewed by Sarah Bennet. 'When words are not enough', MSc Research, University of Exeter School of Psychology.



The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) is the professional organisation for registered art therapists in the United Kingdom.



works to promote the use of art therapy in the UK through events, publications and research.



has a Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Practice.



maintains a comprehensive directory of qualified Art Therapists organised by region with European and International sections.



gives information to members of the public who are seeking a registered Art Therapist in their locality.



welcomes practitioners of other psychological therapies or those who are interested in art therapy as a career to join the BAAT as an Associate Member.



provides continuing professional development for its membership.



holds conferences and events that are open to other professionals.



offers introductory and foundation level courses to people who are interested in learning more about art therapy.

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Details of members, courses and forthcoming events can be obtained by visiting the BAAT website, or by contacting the BAAT office.

What is Art Therapy?



the british association of
art therapists



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Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses visual art media as its primary mode of communication.

Through art-making, people can express and explore feelings that are at times confusing and difficult to communicate verbally.

Clients of all ages (young children, adults and elders) may benefit from art therapy, which is suitable for a wide range of issues, disabilities or diagnoses.

These include emotional or mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, life-limiting conditions, brain-injury or neurological conditions and physical illness.

Art therapy may be provided in group or individual sessions. It is not a recreational activity or an art lesson, although the sessions can be enjoyable.

Clients do not need to have any previous experience or expertise in art.

Why use Art?

Art has long been known to have therapeutic properties. When creating visual images, people 'draw on' the right side of their brains – the same side that is used before spoken language develops. It is where visual memories are stored.

Using art materials to make images which can be thought about with a qualified and registered art therapist may help relieve difficult or painful feelings and can help increase general well-being

Sometimes it can be difficult to talk directly about difficulties and feelings so communicating through another medium may be easier or more appropriate.

Sometimes words can't be used or found to describe thoughts and feelings but the processes involved in image making and the images themselves can help to do so.

Sometimes words alone don't seem to be enough but images and words together may be able to convey what one wants to say.

Sometimes there are just too many words – and they can get in the way of being able to be in touch with emotions. These are just some of the reasons for the 'Art' in art therapy.



What is an Art Therapist?

An Art Therapist (or Art Psychotherapist, both titles are interchangeable) is someone who has undertaken a training in Art Therapy approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In the UK, Art Therapists are statutorily regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council and must be on its register in order to practice legally.

Art Therapists are employed in many different settings in the statutory and independent sectors e.g. education, prisons, hospitals, social services, charities, child and adolescent services, and adult mental health, in day or residential provision. Some art therapists also work in private practice.

What does the training entail?

The work of an Art Therapist can be extremely challenging and calls for considerable skill and sensitivity. Those who wish to pursue a career in art therapy need to be flexible and mature.

The qualifying training in art psychotherapy is at Masters or MSc level. It includes theoretical seminars, experiential art therapy groups and workshops and supervision groups, and written papers. Clinical placements in diverse settings are undertaken over the course of the training. The courses are completed on a full-time basis over two years, or part-time over three years. Students undertake personal therapy as a requirement of the training.

Applicants to the training courses need to have had prior experience in a caring setting, and usually have a degree or equivalent in a chosen area of art or design. If an applicant has a degree/equivalent or qualification in another area, he or she will need to demonstrate a serious commitment to their own art practice. A list of training institutions can be obtained from the BAAT office or website.