

ART THERAPY

SHANEY WATTERS M.A., LMFT, ON THE HEALING POWER OF ART

BY PATRICK TSAKUDA

Art therapy is a mental health profession that utilizes the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well being of individuals of all ages.

This type of counseling involves expressing yourself through various types of art, such as painting, drawing, sculpture and more. Art therapy can help you get in touch with hidden thoughts and feelings. It may help with a wide range of concerns including mood disorders, such as depression, addiction, traumatic experiences, grief and loss, and problems related to medical illness.

Art therapy provides a rich addition to talk therapy in a number of ways. In a recent interview with LA Health News, Los Angeles based Marriage and Family Therapist Shaney Watters highlighted the following basic benefits of this type of therapy.

1. One learns mindfulness and coping skills through creating imagery.
2. Visual imagery adds a different voice/ perspective in the room as it comes from the depths of the client's self and might not otherwise be present with straight talk therapy.
3. Creating a visual allows clients to imagine their desired path/goal in a more substantive, complete way than just words.
4. A client can easily utilize skills/tools learned later down the road should the need arise again or maintain creative practice for prevention and wellness.
5. Art therapy acts as a gateway to the deepest aspects of the self and provides a built-in tangible reminder of insights.

One does not have to be an artist to benefit from this type of therapy, explains Watters. "The necessary element a person must possess to be a good art therapy client is an openness to play and creative problem solving. In art therapy the imagery can be as simple as a field of color or a series of lines to represent a client's experience. No formal art training is necessary."



For more information on art therapy please visit Shaney Watters web site at www.shaneywatters.com. Shaney Watters M.A., LMFT, is a member of the American Art Therapy Association and the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. To schedule an appointment with Ms. Watters call (323) 337-7345, or you can contact her via e-mail at swatters_mft@yahoo.com.