Referral protocols for Art Therapy

According to the American Art Therapy Association a national organization which registers and certifies professional art therapists, 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.

Art therapy is becoming a more acceptable way of helping people. As we mentioned, it can help with [mental health](http://www.arttherapyblog.com/c/mental-health/) and art helps the brain, but it can also help with the physical and emotional well-being of a person. Art can help people:

* manage behavior
* reduce stress
* develop interpersonal skills
* increase self-esteem
* increase self-awareness

**Art therapists can also help address:**

* emotional difficulties related to disability or illness
* [trauma and loss](http://www.arttherapyblog.com/ptsd/ptsd-treatment-showing-promise/)
* [post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)](http://www.arttherapyblog.com/c/ptsd/)
* physical problems
* cognitive problems
* neurological problems

Art Therapy is especially useful in working with children:

* **Art therapy for children can provide kids with an easier way to express themselves since children are more naturally artistic and creative.** A young child is likely to be more comfortable initially expressing him/herself with some crayons and markers, for example, than he/she is going to be at expressing emotions and feelings through words.
* A question and answer type of format can be daunting and intimidating for a child, especially when they have to try and explain themselves with their already limited vocabulary. Because of this, **art therapy for children can be a much more viable solution for communication than simply having a conversation and talking about things.** This can be especially true when it comes to children and traumatic events.
* If a child experiences something tragic, that event usually gets buried in their subconscious where it affects them in the future. These types of things are not easy for kids to talk about, especially when there are deep-rooted emotional issues in play. **Through art therapy children can help bring these suppressed emotions to the surface** so the art therapist can then focus on healing the child’s issue(s).

Art therapy and children can be combined to help in a variety of ways, including but not limited to the following:

* Art therapy for **mental health problems** in children
* Art therapy and **child grief and/or loss**. Can help children communicate about the death of a mom, dad, or sibling, for example
* Art therapy for **bereaved children** and/or a child suffering from bereavement
* Art therapy for **children with learning disabilities**
* Art therapy can help **children with emotional problems**
* Art therapy can aid kids with their **cognitive abilities**
* Art therapy can help a child or children with abuse, helping them **communicate about physical or sexual abuse**
* Art therapy and children cancer patients…can **help a child with cancer**
* Art therapy for **treatment of schizophrenia** in children

Those are just a few aspects in which art therapy can help children. Art therapy can also aid a child in achieving better self-awareness, relief from stress or anxiety, learning disorders, autism, and other traumatic experiences.

Through art therapy, children receive treatment that is based on their existing strengths, weaknesses, interests, and concerns. It can help children of all ages and races.

Art Therapy is most useful with Transformations clients when:

* When you note that the client has difficulty expressing themselves verbally
* When you note that the client has restricted emotionality when expressing themselves
* When client is rationalizing feelings or behavior in an unhealthy manner or to an unhealthy extent
* When trauma has occurred in the past or present
* When an eating disorder is present or suspected
* When there is body image/self-image distortions
* When thought distortions, delusions, or hallucinations are present
* When attachment is limited or non-existent
* When cognitive interventions have failed or had limited success
* When anxiety is sever and cognitive interventions have had limited or no success
* When client is more prone to activity and kinesthetic expression
* When client is depressed or hopeless and cognitive interventions have had limited success
* When self-harming behavior is part of the client’s defensive or coping structure
* When the client has limited verbal skills due to developmental, speech, or learning issues