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# Nothing above and Beyond ART

Srilaya MNG

Artist, Law Student & Independent Researcher, Chennai, India

**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores the therapeutic potential of art in addressing mental and emotional challenges, particularly in vulnerable populations. Drawing on case studies including trauma survivors, patients in clinical settings, and personal experiences of transformation, the research highlights how art, when integrated intentionally, becomes a medium for emotional expression, healing, and identity reconstruction. The paper underscores the neuropsychological basis of art therapy and advocates its inclusion in mainstream mental health strategies, emphasizing its low cost, high accessibility, and ability to foster resilience and hope.

**KEYWORDS:** Art therapy, mental health, trauma healing, PTSD, creativity, emotional well-being

## I. INTRODUCTION

In a world where mental health issues are increasingly prevalent, the search for effective, affordable, and accessible healing methods has never been more critical. Among various alternatives, art has emerged as a powerful tool for emotional expression and psychological recovery. Art therapy, the integration of artistic expression into therapeutic practice, offers a unique way to navigate complex emotions, process trauma, and rediscover hope. This paper aims to analyse the role of art as a therapeutic tool, illustrating how it fosters mental well-being across age groups and contexts.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Art therapy has been recognized for decades as a clinical intervention. According to the American Art Therapy Association, it facilitates self-expression, increases self-awareness, and reduces anxiety and depression. Research in neuroscience has demonstrated that art activates regions in the brain associated with emotions, memory, and healing (Malchiodi, 2012). Programs in hospitals and trauma centres increasingly adopt art as a supplementary treatment to traditional counselling, especially for those who struggle to articulate their experiences verbally.

### Personal Reflection:

Art is not confined to painting, drawing, or sculpture; it is an emotion, a connection, a vibe. It's how you feel when immersed in the act of creating—be it singing, dancing, or any other form of expression that captures your heart. In those moments, the world fades away, leaving only you, your thoughts, and your feelings. Art has the profound power to transform. It can lift the saddest soul to happiness and raise the lowest spirit to new heights. There is no one untouched by the magic of art because it transcends boundaries, it is not a luxury, nor is it reserved for a select few. Art, in its truest essence, is a necessity of life.

A line I hold close to my heart captures this beautifully: "The goal is to live your love in the service of art." These words by Rick Rubin resonate deeply within me, for they remind us that art is not just something we create; it is something we live for, something that breathes life into us as much as we breathe life into it, simply, a line that lives in me.

Art doesn't have to be great or beautiful all the time. It isn't always about the outcome or the masterpiece you create. Especially when it comes to mental health, the result is secondary. What truly matters are the process—the journey you embark on while creating. It's about how you feel, the emotions you experience, and the peace you find in the act of doing art.

To be honest, my own journey with art began at home. I turned to it in moments of happiness, sadness, and even times when I didn't know how to feel. It became my anchor, my outlet. Over time, what started as personal expression grew into something more big. Teaching art to children in various homes not only enriched their lives but also transformed mine. The confidence and mental growth I experienced through art are unmatched—a testament to its power to heal,

inspire, and elevate us to new levels of self-awareness and the things that I don't know I had. Art, for me, has been more than a practice, love or passion; it's something which I can't live without!

"Having Arts on Prescription is having another discipline in my team" says Andrew Cole, the physician in charge of the cancer rehabilitation clinic. How can this be left out easily? The words tell the impact of art! **Arts on Prescription**" isn't just a phrase it's a revolution that's very much needed since Art speaks where words fail, it heals where medicine stops, and it connects where isolation thrives. ART transforms spaces, minds, and even lives, making every individual feel seen, heard, and valued. By weaving creativity or art into clinics, it's not just offering therapy but it's about offering hope, growth, and the courage to reimagine life who thought their lives were over. Here are few real life incidents which acts as an evidence on how art transforms people's lives.

#### **Bill Murray: Individual Transformation through Art**

Bill Murray gave his first stage performance, it didn't turnout good. He walked out to commit suicide & saw Art Institute of Chicago. but found his life in art while he saw the painting "**The Song of the Lark**". Seeing the painting gave him hope where the painting depicted with the woman who have nothing with her, but working in her field very happily —the light & the sun in the painting symbolized a new day, and resilience inspired him to keep going. He realized, "Life isn't over; there's still a chance to make things better." This moment became a turning point, showing the profound power of art to touch hearts and inspire hope, even in the darkest times that too even one after he thought that his life was ended.

#### **Art in Clinical Settings: Sydney's Greenwich Hospital**

During difficult treatments, art therapy has become a vital source of emotional and psychological support for cancer patients. Patients at Sydney's Greenwich Hospital use artistic endeavors like painting and drawing as a therapeutic way to release tension and communicate their feelings. This strategy is based on a concept used in the UK, where medical practitioners recommend engaging in the arts to improve wellbeing. According to studies, art therapy can help patients receiving medical treatments feel happier, experience less anxiety, and live better lives. Apart from prescribing medications to the cancer patients, this hospital provides art materials to the patients to express their mind through art where no one can sit before them, ask after them, causing uncomfortableness to anyone. They with their own art world is enough to paint their pain, thoughts, dreams out. Incorporating art therapy into cancer treatment gives patients a sense of agency and allows them to express themselves, which promotes healing in general.

### **III. ROLE & IMPORTANCE OF ART IN CURING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD):**

#### **Art Therapy as a Treatment Approach**

In 2018, a study led by Australians was launched to evaluate the efficacy of art therapy in addressing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in veterans and emergency services workers.

David Gillard, a former member of the Royal Australian Air Force, recounted his personal journey, explaining that art therapy helped him "escape [himself] for a few hours and avoid thinking about all the terrible things that he has experienced during his days in Iran," greatly supporting his healing from PTSD. Art therapist Karin Foxwell emphasized that art therapy provides a non-verbal way for people to work through traumatic events, saying, "They don't need to sit before others and speak... they can express themselves through painting, drawing, clay, sand, and various objects or figures. "The results of the study were expected to improve the legitimacy and acceptance of art therapy in Australia, possibly resulting in its wider adoption as a treatment for PTSD.

These are the best examples of how art transform people's life and also the mental being of people.

Art therapy is emerging as a promising complementary treatment for PTSD, addressing symptoms like emotional not being and avoidance that are often resistant to traditional therapies. Research continues to explore its full potential, but the benefits observed so far are significant.



#### IV. KEY BENEFITS OF ART THERAPY FOR PTSD

1. **Physiological Impact:**
  - Creative expression can lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and boost the immune system.
  - It influences neuro-endocrine pathways, improving sleep, emotional regulation, and overall well-being.
2. **Emotional and Mental Health:**
  - Art therapy helps reduce anxiety, depression, and pain.
  - It promotes relaxation, self-awareness, and a sense of accomplishment.
3. **Improved Quality of Life:**
  - Participants often experience a sense of empowerment and purpose, aiding in their overall treatment engagement.
4. **Safe Emotional Outlet:**
  - It provides a space for individuals to process and express emotions authentically without needing to verbalize them outright, which is helpful for those who find talking difficult.
5. **Engaging Both Memory Types:**
  - Trauma affects both verbal and non-verbal memories, and art therapy bridges this gap. Talking while creating art opens pathways for deeper emotional processing.

#### Why Art Therapy Works:

- It creates a non-judgmental and supportive environment.
- Art facilitates the expression of guilt, fear, or anger, often difficult to articulate through words.
- Guided by a trained professional, the process is tailored to unlock the healing benefits of self-expression.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Art, beyond aesthetics and entertainment, is a potent force of healing. As the mind seeks ways to process pain, trauma, and emotional disconnect, art becomes a bridge between silence and speech, chaos and calm, hurt and healing. In both clinical and grassroots settings, art therapy must be acknowledged not just as an alternative method, but as a necessary part of the mental health ecosystem. With minimal resources, maximum reach, and universal accessibility, art truly heals where words may fail.

Finally, according to me, "Nothing Above & Beyond ART."

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