



# The Art Therapy Sourcebook

By Cathy Malchiodi

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Art therapy is a process that helps people of all ages to express and understand feelings, interests, relationships, and self-perceptions through art activities. It has been useful in treating emotional trauma and grief, as a supplement to pain and symptom management, to address psychological distress, and to encourage self-growth and actualization. *The Art Therapy Sourcebook* is a guide for people who want to use art as a way of understanding themselves better. It starts with information on necessary supplies and takes the reader on a journey toward understanding the connection between artistic images and human emotions.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Since our ancestors began drawing on cave walls, humans have intuitively known that expressing emotions through art was healthy. Now, 20,000 years later, Cathy Malchiodi brings us a smart overview of the use of art as a therapeutic tool. In this concise and easy-to-read book, Malchiodi treats the reader to fascinating case studies and valuable pointers in helping us to open up and explore our nature creatively. This book is ideally suited for people beginning to explore art. *Power of Expressing Sourcebook* makes a major contribution to art therapy going mainstream. This is the most accessible and complete art therapy book ever published. It's a great achievement for Cathy Malchiodi and for art therapy. -- *Shaun McNiff, PhD, ATR, HLM. Author, Trust the Process and Art as Medicine*

Throughout history artistic expression has been recognized as a catalyst for healing. Art is an expression of mind and spirit, and cannot be left out of our equation of healing. Cathy Malchiodi's fascinating book shows how modern art therapy is being employed as a potent healthcare intervention. -- *Larry Dossey, MD. Author, Prayer is Good Medicine and Healing Words*

What makes mankind unique is not our ability to reason but our use of symbols. Read this excellent resource and learn to communicate and experience life fully. -- *Bernie Siegel, MD. Author, Prescriptions for Living and Love, Medicine, and Miracles*

#### About the Author

**Cathy Malchiodi, M.A., A.T.R., L.P.A.T., L.P.C.C.**, is a licensed professional art therapist and licensed professional clinical counselor. She is the current editor of *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* and the author of *Breaking the Silence: Art Therapy with Children from Violent Homes*.

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#### Introduction/Preface

The language of visual art -- colors, shapes, lines, and images -- speaks to us in ways which words cannot. Art therapy is a modality which uses the non-verbal language of art for personal growth, insight, and transformation and is a means of bridging what is inside us -- our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions -- with outer realities and life experiences. It is based on the belief that images can help us to understand who we are, communicate feelings, thoughts, and experiences which words cannot, and enhance life through self-expression.

While the field of art therapy is relatively new, the idea that art making can be a form of therapy is very old and one of the most ancient forms of healing. The visual arts -- drawing, painting, and sculpture -- are powerful and effective forms of communication which have been used to convey humanity's collective history, ideas, feelings, dreams, and aspirations. Art has always been used to chronicle and portray a wide range of emotions and experiences, from profound joy to the deepest sorrow, from triumph to trauma. Since our earliest recorded history, art has also served as a means of reparation, rehabilitation, and transformation, and has been used to restore physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being.

In recent years, we have rediscovered the benefits of art making for personal growth, self-expression, transformation, and wellness. Many people have found that art making can be soothing and stress reducing, a

way to transcend troubling circumstances or life's problems. Others have experienced how imagery helps to solve problems, release powerful or distressing emotions, recover from traumatic losses or experiences, or alleviate pain or other physical symptoms. You yourself may already be using art as a form of therapy and may paint, draw, or sculpt for relaxation, gratification, and self-expression.

In response to this recognition that art can help people authentically express themselves, release powerful emotions, transcend trauma, and enhance health and well-being, the field of art therapy has grown and expanded in the last two decades, becoming a recognized form of treatment in health and medicine. Art therapy is based on the idea that the creative process of art making is healing and life enhancing, and that it is an potent form of communication of feelings, thoughts, and experiences. It utilizes the creative process which exists within every individual to promote growth, self-expression, emotional reparation, conflict resolution, and transformation. Through art making as therapy you may find relief from overwhelming emotions, crises, or trauma, discover insights about yourself, achieve an increased sense of well-being, enrich your daily life, or experience personal change. It is a way to make sense of that which is painful, to create personal meaning, to enhance wellness, and to become whole.

This book will provide you with an overview of the field of art therapy and explain power of art making for personal growth, insight, and transformation. It will introduce you to what art therapy is, where it came from, and why it is a powerful way of knowing yourself and an equally powerful way of healing. It will also familiarize you with some of the many ways art making as therapy can help you authentically express yourself, reduce stress, confront and resolve trauma or loss, and enhance your health and well-being.

Because art therapy is an action-oriented, experiential modality for self-exploration and growth, it is important that you experience it not only through reading this book, but also through your own art making. What I have described about art therapy will be more meaningful if you become an active participant in learning about arts healing potential through expressing yourself in simple drawing, painting, and collage exercises presented throughout this book. What I have learned about the therapeutic benefits of art making not only has come from reading about and studying the field of art therapy, but also my own work as an artist. The personal experiences of art making as therapy in my own life have ultimately informed my understanding of its transformative and reparative qualities.

I have also learned from others-- clients, artists, students, and colleagues -- why art is restorative and healing; many of their stories are described throughout this book. In two decades of working as an art therapist with children who have been abused or traumatized, children and adults with serious or life-threatening illnesses, and families experiencing trauma or loss, and teaching thousands of people in art therapy workshops and studios, I have been repeatedly taught about important connections between the creative process of image making and health. These experiences have proven to me that art is a potent and effective means of self-expression available to people of all ages and capabilities, that everyone can benefit from arts ability to repair and restore, and that art making as therapy can play a vital role in health, healing, and wholeness.

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