

ART THERAPY POCKET GUIDE

FAST FACTS

- In addition to being used for treating psychological and medical conditions, art therapy has been shown to produce general benefit by reducing everyday stress and increasing self-esteem and quality of life.
- To heal the invisible wounds of war such as mild and moderate traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorders, the military and VA offer art therapy in many centers such as the National Intrepid Center of Excellence Healing Arts Program.¹

WHAT IS ART THERAPY?

Art therapy is a form of clinical intervention that uses art as the primary mode of expression and communication. The art therapist uses creativity to help achieve personal and treatment-related goals. The patient uses and makes art as a way to convey feelings at that moment or about a particular experience or situation.

When people are experiencing intense, complex or confusing emotions, the use of art in a therapeutic setting can help them manage and communicate their feelings in ways that language cannot always accomplish. You do not have to be good at or an experienced artist to enjoy the benefits of art therapy.

What can I expect to happen during art therapy?

Although art therapists are trained to treat a number of different psychological or emotional issues, some therapists will specialize in certain conditions. Confirm that your therapist is equipped to address your particular concern.

Art therapy can be done in groups or in individual sessions. Before you seek treatment, make sure that you are choosing what you or a trusted healthcare practitioner believes will work best for you.

Is there evidence that art therapy works?

In the last 20 years, as patients increasingly integrate art therapy into their treatment plans, more and more literature is being published exploring and confirming the positive impact of art therapy for treating certain conditions. This includes for:

- Trauma²
- Depression, anxiety and phobias³
- Burnout, fatigue and quality of life for End of Life/Hospice Care Workers⁴
- Physical and psychological symptoms relating to cancer⁵
- Anxiety and quality of life in children with asthma⁶

What conditions does art therapy treat?

Art therapy is used to treat both physical and mental health conditions and address symptoms related to chronic health concerns including:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder/trauma recovery
- Grief/loss treatment
- Addiction recovery
- Depression
- Panic disorder
- Anxiety
- Asthma
- Cancer symptoms
- Neurodegenerative diseases
- Managing undesired behavior

Are there precautions, side effects or safety concerns I should be aware of before I start art therapy?

Art therapy is widely considered a safe way of addressing physical and mental conditions when delivered by a well-trained certified art therapist. Any form of therapy can unearth uncomfortable emotions and may cause you to experience increased levels of psychological discomfort. Reliving traumatic experiences is difficult and if it isn't handled correctly can negatively impact an individual's psychological and/or physical health.

What training/certifications/licensing does an art therapist need on order to practice?

Currently, there isn't a nationally recognized unified set of required guidelines and certifications an individual must obtain to act as an art therapist.

Licensure Guidelines

- Thirty-nine states regulate the licensure of art therapists, and these requirements vary by the state in which the therapist is practicing. Typically, art therapists are licensed as an art therapist, creative art therapist, or professional or mental health counselor. To find out your state's current licensing requirements of art therapists, visit <https://arttherapy.org/state-advocacy/>

Educational Requirements

- To be recognized as an art therapist, an individual must have completed graduate level education in art therapy or in a related counseling or psychological field. The American Art Therapy Association also requires that students have completed certain courses during their graduate program in order to apply for licensure. To find more information on recognized graduate programs and the courses art therapists are required to take, visit <https://arttherapy.org/educational-standards/>

Board Certification and Registration

- Currently, the American Art Therapy Association oversees and certifies the registration of art therapists. In order to be registered, a therapist must have completed a graduate program in art therapy from an accredited university, completed an internship/clinic hours supervised by a professional clinician and pass a nationally recognized exam. To learn more about the certification process, visit <http://www.atcb.org/Public/AboutTheCredentials>

How do I find an art therapist?

The best place to locate a certified art therapist who meets the certification and educational requirements of the American Art Therapy Association is to visit <https://arttherapy.org/art-therapist-locator/>

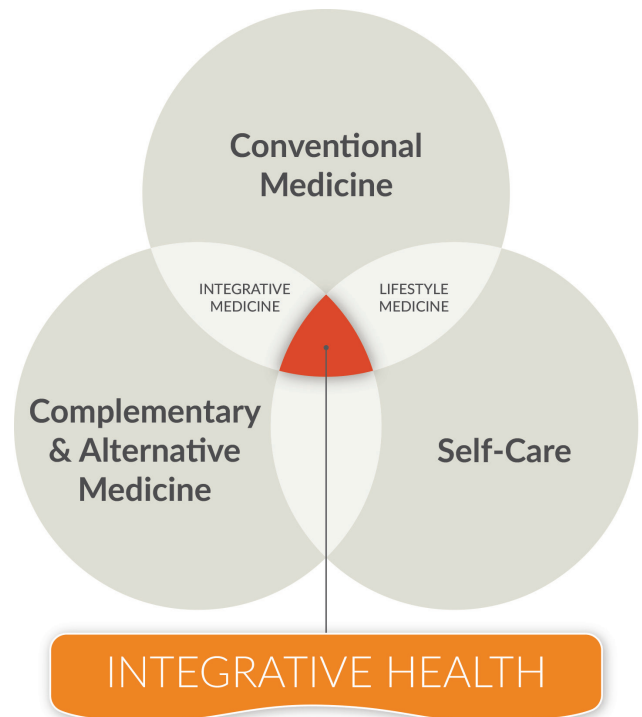
Will my insurance company cover the cost of seeing an art therapist?

A therapist who strictly identifies as an art therapist is most likely not going to be covered under your insurance policy. Whether your insurance company covers your art therapy is mostly dependent on your therapist's training, license and how your state classifies art therapy as a profession (see training/certifications/licensing section).

- Some insurance companies will cover treatment and recognize the services of therapists trained in particular therapeutic interventions that accompany the art therapy such as traditional therapy services.

Should I inform my primary care physician that I am seeing an art therapist?

It is important when deciding to see an art therapist to let your primary care physician and any of your other healthcare providers know that you would like to include art therapy in the tools you are using to address your medical condition or concern.



Endnotes:

- 1 National Intrepid Center of Excellence. *The NICoE Healing Arts Program*. [http://www.nicoe.capmed.mil/Shared%20Documents/Healing%20Arts%20Program\(AEM\)_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL2_2012%2006%2018.pdf](http://www.nicoe.capmed.mil/Shared%20Documents/Healing%20Arts%20Program(AEM)_Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL2_2012%2006%2018.pdf) Accessed October 17, 2017.
- 2 Schouten, K. A., de Niet, G. J., Knipscheer, J. W., Kleber, R. J., & Hutschemaekers, G. J. M. (2014). The Effectiveness of Art Therapy in the Treatment of Traumatized Adults. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 16*(2): pp. 220-228.
- 3 Uttley, L., Scope, A., Stevenson, M., et al. (2015). Systematic review and economic modelling of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of art therapy among people with non-psychotic mental health disorders. Chapter 2, *Clinical effectiveness of art therapy: quantitative systematic review*. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279641/>
- 4 Potash, S. J., HY Ho, A., Chan, F., Wang, X. L., & Cheng, C. (2014). Can art therapy reduce death anxiety and burnout in end-of-life care workers? A quasi-experimental study. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing, 20*(5): pp. 233-240.
- 5 Wood, M. J., Molassiotis, A., & Payne, S. (2011). What research evidence is there for the use of art therapy in the management of symptoms in adults with cancer? A systematic review. *Psycho-oncology, 20*(2): pp. 135-145.
- 6 Beebe, A., Gelfand, E.W., & Bender B. (2010). A randomized trial to test the effectiveness of art therapy for children with asthma. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, 123*(2): pp. 263-266.