

Expressive Art / Occupational Therapy in Residential Facilities

Expressive art therapy is different from the medical model of art therapy, where art is used to analyse and treat people and must be overseen by a certified art therapist. Because of this difference, expressive art therapy is a helpful alternative approach that is focused on the process of creating the work, trying out a range of art materials, and exploring one's feelings in a supportive setting.

We know that art and creative expression promotes self-worth, mental wellbeing, emotional relief, social interaction, sensory stimulation, communication, and confidence. Art engagement also supports the client's family and friends, as well as the healthcare professionals who support them. Even for clients with severe dementia, enjoyment can be derived from the arts, and valuable social and emotional support in palliative care and bereavement can also be provided through the arts.

In health, nursing and other residential facilities, the priority in expressive art therapy should be on a client's skills and strengths, their potential, and their satisfaction in the process. Through this person-centred approach, the expressive art facilitator's role of being empathic, open, honest and caring must be emphasized.

Expressive art therapy is not about perfection or the end result; it is about self-expression, feeling and making meaning of one's experiences in a failure-free environment. At its most fundamental level, expressive art therapy is a meaningful way to spend an afternoon. At its best, it can be a powerful coping tool for clients and for the people in their lives. There are no rules, restrictions, limitations or eligibility criteria.

The process can employ many different art forms, including movement, drawing, painting, music, writing, colouring, collage, and crafting. Storytelling and life-review work (for example River of Life, Family Tree and Constellations exercises) are also forms of creative expression. These approaches are about making connections, sharing memories, and reflecting on personal experiences, while still remaining in the present through active participation.

Your **Life** in the context of the **People** and **Place** around you. For **Young, Old, and Everyone** in between. Bringing together **Past, Present, and Future** or, in other words, **Memories, Opportunities, and Dreams**. Exploring **Connection and Meaning** across **Time**. - SUSAN V. BOSAK, *Legacy Project Founder, 7-Generation Strategist*

Bio

Jenn Warren is an Expressive Arts Facilitator and End of Life Companion passionate about Legacy Projects and Life-Story Work. Using creative approaches such as collage, writing, oral histories, photography, video, and digital arts, Legacy Work is about making connections, sharing memories, reflecting on past experiences, and focusing on life and living.

Jenn is a [StoryCenter](#) digital storytelling facilitator, certified End of Life Companion and Death Doula with [Going with Grace](#), and trained in First Aid Level 2 and Reiki Level 1. She has a Bachelors Degree of Fine Arts in Photography from the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University, and a Masters Degree in Communication for Development from Malmo University, Sweden.

Sources

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