

Ana Maria Arcos - Modality Page - Art Therapy - FINAL

*Writer: Obinna*

*Editor: Carola*

*FKW: Art therapy (14)*

*SKWs: Creative arts therapy (2), therapy for kids (1), child and family counseling (1), therapy for children (1), counseling for children (1), anxiety in children (1), depression in children (1)*

SEO title: Art therapy - Ana Marie Arcos - Brooksville, FL

Meta: Art therapy is a proven method to help children of all ages express themselves fully without judgment and work through their life experiences and challenges.

## What Is Art Therapy for Children?

Art therapy combines art and psychology to help children and adults gain insight into the subconscious mind and develop healthier coping strategies. For children in particular, art therapy can offer an effective non-verbal form of communication through artistic expression when a child might not yet have the language skills to express themselves fully.

Any form of creative expression used to heal can be considered art therapy. Examples include painting, sculpting, coloring, doodling, drawing, computer graphics, and performance art.

Adrian Hill, Margaret Naumburg, and Elinor Ulman are notable pioneers in this field. Art as a tool for healing gained wider acceptance in 1942 when artist Adrian Hill used art to cope with a tuberculosis diagnosis, which he detailed in the book *Art Versus Illness* (1945). Psychologist and educator Margaret Naumburg, considered the “mother of art therapy,” saw art as a tool to help children further develop by unearthing unconscious thoughts and emotions. And Elinor Ulman started the first journal for art therapy in 1961.

Today, this subject is taught in schools and training facilities worldwide and is a proven form of therapy for healing.

## How Does Art Therapy Help Children?

Children as young as 2 and up to 18 years can benefit from art therapy. It can give them a voice and help them work through developmental stages with an outlet to express negative feelings. This therapy can benefit children experiencing peer and family-related challenges, as well as children with health challenges—such as ADHD, autism, Downs Syndrome, anxiety, depression, and neurological and developmental delays. It can also help to address trauma, self-harm, and behavioral issues.

Art therapy can be a welcome alternative to talk therapy because it allows a client to establish trust with a therapist without having to “open up” to an unfamiliar face. Sessions should be conducted by a licensed professional trained in this therapy.

Some of its benefits include:

- **Emotional release:** Therapy offers a healthy outlet for expression, especially with difficult-to-express emotions, such as frustration, hurt, anger, and sadness.
- **Stress relief:** The act of creating something transfers negative energy you may feel into a medium other than one's self, offering a remedy for anxiety or depression in children.
- **Self-discovery/Self-esteem boost:** Therapy helps unearth feelings of your subconscious mind and improve your confidence by accomplishing a task.

Art therapy is also fun! Studies show that creating art releases dopamine, the chemical that is known for making us happy.<sup>1</sup> Dopamine is released whenever we experience pleasure, which can happen when we view or create art we enjoy. As a result, increased levels of dopamine can help clients work through depression or anxiety more easily.

Children do not have to be good artists to benefit from this type of therapy. As humans, we carry an innate ability to create—they can benefit so long as they honestly tap into their emotions.

## How Do Therapy Sessions Work?

In art therapy, a child centers their experiences creatively so that they can make connections with themselves via a safe and non-judgmental artistic medium. An art therapist is trained to interpret meaning within this medium to understand a child's values, feelings, and perceptions—and then help the child to articulate these mini-breakthroughs.

For the first session, I ask that parents meet with me to discuss your child's circumstances and why you want to work with an art therapist. We will also identify which form of artistic expression your child wants to use in sessions. In the second session, your child will begin therapy, which may start with a creative exercise. Sessions are 45-minutes and conducted via the Internet in the comfort of a family's designated space.

If a child is unsure of what kind of creative expression they want to explore, I will prepare an activity box curated to the child's interests based on our initial meeting and mail it to you. The box may include materials for painting, drawing, making music, sketching, and more, to determine which form of art your child responds to best.

During sessions, I will observe what your child is doing or check in with them to see how they feel. Otherwise, sessions are hands-off and require little talking.

Parents play an important role in treatment. In addition to meeting with me in the first session, I also ask parents to be present as needed—for instance, in the event your child has difficulty connecting, you may need to be close by until your child responds to creative arts therapy. I will also share ongoing status checks with you, as well as tips for how to address symptoms through art in day-to-day life with your child.

We want your child to make progress, and art is an excellent way to find the voice that emotional, physical, and mental challenges can sometimes take from them. The first sign of progress is often when a child starts to take initiative in creative expression during

sessions—like initiating a drawing, for example. Another sign of progress may also be a positive change in a child’s behavior at home or school.

Counseling for children is generally short-term and can help a child find a form of expression that they enjoy, have the skill for, and can use to process their emotions in a healthy way. And while we work primarily through your child’s chosen mode of expression, sessions can also integrate play therapy, behavior modification, parent training, or family therapy depending on your child’s specific needs.

## My Background In Creative Arts Therapy

As an art therapist, I understand the importance of helping children lay a foundation for adulthood through accessing their innermost thoughts and feelings—this is how they begin to communicate effectively. I also understand the importance of art to bring healing to emotional, mental, and physical challenges as well. Therefore, I hope to use art therapy to impart healing for young people who are still malleable and willing to explore healthy ways of dealing with life circumstances and experiences.

I have worked in child and family counseling as an art therapist for some 10 years. Before that, I was an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teacher, helping special needs children and teens to express themselves using non-verbal modalities such as art. This experience informs my current work in art therapy as I strive to help children with challenges that include peer pressure, ADHD, autism, behavioral and developmental disorders, and more.

I studied psychology at Florida International University where I earned a bachelor’s degree, followed by a master’s degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. I also recently earned a second master’s degree in Education with a focus on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

One of the most enjoyable aspects of therapy for kids is understanding the unique personality of each child and utilizing my experience and education to help them communicate and heal using artistic expression. It is a blessing to be a conduit for their growth.

## Help Your Child Find Healing Through Art

If you are ready to address the mental, physical, or emotional health needs of your child in a way that lets them tap into their innate ability to create and heal themselves, I invite you to contact me to schedule a free, 15-minute consultation.

-----

1: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4041074/>