



“Therapeutic Interventions for The Support of Those with Alzheimer's Disease.”

ART THERAPY

<https://www.enso-academy.com/therapeuticinterventions>

Patients with dementia including Alzheimer disease commonly experience neuropsychiatric symptoms that diminish their quality of life and pharmacologic treatments for these symptoms are still very limited in their efficacy.

Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence of the progress in the near-term prospects for treating degenerative dementia, and therefore alternative therapies and non-pharmacological interventions are needed to improve neuropsychiatric symptoms and quality of life.

The term art can mean many different things to different people.

In a report published by the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, it was reported that “case studies and small trials suggest that art therapy engages attention, provides pleasure, and improves neuropsychiatric symptoms, social behavior and self-esteem.”

Art therapy was first used in the 1940s to enhance the well-being of tuberculosis patients during their treatment for the disease. It was not until 1969, however, when the AATA was established, that the role of art therapy became widely recognized. In the years 1980-1990, art therapy began to be used in the care of patients with dementia.

In the 21st century, the use of art therapy in dementia patients is slowly increasing, has moved beyond the traditional art forms, expanding to innovative interventions, including art appreciation programs, visual art activities and creation through recollection.

Using the process of creating art as a therapy is possible because Alzheimer's disease generally spares much of the areas of the brain associated with creativity, emotions and creative expression.

Alzheimer's and dementia patient's difficulties like impaired language capabilities or having problems to verbalize thoughts, emotions or feelings, while still retaining basic motor and visual skills, allows a person to express themselves and find comfort through art appreciation and creative activities.



WATERCOLOR

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And what is Art Therapy?

According to the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), art therapy is a mental health profession, facilitated by the art therapist, in which clients use art media, the creative process and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem.

The goal of art therapy is to improve or restore a person's functioning and his or her sense of personal well-being. During an art therapy session, a therapist uses a person's artistic self-expression and their innate ability to create art to enrich and increase their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Art therapy is not a cure and the benefits may not be permanent, but it is useful to improve a patient's quality of life and prevent an increased burden on caregivers.

Benefits of Art Therapy:

- Reduces depression, anxiety and other negative emotions
- Enhances mood and general wellbeing by releasing negative emotions and relaxing
- It enhances social skills and connections with others, and provides a sense of belonging when used in a group setting
- Increased brain stimulation
- Improved memory
- Provides an alternative means of communication, especially important to those with impaired language
- Helps develop and maintain good motor skills and coordination
- Art therapy helps with hand brain interaction
- May improve the flexibility of hands and increase hand-eye coordination when soft and easy to hold art materials are used
- Provides a means of self-expression, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment
- It can help to distract and forget about aches and pains, which in turn reduces agitation
- It can provide a pleasant method of escape from a world that makes less and less sense, and one that is filled with more and more fear and doubt
- Can ease the burden of caregivers, because it helps to decrease patients wandering, calling out for no reason and increase average sleep times from four and a half hours to nearly eight hours.

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Are there any limitations of Art therapy?

Of course as every therapy there are benefits but also some limitations in practising it. Below some of them:

- Requires some hand function and the ability to accomplish simple tasks
- it can be more difficult for people with no prior art skills, which can make it difficult to maintain interest in practising Art therapy
- There are large variations regarding the duration, frequency and period of time required to receive the desired outcome
- Scales used to measure progress need improvement

The benefits of art therapy are often temporary and patients return to previous norms or worse when art therapy has stopped. This indicates that art therapy is most beneficial when used as a regular feature of daily recreational activities.

Examples of Art therapy

Here are some great art therapy suggestions that your loved one is sure to enjoy:

- Painting
- Creative Coloring
- Sculpting
- Simple Crafts
- Clay modelling
- Paper flower making: Through the use of cardboard templates, paper is cut and shaped into flowers.
- Putting together collages: using photos, magazine cutouts, and embellishments.
- Handmade cards.

While more research in art therapy and scales is needed to measure progress to perfection, art therapy can be used to improve the lives of people with dementia and those who care for them, as it can also be used by caregivers.



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Useful tips.

Here are some tips for successful art therapy:

- Keep the project at an adult level. Avoid child-like activities that may feel demeaning to those participating.
- Demonstrate and help guide those participating. Simply helping them get started may give them the confidence they need to be creative independently.
- Be sure materials are safe. Review the paints and materials to ensure they are not toxic or sharp.
- Give those participating plenty of time. Reassure them that their projects do not have to be completed in one sitting

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<https://www.tesserabrandon.com/alzheimers/art-therapy-alzheimers-disease/>

<https://www.heymylo.ie/post/art-therapy-creative-art-activities-for-dementia>