

UNC Chapel School of Social Work  
Clinical Lecture Series

# Expressive Arts for the Present Moment

Hillary Rubesin, PhD, LCMHCS, REAT  
Laurie Selz Campbell, MSW, CPRP



1

## Agenda:

- Intro to presenters & ATI
- Experiential
- Expressive therapy foundations
- Links to mental health practice
- Discussion, Q&A



2

## Art Therapy Institute

<https://www.ncati.org/>

- Local nonprofit, founded in 2006 in Carrboro, NC
- Three pillars of mission: (1) Clinical Work; (2) Education/Training (3) Advocacy/Research
- Current programs: Newcomers, Exception Children, Adult IDD, Arts & Peer Support, Memory Care (& ongoing partnerships with local agencies, including Reintegration Support Network, Boomerang, Families Moving Forward)



3

## Experiential

- An existential, fundamental, or “big” question you’ve been grappling with
- Free writing (words, phrases, journaling)
- A song (or type of music) that matches the feel of what you’ve written: Listen or imagine; begin to move or visualize movement
- Identify feelings & images; create a visual representation
- Breakout groups:
  - Share your artwork & your process as you are comfortable
  - Pick out 3 collective themes from those shared by group members

4

## What are the Expressive Arts?

The expressive arts combine visual arts, movement, drama, music, writing & other creative processes to foster deep personal growth and community development.

The [International Expressive Arts Therapy Association \(IEATA\)](https://www.ieata.org/) encourages an evolving multimodal approach within psychology, organizational development, community arts & education. By integrating the arts processes & allowing one to flow into another, we gain access to our inner resources for healing, clarity, illumination & creativity. <https://www.ieata.org/>

**Poesis:** (Greek) "To make;" important ET principle that all forms of artistic expression (visual art, music, creative writing, dance, psychodrama) come from a common origin.

5



“Art can be said to be  
~and can be used as ~  
the externalized map  
of our interior self.”

~ Peter London

6

## Why & How do Expressive Therapies Work?

Externalizes the internal

Trauma-informed & culturally congruent

- Images & emotions addressed as they are stored in body
- Action-based approach integral to post-traumatic growth
- Universal language; verbal communication unnecessary

De-stigmatizing; familiar media; approachable

Strengths-based & choice-based

Created/transitional objects are reminders of growth

Evokes pride & joy; surprise & new possibilities

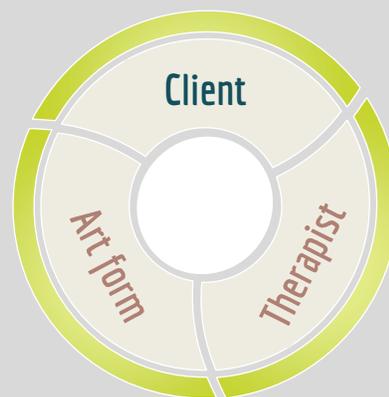


7

## Decentering

Using the art form as a distancing tool

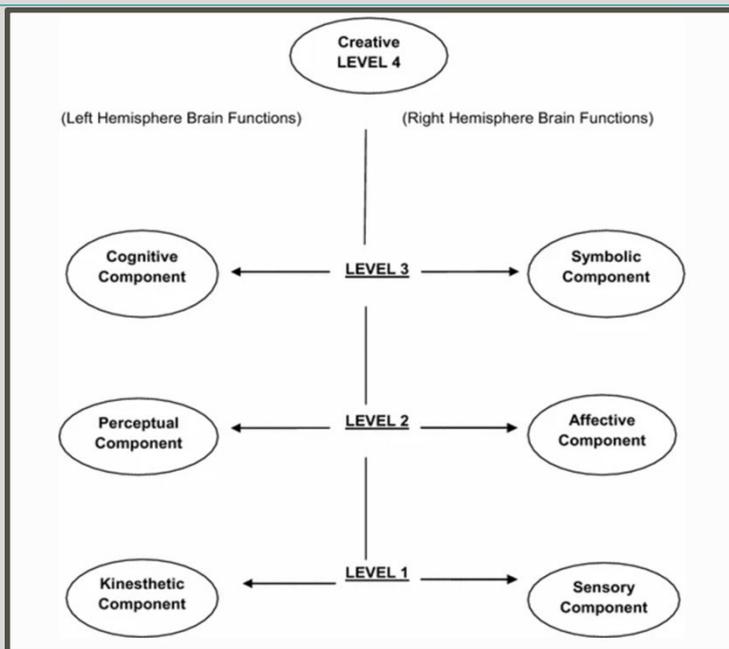
- The art form holds our stories, speaks for us, temporarily removes the story from us, allows us to work on it from a distance.
- Allows client to create meaning of their experiences by seeing the art form as one aspect of self, not a totality
- Expression of inner feelings through outer forms; symbolic speech



8

# Expressive Therapies Continuum

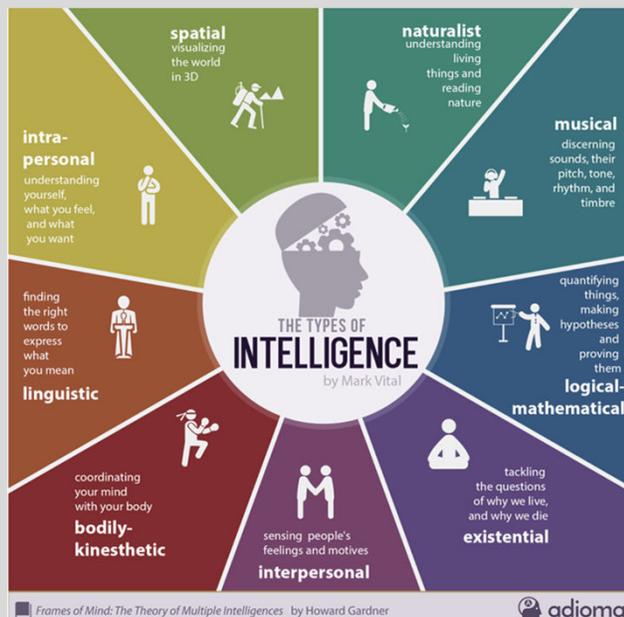
Hinz, L. D. (2009). *Expressive therapies continuum: A framework for using art in therapy*. New York, NY: Routledge.



9

# 9 Types of Intelligence

Source: <https://blog.adioma.com/9-types-of-intelligence-infographic/>

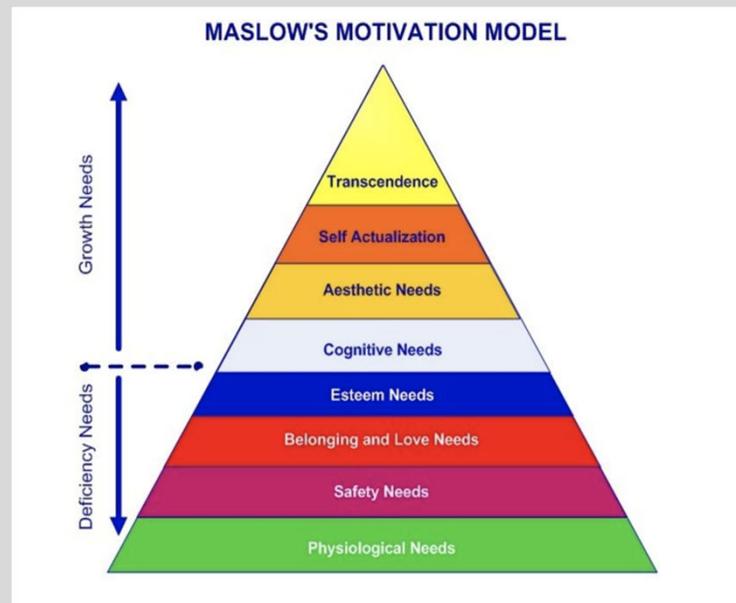


10

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (8-step model)

Source:

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html#needs7>



11

## Why Incorporate the Expressive Arts?

A way to live out the foundational values & ethics of mental health practice

- Dignity & humanity
- Celebration of strengths & potential resilience; meaning-making
- Centrality of the relationship
- Commitment to cultural humility
- Striving for social justice



12

## Art as a Vehicle for Social Justice

- Amplifying voices
- Collective hope, grief, rage, loss
- Envisioning a new reality
- Shifting power
- Articulating shared commitments



13

## Guiding Questions for Incorporating Expressive Arts Into Your Practice

- What are you hoping to focus on or evoke?
  - Building relationship/community
  - Exploring identity/self knowledge
  - Exploring legacy/memory/culture
  - Advocating/elevating voices
  - Self-care/nurturance
- What questions or metaphors might be connected to these, and how might they be "translated" into artistic form?



14

## Some Examples

### Build relationship/community

- What do we each bring to the table? How are we connected? alike? different?
- Poetry, weaving, creation of shared piece composed of individual contributions

### Explore identity/self knowledge

- Which parts of you are seen by others? What is hidden? What do you wish could be seen?
- Poetry, masks, boxes, "shields"

### Become comfortable with the process

- Removing inhibition, judgment
- Doodling, scribbling, drawing with eyes closed



15

## Processing the Arts Experience

Stay close to the art, let it provide insight & ways of understanding

Remember the utmost importance of witnessing



16

## The Aesthetic Analysis

Don't move too quickly to interpretation! Stay with validation of the work itself, the surface & characteristics

- Qualities of the materials & form can be observed. Stay concrete & particular. "It reminds me of..." can also help
- What was tried & worked well? What was attempted & may not have worked as well? What was surprising? What did you expect, & how did that change?

## The Experience of Doing

Compare person's state of mind before & after:

- What happened emotionally? How much presence was possible?
- What was difficult & how did that manifest? What was distracting & how did you overcome it?



17

## Finding the Essence

What does the WORK say? How is it significant?

- If the work could speak, what would it say? What would the client say to the work?
- Ask for a name or title.

## Harvesting

Only done after the aesthetic analysis

- Ask if anything in the work has a connection to where we were before the decentering imaginative process.
- If we ask with OPENNESS, sensitivity & focused attention, then the client will find their own help & clarity.
- Remember the "help" is in the facilitation of the arts process, not in offering "fixes" to a problem.

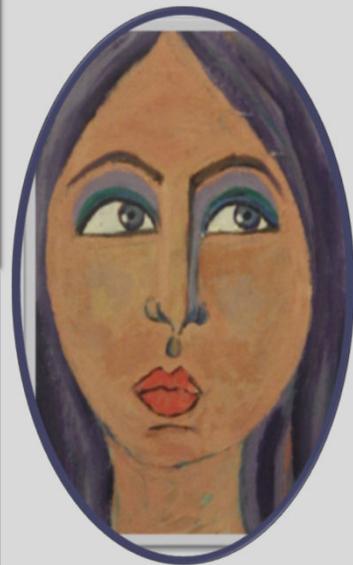


18

And finally, some images...



19



20

...and a  
reminder  
for our  
present  
moment

