

# Art Therapy Myths, **BUSTED**

## **Myth #1:**

Art Therapy is like an art class, where you learn to make art.

**Reality:** Although Art Therapy often results in the creation of art, it is different from an art class in both purpose and result. Art Therapy uses art as a tool for reaching therapeutic goals. The focus of Art Therapy is not to learn to make art or to create beautiful products, but to use the artistic process to facilitate healing and self-awareness.

## **Myth #2:**

Art Therapy is for artists.

**Reality:** Art Therapy does not require any artistic skill or experience. In therapy, we use art as a process to affect change and growth. There are no judgements about the artistic quality of the work, and there is no “right” or “wrong” way to make art in Art Therapy. Unfortunately, many people have been told sometime in their lives that they are bad artists or that they can’t draw. While this may be an important thing to discuss in an art therapy session, it will not impact your ability to participate and benefit from Art Therapy. People with little or no art experience often find Art Therapy freeing and insightful.

## **Myth #3:**

Art Therapy is just for kids or people who can’t communicate

**Reality:** Art Therapy is a useful therapeutic tool for any age. Art is a powerful way to engage kids, teens, adults, and seniors in an expressive and transformative process. Kids are often very receptive to Art Therapy, as they are drawn to the opportunity to be creative and problem solve without words. But while Art Therapy can be a powerful way to work with people who find verbal communication difficult or impossible, it is not limited to those populations. In fact, verbal processing of the Art Therapy experience can be an important part of the process. Art Therapists are skilled in adapting the therapeutic process to whatever age, needs, and abilities the client brings.

## **Myth #4:**

Art Therapists know what you are thinking by looking at your artwork

**Reality:** No one can know what you are thinking by looking at something you drew or created. An Art Therapist works together with you to understand and derive meaning from the symbols and images created. Art Therapy often combines visual and verbal techniques. There may be multiple ways to interpret artwork, and an Art Therapist will bring up ideas to consider, rather than tell you what you think. It is the job of an Art Therapist to be a respectful and supportive partner in therapy, not a detective uncovering your dark secrets.

## **Myth #5 :**

Anyone can call themselves an Art Therapist because it isn't a real type of therapy.

**Reality:** Art therapy programs are nationally accredited, and Art Therapists have advanced training in psychotherapy, art processes, and therapeutic practice. Art Therapy has been an established profession since the 1940s, and training and practice are guided by professional associations and standards. There is a growing body of research to support the practice of Art Therapy, which is used around the world to help people who are experiencing depression, relationship issues, anxiety, spiritual distress, transitional issues, or other mental health challenges.

In New York, Art Therapists maintain their License in Creative Arts Therapy (LCAT), along with their national registration (ATR) and board certification (BC) through mandated continuing education in art therapy and other related mental health fields.