

# ART THERAPY

## What is art therapy and creative arts therapies?

Art therapy is based on the idea that art and creativity can improve wellbeing. Art therapists have been trained to work therapeutically with diverse visual arts medium's including, painting, drawing, sculpture, 3D construction, weaving and mixed media. Best practice as an art therapist, is to be informed by the interests, cultural relevance and therapeutic goals of the client or group.

## What are the benefits

Art therapy provides opportunities for creativity, self-expression, reflection, self-awareness, relaxation, enjoyment and personal discovery. It nourishes a greater sense of self and wellbeing. Art therapy provides an alternative avenue for communication through visual, participatory non-verbal means and the use of symbolism. The use of metaphor and imagery in art therapy can help create a feeling of greater safety by distancing the client from their trauma or personal stories.

Involvement in art therapy can help develop new interests and be harnessed for ongoing personal support. It can be beneficial for individuals coping with mental health, physical pain or disability, through engagement with sensory art materials and focusing on ongoing creative projects.

### Other benefits

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Brings new perspectives into view                                          | Emotion regulation                   |
| Enriching experiences                                                      | Inspiration and motivation           |
| Learning to share feelings                                                 | Lifelong learning                    |
| Mindfulness                                                                | Resilience and problem-solving       |
| Testing out new behaviours and trying new activities in a safe environment | Understanding different perspectives |

## Who can benefit?

Art therapy can support people experiencing a variety of challenges that in some way affect their sense of wellbeing. It can be used with individuals or in groups to provide opportunities for community connectedness, learning social skills, positive relationship-building and increased experiences of safety in a supported environment.

Many research studies\* show the benefits and effectiveness of art therapy in areas such as:

- Mental health, depression and anxiety
- Trauma or Post-Traumatic stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Coping with physical illness
- Chronic mental illness
- Grief and loss
- General wellbeing
- Quality of life

## Art therapy at RFQ

Art therapy at RFQ is person-centred and recovery-oriented in alignment with RFQ values and support services. The art therapist works collaboratively with individuals and / or groups to address relevant issues and goals using diverse creative art forms and therapeutic approaches that are inclusive, flexible, inspiring, enjoyable and motivational. No prior art experience is necessary. Clients are supported by a trained art therapist to develop new skills, work with a variety of art materials and develop creative project ideas. Feedback and re-evaluation of approaches and goals are gathered regularly throughout each client's engagement with art therapy.

\* Edwards, C., O'Brien, T., & King, R., (2015). Visual Art: Principles and Evidence Base for Art Therapy, In, Creative Arts in Counseling and Mental Health, (Eds). Neilsen, P., King, R., & Baker, F. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

## Common myths

### Myth 1 – ‘Artistic people’ are best suited to art therapy

Art therapy is not about knowledge and art ability. It is an approach that sees creativity and imagination as valuable human traits for developing self-understanding and new ways of living.

### Myth 2 – Artwork created in an art therapy session is interpreted by the art therapist

In an art therapy session the therapist will take time to ask the person about their artwork and may offer their own observations for contemplation. Each client brings with them different personal experiences and cultural backgrounds, and key insights into their own story. The client and therapist collaboratively reflect on artwork created and the experience of making it. It is a process that aims to support a person to discover their own meaning and empower the realisation of many possibilities.

## Professional standards for art therapists

Art therapists are trained allied health professionals with a minimum master's level qualification in an art therapy program, and expertise in the visual arts. ANZACATA is the regulating body in Australia, for more information: <https://anzacata.wildapricot.org>

## About RFQ

Richmond Fellowship Queensland (RFQ) is a well-respected not for profit company and leading provider of psychosocial mental health services, serving the Queensland community for over 40 years.

Today, RFQ provides a diversity of evidence based psychosocial recovery and allied health services. From working in acute mental health wards and correctional facilities and supporting discharge and release pathways, to keeping people healthy in the community, including through therapeutic supports, RFQ's vision captures the passion and conviction of our work:

*A future recovered for people facing mental health challenges and social disadvantage.*

This statement of hope is also captured in RFQ's branding name, Recovered Futures. Our RFQ community inspires and reassures people in recovery that there is hope and a future.

## Contacts

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*Recovered Futures – Mental Health Recovery and Wellbeing*