
Using Art-Based Interventions in Therapy

— Simple directives for every
clinician & client —

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What is Art Therapy??

What is Art Therapy?

According to the American Art Therapy Association, art therapy is a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the art therapist, 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
- ★ increase self-esteem.

A goal in art therapy is to improve or restore a client's functioning and his or her sense of personal well-being. Art therapy practice requires knowledge of visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms) and the creative process, as well as of human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.

Product vs. Process

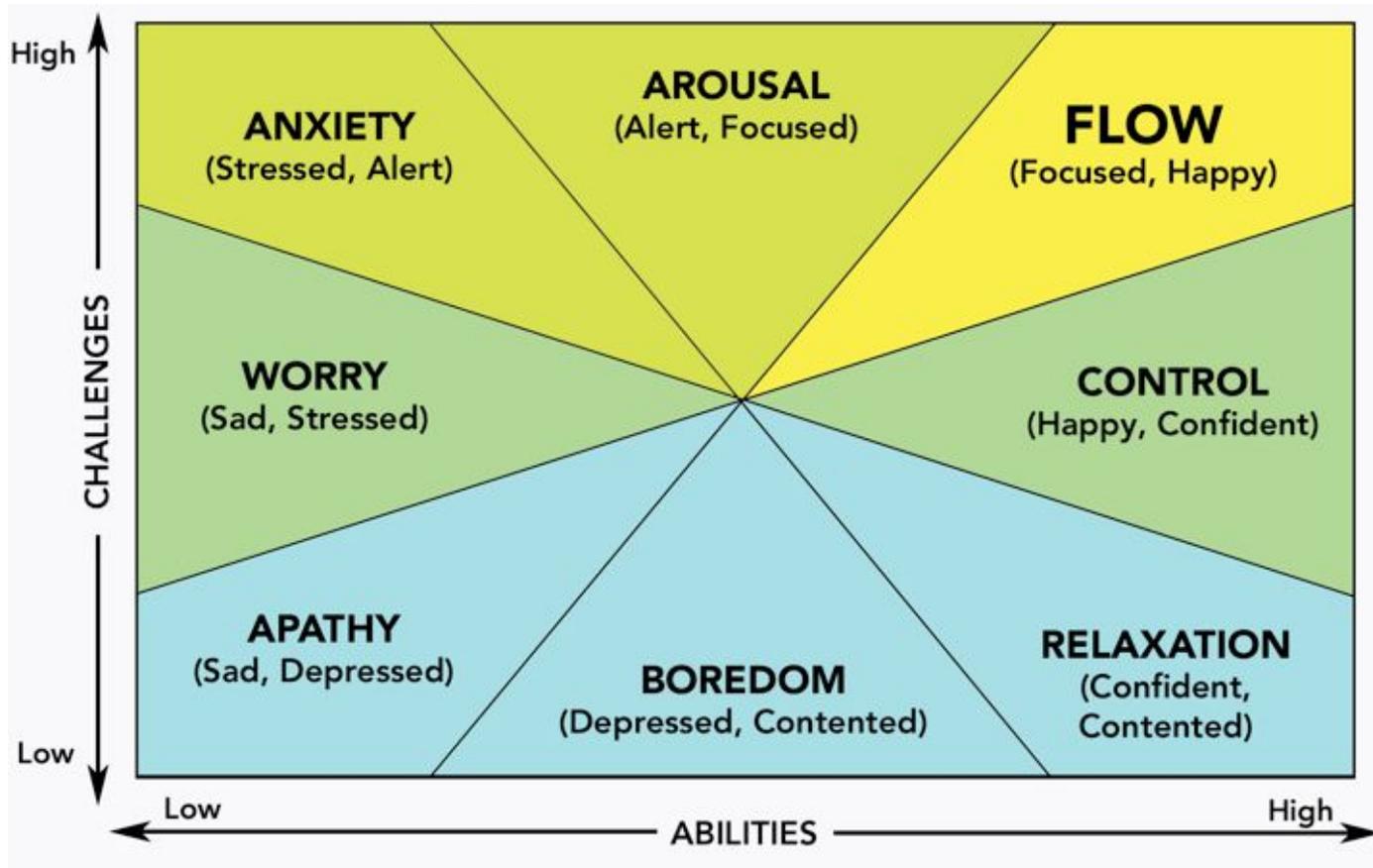
Product

- ★ Looking at the end result/output
- ★ Important for reflection and “looking” at the art
- ★ Overly focusing on the product can negate the process

Flow = state of optimal attention and immersion usually accessed through creativity (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi)

- ★ noted that the act of creating seemed at times more important than the finished work itself
- ★ It's good for our well being
- ★ Can cause upward spiral of happiness

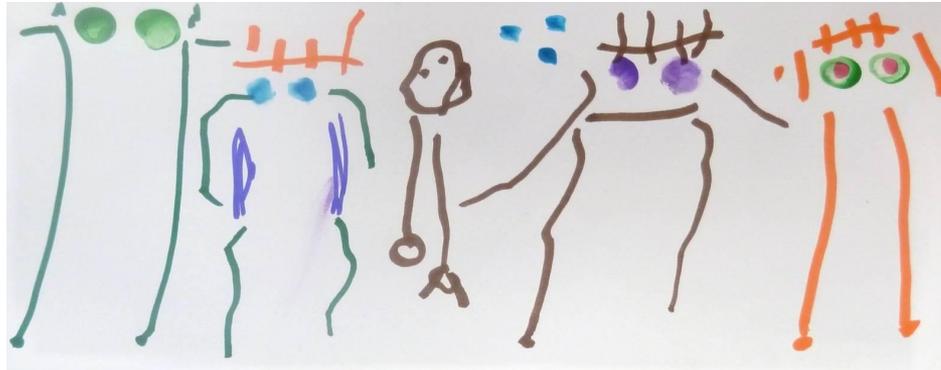
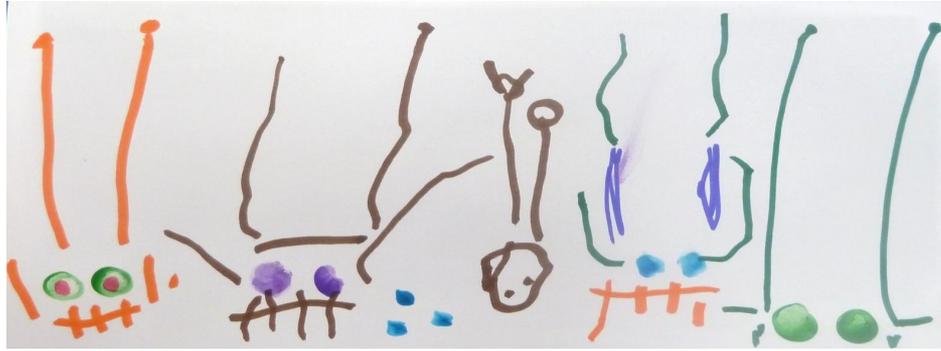
- ★ Both the process & the product can be used to:
 - Assess developmental level,
 - Assess & observe family roles and communication patterns,
 - Help build attunement,
 - Provide family members w/ leadership opportunities,
 - Provide problem-solving tasks



Product = Visual record of treatment...



Process is....



Choosing art materials...

- ★ It's important to know about the art materials that you are introducing to your client & to have worked with them yourself.**

You want to know:

- ★ How easy the material is to:
 - manipulate,
 - use,
 - erase,
- ★ What is possible AND what is not possible
- ★ What's safe for your client's age/developmental level
- ★ What are your goals – self-expression vs. challenging child to problem solve
- ★ Take time to think about choice to provide special materials or empower found materials...

Structured vs. Unstructured

Structured Materials

- more easily controlled, rigid, fixed...

Color pencils, markers, crayons, boxes, collage images, rulers, stencils, coloring books, copy machine, pipe cleaners, beads, acrylic paints

Unstructured Materials

- more difficult to control, loose, flexible

Oil Paints, clay, watercolors, finger paint, glue, loose glitter, etc

Materials that can go either way...

tissue paper, oil pastels...any material can be manipulated to move up or down on scale of structured to unstructured.

Tiptoe into the Art...

- ★ A starter scribble
- ★ A mandala - an outline
- ★ A theme
- ★ Medium / materials {
- ★ A dream
- ★ A mask
- ★ A poem
- ★ A story
- ★ A superhero

- Sharpies
- Translucent film
- Duck tape
- Scents
- Setting
- Tissue paper

A few safety considerations

- ★ Follow the client's lead and pay special attention to bodily cues
 - externalizing/internalizing stress responses
 - trauma triggers
 -
- ★ Identify and utilize materials that the client finds soothing
 - different for each client - don't make assumptions
 - can be used to modulate trauma processing
 -
- ★ AVOID saying things like:
 - That's so pretty/beautiful
 - How nice
 - What is that?
- ★ Materials; scissors, sharp pencils, tacks, glass jars, buttons (especially w/ 0-5 pop)

- ★ Collage images: some images may trigger clients
- ★ Finger paint/boxes- some mediums also trigger clients

Ex: first DTI group

EX: Collage images @ PH

Directive #1: Verbal Joint Drawing

- ★ Requires a Pair: CG/Child, Provider/Child, Siblings, Parents
- ★
- ★ Each choose a different color (crayon, marker, pens)
 - ****TIP**** write color choices on back of paper
 - Ex. Mom=green, child=red
- ★ Provide a medium/large piece of paper

- ★ Instruct them to:
 - Draw together on the same sheet of paper
 - Let them know that they can talk if they want to
 - They will be given 5 minutes (can vary depending on session length and agenda)

Directive #2: Nonverbal Joint Drawing

- ★ Requires a Pair: CG/Child, Provider/Child, Siblings, Parents
- ★
- ★ Each choose a different color (crayon, marker, pens)
- ★
- ★ Provide a medium/large piece of paper
- ★
- ★ Instruct them to:
 - Draw together on the same sheet of paper
 - Let them know that they are not allowed to talk
 - They will be given 5 minutes (can vary depending on session length and agenda)

Let's take a look at Process in action

Process = affect, willingness, behavior, pace, movement through, and attachment to the artwork

- What was the quality of the relationship?
- Who was the first to make a mark?
- When they could talk, did they do so effectively? What challenges did they have?
- When they couldn't talk, what other forms of communication did you observe? What challenges did they have?
- Were family roles observable?

Let's take a look at the Product

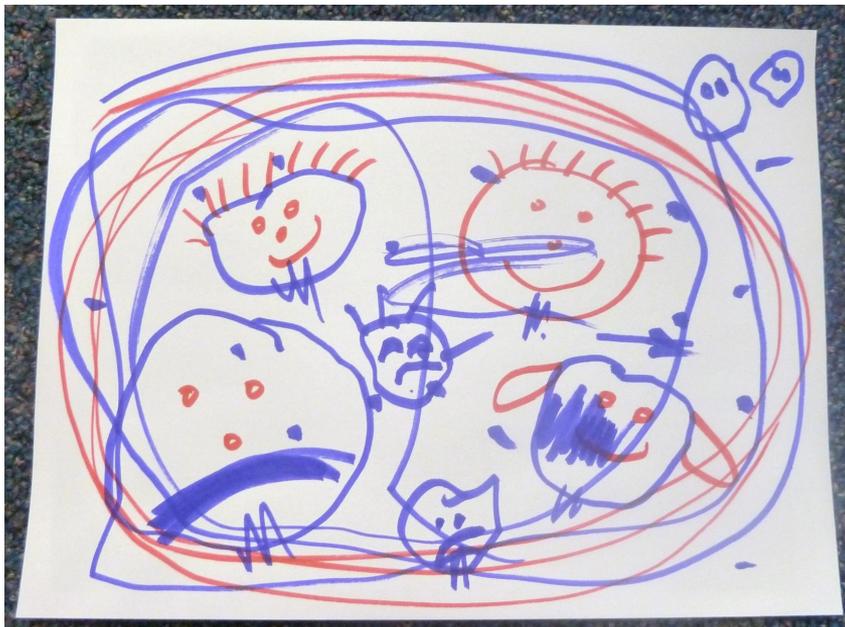
Form (Line quality, color, media, placement)

Content (Themes - current & over time, always clarify, especially with kids, the meaning they ascribe to the images)

- What images were created?
- What do they have to say about the images
- What does the clients say about the artwork?
- What memories does it bring up?
- What do they/you see?
- Does the picture have a story to go with it?
- How do the images relate to each other
- If you were in that picture, who/where would you be?....
 - Remember: Images are not concrete; they are ambiguous and subject to change—they have a life of their own.

Anne Marie & Mom:

Verbal Joint Drawing



Nonverbal Joint Drawing



Directive #3: 3D Mural

- ★ 3D Mural
 - Build an island
 - Build a garden
 - Build a town
 - Build a zoo
- ★ Making costumes
- ★ Body outlines
- ★ Paper mache - Pinata example
- ★ Self- symbols
- ★ Animal-collage genograms
- ★ Popsicle-stick puppets

3D Mural exploration

- Gathering information.
- Even when the child may be too young to grasp the concept, the caregiver's process will provide valuable information:
 -
 - Do they involve the client by assigning age-appropriate tasks?
 - Are they able to make meaning of the art process?
- The art can serve as a way of bringing the caregiver to a more active role in client's treatment
- ★ Prompt family by engaging in conversation about:
 - Who starts/initiates action
 - Who is passive
 - Who takes up the most space/least
 - Who makes decisions
 - How one person responds to another's creations
 - Theme & content
 - Communication patterns

