

## Therapy and Art



Therapy and art - can the two be combined to elicit favourable changes within a person?

Some stand steadfast and maintain that the two are entirely different things and believe that while therapy can help people to process thoughts, feelings, emotions and physical discomfort; there is no way that art can be used as a medium to

provoke these responses and therefore art, used as a tool in therapy, seems a bit pointless and ineffective.

It is often commonly misconceived that art is for those who have a talent for aesthetically pleasing self-expression, you often hear people claiming that they can't draw, they're not creative etc. However when we put our egos aside and recognise that art is a raw, basic and fulfilling form of self-expression, and that the act of creating something (whether aesthetically pleasing or not) provokes an energy flow within the self, it becomes apparent that there is more to creating art than meets the eye (pun wholeheartedly intended).

The flow of energy is an essential component to processing any discomfort, whether mental and emotional, or physical and this is where I see art as being a useful tool in any therapist's tool box. Where words fail a person, where the body needs movement to process, art can bridge the gap. Art is an external expression of inner reflection. The medium of art can help us to move deeper within ourselves, un-burying past difficulties whilst all the time maintaining the energy flow that facilitates our cleansing and healing.

Traditional Art Therapy is a form of psychotherapy and the British Association of Art Therapists describes it like this:

*'Art Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication.'*

*Clients who are referred to an art therapist need not have previous experience or skill in art, the art therapist is not primarily concerned with making an aesthetic or diagnostic assessment of the client's image. The overall aim of its practitioners is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment.'*

However art is finding its way into other therapeutic disciplines which do not have a formalised link with using art as a medium for therapeutic processing, and I firmly believe that the results of combining different therapies with art are beneficial.

I have organised (in my guise as Director of Physis Health & Wellbeing) a workshop with local healer and artist Emma Fotherby.

These extraordinary workshops combine group healing and meditation sessions with therapeutic self-expression and the results are quite spectacular and liberating for all taking part. Emma has agreed to run her workshops at Physis on a monthly basis. To find out more visit the Physis website <http://www.physishealth.co.uk/GroupsEvents.html>