



FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Benefits of Art Therapy for Children with Autism

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Art is a natural way for all children to explore and express themselves. Through drawing, painting, and

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According to the [American Art Therapy Association](https://arttherapy.org/about-art-therapy/) (<https://arttherapy.org/about-art-therapy/>):

“Art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.

Art therapists are master-level clinicians who work with people of all ages across a broad spectrum of practice. Guided by ethical standards and scope of practice, their education and supervised training prepares them for culturally proficient work with diverse populations in a variety of settings. Honoring individuals’ values and beliefs, art therapists work with people who are challenged with medical and mental health problems, as well as individuals seeking emotional, creative, and spiritual growth.”

Through a combination of ABA therapy and art therapy, they can experience self-expression, develop and

Photo:

Planning,
Control,
And
Coordination
July 10, 2021
- 11:22 am



Six
Developer
Benefits of
Sensory
Bins
June 29,
2021 - 12:51
pm



Five
Benefits Of
Speech
And
Language
Pathology
June 8, 2021
- 10:12 am



Three
Benefits Of
Art Therapy
May 17, 2021
- 1:46 pm





Understanding Autism

Autism spectrum disorder, or ASD

<https://blossombehavioral.org/2020/10/22/understanding-the-link-mindfulness-and-autism/>, is generally diagnosed by age three and is typically characterized by:

- Difficulties in verbal and nonverbal communication
- Social deficits
- Repetitive behaviors
- Intellectual delays
- Physical health concerns
- Issues with motor coordination
- Lack of attention and self-regulation

Children with autism tend to have trouble adjusting to change and do better with routines and familiar environments. Difficulties with various behavioral and sensory issues are also common characteristics.

Seeking Treatment Through Art Therapy

Implementing art therapy offers an array of possibilities for children with autism. Art provides a way to help

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- Enhance visual skills
- Define fine motor skills
- Encourage social skills
- Improve behavioral issues through integrating ABA therapy
- Develop sensory integration
- Decrease off-task behaviors
- Increase learning opportunities

Assessing Your Child Through Art

Art therapy can offer a wide variety of assessment opportunities in a relaxed and engaging environment. Your child can be observed improving fine motor skills while enhancing their ability to focus and improve their sensory processing. Cognitive development and behavior are also areas of assessment easily seen through art therapy. It offers an environment that is less over-stimulating than other activities and provides routine, structure, responsibility, and less distraction.

Strengthening Positive Behaviors Through Art

Art therapy offers children with autism a fantastic way to improve their behavior skills. Studies have shown that children with autism exhibit fewer behavioral problems after engaging in artistic activities, mainly





their cognitive development while helping to build and strengthen their visual-spatial skills.

When Art Therapy Meets ABA Therapy

Through the use of [ABA therapy](https://blossombehavioral.org/2019/08/20/aba-therapy-101/), <https://blossombehavioral.org/2019/08/20/aba-therapy-101/> our highly trained team works with children to learn to replace undesirable behaviors with preferred behaviors. By incorporating the family through education and hands-on training during their sessions, it helps them thrive in all of their natural environments.

[Art therapy](https://www.myautism.org/benefits-art-therapy/) <https://www.myautism.org/benefits-art-therapy/> and its practices offer an antecedent- based intervention, or ABI, for children with autism. Much like ABA therapy practices, ABI offers an evidence-based





Aside from ABA therapy, the introduction of art therapy to enhance the development of social skills in children with autism has been used as a successful alternative. Cooper and Widdows (2004) proposed that children with ASD, who tend to be more visual and concrete learners, can better communicate their feelings, emotions, and wants through art-based activities that seem to match their learning styles. In fact, they pointed out that it is easier to engage children with ASD in various art activities because they are allowed the chance to:

- Feel more comfortable expressing themselves through art
- Feel more accepted by their peers
- Reduce stress and anxiety by focusing on creativity rather than verbal communication

Success in Art Therapy: One-on-One Sessions

While additional studies are ongoing, and a variety of variables still need to be introduced, art intervention studies are continually giving us insight into how it is helping children with autism make great strides in many areas.

In one study, researchers Evans and Dubowski (2001) examined the effects that art therapy offered a seven-year-old boy with autism. In total, twenty-seven art sessions, lasting thirty minutes each, were provided over two years. During these weekly sessions, his art sessions involved:





The study showed an increase in the child's attention span and an enhanced ability to follow the therapist's instructions. Towards the end of their two year period, the child began predicting the sequence of events during many sessions.

A separate study by Emery (2004) introduced art therapy intervention for seven months with a six-year-old boy with autism. The results were remarkable. By the middle of their seven months of sessions, he was already displaying considerable conversation skills. He began engaging with the researcher in a far less mechanical voice. It was also noted that his paintings became more concrete and showed his home and school life. He began engaging more in various tasks in his environments and even started making jokes.

Success in Art Therapy: Group Sessions

Group sessions, even as small as two students, have shown promising strides as well. Adding a social component into their sessions fosters interaction, and improves self-esteem. Improvements have been noted in areas of:

- Eye contact
- Verbal skills
- Social skills
- On-task behaviors
- Focus

It's important to note that social success can not wholly be contributed to group art sessions. While it presents ample opportunity, social and verbal skills must also be an area of focus during their meetings with routine





dedicated to providing your child and family with the tools you need to succeed. We invite you to explore the various [therapies and programs](#) <https://blossombehavioral.org/2019/08/15/10-beneficial-therapies-services-for-children-with-autism/> we provide for all your family's needs.

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