

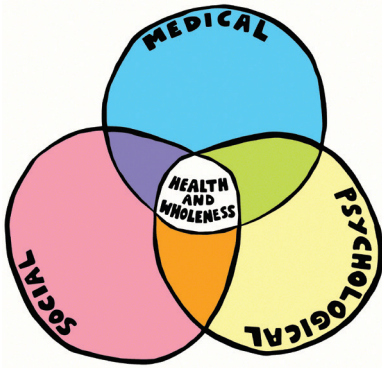
Introduction

“Wholeness invokes balance.”

M. J. Ryan

Throughout my career, I have facilitated art making with people of all ages and abilities as a means of communication, expression, and rehabilitation.

After working for many years as an art therapist developing art therapy programs in hospitals for psychiatric, pediatric, rehabilitation, and medical units, my focus shifted to a special education context. I welcomed this change from a medical model to a psycho-social model that viewed students as artists, emphasizing their strengths and focusing on the whole child. This is important as there are students in your classroom who are experiencing hidden pressures, stressors, and trauma who can benefit from such a model.



After working in this special education setting for almost 12 years, I returned to graduate school once again, this time in Art Education. While supervising pre-service art educators in their student teaching placements I noticed that the cooperating teachers were expected to support students in ways similar to how I did as an art therapist in hospitals and as a school art therapist in special education contexts. Also, the more time I spent in urban schools, the more troubled I became about the impact of trauma on students and their art teachers. Working with students who have experienced adversity and trauma can be taxing for an experienced art therapist; for an art teacher with so many students to attend to, and who lacks training in this area, it poses even more of a challenge. The intention of this book is to offer therapeutic art strategies to help support and enhance your art teaching practice. It will not make you an art therapist, as that takes years of study and practice, but it will help you gain a better understanding of art therapy and how to support all of your students in thoughtful, holistic ways.

Therapeutic Approaches in Art Education translates this information into a practical guide for those who wish to support therapeutic art making in their practice. It provides trauma-informed approaches that can be applied to a typical classroom setting—urban, rural or suburban—and addresses those working with marginalized populations. Throughout, I have used vignettes and stories for illustration purposes. For confidentiality, all names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Each chapter has been designed with sidebars that help readers reference salient information such as quotes, interesting facts, and resources. The Reflect and Notice sidebars and questions help readers, individually or with a group of colleagues, apply the information within each chapter to their own situations. The Appendix includes a PLAYbook that is chock-full of reproducible play sheets that address many topics ranging from mindfulness to stress and relaxation.

Chapter 1 provides a foundation of understanding about trauma and how it impacts learning including the neurobiology of trauma, traumatic grief, toxic stress, post-traumatic stress, children’s psychological/behavioral reactions to trauma, and what that would look like in children ranging from elementary through high school.

Chapter 2 focuses on how a therapeutic approach can aid teachers with the particular demands and challenges of urban art education.

Chapter 3 covers trauma-informed approaches, characteristics, principles and models that can be applied to art education. It also discusses why art is effective with students who have had adverse childhood experiences.

Chapter 4 looks at art education's historical influence on art therapy, some of the commonalities and differences between Therapeutic Art Education and School Art Therapy.

Chapter 5 discusses the curricular framework and creative arts curricular resources.

Chapter 6 thoughtfully considers the art experiences PLAYbook. Much like a playbook in theater, which has a collection of plays, or a notebook in sports that has a collection of strategies or plays, the PLAYbook includes usable materials and examples.

Often teachers forget about self-care, therefore the book ends in Chapter 7 thinking about how to use art for self-care and offers suggestions for what teachers can do after experiencing a traumatic event.

My hope is that this book provides you with curricular resources and the confidence to support your students' health and wholeness through art.