



Penny Brohn UK
Living Well with Cancer

Therapies

Acupuncture | **Art Therapy** | Counselling | Healing
Imagery | Massage | Meditation and Mindfulness
Music Therapy | Nordic Walking | Physical Activity
Qigong | Reflexology | Relaxation | Shiatsu | Yoga



Art Therapy is a combination of art-making and psychological therapy. Art therapy aims to help people reflect on their thoughts and feelings. You do not need to be good at art to benefit from art therapy.

For people with cancer, research has shown that art therapy may be beneficial for coping, quality of life, anxiety and depression.

Art therapy is considered safe and Penny Brohn UK supports art therapy for people with cancer.

Information on art therapy

This evidence-based information sheet aims to provide clearly sourced and reliable information to help you make informed choices about art therapy, one of a range of complementary therapies available to support people with cancer.

What do people who have tried art therapy say about it?

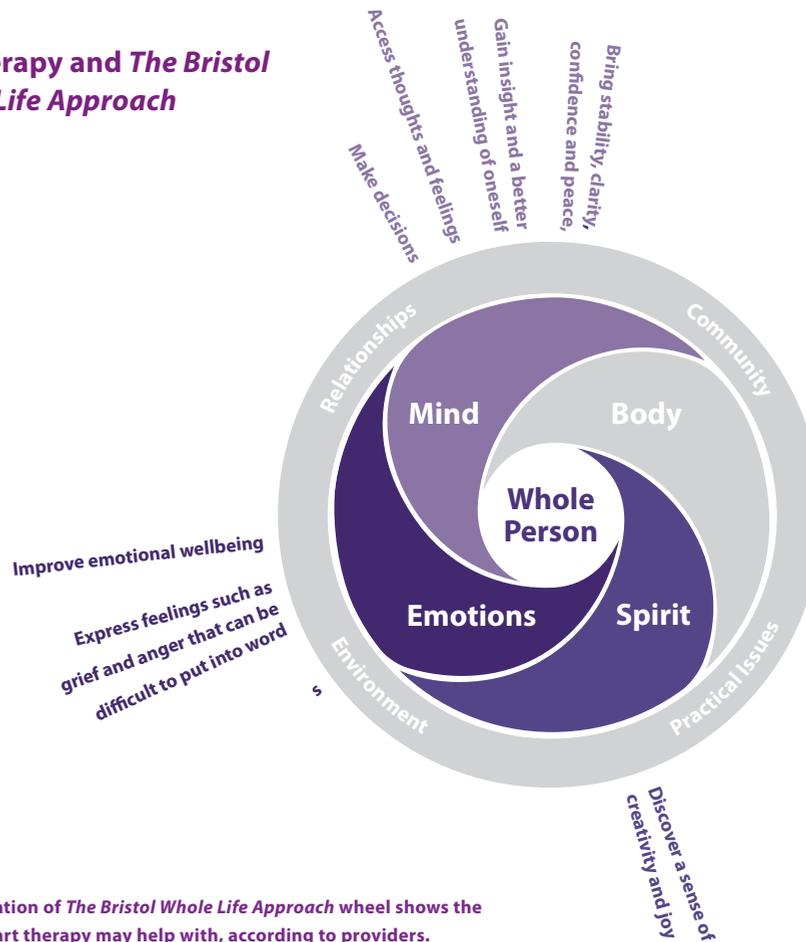
Research studies known as qualitative studies ask people about their experiences. They can provide information from a personal perspective, but can't tell us if a therapy is likely to work for everyone.

Qualitative research shows people with cancer report benefits, including providing a distraction and improvements in pain and anxiety.

People with cancer using art therapy say they:

- Experience less pain and anxiety.
- Benefit from the distraction.

Art Therapy and The Bristol Whole Life Approach



This adaptation of The Bristol Whole Life Approach wheel shows the areas that art therapy may help with, according to providers.

(Please note that these are not the claims of Penny Brohn UK.)

What happens in an art therapy session?

- Art therapy can take place in groups or individually with an art therapist. It may be offered as a one-off or on a regular basis.
- During the session, the therapist may provide many different art materials to use. For example pencils, paints and pastels may be offered, magazines may be provided for collage or clay and other materials may be used for sculpture.
- Some therapists follow a structure and will give a theme to focus on for the session. Others may choose to let clients decide on their own focus. Some

therapists may offer inspiration to help their clients get started. Their job is not to teach artistic skills, but to help their clients to explore and express aspects of themselves or their life situation that may be difficult to express in words.

- Towards the end of the session, art therapists will usually give clients the chance to discuss their finished piece of work and what it means to them. This includes anything they want to share about the thoughts and feelings they had whilst making it.

More about art therapy

Art goes back as far as human history. Some people say that, like speech and tool-making, it is what makes us different from animals. Modern art therapy is a mixture of art and psychology. It is a creative way of exploring, expressing and communicating thoughts and feelings. For some, this can be easier than putting things into words and can be a way of bringing about new understanding and decisions. The focus is not on artistic quality but on what comes out of the process of art-making.

Art therapy started in the 1920s and 30s, where psychiatrists looked at their clients' artwork to gain a better understanding of their state of mind. From the 1940s through to the 1970s, art therapy was influenced by ideas from psychology and psychotherapy. A key figure at this time was Margaret Naumburg, who developed the use of art therapy in psychoanalysis. Another key therapist, Edith Kramer, saw that the process of making art was therapeutic in its own right, with no need for analysis. These two different approaches still exist today.

Art therapy is now offered widely to children, adults, families and groups to support in areas such as cancer, bereavement and addiction.

Is art therapy safe?

Art therapy has no reported serious side-effects. Art therapy is considered safe.

Are there any legal issues?

All art therapists practising in the UK are now registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Only professionally trained art therapists are legally able to practise art therapy.

What is the evidence on art therapy?

Recent research has demonstrated that art therapy may be beneficial for psychological outcomes including depression, anxiety, coping and quality of life.

A full list of references and an extended summary of the research literature is available upon request from our Helpline.

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Statement

Our information and research is designed to help you make informed choices about the services that we provide. From time to time, for illustrative purposes, we may make reference to commonly available products (such as relaxation CDs and popular self-help books). We do not endorse or advertise the use of any specific product.

Disclaimer:

While we make every effort to use up-to-date and reliable sources, we cannot accept liability for errors in the sources that we use and also cannot guarantee to find all the information relevant to your enquiry or request. All responsibility for interpretation of and action upon that information rests with you. This information and advice is offered on the understanding that if you intend to support your treatment with complementary or alternative approaches, then it is advisable to consult your medical team to ensure that they have a complete understanding of your situation and the complementary or alternative approach that you are considering.

Organisations that offer support and information for people with cancer

Cancer Research UK Tel: 0808 800 4040
www.cancerresearchuk.org

Macmillan Cancer Support Tel: 0808 808 0000
www.macmillan.org.uk

NHS 111 Tel: 111
www.nhs.uk

More information on complementary therapies

NHS Evidence www.evidence.nhs.uk
CAM Cancer www.cam-cancer.org/CAM-Summaries

Organisations that represent art therapy

The British Association of Art Therapists

Tel: 020 7686 4216
www.baat.org

Health and Care Professions Council
www.hpc-uk.org