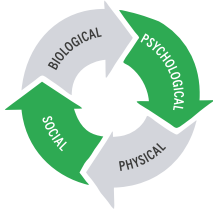


Art therapies



The main focus of this treatment is on psychological factors, as well as social factors when it's offered in a group.



Remember one thumbs up means that enough people have done research to show that this approach does work.

What is it?

Art therapy uses a mix of art, making and talking; so it's different from other talking therapies because you do art and have the option of talking with the therapist at the same time.

Art therapy is often offered in a group setting. The British Association of Art Therapists says that art therapy is "the use of art materials for self-expression and reflection in the presence of a trained art therapist".

What does it aim to do?

You don't have to be good at art to use art therapy! The art therapist will tell you about paint, oil pastels, pencils, different types of paper, materials, clay, glue etc. and help you get started, as art therapy uses lots of different art materials.



You can choose whatever you want to do, for example drawing, painting and making things. Art and drawing might help you to talk and think about things that are happening for you and to understand difficult thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Creating pictures or objects within the therapy may help you to talk with the therapist and others, tell them who you are and how you feel. Art therapy can be helpful if you tend to be withdrawn, don't feel like doing things or find it hard to talk about things. It can help you to feel more confident, interested and better able to do stuff socially with other people

Does it work?

Several studies have looked at whether art therapy helps with unusual and distressing experiences for people who are already taking medicine and having other mental health support.

Some studies found that art therapy improved the way people thought about themselves and how they related to other people and one study found that people had more motivation and felt less down and flat after art therapy – but one study found that art therapy didn't improve psychological health and none of the studies found effects on unusual distressing experiences themselves.

“Coming to art therapy felt safe even when I felt very vulnerable. It felt hard at first, learning to be creative again, but then it became a useful outlet to channel what I find difficult to express. It's not so difficult once I have done some artwork because it makes it easier to relax and talk about things.”

Sharpey, 24

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

NICE found six good quality studies and recommended that art therapies (including art, music, drama and dance movement therapies) be considered for those experiencing unusual, distressing symptoms to help with things like motivation, withdrawal, lack of interest and lack of activity.

They also highlighted the need for more high quality research as the current evidence is limited – especially in young people – where there's only been one small study.

One large study that happened more recently, has shown that for people with longer term problems, group art therapy didn't improve mental health, health or day-to-day life more than another activity group.

How can I get this treatment?

Art therapy is something that may be offered by a local mental health service, but it's not readily available. Ask your doctor, care coordinator or GP if you're interested and they will be able to tell you about local options.

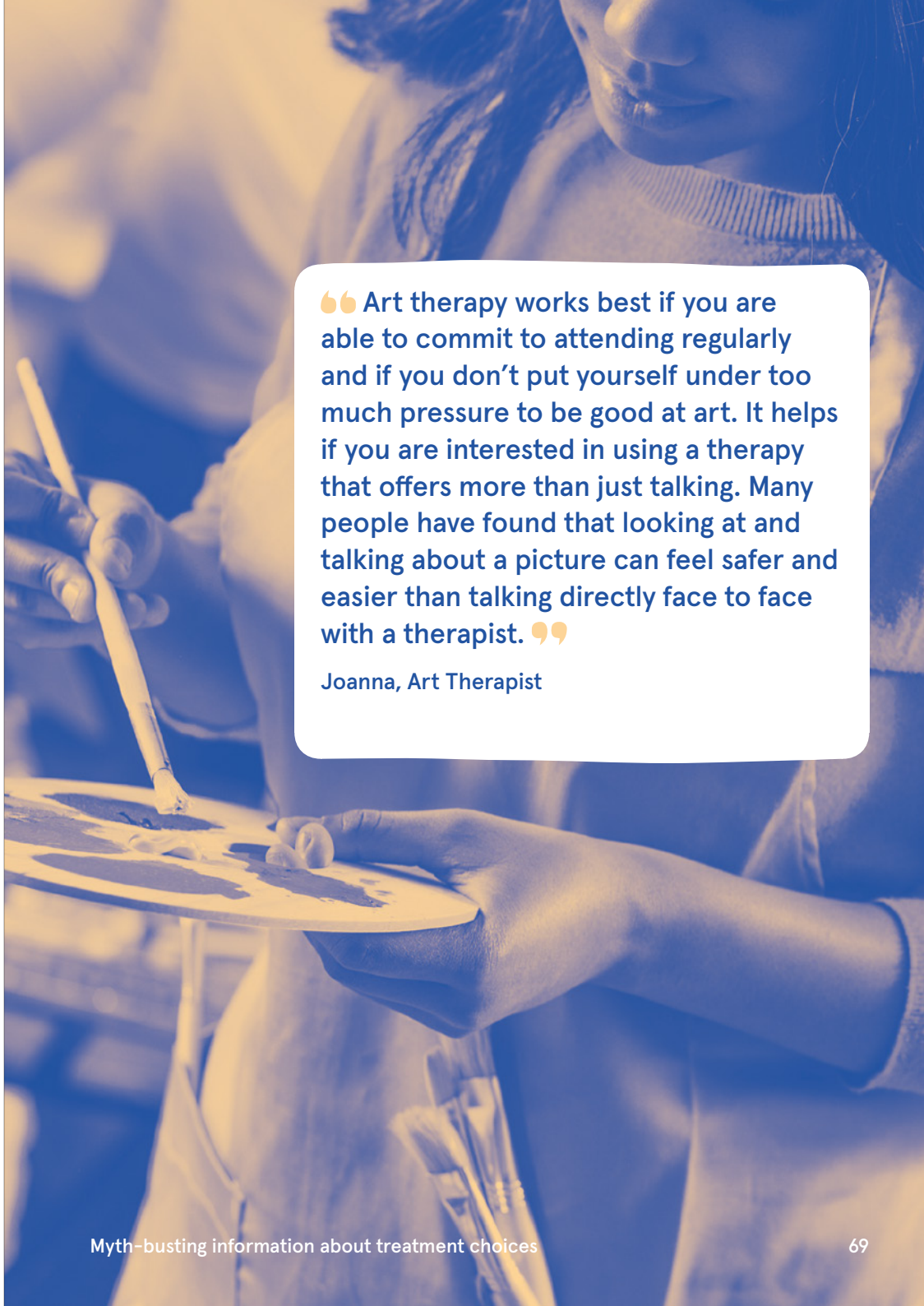
You may also be able to pay privately for art therapy. Try looking on the British Association of Art Therapists' website baat.org where there's a section on finding a private art therapist.

✔ Main pro

Art Therapy offers a different way to show your feelings and talk about thoughts than other therapies.

✘ Main con

There's not a lot of good quality evidence, so it's hard to know whether it's helpful or not. It may feel hard to start with, to do art with a group of people you don't know.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a paint palette and a brush, applying paint. The background is blurred, showing other people in a similar setting. The image has a blue tint.

“ Art therapy works best if you are able to commit to attending regularly and if you don't put yourself under too much pressure to be good at art. It helps if you are interested in using a therapy that offers more than just talking. Many people have found that looking at and talking about a picture can feel safer and easier than talking directly face to face with a therapist. ”

Joanna, Art Therapist