

Art Therapy Outlooks on Later life

Art Therapy Outlooks on Later Life is a subgroup of the British Association of Art Therapists.

ATOLL endeavours to make the practice of Art Therapy with Older People visible through research, talks and the creation of supportive networks for art therapists, related disciplines and the wider public.

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Dandelion Clock by Kimberley Iyemere



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Art Psychotherapy for Older People falls into distinct treatment areas:

- Dementia and cognitive impairment, strokes.
- Functional illnesses including enduring mental health problems, anxiety, depression, and illnesses related to issues connected to later life such as bereavement reactions and loss in general.
- Physical illnesses as a distinct issue or in conjunction with cognitive and or functional illness
- **Art Psychotherapy for Older People facilitates, communication, self expression, self exploration creativity, orientation and stability:**
- Communication – verbally and non verbally through the use of art materials. This enables the expression of inner feelings that can be held by the therapist or in the art work. Consequently great relief can be experienced along with deeper understanding of difficulties both in the moment and as a lasting transformation for some patients.
- Self exploration – Art Psychotherapists use psychoanalytic and or psychodynamic approaches which facilitate the exploration of feelings and memories promoting greater understanding and resolution within oneself and in relationships with others.

- Creativity – through the use of art materials. The Art Psychotherapist working with Older People provides an extremely broad range of art materials which facilitate expression in the most regressed patient and imagination where there seems to be no hopeful resolution. The Art Psychotherapist adapts the art materials to the patient's varying capabilities.
- Life Review – a chance to address or resolve past conflict and to have a more peaceful later life. This may be achieved through psychotherapeutic thinking around the transference and artwork.
- Orientation and stability – for patients with dementia through the consistency of art psychotherapy sessions and more directive art work, for instance; the Art Psychotherapist may provide outlines, collage, tactile materials and a wide variety of art exercises which help give focus to disorientated patients enabling non verbal communication, self expression and creativity.