

A close-up photograph of a human hand, palm facing up, against a dark, textured background. The hand is covered in various colors of paint, including shades of blue, teal, purple, and red. The paint is applied in splatters, smudges, and streaks, particularly concentrated on the palm and fingers. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the skin and the vibrant colors of the paint.

# Art Therapy and You!

MEAGHAN WIGGINS,  
LMHC, OPN-CG

# Introduction

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- Meaghan Wiggins
- Licensed mental health professional, fulltime art therapist at Cancer Support Community Indiana, and oncology patient navigator certified generalist.
- Have been working exclusively with cancer patients for the past 7 years.
- **Fun facts:** Enjoys sweets, MA from Herron school of Art and Design.



# Art Therapy 101

## What the heck is 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 Therapy, **facilitated by a professional art therapist**, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change (AATA, June, 2017).

# More specifically...

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## **NOT** ART THERAPY! ☹️

- Coloring books
- Painting at home, to relax.
  - Therapeutic art, **NOT** therapy.
  - Not every conversation you have is therapeutic!
- **NOT** art class!!

## ART THERAPY! 😊

- Creating an image with a trained professional.
  - Exploring what that image can say about your life!
- Creating something specific with an art therapist based on your needs!
  - Art therapists have specific training to help guide you through creating to understand your art on a deeper level.
  - Master's level profession that involves mental health!



Story Time!!

# Ok, Who can art therapy help?

Art therapy can be utilized with any population! It's **NOT** just for kids!

- **Examples:** Substance abuse, eating disorders, trauma, adolescents, LGBTQ+ persons, also those with Dementia/Alzheimer's.
- Most importantly survivors **AND** caregivers!



# What about someone facing cancer?

## Research on art therapy and oncology shows...

A study that explored 41 women breast cancer survivors, aged 37-69 years old, showed individual art therapy work:

- Improved coping
- Increase in coping resources

A different study that observed 60 cancer patients actively receiving chemo worked with an art therapist weekly found:

- Depression and anxiety decreased in the long term.
- Fatigue from treatment also decreased.

In a recent systematic review that explored 12 different studies (with over 500 cancer patients in active treatment) revealed:

- Significant reduction in anxiety symptoms
- Improvement in quality of life
- Recommended as a complement to other modalities of treatment

For healthcare professionals working in oncology, a different study showed the effectiveness in reducing burnout symptoms for both doctors and nurses.

- Overall improvement in caretaking of their patients.

In my own work with survivors and their families...

- Improved communication skills, conflict resolution, and coping skills.
- **Common themes:** Identity, Control, Communication, and End of life work.

(Bar-Sela, G., Atid, L., Danos, S., Gabay, N. and Epelbaum, R., 2007; Italia, S., Favara-Spacco, C., Di Cataldo, A. and Russo, G., 2008; Jiang X-H, Chen X-J, Xie Q-Q, Feng Y-S, Chen S, Peng J-S., 2020; OSTER I, SVENSK A-C, MAGNUSSON E, et al., 2006;



# Where can I find art therapy?

I am now 100% convinced to start art therapy!! But how can I connect with an art therapist?

## Cancer Support Community!

- **Open Art Studio** (Hybrid)
  - Franciscan Health, **First and fourth Wednesday** of the month at **1:30PM**
- **Groups**
  - *Art Therapy Group*, Community Health Network (virtual only), First Friday of the month at 1PM
  - *Coffee & Coloring Club*, CSC Campus, Thursdays 10AM, Hybrid
  - *Crafting & Conversations*, CSC Campus, Tuesdays 1PM, Hybrid
  - *Mindful Art*, CSC Campus, first and third Saturday of the month, 11AM, Hybrid
- **Individual Sessions** (**Virtual** & In person)
  - Completely free at CSC, availability may vary.

## Art Therapy Centers in Hospitals!

- Art carts on infusion/bedside units
- Riley Children's Hospital
- Saint Vincent's Breast Center





# Spotlighting Local Art Therapists

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## **Brittany Hill, LMHC, ATR-BC**

Licensed in Indiana recently began working as Clinical Director at Recovery Works in Martinsville Indiana. She works primarily with people working through their addictions and regularly leads groups with up to 30 people using art therapy to help cope with withdrawal.

**Phone:** 765.516.6275

### **Specializes in:**

- ❖ Art therapy
- ❖ Addictions
- ❖ Group therapy
- ❖ Oncology

*“They have options, we can start with collage since it’s less intimidating. You can decide the content instead of me coming up with it (the content), and I can make art along side you until you’re more comfortable.”*

# Spotlighting Local Art Therapists

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## **Bailee Taylor, LMHC, LPAT, ATR-BC**

Licensed in Indiana and Kentucky, has a private practice called Calming Creations, located in Columbus Indiana. Meets with clients both in person and virtually through telehealth.

**Email:** [baileetaylor@protonmail.com](mailto:baileetaylor@protonmail.com), **Phone:** 812.489.9203

### **Specializes in:**

- ❖ Art therapy
- ❖ CBT
- ❖ EMDR
- ❖ Animal Assisted therapy
- ❖ Family therapy
- ❖ Children and adolescents
- ❖ Oncology

“I would say that they are brave for considering a new outlet to access parts of themselves they’re perhaps not aware of yet.”





# Spotlighting Local Art Therapists

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## **Katy Downey, LMHC, ATR**

Licensed in Indiana and has a private practice in Indianapolis Indiana. Has also worked with oncology patients previously and does lead groups at Cancer Support Community Indiana.

**Email:** [katy@dkk.associates](mailto:katy@dkk.associates), **Phone:** 317.426.1357

### **Specializes in:**

- ❖ Art therapy
- ❖ Children and adolescents
- ❖ Oncology
- ❖ LGBTQIA+

*“The biggest myth about art therapy is that you have to be good at art! No skill is required, and there is no judgement in the safety of the therapeutic space. It’s about exploring, playing, and focusing on the process, not the product.”*





A close-up photograph of a woman's hands, with red paint smeared on the fingers and palms. The hands are positioned against a background of thick, vertical red and white brushstrokes on a light-colored surface. The woman's face is partially visible on the right side of the frame, out of focus. She is wearing a gold ring on her left ring finger and a thin bracelet on her left wrist.

“Art is not always about pretty things. It’s about who we are, what happened to us, and how our lives are affected.”

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*ELIZABETH BROUN*



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