



# DRAWING INSPIRATION

Soothe your soul with art therapy

WORDS ABILAN JOHNSON


**EXPRESS |** ARE THERE A FEW THINGS ON YOUR MIND THAT A CAN OF PAINT MIGHT SOLVE? ART THERAPIST ANGELINA RODRIGUEZ HAS BEEN ASKED ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT HER WORK. INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW: WHAT IS ART THERAPY, EXACTLY?

If you were to take the opportunity to experience art therapy firsthand, you would begin by trying to communicate your feelings to the art therapist using paper and an assortment of markers, paint or crayons. After illustrating these feelings, the therapist asks you about your work; what certain colors represent to you, what was the significance of figures that were included here or there. While discussing your work, it becomes clear to you that these inner impulses, feelings and personality aspects of yours are physically evident on the page. For those who need more evidence to make a decision as to whether art therapy is worthwhile, read on.



## THE PROCESS

The Art Therapy Association describes art therapy as "a mental health profession that uses the creative process of making art to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness and achieve insight." Materials used in art therapy sessions can be as abstract as paper, paints and markers or as elaborate as personal collages. Rodriguez stresses that the type of artwork created with art therapy is "about expression, and by no means is it about a finished product."



## THE DIFFERENCE

Rodriguez insists a client can tell her more in a drawing than in talk therapy, because there are less inhibitions, and it is natural to want to create.

"Our natural inclination as children is to create art until we are told at some point not to color that tree blue or to stay within the lines," Rodriguez notes. "Creativity can be stripped away by authority figures." Looking at symbols within work is a way to facilitate expression.



## THE BENEFITS

Just think of art therapy as another method of expression that can help you solve problems or find peace.

"Taking home a piece of work created during a session or workshop is concrete and allows the client to look at the piece of work more long term," notes Rodriguez. "It can be a visible reminder of what was discussed or learned during the session, or the client might begin to see new things about themselves."

She continues, "Art therapy is specifically for those people who do not think that they are artistically inclined. I see employees that are stressed at work, wives that are frustrated with their relationships, angry children who cannot communicate with their parents and people who seem to be 'stuck.'"

For this year, Rodriguez projects that depression, fear over the economy and the general instability in society will be the major themes for clients seeking therapy. Her suggestions for combating those anxieties are "taking a look at what you can and cannot control, focusing on what you can control, taking care of unfinished business and letting go." [arttherapy.org](http://arttherapy.org)