



Myra Fortin

Creative Art Therapy Student

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Education

- **M.A., Marriage and Family Art Therapy** 2026
Antioch University, Candidate
- EMDR Certificate, 2026
EMDR Consulting, Candidate
- **Candidate for Sex Therapy Certificate** 2024
Antioch University, Candidate
- **B.A. Visual Communication and Design** 2017
Cornish College of the Arts, Graduate

Relevant Work Experience

Clinical Intern, Steffen Counseling Services 2025-2026

- Systemic case conceptualization using family-systems and relational frameworks
- Case management and coordination with supervisors or interdisciplinary teams
- Built and managed a case load of 15 clients per week.
- Building rapport with diverse clients and family structures

Pre-Internship, Antioch Clinic 2024-2025

- Documentation of progress notes, treatment plans, and case summaries
- Supporting clients in identifying patterns, strengths, and relational needs
- Utilizing Art-based or expressive therapy techniques

Pre-Internship, Mary's Place 2024- 2025

- Composed a work schedule with management
- Assisted in running of back-to-school events, doing setup, inventory, and mediation.
- Collaborated with group members to support families at Mary's Place

What is art therapy?

Art therapy is a non-verbal therapeutic modality that invites clients to use art to reflect and heal. A study by Mary et al. (2020) shows that our brains work hard to prevent us from remembering or expressing traumatic events. This can lead to the development of unhealthy coping mechanisms and behaviors, which many of our clients are working to unlearn. Art therapy and other creative therapies can help our clients express themselves and communicate these traumatic experiences kinesthetically, sensorially, visually, and symbolically.

While many limit art therapy to children, it is an exceptional tool for any age. It's also highly effective for families and couples, as art directives can be collaborative, allowing partners and family members to communicate in new ways. Art therapy pairs well with various other therapy modalities, such as Narrative Therapy, Emotion-Focused Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

Art therapy is a flexible modality due to the multitude of mediums that can be utilized to help clients with their unique situations. Art therapists carefully select mediums to work with their clients, as each medium has its own benefits and can be used in many ways to help and safely challenge clients. Clients may be more familiar with some mediums like colored pencils and crayons, while others might be new to mediums like watercolors, acrylics, and clay. Using different mediums, we can help our clients work through their emotions and challenge them by introducing new mediums. Each medium can trigger different sensations within our bodies; some require more force, others precision, and the variety of sensations engages our clients physically and mentally.

Having an art therapist in your group will provide clients with access to different forms of therapy. Art therapy is effective for individual therapy as well as couples, family, and group therapy. An art therapy session might include art-making but doesn't have to; it depends on what the client is open to doing in that session. If the client is open to making art, the therapist might utilize a planned art directive. Art directives are interventions using art to help clients move toward their goals or to help the therapist collect and assess information from clients nonverbally. For example, asking clients to draw a picture of their family, a self-portrait, or what they think an emotion looks or feels like can help gather information about them and provide space to discuss these subjects.

References

Mary, A., Dayan, J., Leone, G., Postel, C., Fraisse, F., Malle, C., Vallée, T., Klein-Peschanski, C., Viader, F., De La Sayette, V., Peschanski, D., Eustache, F., & Gagnepain, P. (2020). Resilience after trauma: The role of memory suppression. *Science*, 367(6479).
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aay8477>

Population: Adolescent/Families

Art Directive: Family portrait (Garden, Forest, Aquarium,)

Art materials: 8 x 10 paper, a variety of colors

Markers (scented and non-scented)

Crayons

Colored pencils

Pen or pencil

This directive would be used in the first few sessions with clients to help build an understanding of how the clients(s) view their family system.

Directions:

1. Ask client(s) to close their eyes and focus on their breath for a minute, then ask them to think about their family. Think about who's apart of their family and how they make them feel.
2. When the client(s) ready and comfortable ask them to draw a picture of their family, give them the choice of drawing them as a garden, forest, or aquarium. The Therapist can choose to join the client by drawing their family or just observe.
3. Depending on the client(s), allow them about ten minutes to work on their drawing.
4. Once the piece is finished ask the client(s) to point out each member of the family.
5. Ask the client(s) to explain how they decided to depict their family.
6. If the client(s) are comfortable discuss with them about their family system and keep note of how they view their family.

Questions and Considerations:

1. Take note of who's in the picture and who isn't. "I notice you added your grandparents, are you willing to tell me about them?"
2. Ask the client about any size differences, animal or plant choices, and details that might give more information on how the client sees members of their family. "I'm curious why you chose these animals to depict your family, care to explain your thought process?"
3. Focus on the positive aspects depicted in the image. "I see that you've drawn yourself and your siblings playing together, do you get along well with them?"
4. Be sure to ask questions to better understand your clients perspective to try and avoid any assumptions. "I noticed that dad is really far away from everyone, why's that?"

Population: Adolescent/Families

Art Directive: Build a Safe Space

Art materials: 2D: paper, markers, colored pencils, glitter, watercolor, etc.

3D (optional): cardboard boxes, popsicle sticks, recycled plastic or glass jar, scissors, glue, tapes, and anything that you may want to put in the “box.” E.g., rocks, flowers, sand, candy, etc.

You can tailor the materials you use depending on the age group you are working with. The idea is to provide them with as much as possible so they can get creative.

This directive would be used after the client(s) and therapist have built a strong rapport with each other. It's important to be mindful of who the client(s) are and their relationships to safe spaces.

Directions:

1. Ask the client(s) to think about a space that makes them feel safe, real, or imagined. If they can't imagine a safe place for themselves invite them to think of a safe space for an animal.
2. Then ask them to reflect on what makes this space feel safe.
3. Ask them to close their eyes and focus on their breathing. Ask them to recall their safe place and ask what this space looks like. Ask how it feels in their safe space, and what emotions come up.
4. When the client(s) are ready ask them to explore the art materials available to them and ask them to recreate their safe space with the materials. This could be a drawing or a sculpture, give your client(s) as much creative freedom as possible.
5. When they're finished and feel comfortable ask them to share their creations and describe the different parts of their safe space.
6. Discuss with client(s) about safe environments and how they might create a safe space for themselves in real life.

Questions and Considerations:

1. What came up for the client(s) while thinking of and making their safe space? “What came up for you while thinking about your safe space? Was it different than what you felt while making it?”
2. Ask how it feels to share this space with the therapist and others if in a group setting. “How do you feel now that you've shared this space with us?”
3. When asking clients about their safe spaces, highlight their creativity and care. “It was thoughtful of you to include a space for a guest.”
4. Ask if the client has other safe spaces or could imagine other safe spaces and if they would be willing to create them in later sessions.