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# Spring Renewal through Self-expression

**M**aking art, or doing most any type of creative activity, is a form of self-expression. Someone wise said that “All art is a self-portrait,” and the art begins to reveal the person, the artist who created the form. Just doing a creative activity is cathartic, or healing, in and of itself. Working in colors, with materials to create an art expression makes the mind and body feel good.

Pressing a paint brush on a paper plate is not necessarily about making a masterpiece or even wanting to hang the creation on a wall. The felt, the construction paper, clay, the doll eyes are all about expressing one’s inner landscape. Because art therapy is not an art class, a person does not have to be “good” at making art – painting, drawing, singing, or even cooking – to gain the benefits and enjoyment from practicing with clay or with water colors.

Someone else said, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” In a therapeutic setting, making art has added benefits. Art activities like paper mache pull out those expressions, thoughts, or experiences that may be challenging to discuss aloud. Sometimes a drawing alone can tell the whole story. In treatment, this kind of expression can be very eye-opening. For less verbal populations, since talking about experience is often difficult, using art to express oneself can be a start to exploring issues.

Once drawn, a picture provides an easy-access freeway to discuss the topic and work through the challenge at hand. Even if a person never says a word about his or her drawing or sculpture or poem, just having created a tangible object, just “getting ideas out there,” can be therapeutic. People are encouraged when they review their work over time and let the artwork “speak” back to them because the creation is revealing in a positive way and can truly facilitate the therapeutic process without being threatening.

