

# Art Journaling as a Visual Voice for Trauma Intervention

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## What Is Art Journaling?

Combining images and words in the safe space of a notebook or sketchbook for self-expression:

- No rules
- Process Orientated
- Sometimes facilitated by “prompts”
- Encourages media/material experimentation
- Includes the use of simple art materials
- Creates opportunity for insight
- Tangible record/documentation of thoughts, feelings, memories & experiences

## [Art] Journaling Benefits & Trauma

- Supports sensory recognition, regulation, and catharsis release (Spehar, 2013) through “being present with the themes and questions that resound in [a survivor’s] everyday existence” (Hieb, 2005)
- Provides an accessible, empowering, non threatening safe space and container (Chilton, 2007)
- Empowers navigating the trauma, making meaning and giving a visual voice to creating a new narrative at your own pace (Spehar, 2013)





# Themes

## Art Journaling as a Safe Place

- Making art within the safe containment of an art journal can help support and re-establish a sense of safety for survivors of trauma. It also provides liberation in the form of freedom of expression. (Kohut, 2011, Chilton, 2007, Hieb, 2005)
- Anchoring- It is important for the trauma survivor to establish a personal anchor as a visual safety plan that can be used for safety & as a grounding tool (Spehar, 2013, Adams, 1998) before beginning art journaling.
- Safety plan for the journal: Considerations around privacy, security, future safety concerns & issues (Adams, 1998).



## Art Journaling to Promote Emotional Expression

- Strong feelings connected to fear, anger, guilt, and shame can be channeled onto the page through art journaling's combination of words and image.
- Complex feelings can become clearer, making emotions more manageable and less frightening. (Spehar, 2013).
- Relief and release of inner emotional states as feelings become externalized and honors the survivor's authentic voice (Hieb, 2005, Cohen, Barnes, & Rankin, 1995).
- Provides a visual voice to experiences, emotions and thoughts silenced in the violence's fear and terror



## Art Journaling & Self Awareness

- Re- discovering the self, dreams, wishes, intentions, and goals through the lens of not only a survivor, but thriver

Becoming: Art journaling creates an opportunity to "seek the wisdom of your hidden self" and fosters insight for self-awareness (Hieb, 2005).

Sparks of Illumination: "Small glimpses of light, a brightness that helps move [the survivor] from one step to the next" (Hieb, 2005).



# Themes

## **Art Journaling to Manage Traumatic Stress**

Through the creative process, survivors can start to make sense of and begin to find their way out of chaos related to trauma reactions, the abuse, and memories.

Important Considerations (Spehar, 2013, Cohen, Barnes, & Rankin, 1995):

- Emotional Safety
- Self-regulation ability
- Anchoring
- Emotional Caution: Content & Prompts

Art Journaling supports a meditative, here and now presence (Hieb, 2005):

- Holistic awareness
- Relaxation
- Mind/body connection

## **Art Journaling & Resiliency**

Survivors can discover a sense of grounding, strength, understanding, and hope through art journaling:

- Empowering
- Liberating
- Supportive Process
- Action Orientated

## **Art Journaling for Self Care**

A creative practice through art journaling can play a role in the art therapist's self care:

Benefits:

- Slow things down
- Focus on the here and now
- Foster clarity
- Re-ignite self-awareness
- Rewarding

## References

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Arylo, C. (2012). *Madly in love with me*. Novato: New World Library.

Chilton, G. (2007). Altered Books in Art Therapy with Adolescents. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 24(2) pp. 59-63.

Cohen, B.; Barnes, M.; & Rankin, A. (1995). *Managing traumatic stress through art: Drawing from the center*. Baltimore: Sidran Press.

Hieb, M. (2005) *Inner journeying through art-journaling: Learning to see and record your life as a work of art*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Kohut, M. (2011) Making Art From Memories: Honoring Deceased Loved Ones Through a Scrapbooking Bereavement Group, *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 28:3, 123-131.

Lipsky, van Dernoot, L.; & Burk C. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide for caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco : Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Spehar, C. (2013) Path of the Pen: Journaling through Soul Pain to Peace. Presentation at the 2013 National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children Childhood Trauma Practitioner's Assembly, Clinton Township, Michigan.

## Online Art Journaling Resources

Six Powerful Reasons Kids Should Art Journal:

[http://www.mommy-labs.com/creative-kids/art\\_craft\\_projects\\_kids/art-journaling-kids-reasons-creative-learning](http://www.mommy-labs.com/creative-kids/art_craft_projects_kids/art-journaling-kids-reasons-creative-learning)

Art Journaling 101:

<http://daisyyellow.squarespace.com/abstract/art-journaling-101.html>

Art Journalist: Resources, Tips, Techniques, and Prompts:

<http://artjournalist.com>

Keeping a Visual Journal- 15 Reasons Why Artists Keep Visual Journals:

[http://victoriatorf.com/media\\_design/md\\_journal.html](http://victoriatorf.com/media_design/md_journal.html)

Art Journaling as a Creative Process Download:

<http://artjournaling.blogspot.com/p/art-journal-handout.html>



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