

AWBW / How is AWWB Different from Art Therapy?

A Window Between Worlds (AWBW) is different from art therapy, or creative arts therapies training. Art therapy is conducted by a credentialed therapist who has been trained in psychology and the arts. As art therapy is often less accessible or affordable, AWWB is a resource for individuals to provide art as a safe, productive, meaningful, and effective healing tool.

AWBW Workshops

Definition and Purpose: AWWB is a nonprofit organization that provides healing art workshops aimed at supporting individuals and communities affected by violence and trauma. These workshops are facilitated by individuals trained by AWWB who guide participants through creative projects to aid in healing and empowerment.

Highlights:

- **Facilitator Training:** Facilitators undergo specific trauma-informed art facilitation training provided by AWWB to lead workshops effectively. Facilitators are a reflection of helpers from various communities. While many are trained therapists, facilitators are not required to have a formal degree or clinical training.
- **Empowerment and Healing Focus:** The primary goal is to use art as a tool for empowerment, self-expression, and community building. While therapeutic benefits are often experienced, the focus is on healing and personal agency rather than a targeted treatment plan.
- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Workshops are designed with an understanding of the impacts of trauma, providing a safe, supportive, invitational, participant-centered space, and can be used in conjunction with therapeutic modalities.
- **Evidence-Informed Practice:** Facilitators are trained to structure art activities utilizing the Arc of Healing, birthed from a research study, to promote essential healing elements, guiding participants through the phases of safety, grounding, awareness, expression, empowerment, and integration.

Art Therapy

Definition and Purpose: Art Therapy is a mental health profession that integrates the creative process of making art with psychotherapeutic techniques to improve participants' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It is facilitated by a trained Art Therapist who holds a Master's degree and certification in Art Therapy.

Highlights:

- **Educational Training:** Licensed Art Therapists earn a master's degree and complete supervised practicum and internship hours. Training includes providing treatment for

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various psychological issues, including trauma, depression, anxiety, and other mental health diagnoses.

- Psychotherapy Focus: Art therapy uses art as a medium to facilitate psychotherapy. The process involves exploring feelings, reconciling emotional conflicts, fostering self-awareness, managing behavior, developing social skills, reducing anxiety, and increasing self-esteem.
- Integrative Approach: Art therapy can be combined with other therapeutic modalities, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or mindfulness practices, to enhance overall treatment outcomes.
- Evidence-Based Practice: Art therapy practices are grounded in psychological theories and evidence-based research. Art Therapists utilize these frameworks to inform their approach and tailor interventions to the needs of each individual or group.

Summary of Key Differences

1. Professional Background:

- AWBW Workshops: Led by facilitators trained by AWWB representing a range of sectors, often embedded within collaborating agencies.
- Art Therapy: Conducted by licensed Art Therapists with formal training in both art and psychotherapy.

2. Focus and Intent:

- AWBW Workshops: Emphasize empowerment, community healing, and personal expression, with a trauma-informed holistic approach.
- Art Therapy: Emphasizes psychotherapeutic outcomes and is often part of a broader treatment plan for mental health challenges.

3. Goals:

- AWBW Workshops: Aims to provide a supportive space for creative expression, connection (within and with others), and reflection, while fostering positivity, growth, and empowerment.
- Art Therapy: Aims to address specific mental health challenges through creative processes by promoting psychological healing, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and coping skills.

4. Settings and Accessibility:

- AWBW Workshops: Most frequently offered in community-based settings such as shelters, schools, and community mental health centers.
- Art Therapy: Typically offered in clinical or therapeutic settings, but also in community-based settings.

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