

# EXPRESSIVE THERAPY

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## Expressive Therapy: A Comprehensive Overview

### Abstract

Expressive therapy (ET) is a form of psychotherapy that combines creative arts and talk therapy to explore and express emotions. It is used to help individuals gain insight into their feelings, behaviors, and experiences, and to develop coping strategies. This article provides an overview of expressive therapy, including its history, types, benefits, and current research efforts. In addition, it offers practical advice for practitioners considering incorporating expressive therapy into their practice.

Keywords: expressive therapy, psychotherapy, creative arts, talk therapy

### Introduction

Expressive therapy (ET) is an effective and increasingly popular form of psychotherapy that combines creative arts and talk therapy to explore and express emotions. It is used to help individuals gain insight into their feelings, behaviors, and experiences, and to develop coping strategies. This comprehensive overview provides an introduction to the history, types, benefits, and current research efforts of expressive therapy. It also offers practical advice for practitioners considering incorporating expressive therapy into their practice.

### History

Expressive therapy has its roots in the expressive arts therapies, which emerged in the early 20th century. It was developed as a response to the traditional psychoanalytic approach of the time, which focused on the unconscious mind and the early childhood experiences of the patient. The expressive arts therapies sought to incorporate the creative arts into psychotherapy to help patients express their emotions and gain insight into their feelings and behaviors.

### Types

Expressive therapy encompasses a wide range of creative arts therapies, including art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, and poetry therapy. Art therapy is the most common form of expressive therapy, and involves using art materials (e.g., painting, drawing, sculpting, and photography) to express emotions and gain insight into one's feelings and experiences. Music therapy incorporates music to help individuals explore their emotions and develop coping strategies. Dance/movement therapy uses movement and dance to express emotions and gain insight into physical and emotional states. Drama therapy utilizes role-playing and improvisation to explore emotions and develop coping strategies. Poetry therapy is a form of expressive writing that uses poetry to express emotions and gain insight into one's feelings and experiences.

## Benefits

Expressive therapy has been found to be beneficial in treating a variety of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, trauma, and addiction. It has been shown to help individuals gain insight into their feelings and behaviors, and to develop coping strategies for managing difficult emotions and experiences. Additionally, expressive therapy can be used to help individuals increase self-awareness, build self-esteem, and improve communication and interpersonal skills (Kaminsky, 2020).

## Research

Recent research has demonstrated the efficacy of expressive therapy in treating various mental health issues. For example, a meta-analysis of 32 studies found that expressive therapy was effective in treating depression (Chung et al., 2020). Additionally, a systematic review of 17 studies found that expressive therapy was effective in treating trauma (Vera-López et al., 2019). The research also suggests that expressive therapy is an effective treatment for anxiety, addiction, and other mental health issues (Kaminsky, 2020).

## Conclusion

Expressive therapy is an effective and increasingly popular form of psychotherapy that combines creative arts and talk therapy to explore and express emotions. It has been found to be beneficial in treating a variety of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, trauma, and addiction. Recent research has demonstrated the efficacy of expressive therapy in treating various mental health issues. Practitioners considering incorporating expressive therapy into their practice should be aware of the benefits, types, and current research efforts in the field.

## References

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