

## **Art therapy for older adults in care - FAQ's**

### **What is Day by Day Art Therapy all about?**

Raphaëlle Legillon is a registered art therapist with experience working with the elderly in care. In conceiving the idea for Day by Day Art Therapy her goal was to provide an art therapy service for Aged Care residents through group work. The purpose of these groups is to accompany the residents through self-exploration in art, with special sensitivity to their unique physical, mental and emotional conditions (including dementia), while providing a safe, relaxing and enjoyable space to create.

### **What is art therapy?**

Art therapy is a form of therapy that focuses on the expressive and exploratory nature of art making. The creative expression stimulates cognitive functions, the senses and enables the client to externalise their inner feelings. It helps connect with your Self and others, to acknowledge the legacies of the past, to address current problems and to grow in confidence and self-appreciation.

### **What is the role of the art therapist?**

To create a safe space for the clients to express themselves freely in; To create a deep and trusting therapeutic relationship between themselves and the client; To guide and support the client through their creative and emotional journey.

### **How does art therapy help older adults?**

- It facilitates social interactions between residents, hence reducing isolation
- It gets the creative juices flowing, stimulating the brain and giving the residents a sense of pride and achievement after having created their art work
- It promotes happiness and wellbeing
- It teaches new skills which give the residents a sense of control
- It provides a space where the residents can feel free to play and explore with the art materials, without the pressure of having to produce a 'beautiful work of art'
- It provides a safe space for the residents to bring thoughts and feelings, knowing they will be accepted and acknowledged
- It gives the residents an opportunity to share and support each other in the art-making as well as the discussion processes.

## How does art therapy benefit clients living with dementia?

- It boosts their self-esteem
- It increases their focus and attention span
- It provides an outlet for their emotions
- It can be used as a trigger for memories
- It activates the neurones, improving brain function
- It facilitates communication

(from *Advantages of Art Therapy for Patients with Dementia and Alzheimers* by Thomas Taylor, 2016).

## What does an art therapy session look like?

At first it may look just like an art class - there are pencils, paper, paints, pastels and all sorts of materials that can be used to create. The client may have an idea in mind as to what they would like to create, or they might ask for some ideas and guidance. They might want to explore some thoughts or feelings they have had. The art therapist can assist, guide and support the residents all the way, and all participants must be respectful and attentive to one another. At the end of a session the clients are encouraged to discuss their works with each other, but there is no obligation to share. No art skills are needed - these sessions are about expression and experimentation, not about producing finished, beautiful works of art.

## Who do I contact to express interest in having art therapy for myself/a family member/my Aged Care facility?

Raphaëlle Legillon, primary contact for Day by Day Art Therapy:

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Or contact your Aged Care facility to discuss the possibilities.

