

Walking the Path

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Use of Art in the Walking the Path Program:

The Walking the Path Model utilizes art therapy activities to provide program participants with the opportunity for self-expression, creativity, healing and growth within the safety of a supportive environment. Significant transitions, by their very nature often evoke feelings of fear and anxiety, particularly for those who have experienced repeated trauma and loss in their lives. Art therapy can provide a means for young people in the program to express their feelings and explore life transitions in a safe way.

What is Art Therapy?

Art therapy is form of psychotherapy in which creative expression is used to address a variety of cognitive, behavioral, physical, social and/or emotional issues. Art is away to express feelings and thoughts, and can provide a healthy outlet for frustrations. Since creating art is a less direct means of expression, it is often easier for both children and adults to express confusing and painful feelings through imagery rather than words. Through the creative process, a person is able to explore wishes, fears, and conflicts and ultimately, gain mastery over them. The process of art therapy is based upon the belief that our fundamental thoughts and feelings originate in the unconscious and consequently are expressed more completely in images rather than words. Art therapy utilizes the creative process that exists within all of us to foster growth.

What is so unique about art therapy is that it provides a vehicle for the expression of complex feelings while simultaneously allowing the young person to remain within the safety of their imagery. Art can provide a link between the painful memories of the past and the reality of the present. It enables a young person to experience the past with the knowledge that they don't have to leave the safety of the present. In art therapy, the emphasis is not on the art product but rather on the creative process. No artistic experience or talent is necessary.

Use of Art Therapy with Youth Who has Experience Trauma

Art therapy can be especially beneficial for individuals dealings with trauma and loss, and there is an established precedent for this. Traumatic experiences are often stored as sensory memories. There, the art process can access these experiences in a way that verbal therapy cannot. Traumatic experiences often get split off from consciousness and become encapsulated. As a result, the feelings that are associated with the trauma are also repressed. Art therapy can serve as a bridge between these two separate worlds of memory and affect.

The creation of artwork allows the feelings and memories associated with trauma to emerge in uncensored and less threatening ways. Thus, the use of art therapy can provide a non-verbal and less intimidating way for the therapist and client to connect. Art therapy is especially helpful for those who have difficulties expressing themselves verbally.

Use of Digital Media

The history of storytelling through moving image in the form of film goes back to the early twentieth century. In the last four decades, efforts have been made to adapt the early technology so that this artistic medium is more use-friendly and accessible as well as less time consuming and expensive. The newest in that technology is Digital Video. Digital Video is a video signal represented by computer-readable binary numbers that describe luminance levels as well as finite sets of colors. The Digital Video format is newer than the analog (VHS) format and is superior in quality, ease of use, and features. The new technology has made it relatively easy for beginners to create and layout a visual story. In recent decades, Digital

Video has become an alternative to film. Film by its very nature brings vibrancy to many situations.

Our choice of video editing software is Final Cut Pro. Final Cut has emerged as an industry standard that allows its users to control all aspects of the sequence which they have laid out. Many filmmakers, like George Lucas, have incorporated digital video into their filmmaking repertoire.

In the Walking the Path program, digital video is used as a tool for self expression. As aid to expressive arts methods, digital video allows many visual elements to come alive when dealing with difficult events. The same way that traditional proverbs were used to explain complex situations, movies are today's metaphors. The use of theatrical elements such as three-act structures or formal structures help youth clearly articulate their transition stories.

Creativity is one of the most important parts of a human being's expression. It is the passion of the *Titanic*, or the mystery of the *Lord of the Rings* that we hope to inspire in the young adults that participate in Walking the Path.