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# Arts therapies

What is the evidence that arts therapies can reduce depression and increase wellbeing across the life span? Relevant examples and important considerations from process and outcome studies

Prof Vicky Karkou

Edge Hill University

Research Centre for Arts and Wellbeing





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Arts and Wellbeing



Prof Vicky Karkou  
Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine

[ehu.ac.uk](http://ehu.ac.uk)





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# Research team and scope



<https://sites.edgehill.ac.uk/rcaw/>

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# Aim of presentation



- Arts Therapies: What are they?
- Outcome studies: Do they work? With whom?
- Therapeutic factors: What supports therapeutic change?
- Future research: What next?





# Arts Therapies

What are they?

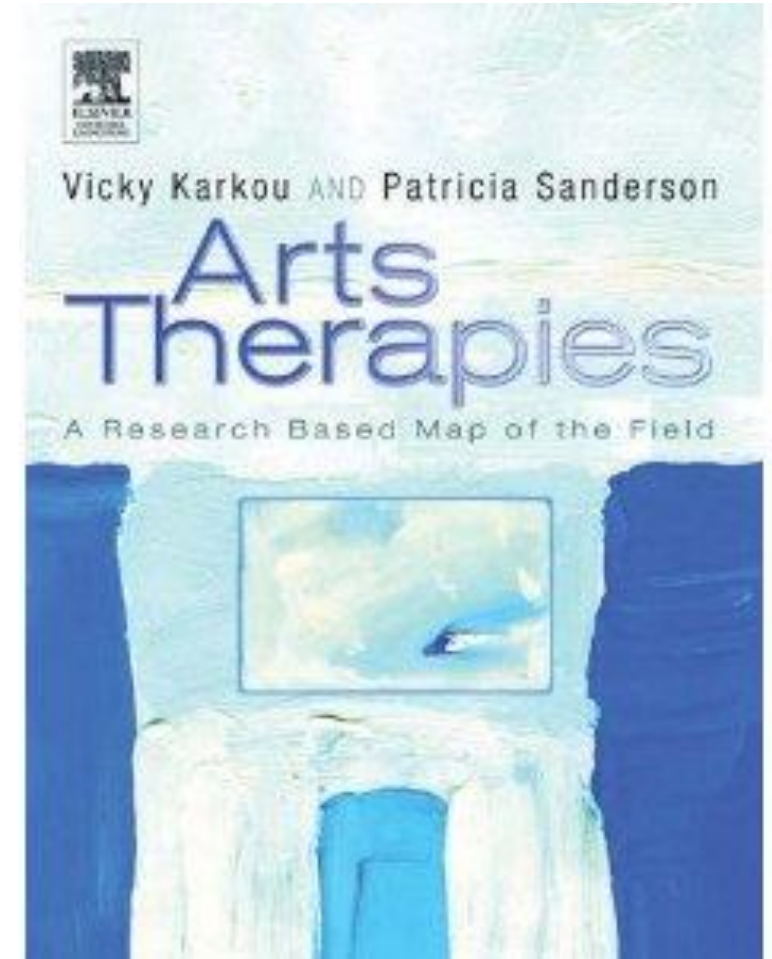
# Definition

Arts therapies (or arts psychotherapies) are:

“... the creative use of the artistic media as vehicles for non-verbal and/or symbolic communication, within a holding environment, encouraged by a well-defined client-therapist relationship, in order to achieve personal and/or social therapeutic goals appropriate for the individual” (Karkou and Sanderson 2006, p. 46).

Four sub-disciplines in the UK:

Art, music, drama and dance movement therapy





## Training

- 2-year-long Masters (MA or MSc) University-based qualifications

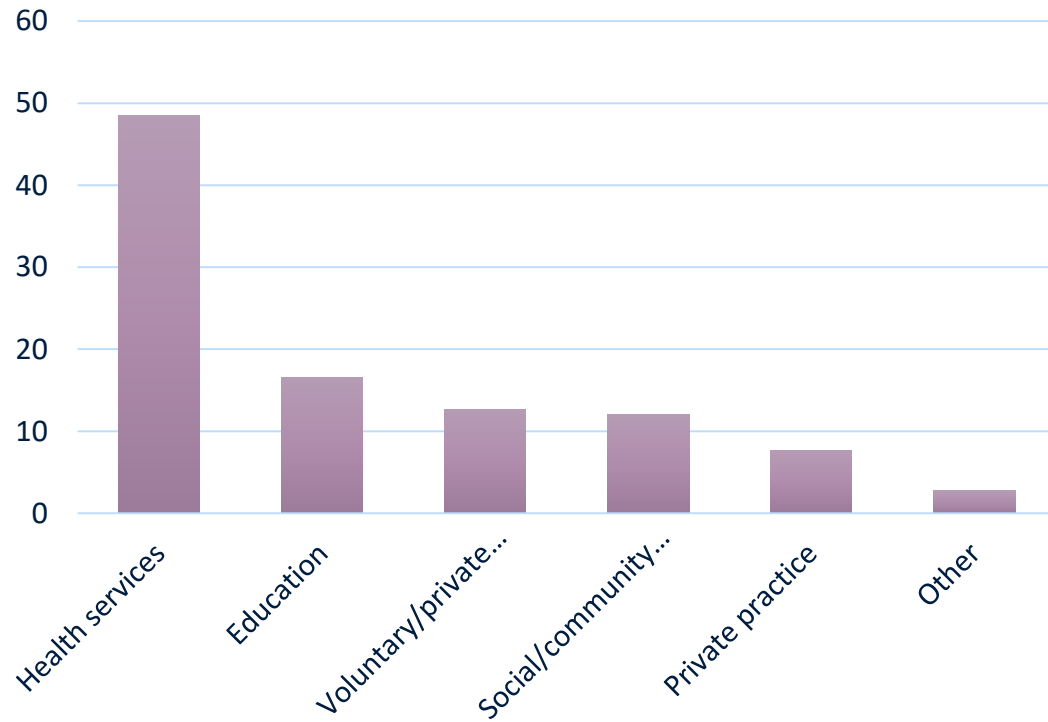
## Registration

- Health and Care Professions Council, next to clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists
- UK Council for Psychotherapy, next to psychoanalysts and humanistic psychotherapists
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy next to person-centred counsellors and cognitive behavioural therapists

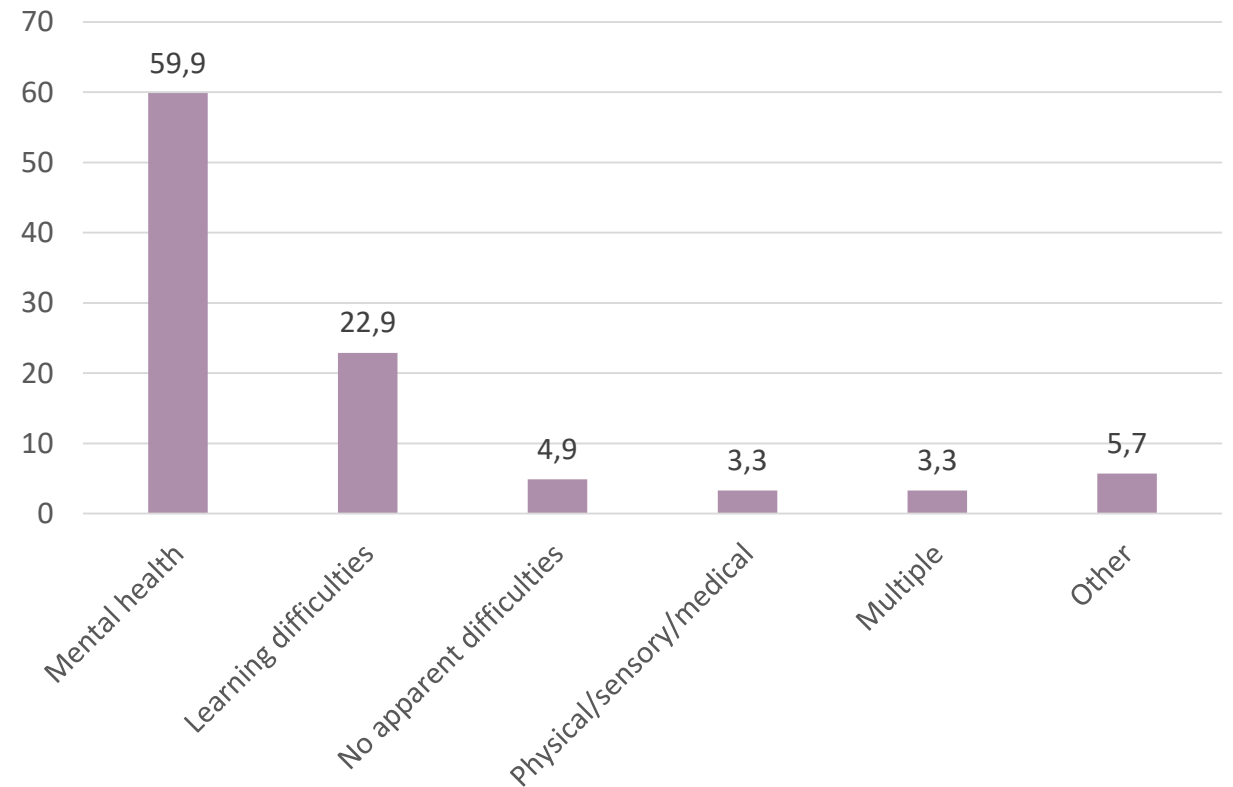


# Areas of work

## Main work environments



## Main client groups





A close-up photograph of a young woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black top with white polka dots. She is holding a blue paper mustache in front of her mouth with both hands. A rainbow-colored stick is visible behind her mouth. She is also wearing a brown leather bracelet on her left wrist and a green hair tie on her right hair.

# Outcome studies

Does it work? With whom?



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# Working with children







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# Children with cancer, asthma, those born preterm, ADHD, autism

Complementary Therapies in Medicine  
Volume 41, December 2018, Pages 180-185

Effectiveness of group art therapy on  
quality of life in paediatric patients with  
cancer: A randomized controlled trial

Bayar Mohammed Omar Abdulla<sup>b</sup>

Deldar Mo

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Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology  
Volume 126, Issue 2, August 2010, Pages 263-266.e1

Asthma and lower airway disease  
A randomized trial to test the  
effectiveness of art therapy for children  
with asthma

Anya Beebe MA, LPC<sup>a</sup>, Erwin W. Gelfand MD<sup>b</sup>, Bruce Bender PhD<sup>a</sup>

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2010.03.019

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JAMA Network Open | Original Investigation | Pediatrics  
May 26, 2023

Effect of Music Therapy on Parent-Infant Bonding Among Infants Born  
Preterm: A Randomized Clinical Trial

Claire M. Ghatti, PhD; Tora Söderström Gaden, PhD; Lucja Bieleninik, Dr habil; Ingrid Kvestad, PhD; Jörg Assmus,  
Luisa Fernanda Aristizabal Sanchez, MMT; Shmuel Arnon, MD; Jeanette Dulsrud; Cochavit Elefant, PhD; Shulamit  
Heidi Glosli, MD, PhD; Ludwika Konieczna-Nowak, Dr habil; Marcela Lichtensztein, MA; Merethe Wolf Lindvall,  
Dary Murcia Fernández, MD; Catharina Janner Røed, MA; Gladys Saá, MD; Betty Van Roy, PhD; Bente Johanne

Abstract | Full Text

JAMA Netw Open. 2023; 6(5):e2315750. 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.15750

THE LANCET  
Child & Adolescent Health

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COMMENT | VOLUME 3, ISSUE 11, P759-761, NOVEMBER 2019

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Music therapy for children with autism: investigating social  
behaviour through music

Megha Sharda • Giorgia Silani • Karsten Specht • Julian Tillmann • Urs Nater • Christian Gold

Published: September 04, 2019 • DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(19)30265-2

Check for updates

Published: 02 January 2020

The effect of drama therapy on working memory and its  
components in primary school children with ADHD

Mina Kejani & Zohreh Raeisi

Current Psychology 41, 417-426 (2022) | Cite

2174 Accesses | 6 Citations

ARCH article

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This article is part of the Research Topic  
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A Dance Movement Psychotherapy  
Intervention for the Wellbeing of Children  
With an Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Pilot  
Intervention Study



Supriya Aithal<sup>1\*</sup>



Vicky Karkou<sup>1</sup>



# Children and young people

Taylor & Francis Online

Home > All Journals > International Journal of Art Therapy > List of Issues > Volume 24, Issue 3 > The effectiveness and contribution of art therapy work with children in 2018 - what progress has been made so far? A systematic review

International Journal of Art Therapy  
Formerly Inscape  
Volume 24, 2019 - Issue 3: Art Therapy with Children

5,272 Views  
13 CrossRef citations to date  
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Articles

## The effectiveness and contribution of art therapy work with children in 2018 - what progress has been made so far? A systematic review

Liat Cohen-Yatziv & Dafna Regev

Pages 100-112 | Received 11 Aug 2018, Accepted 22 Jan 2019, Published online: 08 Apr 2019

Download citation | <https://doi.org/10.1080/17454832.2019.1574845> | Check for updates

Full Article | Figures & data | References | Citations | Metrics | Reprints & Permissions | Get access

## Systematic reviews on emotional/behavioural difficulties

Elsevier

Children and Youth Services Review  
Volume 112, May 2020, 104928

## A systematic review of child-focused outcomes and assessments of arts therapies delivered in primary mainstream schools

Zoe Moula, Supriya Aithal, Vicky Karkou, Joanne Powell

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British Journal of Music Therapy

BAMT BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC THERAPY

Journal indexing and metrics

Available access | Research article | First published online June 1, 2009

## Music Therapy with Children and Adolescents in Mainstream Schools: A Systematic Review

Catherine Carr and Tony Wigram | View all authors and affiliations

Volume 23, Issue 1 | <https://doi.org/10.1177/135945750902300102>

JCPP Advances

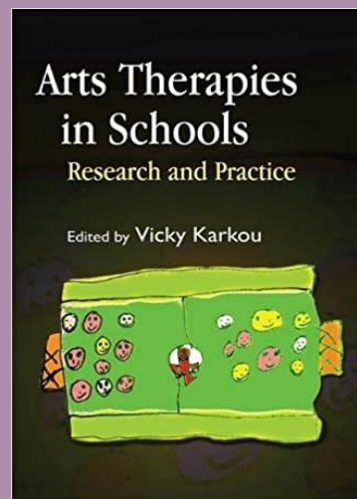
ACAMH The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health

RESEARCH REVIEW | Open Access | CC BY

## A systematic review of dramatherapy interventions used to alleviate emotional distress and support the well-being of children and young people aged 8–18 years old

Eleanor Keiller, Megan Tjasink, Jane Bourne, Dennis Ougrin, Catherine Elizabeth Carr, Jennifer Y. F. Lau

First published: 01 March 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcv2.12145> | Citations: 2



Although many practitioners work with children and young people, outcome studies in this area remain limited.



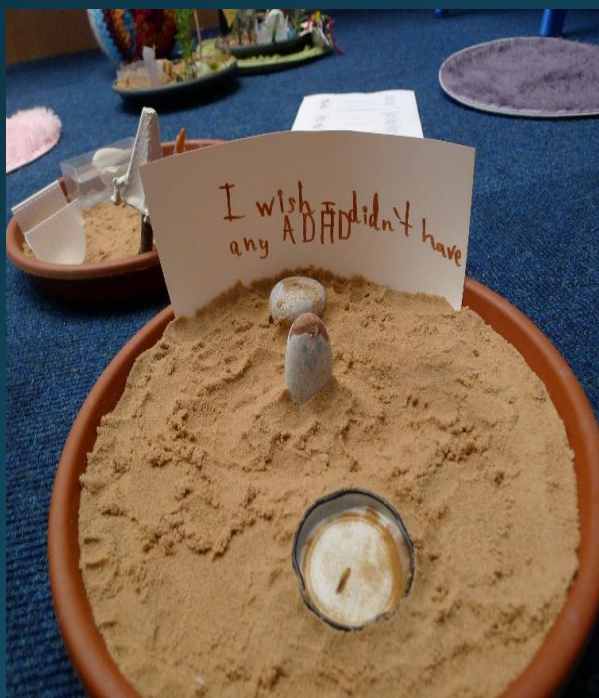


## Children with emotional/behavioural difficulties

Improvements sustained for 12 months after the intervention:

- Quality of Life – self reported (HRQOL)
  - Wellbeing and life functioning – self reported (CORS)
  - Emotional and behavioural difficulties – assess by teachers (SDQ)
  - Quality of sleep (fitbits)
  - No differences between different types of arts therapies
- (Moula, Powell and Karkou 2020)





Moula, Karkou and Powell 2022



# More outcome studies

## Schools

Feasibility RCT in 5 schools in the North West of England with a trauma-informed creative therapy groups.

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## Hospitals

Feasibility RCT in specialist mental health services in hospitals as a group treatment for children and young people with symptoms of depression.

**National Institute for  
Health Research**



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## Working with adults







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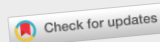
# Adults with PTSD, anxiety, cancer, heart conditions, pain

Articles

## Art Therapy and Cognitive Processing Therapy for Combat-Related PTSD: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Melissa Campbell, Kathleen P. Decker ✉, Kerry Kruk & Sarah P. Deaver  
Pages 169-177 | Published online: 20 Oct 2016

🗨 Cite this article ✉ <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2016.1226643>



Psycho-Oncology

Journal of the Psychological, Social and  
Behavioral Dimensions of Cancer

WILEY

Paper | Full Access

## A randomized, controlled trial of mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT) for women with cancer

Daniel A. Monti ✉, Caroline Peterson, Elisabeth J. Shakin Kunkel, Walter W. Hauck,  
Lora Rhodes, George C. Brainard

First published: 15 November 2005 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.988> | Citations



The Arts in Psychotherapy  
Volume 39, Issue 4, September 2012, Pages 296-303



## The efficacy of dance movement therapy group on improvement of quality of life: A randomized controlled trial

Iris Bräuninger PhD, BTd ✉

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JOURNAL ARTICLE

## Effect of Music Therapy with Emotional-Approach Coping on Preprocedural Anxiety in Cardiac Catheterization: A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Claire M. Ghetti, PhD, LCAT, MT-BC ✉

Journal of Music Therapy, Volume 50, Issue 2, Summer 2013, Pages 93-122,  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jmt/50.2.93>  
Published: 01 July 2013

CLINICAL TRIAL article

Front. Psychol., 16 April 2021  
Sec. Psychology for Clinical Settings  
Volume 12 - 2021 |  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.587923>

This article is part of the Research Topic  
The Psychological and Physiological  
Benefits of the Arts

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## The Development of Mindful-Based Dance Movement Therapy Intervention for Chronic Pain: A Pilot Study With Chronic Headache Patients

Indra Majore-Dusele<sup>1\*</sup>

Vicky Karkou<sup>2</sup>

Inga Millere<sup>1</sup>

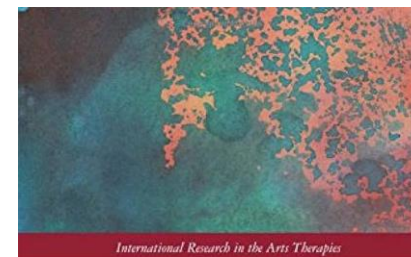


Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews

## Music therapy for depression (Review)

Aalbers S, Fusar-Poli L, Freeman RE, Spreen M, Ket JCF, Vink AC, Maratos A, Crawford M, Chen XJ, ...

## Systematic reviews of studies with adults with depression



### ARTS THERAPIES IN THE TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION

Edited by  
Ania Zubala and Vicky Karkou



#### SYSTEMATIC REVIEW article

Front. Psychol., 03 May 2019  
Sec. Psychology for Clinical Settings  
Volume 10 - 2019 |  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00936>

This article is part of the Research Topic  
The State of the Art in Creative Arts  
Therapies

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### Effectiveness of Dance Movement Therapy in the Treatment of Adults With Depression: A Systematic Review With Meta-Analyses

There is a growing number of studies that testify on the effectiveness of arts therapies on measures of depression. However, most studies do not have an active control.



#### Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice

Volume 41, November 2020, 101246



### Effectiveness of mindfulness-based art therapy for symptoms of anxiety, depression, and fatigue: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Pamela Newland <sup>a</sup>, B. Ann Bettencourt <sup>b</sup>

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctcp.2020.101246>

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Integrative systematic review of drama therapy intervention research.

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Feniger-Schaal, Rinat, Oriki, Hoo

Citation  
Feniger-Schaal, R., & Oriki, H. (2020). Integrative systematic review of drama therapy intervention research. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 14(1), 68–80. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000257>

Abstract  
Drama therapy is an active and experiential psychotherapy modality that involves the intentional and systematic use of drama/theater processes as primary means to achieve psychological growth and change within a psychotherapeutic relationship. At present, drama therapy is in the crucial stage of moving from clinical reports of case studies and vignettes to producing evidence-based practice supported by empirical studies. Drama therapy intervention research is relatively scarce compared to other psychotherapies and psychological interventions. In this article, we conducted a systematic review of drama therapy intervention studies published in the last decade (2007 to 2017). We adopted an integrative approach to systematic review that includes a combination of publications with diverse methodologies and various client groups, interventions, comparisons, and outcomes. Search in four databases and a hand search resulted in 24 drama therapy intervention articles. The results summarize the different approaches used in drama therapy and the populations with which it is being used. In addition, we address some key methodological issues that arise from the different studies. In the last decade, drama therapy research has produced promising results, showing that drama therapy offers effective treatment for various populations. The largest number of studies concerns individuals (adults and children) with developmental disabilities, cognitive impairments, or both (46%). Limitations and recommendations for improving methodology, transparency, and specificity in reporting on future drama therapy and other intervention research are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2020 APA, all rights reserved)

Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts  
Journal TOC  
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Related Content  
Review of Creative Interventions with Traumatized Children.  
Rothwell, Kate, 2009  
Drama therapy and theater as an intervention tool: Biometric analysis of programs based on drama therapy and theater.  
Fernández-Aguayo, Sara, Pino-Juste, Margarita, 2018  
Creative arts therapy in the united



## ERA study – a multi-site trial on group arts therapies with people with diagnostically heterogeneous psychiatric patients; NIHR – HTA



















The Arts in Psychotherapy

Volume 72, February 2021, 101747



Research Article

What makes us the same? What makes us different? Development of a shared model and manual of group therapy practice across art therapy, dance movement therapy and music therapy within community mental health care

Catherine Carr<sup>a b</sup>  , Barbara Feldtkeller<sup>c</sup>  , Jennifer French<sup>b</sup>  ,  
Dominik Havsteen-Franklin<sup>d e</sup>  , Val Huet<sup>f</sup>  , Vicky Karkou<sup>g</sup>  , Stefan Priebe<sup>a b</sup>  ,  
Stephen Sandford<sup>b</sup>  

counselling & psychotherapy research  
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ORIGINAL ARTICLE |  Open Access |  

## Bringing creative psychotherapies to primary NHS Mental Health Services in the UK: A feasibility study on patient and staff experiences of arts for the blues workshops delivered at Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services

Vicky Karkou , Joanna Omylinska-Thurston, Ailsa Parsons, Kerry Nair, Jennifer Starkey, Shelly Haslam, Scott Thurston, Linda Dubrow Marshall

First published: 02 June 2022 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12544> | Citations: 4





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# Arts for the Blues

**What is it?**

**What do participants think?**





# Who is this group for?

## Adults:

- Primary mental health care - GMMH NHS FT
- University of Salford Clinic
- Mothers and babies / parents and infants / mothers and pre-school children with lived experience of domestic abuse – community organisations

## Children and young people:

- Schools in the North West of England
- Children's hospital - Alder Hey Children's NHS FT CAMHS
- Training for therapists - Greater Manchester CAMHS
- RCT feasibility study - RfPB application

## Helping professionals:

- Multi-level intervention via Staff Psychology Support Service at large NHS Trust - LUFT
- Doctors in training – HEE funding
- Mental health staff - RfPB application in preparation



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## Working with older adults







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# Older adults with Parkinson's, dementia, hypertension, stroke, those at pre- or post-operative care



The Arts in Psychotherapy  
Volume 43, April 2015, Pages 40–48

Drama therapy with older people with dementia—Does it improve quality of life?

Joanna Jaaniste PhD<sup>a</sup>, Sheridan Linnell PhD<sup>b</sup>, Richard L. Ollerton PhD<sup>c</sup>,  
Shameran Slewa-Young PhD<sup>d</sup>

Nature and Science of Sleep  
Volume 12, 2020 - Issue

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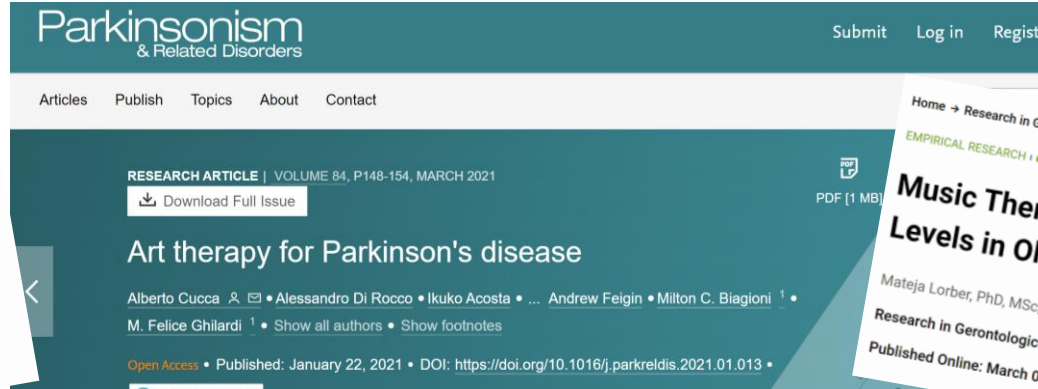
Clinical Trial Report

Effects of Patient-Directed Interactive Music Therapy on Sleep Quality in Postoperative Elderly Patients: A Randomized-Controlled Trial

Jeongmin Kim, Dain Choi, Myung Sun Yeo, Ga Eul Yoo, Soo Ji Kim & Sungwon Na

Pages 791–800 | Published online: 17 Nov 2022

Cite this article | <https://doi.org/10.2147/NSS.S286375>



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RESEARCH ARTICLE | VOLUME 84, P148–154, MARCH 2021

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Art therapy for Parkinson's disease

Alberto Cucca, Alessandro Di Rocco, Ikuko Acosta, ... Andrew Feigin, Milton C. Biagioni, M. Felice Ghilardi

Open Access • Published: January 22, 2021 • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.parkreldis.2021.01.013>

Home → Research in Gerontological Nursing → Vol. 15, No. 2

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Music Therapy as an Intervention to Reduce Blood Pressure and Anxiety Levels in Older Adults With Hypertension: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Mateja Lorber, PhD, MSc, BSc, RN and Suzana Divjak, MN, BSc, RN

Research in Gerontological Nursing, 2022;15(2):85–92

Published Online: March 01, 2022 • <https://doi.org/10.3928/19404921-20220218-03>

Clinical Rehabilitation



Available access

Research article

First published online July 11, 2016

Impact Factor: 3.0 / 5-Year Impact Factor: 3.9

JOURN

Creative art therapy to enhance rehabilitation for stroke patients: a randomized controlled trial

Ratcharin Kongkasuwan, Kotchakorn Voraakhom, ..., and Vilai Kuptniratsaikul

Volume 30, Issue 10

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0269215515607072>



View all authors and affiliations

## SYSTEMATIC REVIEW article

Front. Psychol., 08 January 2019  
Sec. Psychology for Clinical Settings  
Volume 9 - 2018 |  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02655>

This article is part of the Research  
Topic  
The State of the Art in Creative Arts Therapies  
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## Creative Arts Interventions to Address Depression in Older Adults: A Systematic Review of Outcomes, Processes, and Mechanisms

Kim Dunphy<sup>1\*</sup> Felicity A. Baker<sup>1</sup> Ella Dumaresq<sup>1</sup> Katrina Carroll-Haskins<sup>2</sup>  
Jasmin Eickholt<sup>1,3</sup> Maya Ercole<sup>1</sup> Girija Kaimal<sup>2</sup> Kirsten Meyer<sup>1</sup>  
Nisha Sajjani<sup>4</sup> Opher Y. Shamir<sup>4</sup> Thomas Wosch<sup>3</sup>

## Systematic reviews of studies with older adults with mental health concerns



The Arts in Psychotherapy  
Volume 76, November 2021, 101842



Research Article

## A systematic review of music therapy interventions used to address emotional needs of older adults

[Sekyung Jang<sup>a</sup>](#)   [Lizzy Kunde<sup>b</sup>](#)



Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews

## Music-based therapeutic interventions for people with dementia (Review)

van der Steen JT, Smaling HJA, van der Wouden JC, Bruinsma MS, Scholten RJPM, Vink AC



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Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews | Review - Intervention

## Dance movement therapy for dementia

 Vicky Karkou, Bonnie Meekums Authors' declarations of interest

Version published: 03 February 2017 Version history

<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD011022.pub2> 

There are neither large  
scale multi-national trials  
in arts therapies nor  
studies on combined  
approaches.

Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology

Impact Factor: 2.6 / 5-Year Impact Factor: 3.0

[JOURNAL HOMEPAGE](#)

 Available access | [Review article](#) | First published online September 27, 2022

The Effect of the Art Therapy Interventions on Depression Symptoms Among Older Adults: A Meta-analysis  
of Controlled Clinical Trials

[Ensiyeh Jenabi, PhD](#) , [Saeid Bashirian, PhD](#) ,  and [Mozhdeh Bashirian, MA](#)  [View all authors and affiliations](#)

[Volume 36, Issue 3](#) | <https://doi.org/10.1177/08919887221130264>



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ARTICLES | [VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3, E153-E165, MARCH 2022](#)

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### Clinical effectiveness of music interventions for dementia and depression in elderly care (MIDDEL): Australian cohort of an international pragmatic cluster-randomised controlled trial

Felicity A Baker, PhD • [Young-Eun C Lee, PhD](#) • [Tanara Vieira Sousa, PhD](#) •

[Phoebe A Stretton-Smith, MMusThrp](#) • [Jeanette Tamplin, PhD](#) • [Vigdis Sveinsdottir, PhD](#) • et al. [Show all authors](#)

[Open Access](#) • Published: March, 2022 • DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2666-7568\(22\)00027-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2666-7568(22)00027-7) •





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# The Arts and Health Office at WHO and the new WHO Jameel Arts and Health Lab



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## The Jameel Arts & Health Lab in collaboration with the WHO–*Lancet* Global Series on the Health Benefits of the Arts

[Nisha Sajnani](#) ✉ • [Nils Fietje](#)

Published: September 19, 2023 • DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01959-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01959-1) •



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# Therapeutic factors

What supports therapeutic change?





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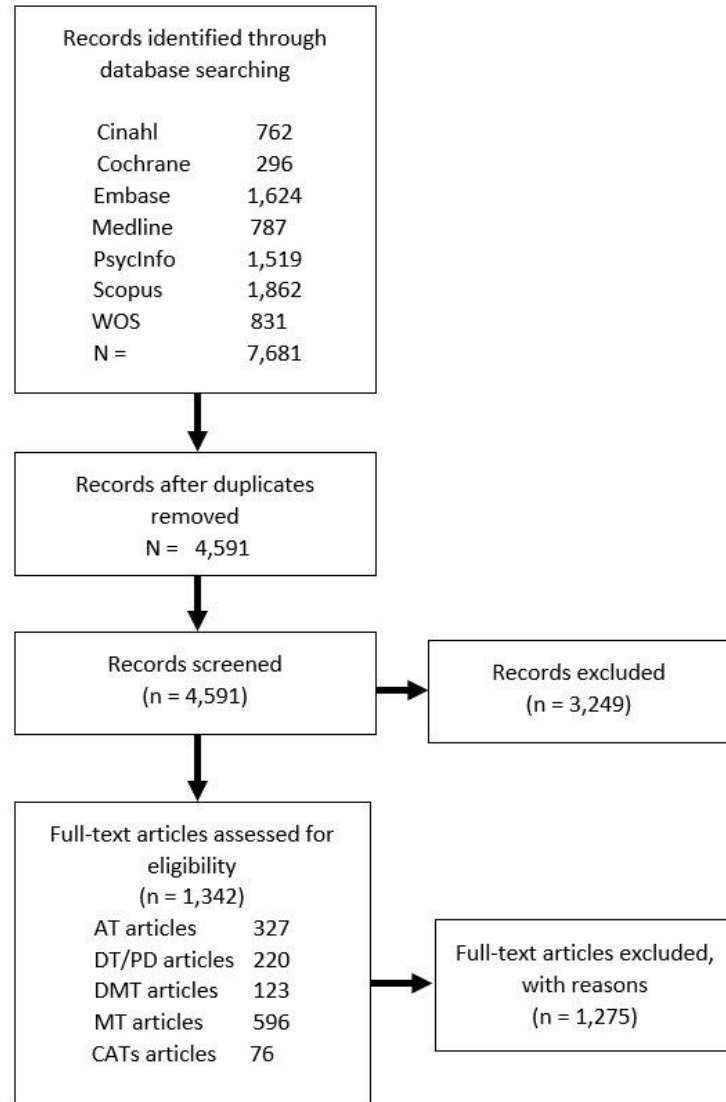
# Therapeutic factors



NYU – World Health Organization Arts and Health Launch Event, September 2021



# Therapeutic factors



## SYSTEMATIC REVIEW article

Front. Psychol., 15 July 2021

Sec. Psychology for Clinical Settings

Volume 12 - 2021 |

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.678397>

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## From Therapeutic Factors to Mechanisms of Change in the Creative Arts Therapies: A Scoping Review



Martina de Witte<sup>1,2,3,4\*†</sup>



Hod Orkibi<sup>5\*†</sup>



Rebecca Zarate<sup>6†</sup>



Vicky Karkou<sup>7</sup>



Nisha Sajjani<sup>8</sup>



Bani Malhotra<sup>9</sup>



Rainbow Tin Hung Ho<sup>10</sup>



Girija Kaimal<sup>9</sup>



Felicity A. Baker<sup>11,12</sup>



Sabine C. Koch<sup>13,14</sup>



# 19 domains

1. **Embodiment**  
(n=14)

2. **Concretization**  
(n=10)

3. **Symbolism and  
metaphor** (n=8)

4. Interaction  
through the arts  
(n = 19)

5. Creativity  
(n = 13)

6. Artistic pleasure  
(n = 13)

7. Modulating in  
time and space  
(n = 14)

8. Developing skills  
(n = 16)

9. Active  
engagement  
(n = 15)

10. Non-verbal  
expression  
(n = 11)

11. Connection  
with self (n = 12)

12. Therapeutic  
alliance and bond  
(n = 10)

13. Group  
processes  
(n = 25)

14. Structure  
(n = 17)

15. Agency  
(n = 24)

16. Emotional  
elicitation and  
processing (n = 23)

17. Understanding  
(n = 24)

18. Remembering  
(n = 5)

19. Environment  
(n=10)



## Three domains with therapeutic factors labelled joint &/or specific

### Embodiment

- Body Awareness
- Physicality of the arts
- Experiencing the body

### Concretization

- Creating something visible
- Re-enactment
- Self display
- Visual narratives

### Symbolism and metaphor

- Symbolic work
- Metaphor
- Unconscious processing through the arts





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# Neuroscience Meets Dance in Therapy

Towards  
mechanisms  
of change





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# Neuroscience Meets Dance in Therapy

## Neuroscience Meets Dance in Therapy

### Neuroscience, Dance, the Arts and Therapy:

*Translating Research into Practice*

*Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK*

*7th June 2024, 10:00 - 18:00*

Organised by:



Dr Valentina Cazzato



Prof Vicky Karkou



Dr Stergios Makris

Dr Asaf Bachrach  
(CNRS France)

*Keynote Speaker*



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Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council





# Future research

What is next?





# Future research

- Large good quality outcome studies with manualised interventions for specific populations
- Neuroscientific studies to understand the process:
  - Participant observation
  - Synchrony and mirroring
  - Movement meditation
- Implementation studies are also urgently needed





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# Implementation studies

Arts4Us: a collaboration with over 50 partners  
£2.5 million to scale up place-based arts initiatives that support the mental health of children and young people





# Questions

