



## Engaging in Watercolor Art for Emotional Exploration and Healing

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In the journey of healing, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, self-expression serves as a powerful catalyst for renewal and well-being.

Creativity in its various forms—art, music, writing, cooking, or dancing—offers profound benefits that engage individuals in a transformative process that restores energy, emotional resilience and contributes to overall well-being.

This article explores how watercolor therapy may allow patients to reduce anxiety, manage symptoms, allow them to externalize their inner turmoil, and improve overall mood. The tactile and visual nature of art offers a non-verbal outlet for communication for those struggling to articulate their feelings. Art also provides patients with a means to connect their emotions and helps individuals connect with their inner selves with a renewed sense of purpose.

Self-expression through creative activities provides a healing avenue for individuals to process their experiences, emotions and thoughts in ways that traditional therapeutic methods may not. Humans have a need to communicate and understand themselves. Creative activities offer a pathway to healing that engages both the mind and body.

As a member of the education staff at a hospital oncology institute, I provide bi-weekly healing sessions for cancer patients and medical staff. The cancer patients

periodically engage in watercolor art as a form of emotional expression and healing.

### CASE STUDY

Mary, diagnosed with breast cancer, was completing her treatment. Despite her medical progress, she struggled with anxiety, depression, and grief. The bi-weekly healing session provided talk therapy but did not fully address the need for more tangible and creative outlets for emotions. Mary and other patients were interested in complementary approaches.

I introduced watercolor painting to express and process their feelings. Watercolor painting, like life, is complex and it is dialogue with yourself and as with all art, all flows from the inner to the outer, from the spirit, through the mind, then to the body. You begin with the SPIRIT (Intention), then the MIND (craft), and include the BODY (technique). My goal was to give spontaneous freedom through the creative process to those who suffered and give them an opportunity to play—and to know themselves in the present moment. The primary intention was to turn the painting into meditation and meditation into art. Mary created abstract paintings that reflected her internal experiences. She used dark, heavy colors to depict feelings of worry, fear and uncertainty. Lighter, more vibrant colors represented hope and healing.

Mary's first painting included dark swirling purples and grays with a technique, wet-on-wet and it created a sense of chaos. Painting on wet paper is unpredictable and mirrored her feelings of anxiety and lack of control. In contrast, Mary used warm, bright yellows and greens with a dry brush on paper with shapes that symbolized new beginnings and the positive progress of her recovery.

Watercolor provided Mary and other cancer patients with a reflective space to understand and process their emotions. The physical art of choosing colors, manipulating colors, and applying paint allows them to connect with their inner self and gain new perspectives on struggles and triumphs as represented on paper.

Art in any form provides a unique opportunity for visual reflection to see emotions represented on paper to better understand and express experiences. Art can facilitate emotional release, gain clarity, and discover a renewed sense of purpose and creativity. The act of creating something meaningful provides a way to reconnect with our inner self. €



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