A close-up photograph of a hand with red-painted nails painting a large yellow smiley face on a white surface. The brush is visible, applying the yellow paint to the lower part of the face. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

# ART THERAPY AS A PATHWAY TO MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

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# *Hi! I'm Aniko Vigh*

I'm a certified Art Therapist and Cognitive Behavioral Coach, passionate about helping individuals heal and grow through creative expression. Since 2017, I've worked with clients to process trauma, release stuck emotions, build self-worth, and find confidence and safety.

My experience spans mental health challenges including trauma, PTSD, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and more. I soon transitioned into private practice, primarily supporting women coping with burnout, depression, complex PTSD, and anxiety. For the past year, I've been working as an art therapist at Holina, a trauma and addiction treatment center in Koh Phangan.

I continue to enhance my skills through trauma-awareness and somatic regulation trainings, integrating these practices into my sessions. My approach is holistic, encompassing the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects. I am deeply committed to using art as a tool for healing and transformation. I've prepared a presentation detailing art therapy's benefits, process, and supporting research.

Looking forward to sharing this journey with you.

*Warm regards,*

*Aniko Vigh*



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# WHAT IS ART THERAPY?

Art therapy is a therapy form using disciplines of art and psychotherapy. It is an effective method for expressing repressed emotions and addressing underlying conflicts through creative forms like colors, symbols, associations, and role play. Our most basic and core thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and conditioning are often stored in the subconscious, and art therapy helps access and transform these through the creative mind rather than using logic and language. By turning emotions into visual representations, art therapy creates a healthy separation between one's identity and emotional triggers, making it easier to cope with discomfort. It is highly effective for individuals dealing with anxiety, stress, depression, trauma; PTSD, CPTSD, grief, and more.

The goal of art therapy is not to eliminate discomfort but to transform negative emotions into honest, expressive forms that offer validation to suppressed feelings. This process fosters a deeper connection to oneself and improves one's ability to manage inner conflicts and challenges. In art therapy, we encourage self-expression by focusing on the body's sensations and spontaneous impulses, often integrating somatic practices, inner child work, and other therapeutic techniques. It is not limited to "artistic" individuals and is accessible to people of all ages. Art therapy uses various materials like pastels, colored pencils, gouache, acrylics, clay, and collage-making supplies to facilitate creative expression.



# SEVEN KEY BENEFITS OF ART THERAPY

## 1. Emotional Resilience:

Art therapy offers a non-verbal outlet for expressing feelings and emotions, especially for individuals who are overwhelmed by strong emotions and struggle to articulate through words. This gentle approach helps people connect with their emotions in a manageable way, allowing them to feel through it without being paralyzed. Gradually, participants develop a healthier relationship with their emotions, moving away from avoidance, numbing, or escaping, and instead learning to process their feelings effectively.

## 2. Stress Reduction & Nervous System Regulation:

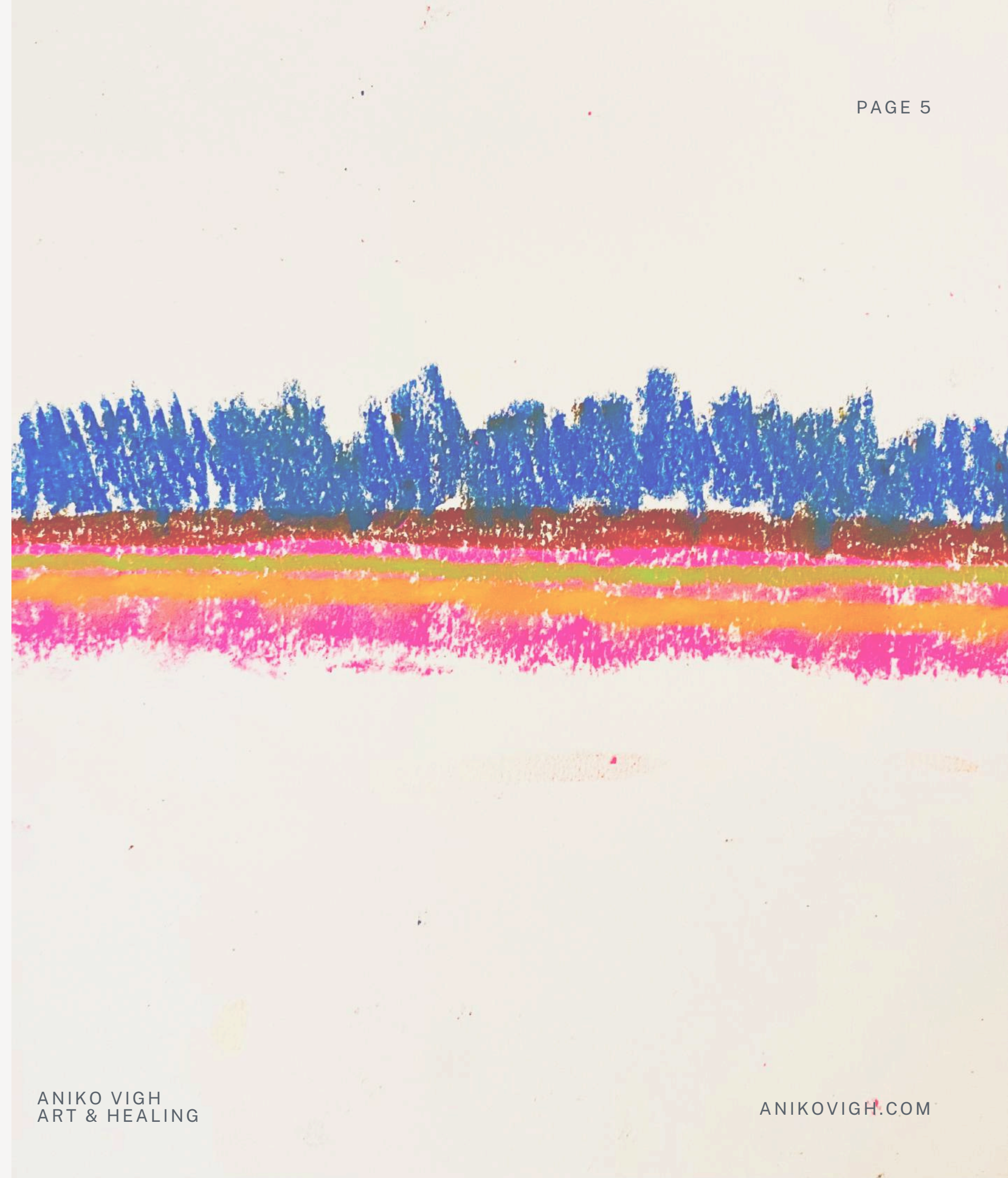
Engaging in creative expression encourages mindfulness, helping individuals stay present in the moment. This process often leads to a meditative state where time feels suspended. By externalizing emotions through art, individuals release internal tension, which helps to calm and regulate the nervous system. This grounding effect reduces stress and anxiety, promoting a lighter and more balanced mental state.

## 3. Self-Discovery:

Art therapy can unveil subconscious thoughts and emotions that might otherwise go unnoticed. By trusting their instincts, individuals tap into their intuition, uncovering deeper layers of self-awareness. This process fosters greater emotional clarity, empowering participants to feel more secure, stable, and comfortable in their bodies. As understanding grows, feelings of helplessness diminish, and a sense of control takes hold.

## 4. Improved Coping with Life's Challenges:

Art therapy enhances cognitive abilities such as problem-solving and concentration. It encourages a broader perspective, allowing individuals to view challenges from new angles. By learning to trust their sensations, and creative impulses – especially when the creative outcome is unclear – participants build self-confidence and develop inner trust and resilience. This empowers individuals to face discomfort and adversity with greater ease.



# SEVEN KEY BENEFITS OF ART THERAPY

## **5. Trauma Processing:**

Art therapy is a powerful tool for processing trauma. It allows individuals to externalize their traumatic experiences, making them feel more manageable and less overwhelming. This process helps create a healthy distinction between the trauma and their core identity, promoting healing at a gradual and personalized pace. Through art, individuals learn to ask, "Who am I?" separate from their trauma, fostering a sense of safety and healing.

## **6. Inner Stability & Confidence:**

By connecting with inner struggles and developing new coping strategies, art therapy helps individuals build a deeper sense of confidence and self-esteem. As they express vulnerability through creative work, they experience a sense of accomplishment, feeling validated and seen. This fosters stronger sense of connection to self, allowing positive emotions to emerge and strengthens inner stability and gradually improves self-image.

## **7. Reparenting the Inner Child:**

Art therapy provides a way to connect with the inner child – the younger, vulnerable parts of ourselves that often drive reactive and uncontrolled behaviors. Through creative expression, individuals can give voice to their inner child, acknowledging and healing unmet needs from the past. This nurturing process helps build self-worth and a sense of security, allowing the adult self to take on a more stable, protective role. As a result, individuals feel less triggered and more grounded, learning to "parent" their inner child with care and love.

# THE ART THERAPY PROCESS



- The individual selects a personal topic they wish to explore, understand, and heal. I often guide the person in choosing a topic that is ready to be addressed. At times, we may start without a specific topic, allowing the internal expression to reveal the most relevant issues. The body always unveils what it is ready to handle and process.
- The individual then transfers their inner world onto paper, guided by emotions, curiosity, spontaneous impulses, and intuition.
- We work with imagination, role-play, associations, and symbols to help the individual access deeper layers of their emotions and thoughts.
- Throughout the process, the client is closely and safely guided. I offer questions and suggestions to encourage authentic expression, but the client remains free at all times to choose how they wish to continue and express their emotions on paper.
- We focus on the process of self-expression and emotional release, rather than creating art with an aesthetically pleasing outcome. As a skilled and certified Art Therapist I help the individual to decode the nonverbal messages, and uncover the hidden insights behind symbols, and metaphors in the persons creation.

# ARTICLES & RESEARCH

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF ART THERAPY ON MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

The following articles offer in-depth insights into how art therapy fosters emotional resilience, aids in trauma recovery, and enhances overall mental health. These studies illustrate the essential role art therapy plays in promoting mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, providing a holistic approach to healing and self-discovery.

### 1. "Role of Art Therapy in the Promotion of Mental Health: A Critical Review"

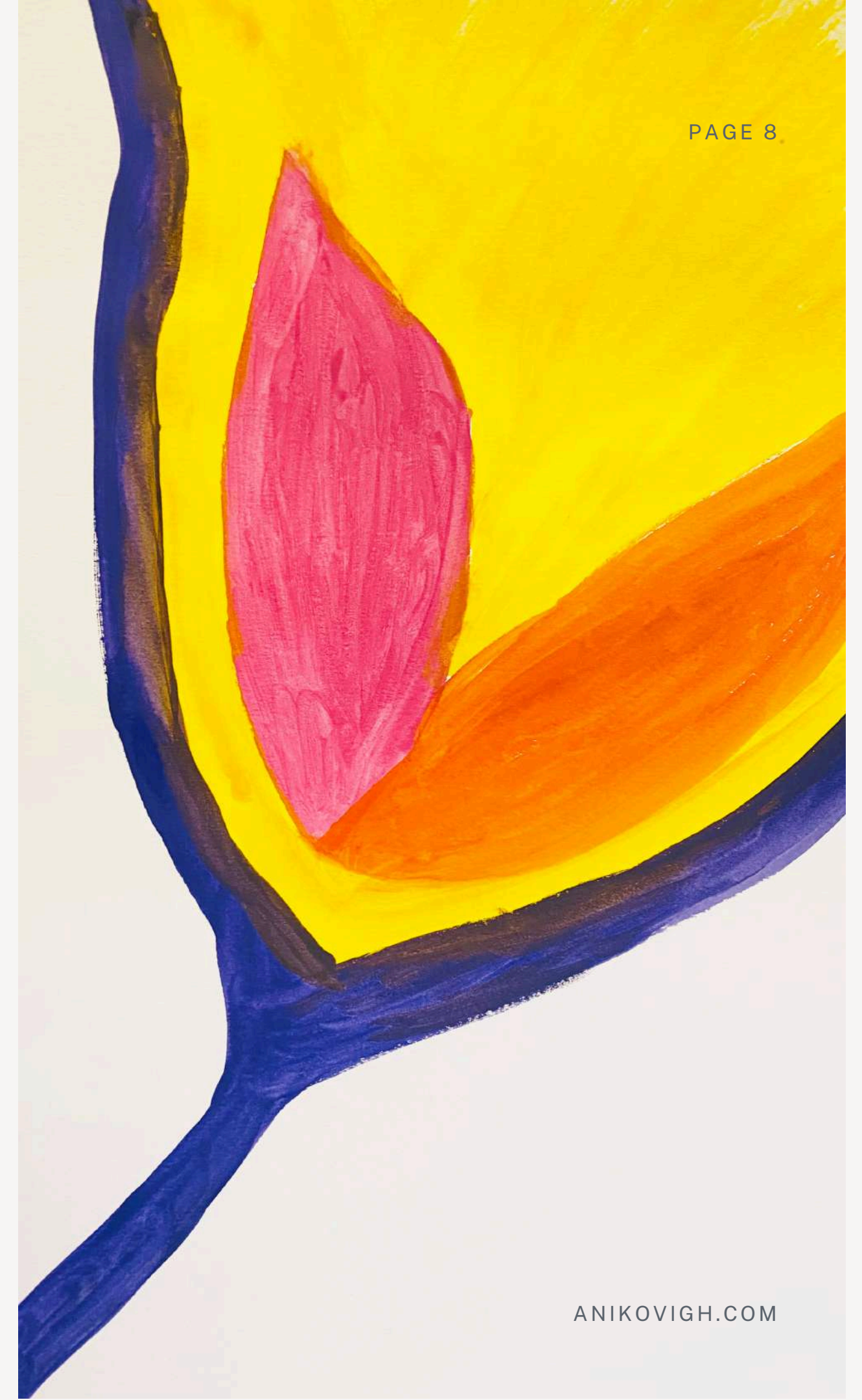
The following article from the National Institutes of Health provides a comprehensive overview of how art therapy can help individuals dealing with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and trauma. It highlights how the use of creative expression aids in emotional processing and promotes self-awareness.

Read more here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9472646/>

### 2. "The Effectiveness of Art Therapy for Anxiety in Adult Women: A Randomized Controlled Trial" (Frontiers in Psychology)

The following study examines the effectiveness of art therapy in reducing anxiety symptoms in adult women. The randomized controlled trial demonstrates how art therapy can significantly alleviate anxiety by providing a safe, expressive outlet for emotions.

Read more here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6549595/>





# ARTICLES & RESEARCH

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF ART THERAPY ON MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

### 3. "Healing Through Art" (Psychiatry.org)

Is an article that highlights how art therapy benefits both emotional and physical health, particularly for individuals dealing with serious mental illness and chronic conditions. It underscores the ability of art therapy to reduce stress, anxiety, and emotional distress while improving cognitive functions, self-esteem, and emotional resilience.

Read more here: <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/healing-through-art>

### 4. "Art Therapy: A Complementary Treatment for Mental Disorders" (Frontiers in Psychology)

An comprehensive review that discusses how art therapy serves as a treatment for mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, and PTSD. It explores how art therapy aids in trauma recovery by facilitating emotional expression and gradual healing.

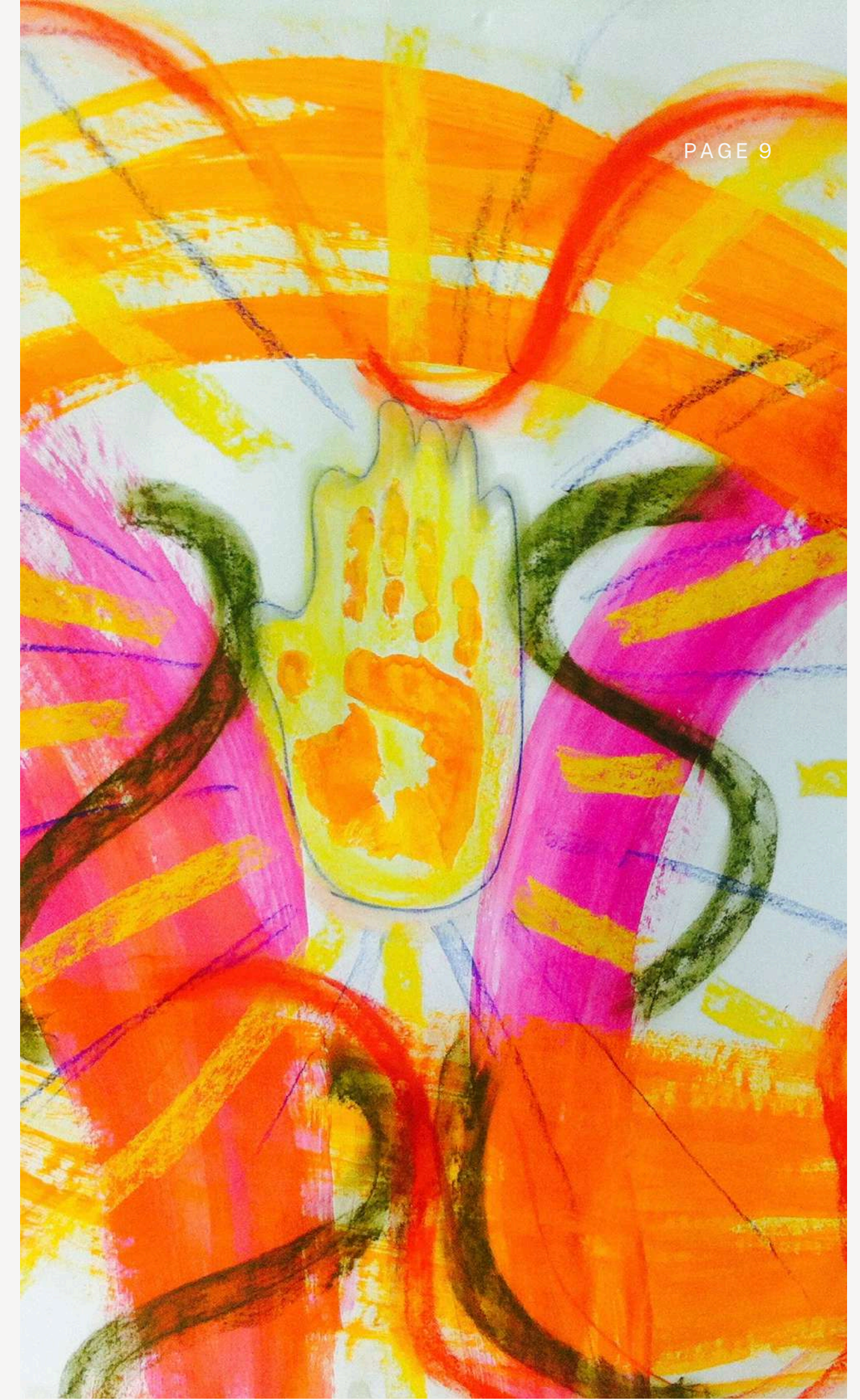
Read more here:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.686005/full>

### 5. "The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature"

The following review explores how engagement with creative arts positively impacts health outcomes, focusing on music, visual arts, and movement-based expressions. It emphasizes how creative therapies improve mental, emotional, and even physical health.

Read more here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2804629/>



# CASE STUDIES

BOUNDARIES, ANGER, AND IDENTITY

The three case studies presented, demonstrate the transformative process of art therapy. Each client's drawing was guided by their subconscious, tapping into emotions and inner experiences that couldn't be fully articulated or rationalized at the time. Clients didn't always know why they were compelled to draw a particular shape, use certain colors, or make specific marks, but they trusted their intuition. This intuitive, nonverbal process allowed them to bypass logic and access deeper emotional truths.

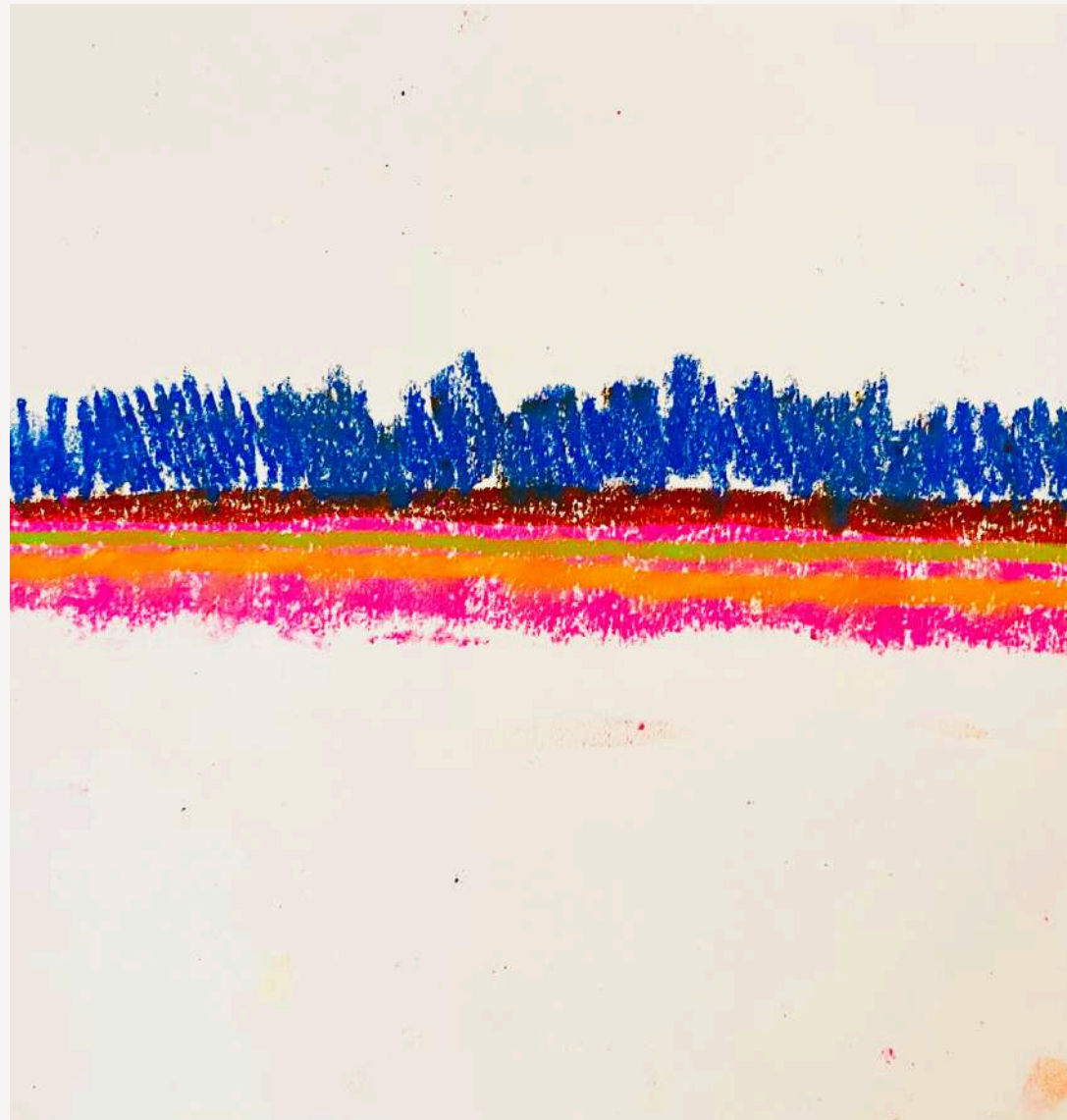
This visceral, sensory-based experience is impactful because it fosters a stronger connection to their authentic needs and helps them learn how to trust their instincts and embodied wisdom. By engaging in this process, they gradually built trust in their inner world.

The following case studies explore themes of boundaries, anger, and identity shaped by trauma through the lens of art therapy.



# CASE STUDIE ONE

## BOUNDARIES



Case Study: Female Client, 58 Years Old

Focus: Boundaries and Overprotectiveness of women

The client struggled with a pattern of overprotecting female friends and colleagues, often prioritizing their needs while neglecting her own. This left her feeling emotionally drained and without clear boundaries.

### Therapeutic Impact

This session helped the client gain insight into her behavior and its effects on her well-being. By understanding and experiencing the importance of boundaries, she now has the foundation to foster healthier, balanced relationships and prioritize self-care. This embodied realization marks the start of profound personal growth and transformation.

### Creative Process 1: Understanding the Current Dynamic

\*Materials: Crayons and Soft Pastels\*

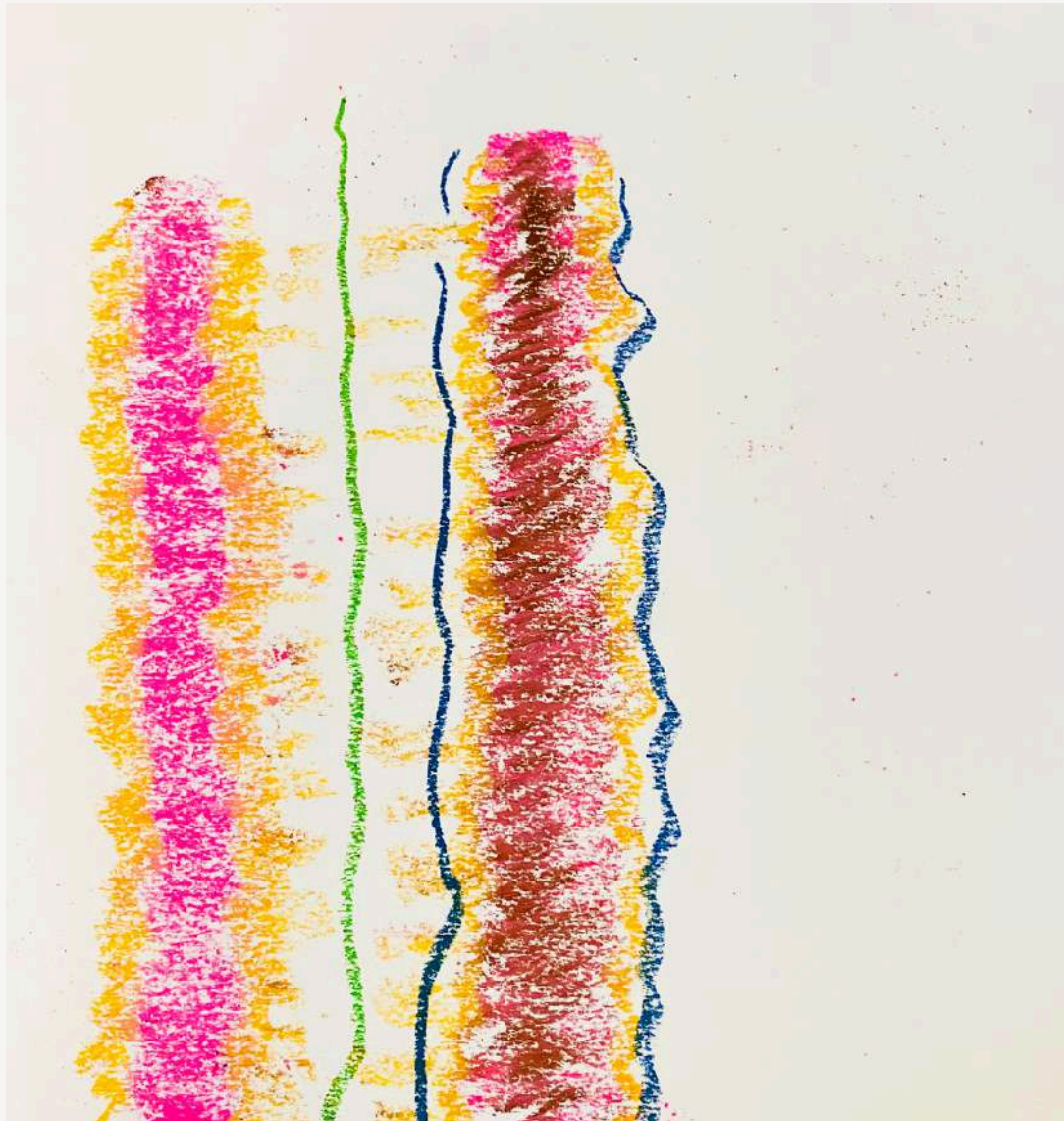
The client used colors, space and shapes to represent key elements of her experience:

- Overprotection: Blue, dominant at the top.
- Self: A very thin brown line, squeezed between the color blue and the women she was overprotecting.
- Women: Pink and orange at the bottom, placed at the bottom.
- Boundaries: None present.

The illustration visually captured how her overprotectiveness overshadowed her, leaving no space for self-care or boundaries. She physically felt and recognized how this dynamic left her short in breath, limited, and disconnected from herself.

# CASE STUDIE ONE

## BOUNDARIES



Case Study Part Two: Female Client, 58 Years Old  
Focus: Boundaries and Overprotectiveness of women

Creative Process 2: Creating a New Dynamic  
\*What Needs to Change?\*

On a fresh page, the client introduced boundaries and more space for herself. She drew a separation between herself and the women, showing clear identity and autonomy for both.

Impact:

The new image brought immediate emotional relief, allowing the client to breathe more deeply and feel freer, both physically and emotionally.

Client's Realizations

- Overprotectiveness creates enmeshment and dependency.
- Prioritizing others' needs leaves no room for her own.
- To empower others, she must lead by setting healthy boundaries.

The real therapeutic breakthrough occurred when the client could \*see, feel, and understand clearly her behaviour and then internalize the new shifts in herself. This experience laid the foundation for deeper, lasting change, as she can start to embrace a healthier, more balanced approach to relationships and self-care.

# CASE STUDIE TWO

## ANGER

Case Study: Male Client, 42 Years Old  
Focus: Repressed Anger

The client aimed to learn how to connect with his emotions, particularly anger and frustration, which he had been suppressing to the point of developing chronic tremors.

Creative Process: Connecting to Anger  
\*Materials: Wet acrylic paint.\*

The client used his fingers to paint, embracing imperfection. His anger was expressed as a burning fire or fireworks, above it layers of dark bruises, yellow-green colors and fading blue skies acting as a barrier. Keep the flames down and stay on the colourful level.

At this stage, the client felt fear towards his anger. Through role play, he connected with a younger part of himself, allowing long-repressed emotions to surface and be validated. This exercise helped him to "sit" with the anger, forming a healthier relationship with it.

Transformative Moment: Switching the Image

Initially resistant for the fear of feeling the anger, the client eventually turned the painting upside down and was surprised to see the fire transform into a bright sun and the skies into a wavy ocean. This shift allowed him to see anger not just as destructive, but as a life force. This realization marked a turning point in how he perceived his anger, which had always triggered fight, flight, or people-pleasing behaviors.

By the session's end, the client had learned to relate to anger in a grounded, safe, and present way – allowing space for both fear and anger, and moving toward a healthier emotional balance.



# CASE STUDIE THREE

## IDENTITY & TRAUMA

Case Study: Female Client, 32 Years Old  
Focus: Identity and Trauma



The client aimed to address her relationship with herself, shaped by trauma and negative self-beliefs.

### Creative Process 1: Current State

In her drawing, she expressed a heavy, dark foggy shape, coming out of a deep red pain.

The image is filled with beliefs like:

- I'm unworthy
- I'm nothing
- I'm wrong

A thin green line at the top symbolized her life force, but she felt trapped beneath the weight of these negative dark thoughts. The image reflected her harsh self-view, driven by trauma. "Being stuck in the darkness makes it hard to catch a "green" air and see beyond the fog."



### Creative Process 2: The Desired Relationship to Self

In a second image, she drew a lighter, more connected version of herself, represented by vibrant greens and yellows, symbolizing growth, peace, lightness and loving kindness.

She realized that her first drawing represented her trauma, while the second revealed her true self—the "seed" that had been hidden beneath the layers of pain. For the first time, she clearly recognized that despite the darkness she endured, her inner light remained untouched. This clarity brought her immense relief, alongside a newfound sense of strength and hope.

"I never chose this dark relationship with myself—it just developed over the years since childhood," she reflected. Now, as an adult, she understands that she has the power to choose a new way to think, relate, and treat herself. She committed to using her drawing as a reminder of her true identity: a growing, vibrant seed full of potential.

# TESTIMONIALS



Ines Ferreira,  
Clinical Psychologist at Holina Trauma and Addiction Centre

“As a clinical psychologist, I’ve seen firsthand how powerful Aniko’s sessions are. She complements traditional therapy by guiding clients to access deeper emotional layers. Through art, they organize their internal chaos, finding clarity and self-acceptance in ways words alone cannot provide.

Aniko’s integrative approach brings profound outcomes, helping clients see new dimensions of themselves and fostering real transformation.

Aniko embodies many of the qualities we aim to model and teach our clients at Holina. Her grounded, calm, and warm presence is combined with a sharp focus, making her a strong and stabilizing force in the therapeutic space. She not only provides safety for clients to open up, but also models the embodiment and grounding techniques that are key to our therapeutic approach.

Clients feel secure in her presence, allowing them to express their true selves. Aniko’s deep passion and commitment to her work foster trust, encouraging clients to engage more deeply in their healing journey.”



Marc Rower,  
Trauma Therapist at Holina Trauma and Addiction Centre

"As a primary therapist, I oversee the clinical therapy process for clients during their 1-3 month stays. Over the past year, I’ve had the privilege of working with Aniko, and I’ve witnessed significant post-traumatic growth in clients through her art therapy.

Aniko’s sessions have allowed clients to access and process internal dynamics that are often difficult to reach through talk therapy. Her various modalities enable clients to see their issues from new perspectives, accelerating their healing and fostering deeper understanding.

Aniko is an integral part of our therapeutic team, seamlessly aligning her work with each client's journey. Her contributions are highly valued by both clients and fellow therapists at our center."



# TESTIMONIALS

W. Sarah, UK

"Art therapy was exactly what I needed to break through the emotional stagnation I felt in talk therapy. It was one of the most transformative parts of my healing journey. While I had previously experienced group art therapy, the private sessions with Aniko were far more impactful, tailored specifically to my personal needs. We addressed deep wounds, triggers, and emotions that had been difficult for me to access. The inner child work, in particular, was key to unlocking my growth.

Working with art in a therapeutic way, was eye-opening — Aniko's insight into the symbolism in my work revealed things I hadn't even realized. Her presence made me feel safe, seen, and understood. I highly recommend art therapy, and if you can work with Aniko, it will be a truly transformative experience."

Noa, Somatic Psychotherapist, Holina, Holistic Recovery Center for Addiction and Trauma

"I had the pleasure of working with Aniko at Holina, where her impact on clients was profoundly positive. Many clients who struggled to access their inner emotions and connect with their inner child experienced breakthroughs in her sessions. Aniko's gentle, soft approach helps clients lower their defenses and engage with their most vulnerable feelings. She creates a safe and nurturing environment, which is crucial for deep healing. I trusted her completely with our clients, and she consistently provided the support they needed to open up. I highly recommend experiencing her work firsthand."





# TESTIMONIALS

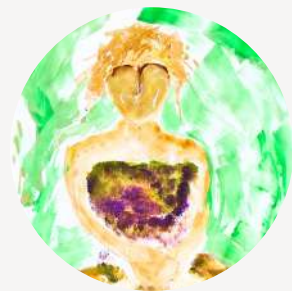


Holina's Client, Thailand

At first, I was skeptical and hesitant to try art therapy. I thought, "I don't know how to make art, I'm not talented," and couldn't see how it would help. But after three months of working with Aniko, it became one of my favorite therapy modalities. It felt so liberating to express my emotions through images, colors, and shapes.

Art therapy helped me access repressed feelings that I couldn't verbalize, and the creative process allowed me to bypass my logical, intellectual mind. My drawings spoke for me in ways words couldn't. I could physically feel the emotions through the colors and images I painted, and the sessions went deep. I started seeing and confronting parts of myself I had long avoided. Art therapy gave me better access to my emotions than talk therapy ever could.

Aniko helped me so much, and I'll be forever grateful for her deep wisdom and guidance!



R. Cathy, Switzerland

"Working with Aniko and going through the expressive paint therapy process has helped me in so many ways. I feel much more grounded, safe, calm and connected. My stress and anxieties has become less and I no longer escape my feeling as I used to. I know myself better than before. I discovered parts in me I never knew I had!

Aniko provided me a safe space for me to truly express myself as I am. she was guiding me all the way through, giving amazing inputs and reflections on my process. It's a true self discovery healing journey. I discovered my creativity again, I know how to reconnect with it, I know how to stay and grow in it instead of pushing it away."



R. Penn, Israel

*"Aniko is an amazing therapist. She opened a door to my inner creativity, which was not accessible to me at all before.*

*With her loving presence she gently and clearly guided me into my inner world. In this journey I met places of inner strength and creativity. She also supported me in gently meeting also difficult places, places holding pain and fear. I cherish the process I went with Aniko and it accompanies me ever since."*





# LET'S CONTACT

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