
Overcoming Trauma and Developing Fine Motor Skills Through Creative Expression

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “How Art Can Help Children Overcome Trauma” by EducationWeek. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the ways that art supports children’s development of fine motor skills.
- ◆ Reflect upon your current practices. Determine how children who have experienced trauma can benefit from creative expression through fine motor activities.
- ◆ Create an action plan to develop a safe environment for creative expression in your learning environment to support children’s fine motor skills.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading, use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children who have experienced trauma through fine motor and art experiences.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support fine motor skills.

...areas of the brain can be reshaped and reorganized through activities that include touch and movement – the foundation of creative expression.

Heidi Durham

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ Art benefits children’s development in a variety of ways. This article describes the ways in which art and creative expression supports children who have experienced trauma by building empathy, social-emotional skills, and a strong sense of self. Art also benefits children’s development of fine motor skills.
 - How do creative art experiences build fine motor skills? Consider the tools they may use and the movements they make during art.

- ◆ Reflect upon the art experiences in your classroom. In what ways do you provide opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills through art? How do you incorporate art as a form of creative expression to support children who have experienced trauma? Remember that crafts and art projects are different than creative expression.

- ◆ Observe the children in your care during an art experience. How do children who have experienced trauma respond to participation in the arts?
 - What emotions do they display? Are they proud, overwhelmed, frustrated, sad, etc.?
 - Do they come to you for help or need fine motor support to create their vision?
 - How are you supporting fine motor skills while encouraging children to create art?

- ◆ Durham notes, “In a safe environment, students can learn that taking risks in art might elicit emotions they can share with pride.” Develop an action plan to provide the children in your classroom who have experienced trauma with safe and supportive art experiences through fine motor activities.
 - Consider children’s fine motor skills. What modifications and supports can you offer to allow them to create freely? You may consider encouraging them to try new grips or tools, narrating and labeling use of fine motor skills, and promoting autonomy.
 - What materials and supplies can you provide children to create freely and express their emotions?
 - Check in regularly to determine if the supports or needs of children have changed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting children's fine motor skills through art:

- ◆ **Source:** Maryville University
 - ◆ **Infographic:** Creativity for Kids: Benefits and Tips for Nurturing an Innovative Mind
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://online.maryville.edu/online-bachelors-degrees/psychology/resources/creativity-for-kids-benefits-tips-for-nurturing-an-innovative-mind/>
 - ◆ **Description:** This infographic summarizes the benefits of art and creative expression on children's development, including fine motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development.
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- ◆ **Source:** Georgetown Behavioral Health Institute
 - ◆ **Article:** Benefits of Expressive Art Therapy for Children
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.georgetownbehavioral.com/blog/expressive-art-therapy-for-children>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article describes the ways in which expressive art therapy (and creative expression) helps children deal with strong emotions and traumatic experiences, while supporting fine motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development.