

Miles for Migraine Education Day 2020 Burlington, Vermont

# ART THERAPY FOR MIGRAINE

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# WHAT IS ART THERAPY?

- Art therapy is a part of the mental health field in which clients, facilitated by an art therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore thoughts and feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, develop self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, learn and practice social skills, reduce anxiety, and increase self esteem.\*
- An art therapist has knowledge of visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms) and the creative process, as well as of human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.\*

\*definitions adapted from the [American Art Therapy Association](#)

# HOW CAN ART THERAPY HELP WITH MIGRAINE?

- **Making art can help ease pain...**

- Intentionally engaging in art making when experiencing pain can not only serve as a distraction through diverting your attention from the pain sensation but can also help train your brain to relax and shift your mood to a more positive state of being so the pain no longer controls your emotional state
- Pain can lead to feelings of anxiety or feeling “out of control” or at the mercy of what the condition allows you to do or not do—art therapy and the creative process can help a person regain a sense of control and reclaim ownership over their life by creating something meaningful and/or unique
- Making art under the guidance and support of an art therapist can help a person with migraines gain understanding and awareness of when and how their condition affects them and their mood, how they relate to their pain and how making art affects their symptoms. Gaining knowledge and awareness of your individual experience can be empowering and help reclaim a sense of wellbeing
- Art therapy does not replace the need for pain medication, but it can help reduce perceptions of pain sensations and help manage the symptoms of stress and anxiety that can accompany pain, which assists with the recovery process and improves quality of life

Referenced from the Harvard Health blog, *Art therapy: Another way to help manage pain*

# WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM ART THERAPY?



Anyone can benefit!



You do not need to have any prior experience or talent in art making to engage in and benefit from art therapy



If you can make a mark on a page you can do art therapy



Be open to trying new things and allow yourself to be free of judgements of what you create.



Be curious and trust the process!

# ART THERAPY EXPERIENTIAL: MINDFUL LINE DRAWING DOODLE

- Use materials you have on hand (something to draw with and something to draw on)
- Take a moment with eyes closed or a soft focus to tune into the rhythm of your breath
  - Feel your belly and chest rise and fall with the rhythm of your inhales and exhales
  - Notice without judgement if your breath is fast or slow, sharp or smooth, long or short, steady or changing
- Open your eyes without losing focus on your breath so you can take your drawing utensil and allow your hand to move it across the paper in sync with your breathing rhythm
- Try to make a continuous line that swirls and moves across the whole page
- When you feel ready, pause and look at the squiggle created. Use color, shapes, lines and/or patterns to fill in the open spaces created by your line. If you'd like, each space can represent a different thought, feeling or sensation you are experiencing.

