

# "TAKING THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED": ART AS A THERAPY TOOL; AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SELF AND SOCIAL LEARNING

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## **Abstract**

Art shouldn't rest only in the frame, but become itself a frame of our experiences. Far more than a mere aesthetic indulgence or an economic benefit, art expands human mind, aiding in moral and individual development as well as in social awareness and acceptance of the "other"; thus in a conscious commitment to humanist principles. After all, creative expression of ourselves through the arts is intrinsically human, enforces our uniqueness as a species, while we delve deeper into our souls, seeking for an unrestricted exploration of our nature.

Supportively, art as a 'therapy method' can enhance social learning and cultural responsiveness. When undertaken by well trained professionals, it can serve crucially in balancing self confidence and exorcising emotional excess by allowing unrevealed means for introspection. Moreover, as a tool for shedding light on our self knowledge, it opens widely the borders of relating effectively to others or to life's varied phenomena, as we learn how to communicate the subtleties of who we really are and what we believe in ways that words usually fail to fully capture.

In our increasingly fast-paced societies, where all of us are under high amounts of pressure and stress, art as a therapy tool gains ground in Education, due mainly to the fact that it provides to educators and students of all ages with problem-solving skills, innovative mindsets and social communicative abilities. Alongside engaged teaching, with no exceptions or limitations, art therapy can nurture learners' souls and generate growth of their minds.

This paper wishes to contribute to a wider understanding of what art as an aiding 'therapeutic' tool uniquely has to offer and reevaluate its social role in fostering meaningful connections between ourselves and our global- cultural environments. In this context, particular attention will be given to the ways in which it can be employed in formal Education and become -alongside art and cultural cultivation- an important investment in social and academic learning alike; in making the classroom a more productive and enjoyable place, a threshold for creativity and multicultural acceptance.

**Keywords:** Art, art education, art therapy, creativity, NEW methods in Education, alternative learning, multicultural acceptance, self-knowledge