

# A Therapeutic Application of the Planetree Vision for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

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by  
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# The Benefit of Planetree for Individuals with Disabilities

The multiple benefits of Planetree, especially as a application of art imagery, provide frontiers that still need to be explored by those whose lives are touched by a developmental disability.

Benefit categories include:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Social

# Emotional Benefit

- The Planetree vision allows an individual a means of coping with events and emotions of an event beyond his/her control.
- By engaging in the creative process freely the individual learns to assume an active role rather than a passive role over the experience.
- When one experiences Planetree in relationship to the disability, a sense of control emerges that one has choice of expression over the experience.
- Having choice is empowering by boosting ones self-esteem and self-confidence.

# Physical Benefit

- Although Planetree correlation with art imagery is still in its preliminary phase, some of the physical benefits are a reduction in fatigue, depression, anxiety, pain and stress.
- By lowering stress and anxiety, Planetree's creativity may even serve to boost an individual's immune response.
- Studies have documented a reduction in blood pressure as a result of art imagery.

# Cognitive Benefit

- The art imagery of Planetree in some cases, may provide insight into individual's behavioral health diagnosis or challenging behaviors stabilization.
- Although caregivers of individuals should not infer anything about the art imagery, the individual may verbally support the imagery.
- The art imagery of Planetree can provide a glimpse into an individual's inner world and serve as a lens to help caregivers, families, and others an understanding of the point of view of the individual.

# Cognitive Benefit

- The advent of technologies that enable researchers to better understand the brain's process has provided evidence of art therapy's cognitive benefit.
- Research demonstrates that traumatic memories are stored in the right hemisphere of the brain, while our verbal capacity is controlled by the left hemisphere of the brain.
- The art imagery of Planetree may promote communication across the two hemispheres of the brain for verbal articulation of a traumatic experience after exposure to the art imagery.

# Social Benefit

- The application of group art imagery through Planetree may help provide an opportunity for individuals with a disability to socialize as well as provide a safe outlet for self-expression.
- The application of art imagery through Planetree may help individuals recognize their feelings and problems as not unique, and replace a sense of isolation with connectedness.

# Quality of Life

- Art imagery may be an effective means of improving the quality of life especially in the elderly individual.
- Art imagery may encourage communication to enhance a sense of well-being, happiness, peacefulness, satisfaction, and calmness.
- In some cases, a creative application of art imagery eases transitional stress to a high technological tertiary care community.

# Summary

- Planetree as an application of art imagery uses creative processes to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals with and without disabilities.
- Based on the belief that the creative process involves artistic self-expression, art imagery helps individuals to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self esteem, self-awareness, and achieve insight.

# Resources

- The Arts of Life, Inc. Chicago, Ill.
- American Visionary Art Museum, Baltimore Md.
- National Center of the Arts & Disabilities (NIAD)
- Fountain Gallery, New York, N.Y.
- Art From the Heart
- Creative Growth Art Center
- Neighborhood Center of the Arts