



## ART THERAPY IN 6 QUESTIONS

Art therapy uses art as a psychotherapeutic tool through everyone's creativity and imagination to stimulate cognitive, emotional, physical and social capabilities. Art is a form of self-expression that is beneficial to mental health and well-being.

1

### For whom and why?

**Art therapy** is aimed at people with mild to moderate dementia.

Art therapy is indicated to stimulate cognitive functioning, improve mood and quality of life, stimulate social interactions and manage behavioural symptoms.

2

### How is the intervention conducted?

**An art therapy programme follows a therapeutic protocol.**

The sessions are conducted individually or in group of 5 to 8 participants supervised by 2 therapists. Sessions take place throughout the year once a week and last between 20 minutes and 1 hour depending on the participants' ability to concentrate. Sessions are usually held mid-morning but can be provided at the end of the day to limit anxiety often present in people with dementia at that time.

The sessions offer different activities: drawing, painting, collage, pottery, writing a poem, theatre, music, dance, etc. The aim of the sessions is for each participant to engage in an artistic creation process freely or by taking inspiration from a known work. During the sessions, participants are encouraged to talk about what they are doing (description of the artistic creation, the memories it evokes, etc.). Family caregivers can join the sessions to strengthen the links with their loved one.

The works can be kept by the participants or presented in exhibitions or performances.

3

### What are the benefits?

**Observed effects** are an improvement in quality of life, well-being and social interactions; a decrease in agitation, depression, anxiety and feelings of loneliness; a decrease in the use of psychotropic treatments (antidepressants, anxiolytics and neuroleptics); and a decrease in caregiver stress.





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How does it work?

Art therapy targets and involves 4 areas:

- Cognitive: memory, concentration, language, imagination, spatial orientation, sensory stimulation.
- Emotional: expression of emotions, relaxation, self-awareness.
- Physical: fine motor skills and sensory-motor integration (control and coordination of gestures related to the perception of one's environment and one's own sensations).
- Social: social interactions, social inclusion, social cohesion.

Cultural aspects and interests of the participants are to be considered in the choice of media and techniques used and in the artworks presented.

5

When is it contraindicated?

Art therapy sessions are not recommended for people with moderately severe and severe cognitive impairments because the imagination will be difficult to mobilise.

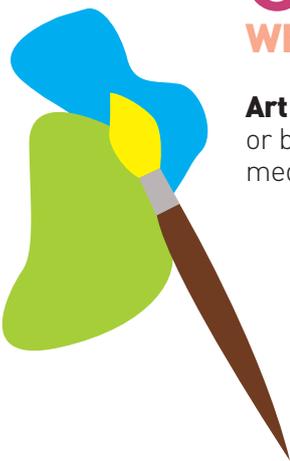
Severe sensory impairment (visual and/or auditory) may hinder the participant and interfere with the course of the sessions as well as chronic pain (osteoarthritis of the hands), behavioural symptoms and psychiatric disorders with hallucinations.

In all cases, it is necessary to discuss it beforehand with professionals.

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Who can provide art therapy?

Art therapy is provided by a qualified art therapist, by an art therapy student or by any care staff with specific training. When a professional uses art as a medium of care or activity, it is not necessarily art therapy.



Do not forget your glasses and/or hearing aids if you need them.



Your participation in the sessions is free. You will always be asked if you wish to participate.

This sheet is adapted from a chapter in the guide *Psychosocial interventions and dementia: understanding, knowing, implementing* which presents 10 psychosocial interventions.

