

Boost Your Creativity: Art Techniques to Help You, Help Your Clients

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Goals & Objectives

In this presentation you will learn:

- The importance of creativity in our work as counselors
- How to increase your own creativity
- Creative art techniques to use with clients



Why is creativity important in our work?

- It helps us remain interested and engaged
- It helps us be attentive to our clients and their needs
- It helps us understand ourselves
- It helps us manage our own stress levels





How do we increase our own creativity?

- Keep a notebook of ideas (random and concrete).
- Find something outside your comfort zone to try.
- Doodle!
- Focus on the act of making and not the end result.
- Give yourself time and space.
- Read something new.
- Change your routine or environment, even a little.
- Go outdoors and get fresh air.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Have fun with it!

Keep in mind when using art as a clinical tool....

It's important to have an awareness of our own comfort level with art materials, coupled with a basic understanding of the applications. Doing so will actually boost our creativity and help our clients in their process.

When we have a stronger understanding of the art materials, how to employ them, we will help our clients explore their emotions and reach their goals.

The box in art therapy (background)

- The box, or container in art therapy terms, can serve as a metaphor for “a holding space”.
- The container or box can be representative many things, the parent-child relationship; the need to safely express (and contain) feelings that are too overwhelming; or, it can represent different “sides” of the client.
- We can be creative in the art-making process, allowing the client to use the box to express themselves, while the box acts as a literal container for the client’s emotions.



The box in art therapy (Process)

- Use a box or container. Any size or shape but it should be offered with a lid.
- Provide paint, glue, glitter, collage materials, scissors, markers, beads, hot glue, string, small toys or animals, etc.

Ideas for directives include:

- Make a box with the outside as others (friends, family) see you and the inside how you see yourself.
- Make an environment for an animal (provide small plastic animal of choice).
- Make a box for your worries.



Examples



Figure 1.

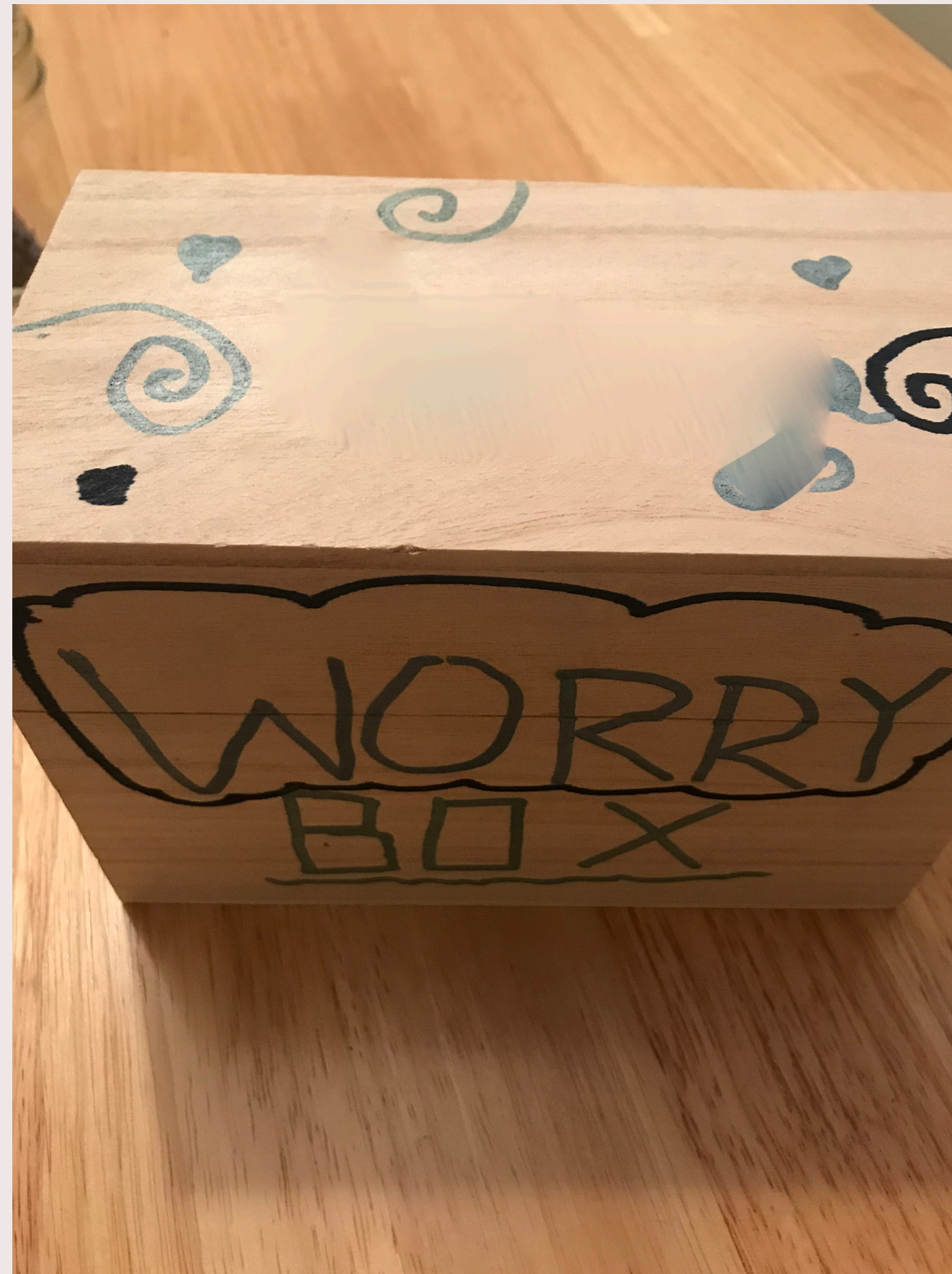


Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

Torn Paper Work in Art Therapy

(Background)

- Ripping, tearing, shredding or crumpling paper has a therapeutic value in itself.
- When a client struggles to find the words to express an emotion such as anger, encouraging the act of ripping and tearing paper can be a release.
- The release of tearing paper can open the client up to the second part, the art-making. This step can allow the client to move through the anger and work to resolve conflict or change perspectives.



Torn Paper Work in Art Therapy

(Process)

- Provide client with paper (colored paper, construction paper, magazines, old phone books, brown paper bags, notebook paper, etc.)
- Encourage client to rip, tear, shred, crumple the paper. You may need to model it for them because it may feel awkward. **Be aware of the client in the space and be mindful of their emotions and movements.**
- Once the paper is shredded or torn, it may be all over the table, the floor, the carpet. Don't pick it up right away! Allow for some reflection.
- Offer the client to make something from the torn paper. "Would you like to do something with this? Like make a collage or a painting?" Keep in mind, some clients won't! They may want to throw it away in the garbage and it's important to respect the client's choice to throw their art away.
- If the client decides to make something, offer a paper with a border or even a canvas. The edge acts as a container to the previous emotions and will metaphorically "hold" the emotions.
- A final and most important step in this art project is to reflect. Allow time to reflect on the piece that the client made from the torn art and talk about where the client started (shredding the paper) to the end of the directive.

Some ideas on reflection. You can prompt the client by asking open ended questions about the end piece of art, or how they felt in the first part of the process (tearing the paper) compared to the second (creating artwork).



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

Torn paper collage to work through trauma

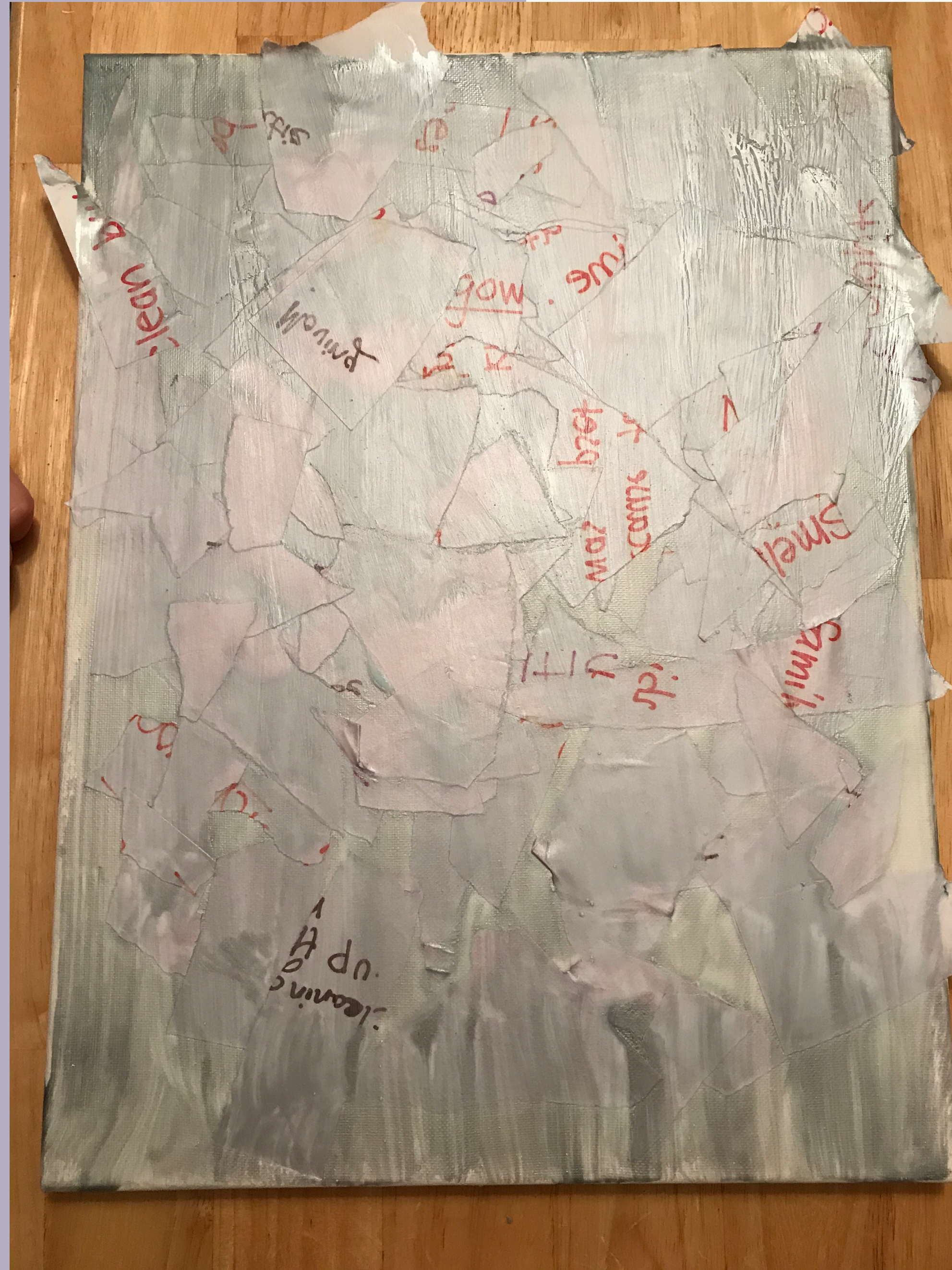


Figure 8.

It's important to remember:

1. Try and build creativity in your own life
2. Understand your own reactions and responses to the art materials
3. Have a basic understanding of the use of different art materials
4. Hold the space for the client
5. Allow for spontaneity - and even unfinished work

It's not about the product.
It's about the *process*.



References and resources

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Figures

Figure 1. Nine year old boy with ADHD, self-esteem issues.

Figure 2. Ten year old girl with anxiety disorder and ADHD.

Figure 3. Ten year old girl with anxiety disorder and ADHD.

Figure 4. Eight year old girl with trauma and high conflict divorce.

Figure 5. Nine year old girl with high conflict divorce and bedtime struggles.

Figure 6. Eight year old girl with selective mutism.

Figure 7. Eight year old girl with selective mutism.

Figure 8. Twelve year old girl with hospitalization and trauma.

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