Art therapists use the creative process and the issues that surface during art therapy to help their clients increase insight and judgment, cope with stress, work through traumatic experiences, increase cognitive abilities, have better relationships with family and friends, and simply enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of the creative experience.

In this highly anticipated revision of the definitive text on art therapy, author and pioneer art therapist Dr. Harriet Wadeson examines the clinical considerations, education, history, and application of art therapy treatment programs for an array of presenting problems. Reflecting current DSM updates since the first edition's publication, the Second Edition has been completely updated, with nine new chapters on trauma, crisis, multicultural considerations, community art therapy, and more.

Illustrated with over 150 works of art from clients as well as the author’s own personal artwork, and packaged with a companion CD-ROM, which includes more than 100 full-color versions of the illustrations in the book, Art Psychotherapy, Second Edition is a comprehensive guide to the theory and practice of art therapy. Written by one of the most established experts in the field, this book will be informative for practicing art therapists, other mental health practitioners looking to incorporate art therapy into their mental health practice, students in these disciplines, and those interested in entering the art therapy profession.

HARRIET WADESON, PhD, LCSW, ATR-BC, HLM, established and directed the Art Therapy Graduate Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago for twenty-three years. She is the author of six books on art therapy and over seventy articles in professional journals. She is an Honorary Life Member of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), the profession’s highest honor, and has been awarded a Resolution of Commendation from the Illinois State Legislature, as well as numerous awards for her art, research, and scientific exhibits. In addition to holding many offices on the AATA’s Executive Board, she is a past associate editor of Art Therapy, the journal of the AATA. She is a frequent international guest lecturer and currently heads the Art Therapy Program at Northwestern University.
Art Psychotherapy,
Second Edition
Art Psychotherapy, Second Edition

Harriet Wadeson

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
To my children, Lisa, Eric, and Keith, with appreciation for the creative challenges, enrichment, joy, and love they have brought to my life.
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Foreword to the First Edition

The concepts and the practices of art psychotherapy have evolved both within and outside the sphere of psychotherapy. In the 1940s, under the pioneering leadership of Margaret Naumburg, the initial framework was psychoanalytic. By studying clinical cases in detail, with artistic expression as the springboard for the patient’s associations and the therapist’s interpretations, Naumburg established an invaluable tradition that continues as one component of present-day art psychotherapy.

Other psychoanalytically oriented pioneers, such as Edith Kramer, gave greater emphasis to the healing potentialities of the psychological processes activated in the creative act. Still others, such as Hanna Yaxa Kwiatkowska, began some 50 years ago to expand the scope of art psychotherapy into the interpersonal field of families.

At about that time, innovations suddenly proliferated not only with fresh concepts and methods, but also with newly defined professional roles for art therapists in private practice and in a great array of clinical settings and academic and research institutions. It was my good fortune to be in a position in the Intramural Program of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), where I could readily be aware of these exciting developments, especially in Washington and Philadelphia, and to facilitate, more explicitly, the creative work of Hanna Kwiatkowska and Harriet Wadeson at NIMH.

Over the subsequent years, Harriet Wadeson has continued to add to her clinical, research, and artistic experience. On the one hand, she has published numerous research papers in leading psychiatric journals; on the other hand, she has thoroughly familiarized herself with developments in existential psychology and the Human Potential Movement,
using not only graphic arts but also other modalities of expressive therapies.

This book, then, has become a personalized statement arising from her highly diversified professional background. She shows how this personal philosophy can be successfully adapted for use with a variety of people, ranging from those with major and minor psychiatric symptoms to those who wish to enhance their growth in dealing with the problems of living.

As an ingredient of the professionalization of art psychotherapy, Harriet Wadeson discusses forthrightly many of the special problems that art therapists, especially when working in institutional settings, have had while establishing their status and identity. Earlier, art therapists often worked as psychodiagnosticians, and their therapy was defined as adjunctive to the primary therapy of someone else. Wadeson asserts that “art therapists should be psychotherapists plus,” that is, psychotherapists who are qualified to work alone or in a team of colleagues and who also are trained in the theory and practice of art therapy, have technical expertise in art, and are experienced in using art for self-expression. Surely, this professional identity is a far cry from “messing around” and “killing time” with art materials in activities programs. In my view, psychiatrists and psychologists even today have failed to understand how much they can learn from skilled art psychotherapists. Interdisciplinary acknowledgment clearly needs to be reciprocal; the gains then are mutual.

I must also express a personal hope—recognized in this volume—that a sophisticated approach to art psychotherapy will not neglect those deeply impaired individuals whose creativity becomes manifest through developing simple but often surprising and personally meaningful “artistic” skills. Also, certain patients can benefit from art therapy that begins stepwise, helping patients to extend their attention span, develop the ability to integrate parts into a whole, improve their motor control, and gain better ability to focus or perceive. Such approaches are quite compatible with a comprehensive approach that also has been enriched by the incorporation of a humanistic tradition concerned with helping all persons, including “normal” clients, to improve authenticity, individuality, and self-actualization. In varying degrees, all approaches to art therapy require a transfer from the realm of materials to the realms of individual creative processes and interpersonal relationships.
Harriet Wadeson's many years as an art therapist have engendered thoughtful and quite detailed guidelines here for dealing with a multiplicity of patients and situations. She devotes an entire chapter or more to each of the following: mania, depression, suicide, schizophrenia, alcoholism, families, and hospitalized and “normal” groups. A most important chapter explains the hypothesis that the recovery style of schizophrenics (either “integrating” or “sealing-over”) can be determined and assessed by the quality of the patient's pictorial expression. These findings are documented by collaborative research that suggests the patient’s recovery style can be elucidated by the quality and expressiveness of his or her pictorial representation. The recovery style can then be a determining factor in planning the best type of treatment by all the staff and in deciding whether drug therapy or other approaches are indicated.

The book as a whole makes it clear that Dr. Wadeson especially enjoys working with the “integrators,” those persons who want to explore the meaning of disturbing experience to the totality of their lives. At the same time that this work delineates many details of technique and the examination of research hypotheses, Dr. Wadeson effectively models for the reader her interest in the therapist’s use of self. She shares with us some of her life experiences, dreams, art productions, and even a poem or two. The chapter on research concludes with a statement that gives a clear picture of the author’s professional goals: “It is my hope that the creativity that is the essence of the profession will be applied to new means of exploration of the human condition through the fertile expressiveness art therapists are trained to perceive.”

Harriet Wadeson has waged a successful struggle to make a synthesis that does justice both to her personal viewpoint and to her profession. Grounded in artistic and psychodynamic traditions, she has absorbed and integrated diverse innovations with families and groups without surrendering her interest in personal meaning. She has worked in-depth with psychotic inpatients as well as with dissatisfied “normals.” Perhaps the most distinctive emphasis in her approach—and in my view the most difficult but most therapeutically valuable—is her concern with a creative therapeutic alliance. Within a framework of participant observation, in the reciprocal processes between therapist and client, lie the most powerful opportunities for personal growth and therapeutic change.