

# ART THERAPY RESOURCES



## ART THERAPY CASE STUDY BACKGROUND: LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

When clients come to therapy, they can sometimes revert to simplistic thinking about their problems and assume they are the cause. For example, 'I hate school because it's too hard. School is too hard because I'm dumb'. This ignores the complexity of the issue (eg. School curriculum, class sizes, life experiences, learning difficulties etc) and simplifies it down to self-blame. This can impact self-esteem and the motivation to seek help.

Understanding the issue through learning facts and known truths can help a client dispel myths about themselves as the source of 'blame'. This exercise is designed to help a client understand the complex layers that may be identified when understanding a simple outcome.

For the purposes of this exercise, we refer to the construction of a cake. If the use of food concepts in therapy is not suitable, this exercise could also be translated to other objects such as constructing a building. The object could relate to any domain where the client shows an interest or understanding.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Ask your client to choose art materials that will help them create a visual representation of a cake. This could be as simple as drawing different coloured layers on a piece of paper, choosing different coloured papers to create a collage cake, or choosing craft materials that represent components of a cake.
- Discuss with your clients what elements in their cake make the cake delicious? Is each element important in contributing to the cake tasting nice?
- Ask your client to consider how this cake might be changed so it doesn't taste nice. This might mean removing items that affect the taste or adding items that impact the taste. It might mean using rotten fruit in your cake instead of fresh fruit.
- End with a discussion about how this cake can be a metaphor for various parts of us and our lives.
  - Are there things in our 'recipe' as a person that has affected our life?
  - Are there things we can do to change our 'recipe'?
  - Are there external things that affect the outcomes of our life?
  - Can we make alterations to elements in our life to make improvements?



NOTE: more details can be found at [www.arttherapyresources.com.au/learning-difficulties](http://www.arttherapyresources.com.au/learning-difficulties)