



WORKING WITH COUPLES

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ART THERAPISTS

Key Action Points for Art Therapists

WHY USE ART THERAPY IN COUPLES COUNSELING?

Art-making provides a safe, symbolic channel for couples to express complex emotions, explore relational dynamics, and foster connection. Through non-verbal communication, couples can:

- Access attachment needs and fears
- Visualize shared goals or conflicts
- Reduce defensiveness and enhance empathy
- Use collaborative projects to mirror and examine relationship patterns.

EVIDENCE-BASED TECHNIQUES

- Joint Drawing Tasks - Encourages negotiation, turn-taking, and emotional attunement.
 - Prompt: "Draw your relationship as a landscape."
- Collaborative Projects - Fosters shared narratives and joint problem-solving.
 - Example: Create a shared sculpture or vision board.
- Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC)
Match materials to needs:
 - Sensory (clay, pastels) for emotional release
 - Perceptual/Affective (color, form) for insight
 - Cognitive/Symbolic (journals, structured tasks) for reflection

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set the Stage - Create a welcoming space with soft lighting, art supplies, and flexible seating. Allow for both individual and collaborative work areas
- Introduce Gradually - Begin with playful, low-risk tasks (e.g., "use colors to represent today's mood"). Progress to relational themes (e.g., "draw a typical argument visually")
- Provide Clear Facilitation - Explain the purpose of each exercise. Offer emotional support without overinterpreting artwork. Use open-ended questions: "What do you see here that reflects your connection?"

ONGOING SUPPORT AND GROWTH

- Incorporate Between-Session Activities: Shared sketchbooks, visual journaling, art rituals
- Review Art Over Time: Track changes in themes or interaction styles
- Stay Informed: Engage in supervision, workshops, and cross-disciplinary learning

BLOG POST LINK: <https://arttherapyresources.com.au/working-with-couples>