

Griffith Centers

Hope & Healing Start Here

MONTHLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER



Art and Play Therapy: Healing Childhood Trauma Without Words

How Creativity Offers a Way Back to Safety, Connection, and Self

Some pain is too big—or too early—to explain with words.

For many children, trauma doesn't live in language. It lives in the body. In behavior. In silence.

In drawings that speak when voices can't.

At Griffith, we work with children who have experienced the unthinkable: abuse, neglect, violence, sudden loss, displacement, or ongoing instability. For many of these children, traditional talk therapy just isn't enough. Or it isn't the right starting point. That's where art and play therapy come in.

Art therapy for trauma gives children something essential: a way to express what they don't yet have words for—and a path to healing that doesn't require re-living the pain out loud.

Let's talk about how art and play therapy work, what makes them so powerful for healing childhood trauma, and how these creative approaches can open doors that words can't.

How to treat school refusal behavior? How can art therapy help with trauma?

Trauma disrupts connection—between the brain and body, between emotions and logic, and often between the child and the people who are trying to help them.

Art therapy for trauma gently restores those connections.

In a safe, structured environment, a child can use colors, shapes, textures, and movement to process what has happened. They may not say they're afraid, confused, or grieving—but they may draw a house that's missing a door. Or paint a sky that changes from black to red. Or build a story with figures in the sand that mirrors what they've lived through.

What makes art therapy so effective for trauma is that it:

- **Bypasses verbal defenses.** Children often don't have the language for what they've experienced. Art helps them express feelings in a form they can tolerate.
- **Regulates the nervous system.** Creating art slows the body down. It helps a child shift out of fight-or-flight into a more grounded state.
- **Builds trust with the therapist.** Shared creative space feels less threatening than direct questioning or structured conversation.
- **Strengthens self-awareness and control.** Children choose what to draw, what to share, and how to engage. That sense of agency is healing in itself.

Art therapy for trauma doesn't erase what happened—but it gives children a way to name their experience, release stored emotion, and begin to rewrite their story with safety and choice.



At Griffith, we believe every child deserves a path to healing that honors their pace and their power. For many, art is that path.

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Services That Meet the Moment

At Griffith Centers, we believe that healing is possible for everyone. Our mission is to walk alongside individuals and families as they reclaim their stories, rebuild their resilience, and rediscover hope.



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