

In Defense of Dirt:
Raw Material, Art Therapy, and the Mind
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This paper examines the role of raw materials and the benefits on the human mind, specifically in the field of art therapy. Pottery has been a very influential aspect in human history. It has been used for religion, cookware, and storage, and in the more modern era, pottery is being used for mindfulness and expressing emotions. The humanity of pottery is most clearly shown in art therapy. Art therapy dates back to the early 20th century with psychiatrists such as Hans Prinzhorn and Karl Jaspers. People like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung were also influential in the field of art therapy with their ideas of viewing the human psyche. Art therapy was finally established as its own profession by Margaret Naumburg in 1940.

Art therapy illustrates how the physical preparation of materials enhances psychological benefits. While store-bought clay offers convenience, the process of gathering and refining wild clay makes the process of therapy more mindful than buying clay from the store. By engaging with the clay from its raw state to a finished product, the artist experiences a deeper level of personal connection, making the therapeutic outcome significantly more impactful than it would be with pre-processed materials. Art is beneficial to all people because it engages the senses more than any other hobby, and it mirrors life with its struggles and failures.