

# MEMBER

## *Perspectives*

Mary C. Beck • LSW, C-ASWCM, NASW-PA Member

### **Aging Life Care™ gets Creative with Art Therapy**

**W** “Can I keep this?” “This looks great!” “She drew that for you?” “I didn’t know he could still draw.” “I will treasure this forever.”

These are just some of the reactions I hear when I use art therapy in my practice as an Advanced Aging Life Care™ Professional. As I reflect back over the years, I have enjoyed interacting with the geriatric population my entire life. This population has insight, knowledge and wisdom to share if we listen. I have had the privilege of receiving many benefits day after day as I work with the geriatric population at all levels of care.

Becoming an Advanced Aging Life Care™ Professional was a natural next step in my career. I started Beck Care Managers LLC, a professional care management company, because I saw a need. While working as a hospice social worker, families would say “Where were you 5, 10 years ago?” as they struggled to care for the client without any guidance. My goal is to promote quality of life and peace of mind by assisting clients in navigating the difficult transitions in life. I encourage independence and autonomy in the least restrictive, safest environment while preserving dignity and respect. The skills that have been helpful are patient advocacy, coordinating family meetings, crisis intervention, family education, discharge planning and art therapy. In this piece, I am going to focus on my experiences with art therapy.

Art therapy begins when the individual picks out the art medium he/she wants to use and ends when it is given to the family as a treasured keepsake.

Art therapy helps clients and families grieve, reconcile, dream, cope, reminisce and reconnect. It creates a safe place for clients and their families to heal, share, laugh and cry when feelings cannot be communicated by words alone.



I have had clients and family members from 7- to 92-years-old participate in art therapy sessions. They choose water colors, colored pencils, hard pastels, markers or twistable crayons from my “bag of tricks.” It is not about the drawing and being an “artist” but rather their expression through art. As families share their drawings with each other, they are no longer aware of my presence. They bond and for a moment forget about the difficulties they are struggling with.

The art therapy session is client-centered and client-driven. A child drew three things he remembers doing with his dad. A couple drew about their 67-year marriage. An elderly woman drew her earliest memory. An elderly man drew a home. A family drew their favorite vacation and what family means to them. Family members drew their feelings about a terminal diagnosis and how it changed their life.

Art therapy is another tool that enhances the quality of life for my clients and their families. So when you have time, instead of thinking about it – draw it.

For more information, contact Mary at [beckcaremanagers@gmail.com](mailto:beckcaremanagers@gmail.com) or visit her website: <http://www.beckcaremanagers.com>.

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