Professional Development: Art Therapy

If you close your eyes and think about a time and place that allowed you to focus on your inner self, does anything come to mind? Probably not. Focusing on the inner you can be exhausting but with the right resources it can also be rewarding. It allows you to see yourself in a way you never thought existed and helps you expand who you are and who you want to be. At Know My World, our staff is encouraged to expand on our own professional development to enhance our ability to facilitate and help teachers and students in social, emotional and cultural learning. For the past few months, I have been taking classes in Creative Art Therapy to broaden my capabilities as an educator and guide, making the realization of the "inner" me an amazing journey.

Art therapy is any form of art that expresses you. There’s no right or wrong way of making an art piece and there’s no one to judge you (except for yourself); you are your greatest critic. Critiquing yourself allows you to face your own challenges. Art therapy allows you to feel, see and express your challenges in your life through any form of creative art.

During my first day of orientation, I was asked to use my non-dominant hand and draw a picture of my emotions. Given five different feelings that are felt intermittently, I was asked, “What does forgiveness feel like? What does it look like? Close your eyes, grab it and draw it. No speaking. Do not look around you or at your classmates. Focus on YOUR feelings.” This was quite a difficult task. I mean, how do you express in a drawing what forgiveness feels like or looks like when an emotion cannot be seen through the eyes? After a few minutes of thinking about it, I knew what forgiveness meant to me and I got to work. Forgiveness is underneath the skin and a feeling of peacefulness. You are opening up your broken heart and letting go of the pain, allowing it to be whole again. You can reach for the stars because whatever it was that was holding you back from forgiving, is no longer there.

Art therapy has opened my eyes to the world around me. It has brought me to a new way of identifying myself. Know My World is a foundation for self-discovery. Like Art Therapy, we strive to let you express the inner you. Through our facilitation of exchanges we encourage our participants to integrate aspects of self expression in their projects. I work as a guide to assist two or more participants at a time and let them know that I am there to help them explore. Art therapists, do the same. They guide their clients and let them know they are there to listen but it is their own decision on what they want to express to you.

I still have about a year to go with the Creative Arts Therapy program but I am elated to see what I will get out of this class and how I share my new awareness with Know My World participants all over the globe.

-Alicia Rescigno
Educational Coordination Manager/Know My World