



Art Therapy and Coloring Books: AATA Draws the Line

AATA

Some coloring book publishers are inaccurately using the term “art therapy” in their branding. The popularity of adult coloring seems to indicate a renewed public awakening to the use of this activity for self-care. However, coloring books are not “art therapy,” and AATA endeavors to promote accurate information that distinguishes between engaging with coloring for self-care and accessing art therapy services provided by a credentialed art therapist. We also acknowledge the coloring book trend as an opportunity for the AATA to help educate the public about the evidence-based integrative mental health profession, art therapy.

The AATA has taken a proactive stance on this, and over the past several months, we have:

- Published our own [statement](#) on coloring books, August 2015, which has been used as a reference by several reporters and most recently been cited by [Real Simple Magazine](#).
- Interviewed with major media outlets and provided opportunities to clarify the difference between coloring books and the art therapy profession. For example, President Donna Betts, PhD, ATR-BC, was quoted in an article in [USA Today](#).
- Researched the issue with experts and strategized with other entities about effective ways to approach the coloring book phenomenon as an opportunity for public education and awareness about art therapy. [Art Therapy Today](#) readers may appreciate as we did the messaging put forth by our friends at the British Association of Art Therapists, as seen in this [video](#) with Val Huet, BAAT Executive Director.
- Introduced the AATA and clarified the correct definition of art therapy on a case-by-case basis with each publisher, corporation, or reporter as we became aware of examples of “art therapy” being linked to coloring books.
- Entered a joint marketing agreement with [Dover Publishing](#) that includes shared messages and a purchasing opportunity for AATA members who historically are also customers of Dover coloring books (for personal use).
- Continually explored new avenues to navigate the coloring book trend as an opportunity to both educate the publishers as well as the public and to harness the interest in coloring as self-care. Doing so enables us to build awareness for persons interested in mental health care and inform them that art therapy incorporates creative, life-enhancing work within a professional context.

The AATA will continue to address this through the lens of our mission, to serve our members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence, and developing and promoting knowledge in, and of, the field of art therapy. Any AATA members who want to know more about how AATA is attending to “art therapy coloring books” may contact info@arttherapy.org.