

Eight Things Art Does for Children's Brains

Art has the power to transform, to illuminate, to educate, inspire and motivate. – Harvey Fierstein



Art by Thrive SPC Virginia patient Gavin

Art has the power to heal and the power to connect. There is no “right” way to make art. When children engage in hands-on activities, it can help them to better understand language and math concepts. So, start creating and crafting; give a child the gift of joy and pride by letting their creative juices flow, and get these added benefits!

- 1. Build Self-Esteem & Confidence** When a child creates something, whether it is a cardboard structure made with duct tape, pipe cleaners twisted together to create a cat, or messy painted fingers dragged across a clean sheet of paper, the fact that it began as a thought and then came into existence by sheer doing, is one of the most powerful ways children can show their talents to the world, especially if they are nonverbal.
- 2. Encourage Neural Connections** Art is an activity that can employ all the senses—sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste—depending on the activity.
- 3. Help with Writing** Babies and toddlers begin by scribbling randomly, back and forth. The more they scribble, the more they are able to control the crayon and its movements across the paper, preparing them for creating letter forms later.
- 4. Promote Decision Making** When children are given a brush and paint, modeling clay, or some crayons, that's when the magic happens. They are making choices, deciding what they want, and going for it! What color? Paint brush or finger? Swirls or dots? Lines or squiggles? Before age 25, the brain's prefrontal cortex is unfinished, making decision making a struggle. Give a child's prefrontal cortex a little workout with art!
- 5. Hone Fine Motor Skills** Gripping a brush, drawing lines, mixing colors, cutting with scissors, controlling a glue stick, rolling clay, tearing paper—all require increasing amounts of dexterity and coordination. Throughout the creative process, children practice many skills without even knowing it!
- 6. Allow Free Expression** Kids need and deserve a safe way to express themselves, especially when it comes to feelings. Sometimes children don't know how or why they are feeling what they are feeling, how to express it, or how to stop it. Art provides a healthy and safe means of expressing emotion.
- 7. Form Bonds** Often times when families, or nurses and patients, or even strangers at a painting studio are creating, they are also laughing, talking, and bonding. Even in silent moments when everyone is focused on their own masterpieces, the shared experience creates a bond.
- 8. Foster Connections** Art is an equalizer, helping create common ground for people who don't know each other and those who communicate differently or may or may not be interested in the same things. It can help people of all ages, races, abilities, and languages connect while engaging in a shared activity.

*Adapted from Stephanie Kessel's Pottery Awesomeness blog at www.potteryawesomeness.com/blogs/news/5-things-you-didnt-know-art-does-for-your-childs-brain and *Art has the power to illuminate . . .*
*LinkedIn article by Victoria Anderson at the Knowledge Layer**

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