

MARIE FORGEARD

Marie Forgeard, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology at William James College and a Research Psychologist at McLean Hospital. Dr. Forgeard specializes in conducting research at the intersection of clinical, social/personality, and positive psychology. Her research program examines strengths-based predictors of well-being and recovery following highly stressful life circumstances, including adverse events and mental health challenges. She is especially interested in the character strengths of openness, imagination, and creativity. The goal of her work is to better understand how specific positive traits contribute to psychological adjustment, and whether these can be harnessed to promote well-being using established as well as novel interventions. Dr. Forgeard was the 2013 recipient of the Frank X. Barron Award from Division 10 of the American Psychological Association (the Society for the Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts). Her research has also been funded by grants from the John Templeton Foundation. She is a licensed psychologist in the state of Massachusetts.

Art heals, but how?

A large and growing literature suggests that engaging in artistic activities enhances mental health and well-being. Yet, more research is needed to explain what might account for these benefits. Existing studies (echoed by anecdotal reports) have shown that art may heal because it serves as an opportunity to engage in adaptive distraction, make meaning out of difficult experiences, develop feelings of self-efficacy, connect with others, or practice mindfulness, among other possibilities. A more thorough understanding of the ways in which art heals has important implications for practitioners interested in using this flexible medium in their work. Practitioners can use insights from this body of research to tailor artistic activities toward specific therapeutic ends and integrate them within other intervention modalities. Clark's (2016) *Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Informed Art Therapy* provides concrete examples of ways to effectively use art in this manner. Given the appeal and versatility of art as a therapeutic vehicle, researchers and practitioners should continue to work collaboratively to help maximize the healing properties of artistic engagement.