



About Variety – the Children’s Charity Tasmania

Variety – the Children’s Charity Tasmanian, is a self-funded charity with a mission to support children who are sick, disadvantaged or living with disability, and have nowhere to turn to for help. We empower children to live, laugh and learn and to attain their potential in life. Visit our [website](http://www.variety.org.au) to find out more about who we are and what we do to give Tassie children a Fair-Go.



Introduction

The Variety Creative Arts Program (the Program) is to provide small and intimate groups of children with an outlet to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through creative arts expression workshops. It is delivered within a safe and welcoming environment using different materials, techniques, and settings with consideration to each cohort needs and objectives.

It consists of workshops designed for children year 1 to year 6, using various art materials and activities, to express their thoughts and emotions. Workshops are facilitated by an arts therapist who helps to explore, build insight, and make meaning of their life experience through their art works.

The Program at a glance

- Fully funded by Variety – the Children’s Charity of Tasmania
- Designed for children in year 1 to year 6 (6-12 years old)
- Tailored for two separate age groups: 6-8 and 9-12 years old
- Can accommodate around 6 children per group
- Delivered over 9 weeks - 50 minutes workshop per week
- Builds up gradually and methodically; as such students’ selection is important to ensure the same group of students participate in every workshop and for the full duration of the program
- Delivered by a qualified arts therapist
- The program is not designed to develop art skills, although for some students it may be a secondary outcome.

Who will benefit from the Program?

The Program aims to assist children, mainly, from disadvantaged and low socio-economic backgrounds, who might be living at home or out of home care. Those children have a complicated upbringing and may be experiencing trauma due to being exposed to, or have experienced, abuse, violence, or neglect.

In the school environment, those children may display challenging behaviours, low self-esteem and/or lack of participation in classroom learning and engagement in social activities.



What is creative arts therapy and how does it work?

Art therapy is a therapeutic practice that utilises the creative process to explore emotions. Art expression is a form of non-verbal communication and is particularly beneficial for children who may not be able to articulate thoughts, sensations, emotions, or perceptions. It is a way for children to convey what may be difficult to express and understand with words.

The focus is not about making good artwork, rather focusing on the creative process, and using art making as a tool to express emotions and to access new insight and coping strategies.

Involvement in arts activities allows children to grow confidence. It is a way to open a dialogue about situations that may be hard to deal with or share. Getting their emotions out in a creative way can be both therapeutic and insightful.

Creative arts therapy is an effective therapy for trauma recovery due to its emphasis on sensory-somatic processes that engage parts of the brain responsible for nervous system regulation.

The Program offers participants an opportunity to explore, express and integrate their lived experience in creative ways. It also provides a safe space for participants to engage in a meaningful diversion from the daily stresses and build confidence through mastery of new materials and techniques, enhance nervous system regulation through sensory art processes and find authentic social connections with others through shared creative experiences.

The Program is designed to:

- Provide children with a safe and nurturing environment in which to express themselves in ways that promote healing and growth
- Assist children to learn to access a safe place within themselves, as well as recognise external safe places and relationships
- An opportunity for creative self-expression and communication
- Increase emotional awareness and literacy, self-awareness and positive self-identity and improve sense of wellbeing



- Provide opportunities for personal growth and social emotional development and increase confidence
- Provide children with an opportunity to work together in a small group, learn to share and accept responsibility for how their actions affect others
- Improve empathy and inclusive behaviours
- Provide children with psychoeducation and mindfulness, breathing techniques and strategies to down-regulate the nervous system
- Provide children with strategies to manage and express difficult feelings like anger, anxiety, and depression
- Stress relief and diversion
- Fun and enjoyment

Efficacy

Since its launch in term 4 2019, and despite COVID-19 many disruptions, we have delivered well over 4,000 sessions, in 35 schools in southern Tasmania, to over 400 individual children.

The results of the program assessments from both the students and their teachers clearly shows:

- >90% believe the Program has helped in their daily life.
- >70% found new ways of expressing themselves.
- >90% believed their personal work was important to them. (Pride and self-esteem)
- >75% learned new ways to calm themselves down when feeling angry or sad.
- >70% have the confidence to speak for themselves.
- 1 in 4 students said they found new and closer friendships.
- 100% wanted to continue in the program.

What is required of the school to participate?

- Allow for an introduction and planning session with the Therapist prior to the program commencement.
- In consultation with the Therapist, select children who are both in need of and will benefit from the program.
- Provide a dedicated teacher's aide or a support teacher per group who is:
 - available to attend all sessions throughout the program



- Have a good understanding of the children's needs
- have an appreciation of the creative therapy and the impact it will have on the students
- have the interest in acquiring strategies and tools from the program that they can use ongoing.
- Provide a suitable space that is private, safe, and easily accessible for the Therapist and consistently available for each session. Preferably with a wet area or at least a sink.
- To ensure minimal disruptions to the program delivery and efficacy, the day and venue must be consistent and avoids any conflict with the scheduled activities during the term.
- Liaise with Parents/Carers. e.g. distribute and collect Parent Permission Forms **before** the commencement of the program, and where there is a need, communicate notes/concerns between parents/carer and the Therapist.
- Allow the students to attend the program's pre and post 1:1 assessment interview with the Therapist. 20-25 minutes each assessment
- Distribute and collect pre/post assessment short surveys to classroom teachers and the school's leadership team which is crucial for enhancing and adapting the Program for future participating schools and other organisations.
- Share stories and testimonials of parents/carers, children, and teachers. Although, this is not essential to be accepted into the program, it will be very much appreciated. It allows Variety to spread the word about its' programs and the support it offers, as well as provide the content to engage with our supporters, philanthropic funding, and corporate partnerships.

Teachers Feedback

"The students felt a great feeling of self-worth when participating in the program, and the work they produced" (Grade 5/6 teacher)

"1 out of my 3 students had an increase in their self-esteem, all 3 students improved in class participation. 2 out of the 3 students improved their concentration in classroom and improved their emotional regulation. 2 out of 3 students increased their engagement with schoolwork." (Grade 5/6 teacher)

"The days that the art group was on they were very motivated to get their work done, as they were excited to get to the program" (Grade 5/6 teacher)



"I noticed an improvement in self-esteem. Students felt proud of their work and enjoyed sharing it with the whole class" (Grade 1/2 teacher).

"There is an improvement in work stamina. Some still struggling with focus, but less distracting behaviour" (Prep/1 teacher).

"One student has shown significant improvement in concentration in the classroom". (Grade 1/2 teacher).

"The children have less drastic responses to emotional problems and their general well-being has improved" (Grade 1/2 teacher).

"Students have demonstrated greater engagement and attention during some learning activities, they are generally handling conflict in a more mature way. There is some increase in attention during learning activities, however they are still easily distracted by peers. Both showing increased care for others when others are upset. Still hands on." (Grade 1 Teacher)