



Art in Social Work

Do We Really Need It?

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Abstract

The arts have been used in social work practice with individuals and communities since the beginning of the profession, and yet an articulation of a rationale for their use is missing. An exploration of how the arts fit within the profession's mission is also lacking. The lack of a theoretical foundation for the arts in social work has thus resulted in the marginalization of arts practice in the field. This article examines fundamental questions regarding the use of the arts in social work: the relevance of the arts to clients, to social workers, and whether the arts can provide evidence to promote professional work. Addressing these concerns will clarify the relevance of the arts to social work theory and practice and explore their advantages and limitations, thus helping to create more nuanced collaborations between social work and the humanities, arts therapy, and the arts in general.

Keywords art, social work, rationale, theory

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