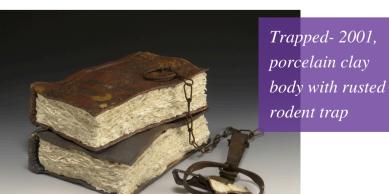
ALLISON NEEDHAM

MA, LMFT

BIOGRAPHY

Allison Needham, MA, LMFT is in private practice where she specializes in using creative expressive arts-based approaches with people who identify as neurodiverse (autistic or having a disability) as well as their parents, family members, professional caregivers and non-paid caregivers. She is a board approved clinical supervisor for the state of Minnesota, an adjunct faculty member at Adler Graduate School, a certified Person-Centered Thinking trainer, and the owner of Marigold Therapy. Allison earned her Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts with an emphasis in ceramics and sculpture from the University of Minnesota and her Master of Arts degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. She completed course work at the Northwest Creative and Expressive Arts <u>Institute</u> and is currently completing her clinical hours to gain credentialing as a REAT.





For the past 20+ years Allison has worked within several Home and Community-Based agencies where she used creative approaches to empower individuals, strengthen families, and build teams. Allison has extensive experience training person centered practices, disability rights, and presenting creative arts-based workshops to caregiving teams, mental health professionals, social workers, and home and community-based service agencies. She has run seminars for self-advocates and groups on self-esteem and sexuality.

Along with her therapy practice she is an exhibiting artist in juried and invitational exhibitions throughout the United States.



WHAT DREW YOU TO THE FIELD OF EXPRESSIVE ARTS?

Like most people who create I have personally benefited from using the creative processes as a pathway to release emotion and to understand myself. I was diagnosed with dyslexia and ADD when I was in the third grade.

Throughout my childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood I was determined to hide this aspect of myself. I lived in fear of being seen as "dumb," "slow," or not capable. While completing my bachelor's degree, I took a

book making class and I was immediately drawn to the shape, form, and symbolism of what we know as a book. I created a body of work around this form and it started a chain reaction within me, a process that I could not explain. When I would get home from the studio, I noticed feeling sad, lonely, frustrated, and/or downright angry. At the time I thought it was just the stress of school. At some point I started to understand that I was releasing emotions from what I was hiding for decades. All these emotions were being brought to the forefront; loneliness- from being excluded, sadness- from years of hiding my authentic self, anger- from having to try harder than everyone to read, write and spell. My hands released decades of struggle through a form that gave me so much struggle. I came across this quote from Carl Jung: "Often the hands will solve a mystery that the intellect has struggled with in vain." This quote connected me to the process I was experiencing and deepened my understanding as to why I am so drawn to creating and movement as well as witnessing others do the same. Finding these new insights, amongst many, about myself is what sent me on the path to study Marriage and Family Therapy, Yoga, and Expressive Arts.

HOW ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING MULTIMODAL EXPRESSIVE ARTS IN THE DOMAINS OF THERAPEUTIC WORK, ARTISTIC PRACTICE, CONSULTATION, EDUCATION, AND ACTIVISM?

My current work involves using expressive interventions in individual therapy sessions as well as educating others about expressive arts. In September I facilitated a workshop at the Minnesota Association of Marriage and Family Therapy's (MAMFT) annual conference, Connecting Through Creativity, where I introduced Expressive Art Therapy to the group. We explored the four types of creativity, the neurobiological and psychological aspects of

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creativity, its impact on well-being, and engaged in the creative process by using visualization, writing, drawing, and movement to create a mural about connecting to their joy while connection to each other and to their MAMFT community. It was a blast and I hope to do more workshops like this in the future. I would also like to take a Sensorimotor training such as Clay Field and Guided Drawing. Oh, and become REAT certified! Only a few clinical hours left!



WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE CURRENT ROLE OF EXPRESSIVE ARTS IN YOUR REGION AND INTERNATIONALLY?

I believe that expressive arts have a unique role in community building. When you think about community events—festivals, state fairs, farmers' markets, music in the park, charity walks/runs/rolls, puppet shows, car shows, etc.—the one thing that is always present is someone's expression of culture, craft, or purpose.

HOW DOES BEING A PART OF IEATA IMPACT YOUR WORK IN EXPRESSIVE ARTS?

Being a part of IEATA has brought me opportunities to meet and connect with like-minded people who understand that importance of creative expression. Seeing others share their creative processes or interventions inspires me to continue to explore what is possible for my clients and my own creative practice.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

I believe creative expression can empower people by building self-esteem, can heal by giving us a voice to our experiences, and educate by helping us remember who we are and who we want to be. It's also a way to have fun and play!

PROFESSIONAL LINKS

- MARIGOLD THERAPY
- LinkedIn