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AWBW

art transforming trauma

A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

"It was easier for me to put paint to paper than say the words out loud."

CHILDREN'S WINDOWS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

WHO WE ARE

A Window Between Worlds is a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Venice, California. We collaborate with human service agencies across the country, training and supporting the staff at these partner organizations in facilitating our healing arts curriculum with those impacted by violence and trauma. In 27 years, over 200,000 adults and children have participated in Windows workshops. Our goal is replacing violence and shame with safety and hope.



WHO WE REACH

Our network of partners includes domestic violence service centers, sexual assault agencies, homeless shelters, veteran's programs, schools and universities, foster youth services, substance abuse treatment centers, prisons, community programs, and more.



PROGRAM IMPACT*

- 32,247 Participants
- 705 Windows Facilitators
- 210 Partner Organizations
- Adult Participants report that the Windows Program helped them to:
 - more easily express themselves: 95%
 - find courage to make healthy decisions for the future: 92%
- Facilitators report that the Windows Program improves children's and youth's:
 - relationships with parents: 87%
 - relationships with peers: 96%
 - sense of confidence and independence: 95%
 - ability to communicate in a non-violent way: 94%



TRAUMA AND ART

- Up to 70% of people will be impacted by trauma in their lifetime¹
- Up to 43% experience trauma by the age of 18²
- Creation of art³:
 - reduces distress
 - increases self-reflection and self-awareness
 - alters behavior and thinking patterns
 - has positive physical effects
 - causes specific brain regions to interact, leading to stronger resilience

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Visit awbw.org to learn more about volunteering, donating and attending AWBW events. With your generosity, we can continue to provide arts programming to those who need it most.

1,2: istss.org/public-resources

3: *How art changes your brain*. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0101035

*All data from 2017 reports and evaluations

AWBW/ About Us



OUR MISSION

A Window Between Worlds is dedicated to empowering individuals and communities impacted by violence and trauma through a transformative healing arts program.

OUR VISION

A Window Between Worlds views art as a catalyst to release trauma, build resilience and ignite social change. When individuals create art in a safe community they can be heard and respected — replacing violence and shame with safety and hope.



A Window Between Worlds (AWBW) collaborates with human service agencies across the country, training and supporting the staff at these partner organizations in facilitating our healing arts curriculum. AWWB's program allows these partnering organizations to expand their offerings to best serve those coping with the consequences of a variety of violent and traumatic experiences.

Our Philosophy

Since the beginning, the AWWB philosophy has been grounded in the idea that the art workshops are a "Window of Time" — a safe, non-judgmental space where participants can authentically express themselves in new ways.

By creating art in hands-on AWWB workshops, participants are provided this safe environment to tell their stories, build resilience, identify and name emotions, self-regulate, gain a stronger sense of self-worth and much more.

Facilitator Trainings

Established employees of human service agencies may apply to become Windows Facilitators. Training sessions include the AWWB philosophy, trauma-informed care approaches and experiential art workshops.

Ongoing Support and Curriculum

AWWB Program Department personnel are consistently in direct contact with active Windows Facilitators, along with sending monthly email updates. Through awbw.org facilitators can access and search over 500 workshops in our ever-evolving curriculum. Additionally, AWWB allocates art supply and community outreach funding.



Our History

- 1991** — Artist and art teacher Cathy Salser tours the country, facilitating art workshops at domestic violence shelters
 - Ongoing art workshops held at a local shelter and A Window Between Worlds is born
- 1993** — Held first "Women's Windows Program" group Leadership (Facilitator) Training
- 1996** — "Children's Windows Program" piloted in response to Los Angeles Domestic Violence Counsel request
- 1998** — Partnerships expand to outside of California
- 2001** — Teen-specific training materials created
- 2003** — Partners with first sexual assault agency
- 2004** — AWWB workshops first held in a prison
- 2005** — Curriculum available to Facilitators online
- 2008** — Family-specific training resources created
 - First school-based partnership begins
- 2013** — Embodied art (movement) based workshops added to curriculum
- 2014** — New mission unveiled, reflecting facilitators' work with additional populations
 - "Women's Windows" name changed to "Adult Windows Program" for gender inclusivity
- 2016** — Held first "Art Transforming Trauma" Conference
- TODAY** — Reach over 32,000 participants annually through more than 200 partnerships nationwide

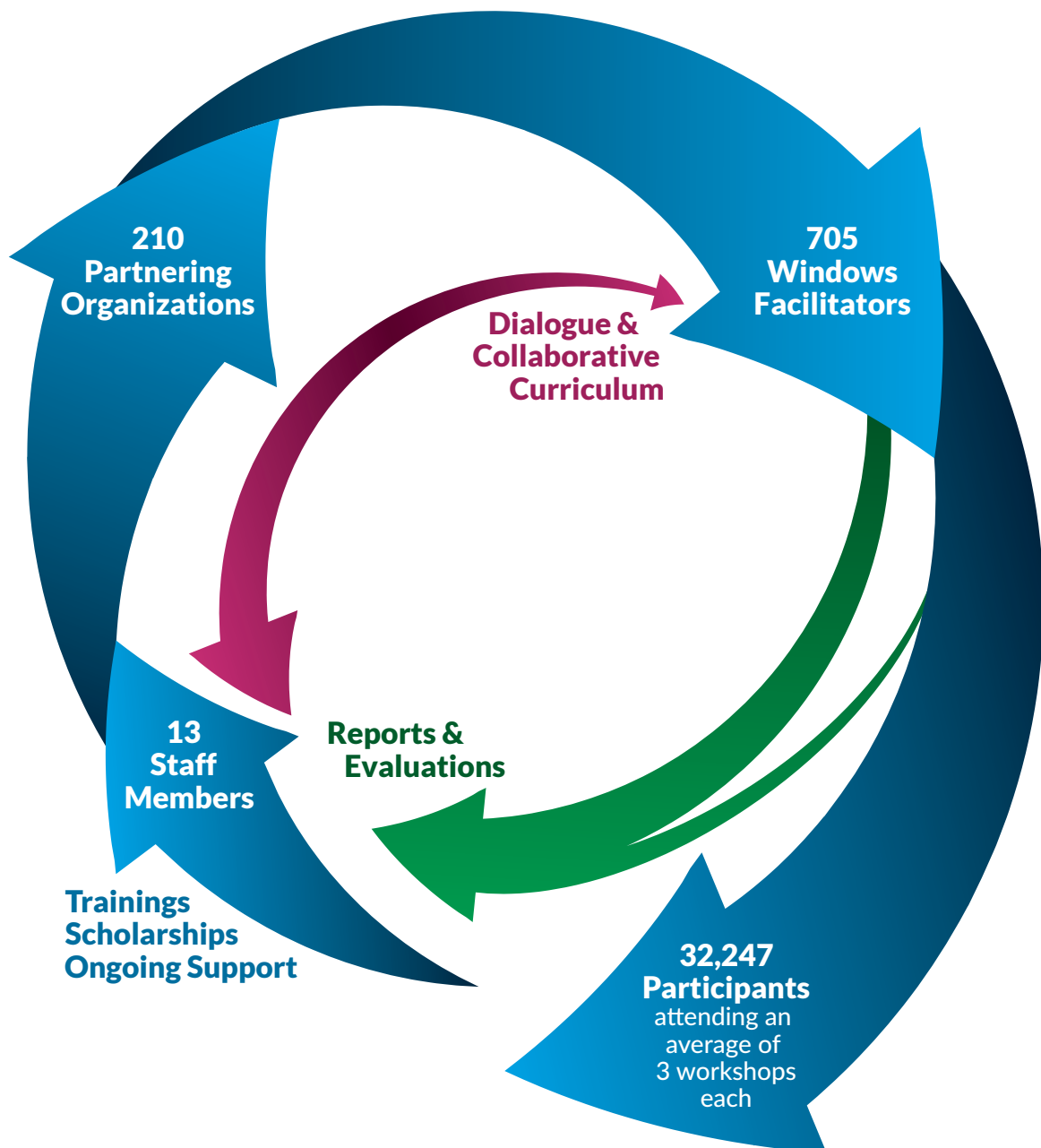
THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FUNDERS WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE, INCLUDING:



AWBW/ Program Model

As a community of practice we are constantly learning and evolving through our partnerships with multiple human service agencies and their staff. Through these mutually beneficial relationships we are able to lift up and share best approaches to addressing trauma through art, allowing us all to deepen and expand our collective expertise.

This diagram illustrates how this community of practice operates and includes statistics from 2017.



AWBW/ Program Impact

Windows Facilitators complete monthly reports for the workshops they hold, as well as fill out an annual evaluation, providing quantitative data about the impact of our arts program.

In 2017 AWWB...

supported
705 facilitators
at **210 partnering organizations**

These Windows Facilitators...

worked with
12,822 children/youth and
19,425 adults
(each participating in an average of 3 workshops)

Participant demographics:

Female: 74%
Male: 25%
Other: 1%

0-5 years old: 14%
6-12 years: 17%
13-17 years: 19%
18-25 years: 10%
25-65 years: 36%
65+ years: 4%

African American: 16%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 7%
Caucasian: 28%
Latinx: 41%
Native American: 3%
Other: 5%

AWBW art workshops improve the children's/youth's...

- Sense of confidence and independence: 95%
- Relationships with peers: 96%
- Relationships with parents: 87%
- Ability to handle anger, conflict and communication in a non-violent way: 94%
- Levels of depression, anxiety and fear: 90%

AWBW art workshops are highly effective in helping adults to...

- Take the time to tune into their needs and future goals: 92%
- Build trust with staff and use support more readily: 79%

Adult participants are given the option to complete evaluations at the end of each workshop. In 2017 adult participants agreed that:

An AWWB art workshop helped me to...

- More easily express myself: 95%
- Feel more positive about myself and my future: 93%
- Identify the difficult things I was experiencing: 88%
- Find courage to make healthy decisions for the future: 92%
- Have a better relationship with my children: 86%



AWBW/ Windows Program Voices

I'm starting to see how the art lets me be me.

Youth Participant, Age 15

The exercise helped empower me to see myself thriving with vitality, hope and happiness with my family.

Adult Participant

Because of AWWB, our agency has increased our capacity to reach clients on a deeper level of understanding.

Adult Windows Facilitator

This is so awesome, I will always remember my happy place when I look at this drawing.

Child Participant, Age 9

Most of all I was able to remember who I am again so I can become whole.

Adult Participant

The children are showing personal growth in the area of trust and compassion.

Children's Windows Facilitator

When our clients cannot find the words, their art speaks for them.

Adult Windows Facilitator

Leaving my dog with dad makes my heart sad. Doing art makes my heart happy.

Child Participant, Age 10

I was able to take a moment in my hectic life and expel a secret hope for myself onto a canvas. This was very relieving.

Adult Participant

Even if they don't talk to me much, their projects make it easier for me to talk to them.

Children's Windows Facilitator

Not knowing where we will live is devastating — art helps clear my thoughts.

Adult Participant

[Art] makes dealing with hard emotional issues safe, approachable, and fun.

Adult Windows Facilitator

This workshop showed me new ways to piece myself back together stronger so that it won't be so easy to break me again.

Adult Participant

Hearing one of the children express that the workshop they participated in made them feel safe and strong was such a highlight for staff.

Children's Windows Facilitator

It was nice to give myself permission to do things.

Adult Participant

These [workshops] reinforce for participants that they are not alone, which has encouraged an openness to share and process trauma.

Adult Windows Facilitator

My picture is of a flower because flowers are so pretty and my life is going to be pretty too.

Child Participant, Age 5

This 9 year old child finally was able to express her feelings without feeling guilty.

Children's Windows Facilitator

The art workshops give various residents the ability to communicate their experiences and envision their own solutions.

Adult Windows Facilitator

I like that I am able to do art, because sometimes I feel embarrassed and shy talking.

Youth Participant, Age 14

This workshop helped me to think and feel things that were repressed for a long time. I could feel pressure being taken off as I worked on the art project.

Adult Participant



Releasing trauma through art ...

Trauma negatively impacts the speech pathways in the brain — it can literally silence. However, the process of creating art can help heal these pathways, often allowing participants to process and share parts of their lives they may not otherwise have even been able to access.



"Letter to my Father" by Emily

*"She was able
to express
deeply-rooted
issues without
the need to
verbalize."*

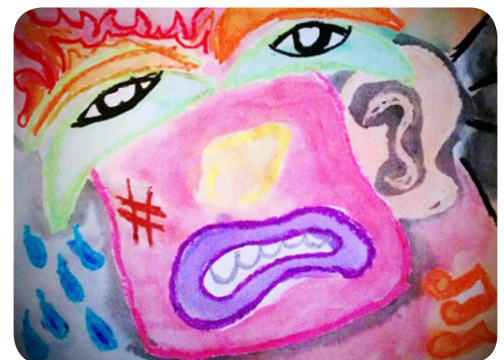
Emily, age 15, and her mother experienced physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse at the hands of their perpetrator. The effect on Emily has been profound. In fear of being abused, or repeatedly witnessing the abuse of her mother or other siblings, Emily completely withdrew from all social settings. She began to self-cut as a means of "having control over what I was feeling."

When Emily first started groups, she was introverted, shy and without a voice. She stayed isolated in her room and did not communicate with anyone unless spoken to and, even then, her answers were typically no more than one or two words. Initially, during the groups, she was unfocused, non-trusting, and not willing to share too much information. After a few weeks, once trust had been established, she began to open up with ease and express through art where she was mentally and emotionally.

She shared, "Seeing my mother get thrown around, my brother getting his lip busted, and my sister being institutionalized can really rain hatred, sadness, and loneliness down on you. It was horrible and definitely painful to watch."

Windows gave Emily an outlet for self-expression. It was where she truly found her voice. Issues involving her sexual abuse were brought to light during our art groups that had not even been revealed to her therapist during counseling sessions. She was able to express deeply-rooted issues without the need to verbalize. The art became a portal for her therapist and a valuable tool necessary for therapeutic connection.

Emily shared, "The groups allowed me to put all the feelings and emotions I had into a work of art. I was able to release all my issues and begin to heal."



"Monster in Me" by Emily

Based on annual evaluations submitted by 125 active Children's Windows partnering organizations in 2017:

95% reported they saw significant growth and healing in children/youth as they participate over time

82% reported the art workshops help the children/youth open up and express themselves

Trusting the process...

A Window Between Worlds program facilitators often see profound transformations when participants create art. The process goes far beyond creating a product — it can be an emotional journey full of healing and positive change, as this facilitator witnessed with her client Terry.



“Since this workshop I have seen Terry more accepting and at peace than I have seen her in more than a year of working with her.”

One day we were creating masks as part of the “Revealing Power and Beauty” workshop. As usual, everyone was fairly quiet as they worked. Suddenly, in the middle of the workshop, Terry thrust her mask down and began crying. She said, “I hate this.”

She reached over to me and grasped my hand and looked at me with eyes I can’t quite describe — perhaps searching and painful. I paused for a moment to give her a chance to express herself. She continued to cry.

I smiled at her and squeezed her hand and told her she could create a new one if she wanted to. The other ladies encouraged her. I told her I loved it. I also told her to put the mask aside and give herself a few minutes to think about it and collect herself. She did and picked it back up a few minutes later and finished it.

During sharing time, she told us about the realization she had during the process: what was being created on the mask was how she felt about the masks she’d worn in her life to deal with trauma and circumstances. She decided she didn’t like these masks. She didn’t want to live like that anymore.

I’m not sure she especially “liked” the finished product, but she acknowledged that it was more about what was being revealed than what the mask looked like. In fact, her daughter saw the mask and loved it so much she asked her if she could have it. In response to the workshop Terry said, “I’ve learned to be open and trust. I also have a peace from this experience.”

Terry now talks about the moment and laughs, which shows tremendous growth and willingness to be vulnerable, helping new girls coming in that don’t know anything about these workshops.

Personally, over the last 6 months since this workshop, I have seen Terry more accepting and at peace than I have seen her in more than a year of working with her. I believe this was one of many turning points... for her and me, too!

Based on 3,508 participant evaluations submitted in 2017:

88% found the workshops helped them identify how their challenging experiences affected them

93% of adults felt more positively about themselves and their future after participating in a Windows workshop

Speaking freely from the heart...

After escaping domestic violence, survivors are left with the heavy task of repairing their remaining family relationships, and children have limited tools to express what they have experienced. Leaders share that for many participants, the Feeling Friends workshop is a safe way to acknowledge their feelings and open communication.



*"Since that day
I have seen a
complete change
in the girl's
ability to
cope."*

An eight year-old girl who was residing at the shelter was exhibiting a lot of adverse behavior: she refused to attend school and was violent with the other children. One day, she had such an intense and overwhelming episode that we called the Psychiatric Emergency Team (PET).

Unable to communicate her feelings, the girl sat mute in the corner, refusing to talk or make eye contact. While waiting for the PET team to arrive I knew that I needed to find a way for her to access and process her inner turmoil. I decided to combine the Feeling Friends and Heart Stories workshops so she could speak freely from her heart, through her art.

Using AWBW's Feeling Faces chart made it easy to create a small banner that contained the different feeling words that empowered the girl to identify and define a myriad of feelings and emotions. She created three hearts on her project. Each heart contained a feeling word. The girl wrote safety in the largest heart which allowed me to recognize her need for safety and reinforced that she would not articulate or trust us enough to share her emotions until she felt safe.

The art was so effective in helping her regulate her emotions that by the time the PET team arrived they didn't need to take her! Once I discovered what a wonderful communication tool the project was, I shared it with her mother and helped the girl hang it on the wall of her room. From that day on, every morning the girl would choose which feeling best represented how she felt that day and then placed the feeling word banner in her feeling friend's hands. This ensured that the girl would not get embarrassed and hide her feelings, but rather

communicate her feelings through her feeling friend. Now her mother has insight into how to meet her daughter's needs.

Since that day I have seen a complete change in the girl's ability to cope. She is a lot more cooperative; she attends school and interacts with the other children in a positive way!



Based on annual evaluations submitted by 125 active Children's Windows partnering organizations in 2017:

76% reported the art workshops helped the children build more trust with the staff

87% reported the Windows program made a positive difference in the children's relationships with their parents

Creating a safe space...

The AWBW philosophy is grounded in the idea that the art workshops are a “Window of Time” — a safe, non-judgmental space where participants can authentically express themselves. During an AWBW workshop, whatever supports participants in expressing, connecting and attending to their needs and feelings is the number one priority.

Honoring this philosophy, one AWBW program facilitator witnessed a beautiful, unexpected transformation for a participant.



“Trapped Light” by Danielle

“It was so important to her that I let her decide what to do.”

This month something happened. I let go of all expectations. I went with the wind during this one workshop, and it really paid off! I “got out of my own way.”

I think my survivors felt extra in tune with their emotions and abilities; maybe I just was capable of listening to my intuition a little deeper this time too.

One of our participants, Danielle, during opening circle did not volunteer to share. She was quiet, and I let her go unannounced. I made sure to ask the group “If anyone wants to share and has not.... please let me know by raising your hand.” She did not raise her hand and I fully respected that choice.

Self-consciously I was worried Danielle didn’t like what we were doing at all. However, I still maintained and trusted her own choice to decide how to participate.

During the workshop, I noticed she felt more in control of her own choices. She picked up a colored pencil. She began to sketch on the back of our “Self-Care Wheels.” Before I knew it, she was creating this incredible artwork, and came up to me at the end to thank me for the most wonderful workshop.

It was so important to her that I let her decide what to do. She was able to express pain during this time, and perhaps felt a little more in control of it. This meant a lot to me, as the ones who are most guarded tend to need these workshops most!

To accompany her artwork Danielle wrote: “Layers and layers of every emotion through my difficult journey thus far is trapping my true self, the light that wants to shine through is stuck.”

Her art and words were so powerfully introspective. I was thankful to see such a transformation in expression.

Based on 3,508 participant evaluations submitted in 2017:

95% agreed the workshops helped them more easily express themselves

84% agreed the workshops helped them gain new insight into their lives