



AWBW

art transforming trauma

A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

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

CHILD AWBW ART WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

WHO WE ARE

A Window Between Worlds is a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Venice, CA. 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. Since 1991, over a quarter million adults and children have participated in AWBW art 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.



2018 PROGRAM IMPACT

- 6,738 workshops held
- 31,929 individuals participating 84,560 times
- 599 workshop facilitators
- 351 programs at 239 partnering organizations
- Facilitators strongly agree that AWBW programming helps participants to:
 - open up and express emotions: 85%
 - build resilience, self-esteem, strength and hope: 76%
- Adult participants agree that the AWBW art workshops helped them to:
 - feel more positive about both themselves and their futures: 93%
 - open up about things they hadn't shared with others before: 82%
 - gain new insight into their lives: 88%



TRAUMA AND ART

- Seven out of ten 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

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 communities

— "Women's Windows" name changed to "Adult Windows Program" for gender inclusivity

2016 — Held first "Art Transforming Trauma" Conference

TODAY — More than a quarter million adults and children have participated in AWWB art workshops



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

THE
RALPH M. PARSONS
FOUNDATION

THE GREEN
FOUNDATION

kai

TheRoseHills
FOUNDATION

CAPITAL
GROUP

The
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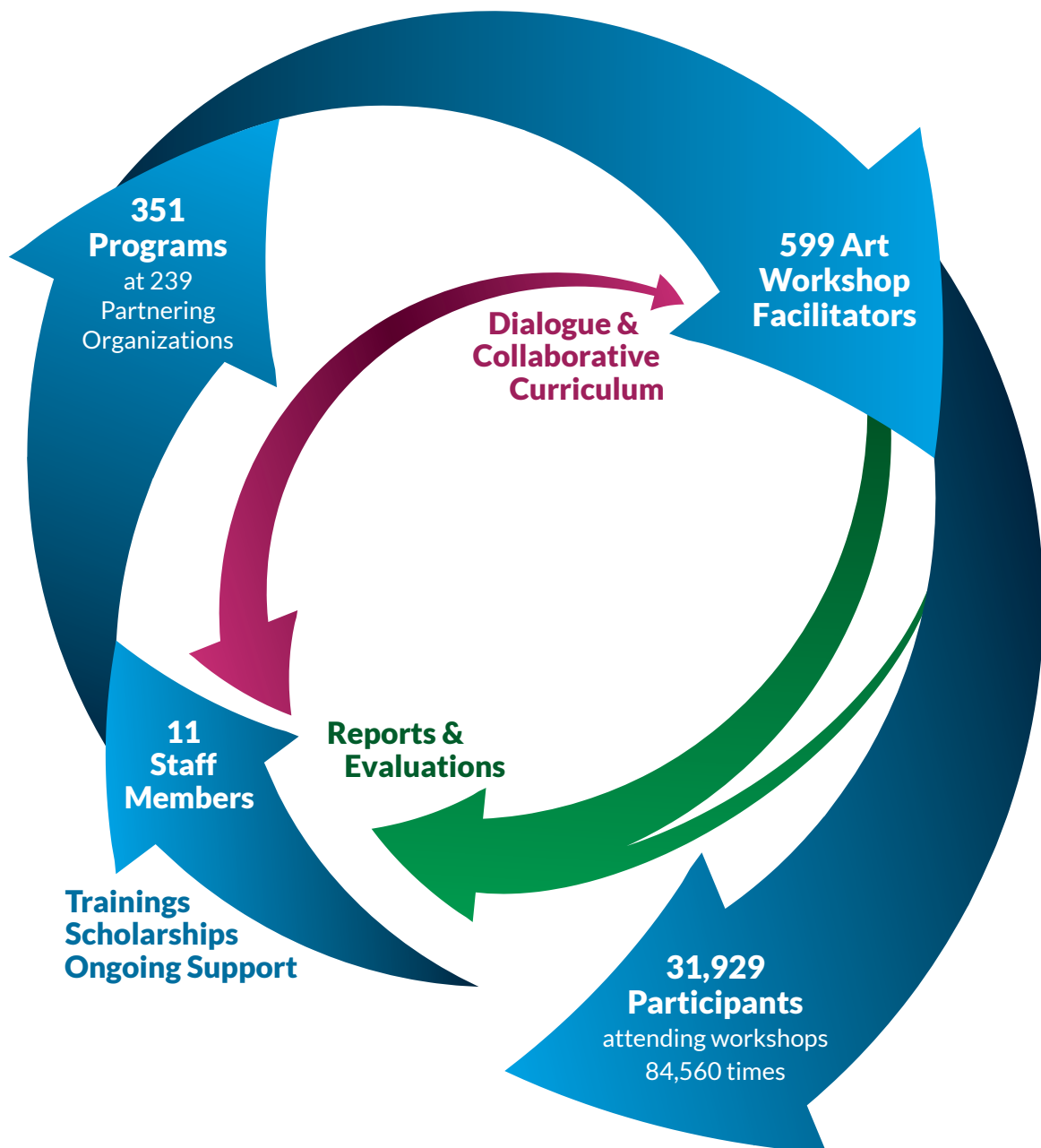
John Gogian Family Foundation

Google

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 2018.



AWBW/ Program Impact

Art workshop facilitators complete monthly reports, as well as fill out an annual evaluation, providing quantitative data about the impact of our arts program.

In 2018 AWWB...

supported

599 facilitators in
351 programs at **239**
partnering organizations

These art workshop facilitators...

worked with

**12,185 children/
youth** and
19,744 adults

who participated
in workshops

84,560 times

Communities our partners work with:

Domestic Violence	90%
Sexual Assault	68%
Child Abuse/Neglect	44%
Behavioral/Mental Health	40%
Students	39%
Homeless	38%
LGBTQIA	35%
Substance Abuse/Recovery	34%
Immigrant/Refugee	26%
Human Trafficking	25%
Foster Youth	19%
Incarcerated	15%
Gang Involved/Impacted	15%
Other	15%
Veterans/Military	11%

AWBW facilitators agree that art workshops helped...

- Facilitators to make breakthroughs with participants who are difficult to reach and connect with: 96%
- Participants to open up and express emotions either in verbal or non-verbal way: 99%
- Make a positive difference in participants' relationships and interactions with others: 93%
- Participants to build resilience, self-esteem, strength and hope: 98%
- Improve collaboration between staff and participants, bridging gaps and building mutual trust: 96%
- Participants handle anger, conflict and communication in a more positive way: 89%

Addult participants are given the option to complete evaluations at the end of each workshop. In 2018 adult participants agreed that:

The art workshop helped me to...

- More easily express myself: 96%
- Feel more positive about myself and my future: 93%
- Open up about things I have not shared with others before: 82%
- Find courage to make healthy decisions for the future: 91%



AWBW/ Windows Program Voices

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

Adult Participant

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

Children's Program Facilitator

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

Adult Participant

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

Youth Participant, Age 15

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

Adult Program 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

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

Adult Program 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

It's amazing seeing a hurt and troubled
child transform into a creative and
positive one through the art.

Children's Program Facilitator

I get mad from school and yell at my mom, but
today I can yell at the paper.

Child Participant, Age 10

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

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

Children's Program Facilitator

Thank you for the program. I don't know
where I would be without it.

Adult Participant

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

Adult Program 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

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 Program Facilitator

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

Adult Program 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



Creativity and confidence...

A Window Between Worlds' first partnership in 1991 was with Sojourn, a domestic violence program that is now a part of The People Concern in Santa Monica. We received an email from a woman who attended AWBW workshops at Sojourn in 2018 explaining the impact creating art has had on her life.



Private Paradise: "This is my hopes and dreams of a **SAFE** and peaceful future; unlimited possibilities. This is my 'invitation' to **true** freedom after my liberation."

*"I rediscovered
my humor, my
wit and my
voice..."*

I'm pretty sure you're the wonderful people who supply the healing arts workshops for the survivors of domestic violence at Sojourn. I simply had to reach out personally to say how grateful I am that you've done this.

I would NEVER have considered doing something so 'indulgent' as an art group before but it's become a revelation for me during my recovery process. I was extremely cynical about it and impatient at first, but after 3-4 sessions, I kid you not, I rediscovered my humor, my wit and my voice again. Even more shocking was the old familiar feeling of confidence seeping back into my frozen terrified brain.

However, the most wonderful thing your course gave me was the explosion of creativity and confidence in parenting my autistic son. Now our apartment is virtually



wallpapered with all kinds of art projects we do together. I also use it as a 'solution' to problems he encounters during play and difficult transitions — to sit down and design and 'tape together' a mini-house for his soft toys would NEVER have happened a year ago!

Please do NOT ever stop this extremely important work. My son and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You have helped 'save' us and made our lives so much more colorful and bright.

Based on participant evaluations submitted by adults in 2018:

93% agree that the workshop helped them to feel more positive about themselves and their futures

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."*

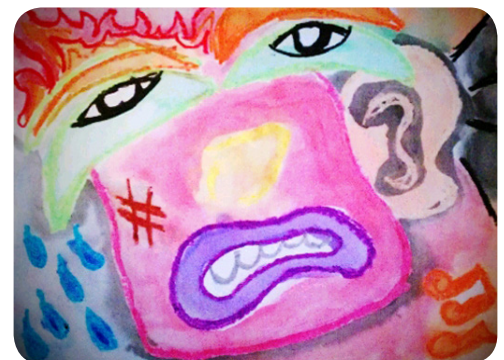
Emily, age 15, and her mother experienced physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse at the hands of their perpetrator. The effect on Emily has been profound. In fear of being abused, or repeatedly witnessing the abuse of her mother or other siblings, Emily completely withdrew from all social settings. 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 facilitators in 2018:

96% agree that the art workshops helped to improve collaboration between staff and participants, bridging gaps and building mutual trust

Finding connection through art...

Creating art can be just what one needs to refocus in moments of anger. Following is a story from one of our facilitators at a substance use outpatient treatment program, where two women found peace and connection during an A Window Between Worlds' art workshop.



We began our art group late one day because a fight broke out between two participants just before we started. I was really worried we would have to ask one or both of the women to leave our treatment program, and for one of them, leaving the program would have meant she could lose her housing.

After a mediated conversation, both participants calmed down enough that they decided they wanted to participate in the art group that day. The painting process seemed to soothe them a great deal and one of them even shared that making art helped her re-center herself: "I really enjoyed this time because I was able to forget everything that happened and just breathe for a little while and lose myself in painting."



*"...I was able to
forget everything
that happened and
just breathe..."*

She apologized to the woman she'd been fighting with, and both participants made insightful and kind comments about each other's art. I think art-making together was the best possible thing that could have happened to bring them both out of fight-or-flight* mode and come back to their best selves. The process appeared to serve as a reconciliation — they walked out of the room together, talking.



This is one of those moments I feel really privileged to witness while doing this work!

* Research has shown that when a person feels threatened — as these two women did before the workshop — the response is either fighting (what happened here), running away (flight) or being unable to do anything (known as freeze).



Based on annual evaluations submitted by facilitators in 2018:

93% agree that the art workshops helped make a positive difference in participants' relationships and interactions with others

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 facilitators in 2018:

96% agree that the art workshops helped them to make breakthroughs with participants who are difficult to reach and connect with