

# 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