

Riley Cassidy

ARE2045

Connecting with Art

Although a hospital is a place to heal, their frigid environment often creates a sense of disconnection. The constant sounds of machines, sterile smells, and bleak designs make it easy to feel lost. The biggest problem with most hospitals is that they hinder human connection. In the hospital most patients are away from their friends, family, hobbies, passions, and left almost isolated. Connection is a form of medicine in itself. Humans are literally wired to connect, whether that be to people or to ideas. There is plenty of evidence from recent studies that indicates a direct correlation between connection and physical health. It is almost ironic that a hospital meant to heal can do the very opposite. There is an obvious need for connection in hospital environments and a great way to do that is through art. Art is a unique outlet that can be implemented just about anywhere— even a hospital. Art has the potential to connect patients with their surroundings, other patients, and even themselves.

The creative processes in art often force the creator to look at things differently. For instance, when drawing an object, one becomes familiar with all of the different details and idiosyncrasies; the object takes on a new form. In this way, art is a powerful tool to help patients reevaluate their surroundings. At first glance, most hospitals all look the same. This means that patients have to dig deep in order to find some way to connect to the space and feel any sense of familiarity; art could be a new way to do so. Patients could draw their surroundings, to familiarize with it, or decorate with art to personalize it. Patients can make the space their own. A person's connection with their space is important in making them feel comfortable and secure, something that often plays a big role in the healing process.

Art also has the power to connect fellow patients, who can relate to each others' struggles. A group project brings patients out of their hospital rooms and gives them a common objective with others in the room. Art can help start a conversation that leads to friendship. Forming new relationships could help patients acclimate to their new environment away from their friends and family.

The healing process itself can create some internal disconnect in patients. A diagnosis can be mistaken for an identity. It's especially easy to lose a sense of individuality when surrounded by blank walls, identical hospital gowns, and unfamiliar healthcare workers. A person's way of life is turned upside down. Art pushes patients to shift their focus from the hospital to their innermost selves. The best part is that once they reconnect with themselves, art can be used as a mode of expression. It can give unique insight into a person's thinking process, interests, and even core values. During expression, creators unearth parts of themselves that they weren't aware of. It is powerful.

Living in a hospital can cause internal and external forms of disconnection, causing patients to lose their sense of individuality. Art encourages patients to reconnect with their core values and self-concept

outside of their illness. By asking patients to create art, healthcare providers can encourage patients to reflect, form new connections, and find new perspectives. Art is a form of communication that isn't hindered by language barriers or age gaps. This kind of unhindered, powerful communication allows for the kind of connection that hospitals need.

