

Art Saves Lives

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Something that I personally feel very passionately about is the overall effect that art has on people. Whenever someone makes a comment that art is not important or is frivolous or is “okay for those who have lots of spare time on their hands,” I begin to wonder why these people are so broken. Art – and I mean all of the arts – is not a spare time thing that is for the idle. Art is primal. It goes to our very soul and defines who we are. Art makes us feel better and gives us purpose.

The healing qualities of art have become recognized so that hospitals now include it as an important part of their programming. The [University of Alberta](#) believed it was so vital that there was a gallery incorporated in the design of its original hospital building.

Art has been found to be a very important factor in dealing with [underprivileged youth](#). Since art can be what ever one wants it to be and there is no right or wrong it can be very useful in building self esteem in those who may not have had a very nurturing home life or a life where parents may have been absent for a good deal of the time. If you can teach a young person to gain attention by picking up a paintbrush or a guitar rather than a knife or a gun we all win. And, I know from personal experience that this is very possible. I have personally witnessed a child turn from a disruptive troublemaker to a budding Vincent Van Gogh in the time it takes to fingerprint someone. Often all they need is someone to tell them that their activities are worthwhile.

How many potential gang members have become musicians or dancers or visual artists? You can see the [talent in the streets](#). The rappers, and the hip hoppers are everywhere. They are doing what we all yearn to do. They are expressing themselves. They need to let out emotions that in many cases can be extreme. On the other hand, how many never had the opportunity. How many fathers thought that their son would become a sissy if he took dance lessons? How many mothers worried that their child would never be able to feed her or himself if he or she went to art school rather than welding school or law school? How many kids with spray cans have we put in handcuffs rather than enrolled them in legitimate art classes?

Self-expression can take forms that cause many people to cringe. When you live on the edge, your art will tend to be edgy. Usually the only direction these young people need to be shown is the difference between edgy and destructive, or self-destructive. Often, but not always, the art that flows will become more socially acceptable – at least to the point where nobody gets hurt.

Art has not only emotional healing qualities but also, in the long run, it can prevent serious physical harm. Anyone who tries to diminish the importance of art has no understanding of what art actually is. The future will be one where we recognize the real contributions that art makes and capitalize on them.