

Mental  
Health  
Care  
CAREERS



# The Art Therapist's Role

Art can serve as a transformative tool of healing and self-discovery for people facing mental health challenges.

Art therapists guide individuals through a healing process using artistic mediums to help them explore their emotions, gain insight and develop coping strategies.

Art therapy is a specialized form of therapy that combines psychology and the creative process to promote healing, personal growth and emotional well-being. Trained art therapists work with people of all ages, helping them express themselves and explore their thoughts and feelings through various art forms, such as painting, drawing, sculpting and collage.

## PREPARATION

Most art therapists start by earning a bachelor's degree in a related field such as psychology, art therapy or fine arts. These provide a solid foundation for pursuing a master's degree in art therapy or a closely related field. Look for graduate programs the American Art Therapy Association has accredited or the Art Therapy Credentials Board has recognized.

During the master's program, students are required to complete supervised clinical internships or practicum experiences. These hands-on placements provide opportunities to work



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directly with clients under the guidance and supervision of experienced art therapists. It gives students the opportunity to develop skills, apply theoretical knowledge and work with diverse populations.

Upon completing a master's degree in art therapy, many counties and states require art therapists to get a license or certification to practice independently. It is important to

research the specific regulations in the region where you plan to practice.

## SKILLS NEEDED

Art therapists possess artistic skills, therapeutic aptitudes and personal qualities.

Key skills and aptitudes are artistic ability; knowledge of psychological principles and therapeutic techniques; empathy and compassion; active listening

skills; non-judgmental attitude; flexibility and adaptability; observational and analytical skills; cultural sensitivity; boundaries, ethics, self-reflection and self-care.

In addition to art and therapy tasks, art therapists perform assessments, write treatment plans and summary reports, participate on client care teams and continue to keep up on research and techniques.

## JOB OUTLOOK AND CONDITIONS

According to Recruiter.com, art therapy careers have had a strong outlook since 2004. Demand for these positions has increased by 33% with an average growth of 2% per year. The demand is expected to increase by 26,660 new jobs through 2029.

As for working conditions, the Illinois Department of Employment Security reports that art therapists have a high level of social interaction, must deal with conflict, almost always work indoors and physically near patients, work autonomously, must be exact and accurate and usually work full time on a set schedule.

While the job is usually safe, art therapists do work with some people who may become aggressive and threatening.

During an art therapy session, an art therapist creates a safe and supportive environment where clients are encouraged to engage in art-making. The focus is on the process and not the actual creation of art.

It is used in a variety of settings, including hospitals, clinics, schools and community organizations. Some art therapists have their own private practices. Therapists may work with individuals of all ages, especially those dealing with trauma, anxiety, depression, grief and other mental health challenges. In some areas, art therapists are starting to work with people who have neurodevelopmental disorders, substance use disorders and chronic illnesses.

# Consumer Psychologists

Consumer psychologists specialize in understanding the psychological factors that influence consumer behavior.

They apply their expertise to help businesses and organizations better understand target audiences, develop effective marketing strategies and create products and services that resonate with consumers.

Consumer psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on studying individuals' behaviors, motivations and decision-making processes as consumers. It is usually considered a subspecialty of industrial or organizational psychology. Professionals in this field explore various psychological aspects that influence consumer choices such as perception, attitudes, emotions, social influence and cognitive processes.

By understanding these factors, consumer psychologists help their clients develop strategies to attract and engage consumers effectively.

Some consumer psychologists work for government organizations or political organizations. Because they research consumer behavior, they are able to help those organizations understand why people make decisions. They might help shape a consumer safety message or encourage



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people to make positive choices for their community.

## BECOMING A CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGIST

The first step is to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology, marketing or a related field. After completing a bachelor's degree, aspiring consumer psychologists often pursue a master's or doctoral degree in con-

sumer psychology. These programs provide specialized coursework and research opportunities in consumer behavior, market research and psychological theories related to consumer decision-making.

Throughout their education, aspiring consumer psychologists gain valuable research experience by working on consumer behavior projects, con-

ducting experiments or analyzing consumer data.

To gain practical experience, aspiring consumer psychologists may seek internships or employment opportunities in market research firms, advertising agencies or consumer-focused organizations. This helps develop a deeper understanding of consumer behavior and provides exposure to industry

practices.

Consumer psychologists need a diverse skill set to effectively analyze consumer behavior and provide actionable insights to businesses. They must have strong research and analytical skills to design and conduct studies, analyze data and interpret research findings. They need a deep understanding of psychological principles and theories related to perception, motivation, decision-making and social influence. Consumer psychologists apply this knowledge to interpret consumer behavior and guide marketing strategies.

Other important skills are communication and presentation skills, knowledge of market research methodologies and business acumen.

## JOB CONDITIONS

Consumer psychologists work in such settings as market research firms, advertising agencies, consulting firms and academic institutions. They perform such tasks as conducting studies, analyzing data, providing consumer insights to clients, creating effective marketing campaigns, blending strategies based on consumer behavior insights or teaching courses.

Workloads can vary with deadlines and project-based work being common. These professionals may have to travel for research or client meetings.

Consumer psychologists contribute to the success of businesses and by bridging the gap between psychology and consumer behavior.

# Child, Adolescent Psychiatrists

Child and adolescent psychiatrists play a crucial role in promoting the mental well-being of children and teenagers.

These specialized medical professionals are dedicated to understanding and addressing the unique mental health challenges young people face.

They specialize in diagnosing, testing and providing mental health care for young people. They evaluate and assess young patients for mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders and mood disorders.

These professionals develop comprehensive treatment plans that may include therapy, medication management and other interventions to support their patients' mental well-being. They work closely with patients, their families and other health care professionals to provide holistic care and address the unique challenges that children and adolescents face in their mental health journeys.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It takes a significant commitment to education and training to become a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

The typical path starts by earning a bachelor's degree in a pre-medical or related field, such as psychology or biology.



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The next step is to attend medical school and earn either a doctor of medicine or a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree. Medical school generally takes four years to complete and covers foundational medical knowledge.

After medical school, graduates pursue a residency program in psychiatry. This involves specialized training in diagnosing and treating mental illnesses. Residency programs typically last four years, during which time doctors gain hands-on experience working with patients under the supervision

of experienced psychiatrists.

Once the residency is complete, aspiring child and adolescent psychiatrists undertake a fellowship in this subspecialty. Fellowships generally last two or three years and provide specialized training in diagnosing and treating mental health disorders in children and adolescents.

## SKILLS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Child and adolescent psychiatrists require a unique set of skills and characteristics to excel in their field.

They must genuinely care about the well-being of young people and approach their work with empathy and compassion. These qualities help establish trust and create a safe and supportive environment for patients to express their thoughts and emotions.

Effective communication is key when working with young patients and their families. Child and adolescent psychiatrists are skilled at actively listening, asking appropriate questions and explaining complex medical concepts in an understandable manner.

Other skills and aptitudes include patience and flexibility, problem-solving abilities, teamwork and collaborative skills.

## JOB CONDITIONS

Child and adolescent psychiatrists work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, psychiatric clinics, community mental health centers, schools and private practices.

The work hours can vary. They may have traditional office hours seeing patients during the day or they may work multiple shifts in a hospital be on call any hours of the day.

They will work with diverse populations possessing unique backgrounds, experiences, traumas, and mental health needs. They often collaborate closely with other health care professionals, including therapists, counselors, educators and social workers. This collaborative environment allows for comprehensive treatment planning and a holistic approach to care.

Child and adolescent psychiatrists deal with emotionally challenging situations, as they work with young people facing mental health struggles. They must be prepared to handle sensitive and distressing situations with professionalism and emotional resilience.

These mental health professionals can make a lasting, positive effect on the lives of children and teenagers, helping them to navigate mental health challenges and fostering their overall well-being.

# Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychology is a multidisciplinary field that combines the principles of psychology with the legal system.

Forensic psychologists play a vital role in the criminal justice system, applying their expertise to understand the psychological factors underlying criminal behavior, evaluating individuals involved in legal cases and providing insights to assist in legal decision-making.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts the field will grow by 14% through 2026. A psychology professor told The American Psychological Association that television shows about forensic psychology such as “Profiler” and “Law & Order: Criminal Intent” is the reason many students are taking up the profession, but she warns it isn’t as glamorous as television depicts. It is, though, exciting, intellectually challenging and lucrative.

## BECOMING A FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST

Those who become forensic psychologists typically follow a very specific educational and professional path. They start by earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology or a related field. It is an opportunity to build a foundation in human behavior, psychological theories and research methods. Aspiring forensic psychologists then pursue a master’s degree, typically



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in forensic psychology or a closely related field. They take specialized coursework on the intersection of psychology and the legal system. At this point, some candidates take internships or conduct research.

Many forensic psychologists pursue a doctorate degree in clinical psychology or forensic psychology, gaining in-depth knowledge in the field. After doing so, it is common for aspiring forensic psychologists to complete a supervised internship and postdoctoral training. At this point, they get hands-on training in conducting forensic assessments, working with legal professionals and gaining expertise in specialized areas such as criminal behavior, risk assessment or child custody evaluations.

Depending on where they practice, forensic psychologists may need to obtain a license to practice independently. This may require passing a licensing exam and meeting ethical and professional standards.

## JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Forensic psychologists conduct assessments and evaluations of people involved in legal cases, such as criminal defendants, witnesses or victims. They assess mental health, cognitive functioning, risk factors and competency to stand trial.

They often provide expert testimony in court proceedings to help judges, attorneys and juries understand psychological concepts, explain their findings and offer professional opinions relevant to the case.

Forensic psychologists may engage in research to advance the field’s understanding of topics such as criminal behavior, eyewitness testimony, risk assessment or the effect of trauma on individuals involved in the legal system.

They collaborate and consult with legal professionals, providing insights and guidance on psychological matters related to cases or policy development.

Forensic psychologists may also be involved in the assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of offenders within correctional settings, addressing issues such as aggression, substance abuse or anger management.

## JOB CONDITIONS

Forensic psychologists work

in a variety of settings including courthouses, correctional facilities, research institutions and private practice.

Job conditions can vary depending on the specific role and work setting. They may work regular office hours, but the nature of the work can sometimes require flexibility, as they may be called upon to provide assessments or testimony outside of regular working hours.

Those who want to excel in the field need to have strong analytical and critical thinking skills, effective communication abilities, a commitment to ethical and professional conduct, cultural sensitivity, emotional resilience and an ability to collaborate and work in teams.

# Geriatric Psychiatrists

With the aging population, the demand for geriatric psychiatrists has grown significantly.

These mental health professionals focus on the care of older adults. They play a vital role in addressing the unique mental health needs of older individuals and ensuring their well-being.

Geriatric psychiatry is a branch of psychiatry that focuses on diagnosing, treating and preventing mental disorders in older adults. Geriatric psychiatrists specialize in understanding the complex interactions between physical health, cognitive abilities and emotional well-being in older people. They address mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, dementia and mood disorders that are commonly experienced in late adulthood.

ExploreHealthCareers.org points out that with the number of people over the age of 65 expected to double in the next 20 years, this is a field where there will be increasing demand.

## BECOMING A GERIATRIC PSYCHIATRIST

Geriatric psychiatrists typically have nine to 10 years of higher education. The first step is to earn a bachelor's degree in a pre-medical or a related field, such as biology or psychology. The next step is to



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attend medical school, which typically takes four years.

Once becoming a medical doctor or doctor of osteopathic medicine, graduates pursue a residency program in psychiatry. This involves specialized training in diagnosing and treating mental illnesses. After completing a general psychiatry residency, aspiring professionals undertake a fellowship in geriatric psychiatry. This focuses on addressing mental

health concerns specific to older adults. Fellows gain experience in evaluating, diagnosing and treating psychiatric disorders in older individuals.

Geriatric psychiatrists must obtain a medical license to practice independently. The requirements vary by locality, but usually involve completing supervised clinical hours and passing licensing exams.

Geriatric psychiatrists require a unique set of skills

to provide effective care for older adults. They must have empathy and compassion for their patients who may face physical, cognitive and emotional challenges. Strong communication skills are essential to effectively interact with older adults, their families and other health care professionals. They need strong diagnostic skills to assess mental health conditions and differentiate them from com-

mon age-related changes or physical health issues.

Geriatric psychiatrists often work as part of a multidisciplinary team that includes geriatricians, nurses, social workers and other health care professionals. They must have a deep understanding of the aging process, age-related changes in mental health and the effect of physical health conditions on mental well-being.

## JOB CONDITIONS

The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry says the field is on the cutting edge of the revolution in biomedical sciences. Those in the profession perform such tasks as counseling patients, holistically evaluating patients, prescribing medicine, creating treatment plans, running diagnostic and laboratory tests and consulting with the families of patients.

Geriatric psychiatrists work in various settings, including the geriatric psychiatry units of hospitals, outpatient clinics, private practices, long-term care facilities such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities and research and academia.

They may work regular office hours or have on-call responsibilities depending on the setting. The work environment can vary, but according to a UCLA survey, most geriatric psychiatrists find their work highly rewarding as they make a significant effect on the mental well-being of older adults.

# Psychiatric Rehab Specialists

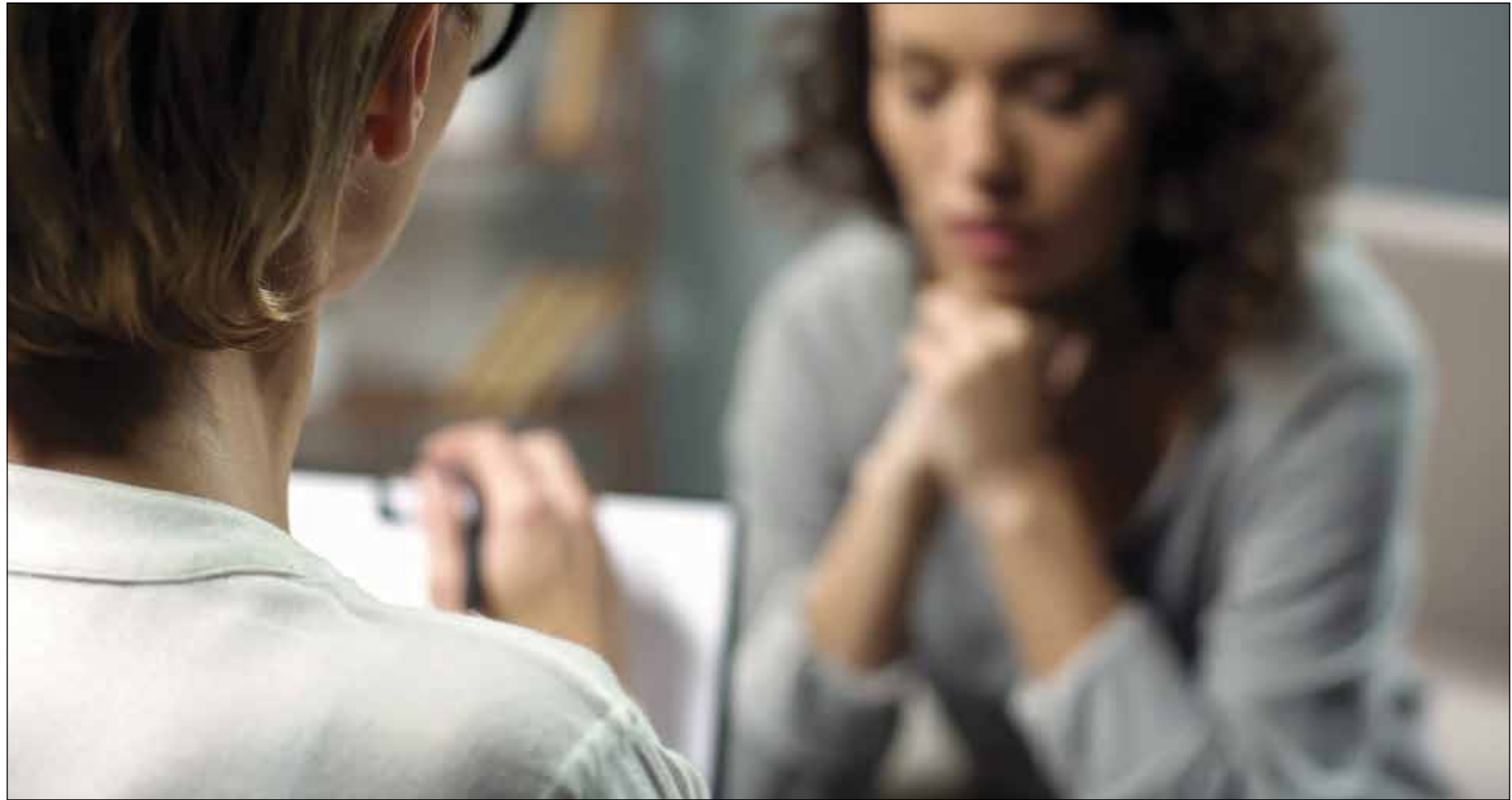
Psychiatric rehabilitation specialists provide support, guidance and resources to individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

These professionals focus on helping individuals regain independence, develop life skills and achieve their goals in the context of their mental health challenges.

Psychiatric rehabilitation is an evidence-based practice that aims to enhance the recovery and quality of life for people with mental health conditions. It focuses on supporting individuals in developing the skills and resources needed to manage their mental health challenges effectively.

Psychiatric rehabilitation specialists work with individuals to identify personal goals, develop strategies for self-care and coping and address barriers to community integration. They primarily work with people who have long-term psychiatric disabilities such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other severe mental health challenges.

The University of North Carolina's Center for Excellence in Community Mental Health explains that impairments in functioning are often more troubling to people with severe mental illnesses than the symptoms themselves. Psychiatric rehabilitation addresses those



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impairments, helping them to increase their independence. A specialist might help a patient maintain their household, develop meaningful relationships, manage finances or learn to navigate around their community.

The website College Educated said rehabilitation specialists may also work with employers to help them understand the specific needs and challenges of a client. They help to create an environment where the person with a disability can succeed.

## BECOMING A PRS

Start by earning a bachelor's degree in a field related to

human services, social work, psychology or a related discipline. This provides a foundation of knowledge in the social and behavioral sciences.

Gain relevant work experience in mental health settings such as residential facilities, community organizations or social service agencies. This experience allows aspiring psychiatric rehabilitation specialists to develop an understanding of mental health challenges and the needs of individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

Certification as a psychiatric rehabilitation practitioner, while not mandatory, can enhance career prospects and demonstrate expertise in the

field. Certification requirements usually include education, work experience and passing an exam.

Psychiatric rehabilitation specialists need a diverse skill set to effectively support individuals in their recovery journey. They should possess empathy and compassion, have effective communication skills, be able to conduct assessments and engage in goal setting, have teaching and training skills and be able to advocate for people.

## JOB CONDITIONS

These professionals tend to work in community mental health facilities, residential facilities, supported employ-

ment programs, hospitals, mental health facilities, nursing homes and case management agencies.

They may work regular office hours, including evenings and weekends, to accommodate their patients' schedules and provide necessary support. They often collaborate as parts of multidisciplinary teams that might include psychiatrists, therapists and social workers.

With the right skills, empathy and commitment, psychiatric rehabilitation specialists contribute to empowering individuals with psychiatric disabilities, promoting independence and improving their overall quality of life.

# Psychotherapy Modalities

Psychotherapy encompasses many modalities and approaches that some specialize in.

Each modality offers unique theoretical frameworks and techniques to address the different mental health concerns and support individuals in their therapeutic journeys.

## COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOR THERAPY (CBT)

CBT is a widely practiced and evidence-based approach that focuses on the relationship between thoughts, emotions and behaviors. It helps individuals identify and challenge negative or unhelpful thought patterns and develop healthier ways of thinking and behaving.

Therapists trained in CBT work collaboratively with clients to set specific goals and use structured techniques to address specific symptoms or problems.

To learn CBT, therapists typically undergo specialized training programs or pursue advanced certifications. These training programs provide comprehensive knowledge of the CBT model, its principles and its techniques. Therapists learn to apply various strategies such as cognitive restructuring, behavior modification and exposure therapy.

Gaining proficiency in CBT can open doors to career opportunities in settings such



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as private practice, clinics, hospitals or research institutions. Many insurance companies recognize CBT as an effective treatment, making it a sought-after modality in the mental health field.

## PSYCHODYNAMIC THERAPY

Psychodynamic therapy is an approach that explores how unconscious thoughts, emotions and past experiences influence behaviors and relationships. It emphasizes the therapeutic relationship as a means of understanding and addressing underlying conflicts and patterns.

Psychodynamic therapists help clients gain insight into their

unconscious processes, develop self-awareness and find meaning of their experiences.

Becoming proficient in psychodynamic therapy often involves extensive training and supervised practice. Therapists may pursue specialized graduate programs or engage in postgraduate training institutes that focus on psychodynamic theories and techniques.

Psychodynamic therapy can be a rewarding career choice for those interested in long-term, in-depth work with clients. Psychodynamic therapists often find employment in private practice, community mental health centers or academic settings. They may work

with individuals, couples or groups and may also pursue research or teaching opportunities in the field.

## MINDFULNESS-BASED APPROACHES

Mindfulness-based approaches draw from Eastern contemplative practices and integrate mindfulness techniques into psychotherapy. These approaches, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction or mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, promote present-moment awareness, acceptance and non-judgmental observation of thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness-based therapists guide clients in cultivating

mindfulness skills to manage stress, reduce anxiety and enhance overall well-being.

To specialize in mindfulness-based approaches, therapists often participate in training programs, workshops or retreats that focus on mindfulness practice and its integration into therapy. They learn to incorporate mindfulness techniques into their therapeutic interventions and guide clients in mindfulness exercises.

Specializing in mindfulness-based approaches can open career paths in settings such as mindfulness centers, integrative health clinics or private practice. It can also create opportunities for teaching mindfulness to groups or leading mindfulness-based programs.

## CAREER CONSIDERATIONS

Specializing in specific modalities can shape the type of clients therapists work with, the settings they practice in and the populations they serve. Some clients may specifically seek therapists trained in a particular modality, which can lead to a more specialized client base.

Specialization may affect job prospects, referral networks and opportunities to collaborate with others in the mental health field.

Specializing in a specific modality does not limit therapists to practicing only that approach. Many therapists integrate different modalities or employ an eclectic approach tailored to their clients' needs.