

UMass MIND Presents: An Art-based Approach to Promote Recovery

On October 19th, 2021, Amy Cheung, an UMass MD/PHD student and a leader of UMass MIND, joined by Lesley University's drama therapy expert - Dr. Laura Wood, and co-founders of Zentangle - Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, led a presentation at the 5th National Organization for the Arts in Health (NOAH) Annual Conference. The theme of the conference this year is *the Art of Resilience*. The NOAH aims to bring health and the arts together to support holistic treatment, education, and prevention of illnesses. The presentation dove into the projects currently underway and the upcoming projects as part of UMass MIND's Community Intervention Program (CIP). The interdisciplinary collaboration between UMass MIND, Lesley University, and the Zentangle Foundation provided insight on various expressive art modalities as a novel approach in promoting healing and recovery for individuals with serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar depressive disorder, and bipolar disorder. Drama therapy offers a new, non-conventional way to work through life experiences and situations. It also offers participants a sense of community, growth in self-confidence, value in social connections, and a focus on mindfulness. Zentangle is a guided art method that allows participants to explore mindfulness, creativity, and assign value to something they have created. As these projects encountered a challenging time during the COVID-19 pandemic, UMass MIND's CIP program, working together with its wonderful collaborators including Dr. Wood, Rick and Maria, was able to adapt and complete them virtually.

With the success seen within the community, UMass MIND will be collaborating with Dr Wood once again to conduct a 12-week drama therapy study. This study is funded by the National Endowment of the Arts, and will consider physiological, psychiatric, and recovery-based quality of life outcomes.



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