

Submitter:	Zian Chavez
On Behalf Of:	Lewis and Clark College
Committee:	Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB3761

Art Therapy Testimony
By Zian Chavez, MA, ATR

I finished grad school in 2015 years ago. I never thought this was possible. I went to the emergency room in 2003 with a migraine, that migraine lasted more than 20 years. That was in addition to my MS symptoms which started in 1999. This is a story about transformation of health, body, mind and spirit.

After being in pain everyday for years in 2007 I started to paint again. I remembered as a child how painting made me feel so wonderful and empowered. With each brush stroke I made, I was breathing through my pain. I let the canvas absorb my suffering. I felt alive when I painted. This was important for me to remember, because sometimes i think I would forget that I was actually living. And because the making of art reminded me that I was alive it provided small glimpses of hope.

Through Art Therapy I found more hope and more inspiration to want to be alive. And at a time of exclusion of self and the world this communication was everything to me. So it was a communication of art and body. Art making saved my life. Art gave me the spirit to make changes in my life. In chronic pain, nothing was working for me. I wanted to die. So I changed everything. My images and the process of making Art gave me the strength to make changes. I wanted to change. I wasn't living, I was barely breathing.

Art, no matter what modality I'm using inspires me. It helps me want to live. I accept who I am and what my body can do. I'm in pain everyday. Sometimes it hurts to walk, to move, to breathe, but I can still do it.

Art Therapy has allowed awareness of my body. I choose to breathe, move, walk my own way. I accept my pain. In a sense I communicate with my pain, for example I'll say pain-I love you. It is a part of me. For years I didn't like it and yes I wanted it to leave. But with Art Therapy, I've made peace with my pain. So with an autoimmune disease like multiple sclerosis, my cells are attacking my cells. I had a conflict going on inside my body. I felt the more I was angry about it and fought the pain emotionally or with medication, my pain continued.

It was when I started to love and accept me for who I am, it shifted. I am enough. I choose consciously to live this way. To be full of gratitude and amazement of all things. This is how it is possible for me to thrive not just survive with a chronic

condition. This is the story how Art Therapy and life are simultaneously providing me with hope and healing. Thank you.

Zian Chavez