

# Lisa Lane Burbidge Unmasks the Diverse Healing Power of Art Therapy

by Christopher Cussat



Lisa Lane Burbidge, MAAT, ATR-BC, LPC describes herself as a mother, an artist, and an art therapist—in that order. But on top of all this, Burbidge is a survivor who has found solace, healing, and expression in her creative outlet and art-related profession. In other words, and to quote her, “Creativity is essential.”

As a Registered and Board Certified Art Therapist (ATR-BC), Burbidge is also a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Pennsylvania. She currently works at Chestnut Ridge Counseling Services, Inc. in Greensburg, PA—a community-based, outpatient mental health clinic. “We provide outpatient therapy and psychiatric care for all ages. My current caseload patients’ ages

range from 4 to 68 years old,” she adds. Burbidge has a small, but growing, art therapy private practice in Greensburg as well which serves clients of all ages and backgrounds—including college students and veterans.

Burbidge says that she has been an artist since she had a coffee can full of crayons, was laying on the floor, and coloring at her grandmother’s house—perhaps 45 years ago. Although she started dabbling in her artistry at a very young age, Burbidge believes that it is never too late to find one’s creative spark. In fact, her own grandmother began painting at age 65.

She attained her Graduate Degree in Art Therapy from Seton Hill University in May 2000 and received an undergraduate degree in Art, with minors in Psychology and Art Therapy, from Carlow University in 1996. The art bug surely seems to run in the family, because like her grandmother, Burbidge’s daughter is also an amazing artist who is currently completing her third year of college for art education.



In addition to being an art therapist and working with art everyday for her job, Burbidge also occasionally creates her own art, does self-art therapy, and sells small artworks on the side. She explains that her preferred media changes with her life. “I began my own personal journey into art and art therapy by painting. A series of Horse Paintings became my primary expression as well as my therapy. Soon after living through separation, divorce, and single parenting of a toddler—

I quickly [and thankfully] learned about the benefits of art therapy first-hand. This was PERFECT!

Burbidge is very open about discussing her own personal healing. She mentions that she got clean and sober and became an alumnus of Gateway Rehab in January 1987. “As an artist, I always felt the power of healing and expression through my own paintings. I love masks as well and I created a series of self-portrait masks (again both artistry and art therapy) in order to soul search and grow into my new life and profession by exploring myself and sharing them with others.”

As a woman who is herself in recovery from addiction, Burbidge has also worked with women in early recovery from addiction for about 10 years. She shared her art and art therapy with them and they also made masks as part of the rehabilitation. “I recall

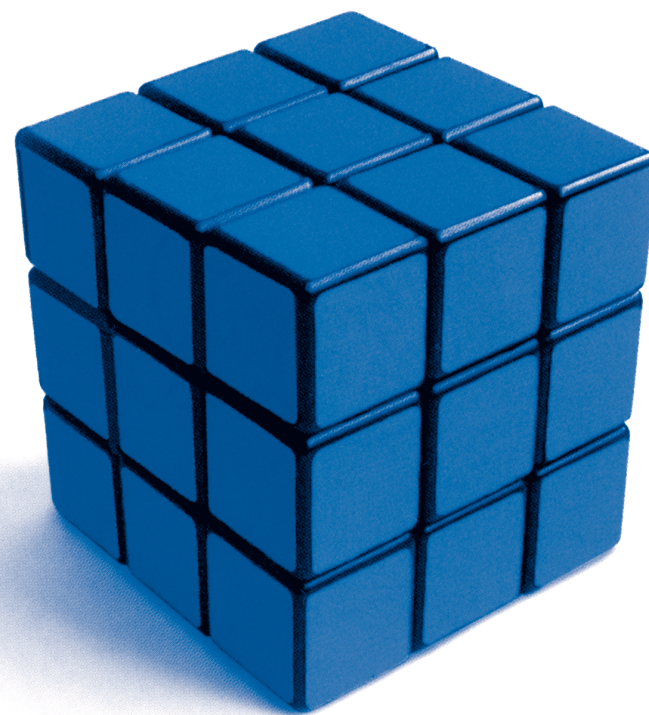


a young woman whose mask’s mouth appeared sewn shut—it was a very powerful image—so powerful she told me it scared her.” Burbidge further explains, “After completing a series of her own self-portrait masks which were so beautiful and exuding such a powerful African spirit, she revealed her truth. That first mask with the mouth sewn shut was the forecaster of suppressed memories of her childhood abuse she had never spoken of.”

Such experiences have only solidified Burbidge’s commitment to the profession of art therapy. “The power of expression is also the power of creativity for healing and transitioning from illness to health, and from addiction to recovery. I truly believe that art therapy is vital to healing—all areas of healing: physical, mental, and spiritual.” Additionally, Burbidge believes that art therapy fits perfectly with other treatments and therapies very well. “It enhances the medical and psychological, as well as the spiritual and cognitive—adding to the healing of the whole person.”

Burbidge continues to create her own art when she can and she still loves to draw horses and mandalas. But she admits that she has had very little time for her own art recently. “As I have begun a private practice last year, the demands on my time have increased and there is much less time for art. Yet, I hope to have a studio in the future—not only for my own personal use, but also as a place for people to come and create! In this way, I would be doing both my own creative expression as well as helping others to heal, grow, and even possibly exhibit and show their art someday.”

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