The Art of Resilience
Before we get started.....

• Let’s take a minute to gather some supplies. If you do not already have them ready, please gather what ever art supplies you might want to use. This can be anything from crayons to colored pencils to pastels or markers. It’s all good!
Ancient Roots of Creative Expression

• Even our most ancient ancestors used images to convey feelings, beliefs, thoughts and aspirations
• These are a just a few images from the Cave of Forgotten Dreams in France
• You will see the beauty and artistry of ancient peoples in recording the events of their lives
So what is Art Therapy anyway?

• The simplest explanation of art therapy is....
• The use of creative expression as part of therapy.
• This can be in the form of imagery, poetry, story telling, dramatic enactmen, sound and music, movement and dance
• There are two major branches of art therapy:
  • Art Psychotherapy in which the issues are focused upon and expressive content is processed through intentional, directed art making. And...
  • Art as Therapy in which the making of the art is the therapy in and of itself.
• Both of these approaches offer release, empowerment, resolution and increased self-understanding in order to move forward in life and toward wellness.
Other benefits of creative expression and art therapy include:

- Emotional regulation
- Exploration and experimentation
- Learning from mistakes
- Delayed gratification
- Planning
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Improved communication
- Increased frustration tolerance
- Letting go of perfectionism
- Sense of accomplishment
- Improved self-concept
- Improved self-confidence & self-esteem
- Socialization
- Reduction of stigma
- Symptom management
Let’s look at some images of folks who struggled with mental health challenges

• This is Adolf Wolfli (1864-1930). He spent most of his life, unfortunately, in a hospital. But he was driven to create and was prolific in creating hundreds of images expressing his inner experience with mental health challenges.

• This was during a time when mental illness was poorly understood.
This type of art is known as: Outsider Art or Visionary Art

This refers to someone having no formal training, who is self-taught, but showing great skill, creativity and motivation to create
Martin Ramirez (1895-1963) was another “Visionary Artist”

- Martin Ramirez is well known for his prolific creativity. He was highly motivated and would use scraps of paper, cardboard and other “Non-traditional’ materials to create his images
091, Untitled (Trains on Inclined Tracks)
c. 1960-63, gouache, colored pencil and graphite on pieced paper, 19 x 24.5 in.
• So now you have seen just a hint of the amazing creativity that can arise from personal challenges. Creativity contributes to resiliency.
• The creative process is inherently empowering.
• Let’s make some art together in community.
Let’s do some art together now to give you a taste of the power of creative expression.

Directive:

- Create an image using your first name as a basis. This can be as simple or ornate as you like. This can include any symbols that you think help us know you better. These can include symbols or images of things that are important to you, places you’ve lived, values you hold dear, hobbies and interests.

- In all art therapy there is no wrong way or right way. The best way is whatever seems right for you.

- Let’s take at least 10 minutes to work on this in our community. Take a few minutes to reflect and then just start. Don’t over think it. Have fun!
Let’s share!

- Remember you are only sharing by choice. We will all get to know each other through this process. We observe with no judgment and refrain from asking questions or making comments.

- Who will be brave and start us off?
How was this to do?

• So part of the art therapy process involves also processing about what was happening as you were making your art. I’d like to hear from a few of you as to how you found the process. Was it difficult? Easy? Fun? Scary?

• Remember, there is no right or wrong. Your experience is your experience. We are all here as a witness to your process and will not ask questions or make comments.

• Thank you
For those that want to share, you can email your creations to the OIFA Team at OIFATEAM@mercycareaz.org. We will post your images to our Mercy Care social media pages.
Thank you so much for being here for this conference. I want to encourage everyone to continue to explore your creativity as a means for self-expression, self-knowledge, personal growth and resiliency.