

Beth Gonzalez-Dolginko, EdD, LCAT, LP

Beth has worked clinically as an art therapist for 40 years, in academia for 28 years and in private practice for 36 years. Beth has worked with children and adults in the areas of psychiatry, addictions, aging, PTSD, chronic illness, special education, developmental disabilities and child development. Beth currently serves on the New York State Office of the Professions for Mental Health Practitioners Board.

Interview Questions with Art Therapist: Dr. Beth Gonzalez-Dolginko
Interview Questions by PerceptA Therapeutic and Training Center, LLC

1. What drew you to become an art therapist and how did you become interested in the profession? Share some of your background.

When I was a teenager, I was interested in art and psychology, so I used to say I wanted to be an art therapist, even before I actually knew it was a profession. I have been working clinically for 40 years, both in private practice and institutions, in: in-patient psychiatry, with PTSD, with developmental disabilities, with the medically ill, in special education, in child development, with aging and with addictions issues. I have also taught art therapy on both the undergraduate and graduate levels for 28 years.

2. Where did you earn your PhD/EdD? What made you pick that school and what was your experience like.

My EdD is in Foundations, Leadership and Policy Studies in Education Administration. Honestly, I needed only my Master's in art therapy for my NYS license. I earned a doctorate because I was a professor on a full-time tenure track at Hofstra University and was required to get my doctorate. I earned it at Hofstra because I got tuition remission, and I was right there.

3. What is your area of expertise?

My areas of expertise as both an art therapist and psychoanalyst are psychiatry and child development.

4. How did your education get you where you are now?

Again, I needed only my Master's in art therapy for my NYS license. My Master's in Art Therapy, getting my ATR-BC and my license are what has served my professional path.

5. What benefits have you had since earning your PhD?

None, really. I am on a NYS Board for Mental Health Practitioners, and there is some recognition from them but not really in terms of my practice. The knowledge of how to engage in meaningful research and write professionally is probably the best outcome of earning my doctorate.

6. What advice would you give the future generation of art therapists about what is important in the field?

It is important to stay current with trends in the field of psychotherapeutic treatment and engage in research related to these fields. The more research and publications that exist related to art therapy, the more credibility our profession will have. It is also important to work towards licensure in your home state. We finally got it in NYS. It has not necessarily increased our salaries, but it has given us more credibility and visibility.

7. In regards to picking a graduate school and choosing a program to suit their needs, what advice would you give to art therapists?

It is important to do your homework and pick a program that matches your philosophy and personality. Look at where their internship placements are. Definitely, do a face-to-face interview with the program director or other faculty members, and ask plenty of questions. You should interview them, too. The location might be an important consideration, as well.

8. What are your thoughts about multicultural issues in art therapy? What is the future of multicultural issues in art therapy?

Multicultural issues are always a consideration when doing any kind of treatment or intervention. It is important to be sensitive to people's cultures and needs in order to be effective. However, multiculturalism is constantly evolving and needs to do so in order to be inclusive. It is no longer just related to race and ethnicity but includes understanding the culture of a single parent family, gay culture, the culture of disability (e.g. deaf culture) and so on.

9. What are your current research interests?

I have been doing some research with organ transplant patients and may be embarking on some research regarding ABA (applied behavioral analysis) because of my involvement with a professional board in NYS.

10. What advice would you give someone considering a path in your profession?

I would tell someone to follow their passion. You will never get rich as an art therapist, there are not many jobs and some populations can cause a lot of burn-out, so it is important that you have a strong calling. Talking to practicing art therapists and doing a fieldwork through an undergraduate course would be highly recommended.