Dramatherapy supports individuals to creatively explore their traumatic experiences, and feelings. Dramatherapy can support individuals to **gain new perspectives**, **express, explore and process emotions**, and **develop healthier coping strategies**. The creative approach of dramatherapy can help to **rebuild confidence, increase self-awareness**, and find ways to **heal from their traumatic experiences.**

British Association for Dramatherapy (BADth) is the professional organisation for Dramatherapists in the United Kingdom. They develop, promote and represent dramatherapy in all national and international contexts, whilst working alongside other health care professions.

Dramatherapists are registered and regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

To find out more about dramatherapy services in your area, for support or learn more about dramatherapy, please visit www.badth.org.uk

For an audio version of this leaflet, or for research referenced in this leaflet, please visit

The British Association of Dramatherapists

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Dramatherapy with people who have experienced trauma

Dramatherapy is a form of psychotherapy delivered by qualified professionals. Dramatherapists work with individuals and groups, using a wide range of techniques. Sometimes dramatherapy can involve a lot of talking, often using stories or metaphors to explore traumatic experiences. Dramatherapy can also be non-verbal, using creative techniques such as drawing, moving, or making.

Trauma can be experienced by anyone, no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Individuals can experience trauma through something which happens directly to them, something they witness, or something they hear about. Trauma may feel different for everyone, and is generally explained as something which feels overwhelming, distressing, and/or intense. Sometimes trauma is because of one incident, and sometimes it is because of repeated or long-term events.

Anything can make humans feel traumatised, and some examples of trauma include:

- emotional, physical, or sexual abuse
- discrimination against yourself or someone else
- being forced to leave your home or relationships
- natural disasters
- destructive human behaviour
- illness of yourself or someone else
- serious accidents
- changes of behaviour in those you know
- deaths of those you know
- fear of something scary happening.

Often, if someone has experienced trauma, it may impact how well they feel able to cope with some, or all, parts of life.

For some, support may be needed to process their trauma and overcome associated challenges, such as:

- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Fear
- Overwhelming emotions
- Lack of emotions
- Intrusive thoughts
- Struggling to sleep
- Struggling to concentrate
- Questioning what is real.

If someone is struggling to cope with their trauma, they might need mental health support, and should speak to a medical professional, like their GP or mental health team, as soon as possible.

How can dramatherapy help individuals who have experienced trauma?

Processing from a safe distance - individuals can explore their trauma at a distance, and pace, which feels helpful and accessible for them.

Use of creativity - activities like drawing, moving, or making to help individuals explore their trauma, or express and process their emotions. Sometimes processing things creatively can feel more manageable and safe than directly discussing trauma.

Talking - could be discussing experiences and emotions, or role-playing situations which individuals have found traumatic, or are struggling to recognise their feelings about.

Trust with therapist - dramatherapists build a therapeutic relationship with their clients, allowing clients to feel safe to explore difficulties and to feel listened to.

Empowerment to make decisions - there is no pressure of having to share details, or engage with certain conversations or techniques.

Feeling listened to - therapists will show individuals they are being listened to, by reflecting experiences back to individuals or suggesting personalised ways to process feelings.