



Neurocognitive and Psychological Health Treatment Strategies

Art Therapy for PTSD and TBI: a Senior Active Duty Military Service Member's Therapeutic Journey

A clinician at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) used art therapy as a therapeutic process for providing treatment for an active duty Service Member with chronic posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a blast-related traumatic brain injury (TBI).¹ This therapy was provided in the context of an integrated care model that included medical and additional complementary therapies. The participant was a senior military Service Member who experienced blast TBI with PTSD. The primary component of the patient's therapy was the creation and discussion of a "mask representing warrior identities" (Figure 1). Art therapy sessions, in conjunction with a four-week evaluation and treatment program, significantly reduced the frequency and severity of flashbacks. The patient received art therapy sessions, narrative discussions, and neuroimaging evaluation. This research was sponsored by both the Department of Defense (DoD) and the National Endowment for the Arts.

FIGURE 1: Patient's Mask Depicting "BFIB" or Bloody Face in Bunker. Photo courtesy of Melissa S. Walker as published in *The Arts in Psychotherapy*.



¹ Walker, M. S., Kaimal, G., Koffman, R., & DeGraba, T. J. (2016). Art therapy for PTSD and TBI: A senior active duty military service member's therapeutic journey. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 49, 10–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2016.05.015>

