



Returning to the Self: Repetition and the Journey of Reclaiming the Exiled Parts in ADHD Through the Arts

Deniz Naji

This experiential workshop invites participants to explore the cyclical journey of returning to the self through art therapy with individuals who live with ADHD. Drawing inspiration from the theme of Cavafy's *Ithaca: Repetition and Return*, this workshop weaves theory, clinical reflection, and creative practice to illuminate how artmaking can transform cycles of shame, fragmentation, and self-rejection into rhythms of belonging and self-integration.

People with ADHD often carry internalized narratives of inadequacy, resulting from repeated experiences of being misunderstood within educational, familial, or social systems. These experiences can lead to the exile of core self-qualities such as spontaneity, curiosity, and sensitivity. In the arts therapies, repetition—whether through color, image, or form—can become a path of return: a ritual through which clients revisit and reintegrate these disowned aspects of identity.

The workshop will share research-based reflections illustrating how clients with ADHD use creative repetition to reclaim agency and authenticity. The therapeutic encounter becomes an act of 'homecoming'—a return to a self once judged or hidden, now seen and integrated through image. In this process, art serves as both compass and vessel, guiding the traveler toward acceptance, coherence, and belonging. This exploration invites practitioners to consider repetition not as pathology, but as rhythm—the pulse of return that animates transformation in the arts therapies.

Participants will engage in hands-on creative exploration using mask-making, complemented by guided reflection and dialogue. The process will model how creative arts offer a structured yet imaginative space for transforming shame into self-recognition. Through this journey, participants will experience art as both compass and container—supporting the cyclical return toward authenticity, coherence, and homecoming within the self.



Biography

Deniz Naji, MA, is a professional art therapist and counsellor supporting adults, teens, and children from diverse cultural and neurodiverse backgrounds. She is a professional member of the Association des art-thérapeutes du Québec (AATQ) and the [Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association \(CCPA\)](#).

Deniz's clinical work explores the intersections between neurodiversity, trauma, and creative process, with a special focus on how creative arts can support neurodiverse individuals in navigating shame, self-concept, and emotional regulation. Her integrative approach is rooted in a deep respect for symbolic process and the cyclical nature of healing. Deniz's work resonates strongly with repetition, honouring artmaking as a journey of homecoming to the authentic self. Through play, movement, and expressive arts, she creates spaces where clients can transform patterns of self-criticism into rhythms of self-acceptance and belonging.

Recent Publications

Naji, D. (2022). **Cultural Bereavement: The Use of Visual Journaling in Times of Complex Grief**. *Canadian Art Therapy Association*.