

# anzjat

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARTS THERAPY

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## Book review

### *Creative arts in counseling and mental health*

Philip Neilsen, Robert King, and Felicity Baker

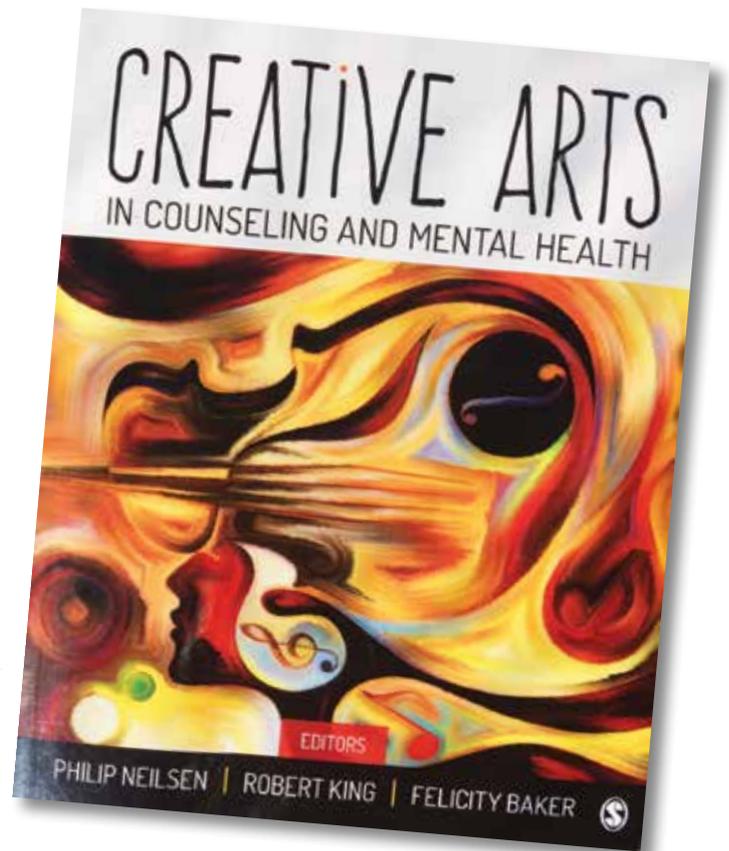
Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2016 (ISBN 978-1-483-30285-0)

Reviewed by Dr Jo Kelly

*Creative arts in counseling and mental health* is an essential publication for an Australian readership. Although an American publication, its focus is Australian-based. Not only has it been written from an Australian perspective, albeit with some contributors who originate or have been trained overseas, it is also a truly collaborative and multi-disciplinary text. As a consequence, its claims are international in their scope.

At its core, the book aims to articulate a theoretical framework by providing evidence that supports the inclusion of the arts in mental health recovery. The authors explore their understanding of what is meant by the creative arts, mental health, and the concept of recovery. A glance at the contents page gives the first indication that the book intentionally sets out to establish an empirical base for including arts in mental health recovery by providing a range of evidence. Contributions by practitioners, trainers, and researchers range across the creative disciplines. The common thread and conviction throughout is the inherent value of the creative arts as a force for stabilising individuals' health. As the editors emphasise in the Introduction, the creative arts can provide an essential supplement to the talking therapies, to improve quality of life and alleviate symptoms.

The structure of the book is significant, in that it addresses the creative arts in mental health across expressive modalities (art, dance, drama, music, and storytelling), across research methodologies, and across time. It is worth reading the editors' Introduction, as it gives a solid theoretical framework



for involving creative arts in recovery. The editors establish five interlinked components, which are influenced by creative activity by fostering recovery and improved mental health: Behavioural Activation, Self-Efficacy or Mastery, Experiential Avoidance, Personal Identity, and Social Connectedness. Patricia Fenner and Margot Schofield, for example, contextualise these five components in the public exhibition of artworks created by people who have experienced mental illness. They argue that exhibiting in public can provide social meaning and purpose, and that the personal benefits extend into the community in the form of social contribution. In the Introduction the editors also discuss the reasons why the