

**Final Paper**

**PART 1**

**Mental Illness as Depression**

Michelangelo Buonarroti

Year: 1511

Hands of God and Adam, detail from The Creation of Adam, from the Sistine Ceiling (pre restoration)



I chose this artwork because it represents mental illness as depression because it shows Adam's and God's hands slightly touching each other but are unable to grasp onto each other's hands

because of history repeating itself through various stories. This painting reveals a clue that Adam and God are not in the same level and it hints that Adam must be gloomy about this matter since life is so complicated and stressful. Adam seems like he also has anxiety because God is superior to him and God has simultaneously watched Adam's good and evil deeds. Adam observed that his lover Eve ate the forbidden fruit. To add on, Adam committed a grave sin by eating the fruit after Eve so that he can try to save her from Earth. However, God warned them not to consume it despite their desires. I strongly believe that Adam might seem guilty which is why his hands are shaking. This also means that Adam is full of anxiety. One factor that might be the cause of depression in this scenario is biological influences based on genetics and DNA. Most importantly, Adam is also filled with depression because he wants to be perfect, but the melancholy truth is that no one is born perfect. Regret may cause mental illness such as depression due to a traumatic past or experience.

Fukojusu (Adonis Flower)

Year: c. 1822-23

Katsushikha Hokusai



I chose this artwork because it is related to mental illness as sexual risk-taking, and it addresses an individual's lifestyle factors. In this erotic Japanese painting, a man and a woman are kissing while laying down and their lips are locked. Likewise, their lips look like they are tangled with each other and are not able to resist each other due to lust and addiction due to extreme sexual desire. Even though, the couple look like they are enjoying themselves, the woman seems like deep inside she is being forced similarly being raped. Her eyes express sorrow and resentment since she is selling her body without a choice. She wants to be independent and lead a life full of love but not lust. She has mental illness because she is a sex worker who is always toyed around numerous men. Most importantly, she is afraid of continuously having sex with strangers because she does not want to be exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. To add on, condoms and birth control pills are not solutions for preventing sexually transmitted diseases spreading from one body to another. For this reason, the woman has attempted to escape and commit suicide but was caught. She is unable to seek help because everyone plays around with her emotions. She is always pressured to earn a living by sleeping with older men. Therefore, her life is full of sadness and regret.

Choosing these paintings were challenging because these paintings had many myths connected to it and I wanted my analysis to go with the flow and focus on how mental illness leads to depression and sexual risk-taking as addiction when life is filled with traumatic events. Positive points about this activity were that I was able to analyze the purpose of these paintings and why the artists decided to paint and publish them to the public. Lessons that I learned while working on this final paper were that everyone's life is not perfect and that it is common for obstacles to occur in life since no one is aware of what might occur in the future. To add on, leading a healthy life is difficult since many people are born with various diseases and illnesses which explains why no one is born perfect.

## **PART 2**

### **Self-Reflection**

Overall, I strongly believe that my project is impressive and organized because I tried my best to be descriptive and explanatory. This is because I chose 2 works of art that are related to mental illness as depression and consists of factors such as biological influences on genetics/DNA and sexual risk-taking in terms of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The process of completing this final paper was quite confusing for me at first since I was not sure of how many works of art, I would have to select to address the main topic that I chose. Searching for paintings and other works of art that were not shown in this course was challenging since there were so many types of paintings that addressed depression as mental illness.

I learned a lot throughout this course because I was able to read the presentations that introduced and addressed various types of mental illnesses, diseases, and artistic topics. To add on, I learned in depth about medicine, forensics, robots and healthcare, visual culture, examining a human body, chronic illnesses, addiction, racism, sexual risk-taking behavior, and infections. I also learned a lot from my peers by reading their thoughtful discussions. Most importantly, I liked observing and analyzing the artwork of other artists and the meaning behind their creative work. I also learned about factors that lead to many diseases from spreading around the world. Most importantly, I strongly believe that throughout this course, expressing my ideas in writing and discussions has improved immensely since I am able to fully express my feelings.

I learned in terms of “seeing art as therapy” that someone can use art to show how they feel about health, disease or illnesses that affects them by drawing or painting an illustration of where in their body if they are enduring pain or what other conditions there are that might impact their health. Patients can utilize art to forget about their issues in life and try to move on with their lives. Most importantly, art therapy is used to improve cognitive and psychological behavior. For example, “The pain of substance abuse can be so intense that words fail to describe an addict’s feelings. Haluzan (2012), explores how the individual’s image in art is a result of internal thought processes that are difficult to express with words. Art therapy has been found to be beneficial to patients with physical or psychological illnesses and provides another counseling method that is useful for people undergoing addiction treatment. Art therapy is the deliberate use of art making for the purpose of addressing psychological and emotional needs and increasing self-awareness. It combines traditional psychotherapy theory and techniques with an understanding of the psychological aspects of the creative process (Matto, Corcoran, & Fassler 2003; Sullens, 2012) (Sharp, paragraph 4).” This means that art is used to express a person’s inner thoughts and opinions that are not often expressed by verbal words. An artist also uses art to express their own healing by utilizing different types of colors to portray emotions, mood and other significant clues or lessons. For example, “By assessing the use of these processes in clinical and qualitative trials, one can determine how others have found benefit in tying the intricacies of artistic meaning to the complexities of health and wellness (Stuckey and Nobel 2010).” This means that art helps express a variety of health conditions and the significance behind them.

## References

Sharp, Art Therapy and the Recovery Process: A Literature Review. *Lesly University*, Spring 5-8-2018

Stucky and Nobel 2010, The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature, *Framing Health Matters*, Heather L. Stuckey, DEd, and Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH