

# Arts and the Military

Information from the **Wyoming Arts Alliance**

## Arts Benefits to Military

Creative-arts therapy has been shown to foster a healthier, more resilient military, from training through rehabilitation. Since 2011, the NEA has partnered with the Department of Defense to provide arts therapy for service members with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and its accompanying mental-health issues. The therapy was so successful that in fiscal year 2016, Congress appropriated a \$1.9 million budget increase for the NEA for the specific purpose of expanding art therapy's reach. The program, now called Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is an integral part of treatment for active-duty service members, veterans, and reservists. It promotes what the military calls "The Four R's":

- readiness
- resilience
- retention
- reintegration

The benefits of arts therapy are particularly striking at the "resilience" stage, where it is used to combat physical and psychological trauma. Research has shown that arts therapy helps military patients suffering from PTSD and TBI to communicate their experiences, which allows medical staff to better understand their conditions and pinpoint more effective treatments. Patients also note improved memory, sleep, pain levels, cognitive function, and ability to face emotional difficulties, as well as reduced stress, depression, and anxiety, and increased positive emotions.

While individual accounts paint a powerful picture of art therapy's healing potential, surveys conducted by the National Intrepid Center of Excellence suggest that it's also effective at scale, with 85% of military patients saying art is helpful to their healing.

*Other Sources: Quartz*

