

ita



MOVING MOUNTAINS

ROOTED IN CREATIVITY, RISING THROUGH CHANGE

EVANSTON, IL | JUNE 5-7, 2026

IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL SESSIONS | ITACHICAGO.ORG/CONFERENCE

With Keynote Speaker: Dr. Amber Elizabeth L. Gray



Dr. Amber Elizabeth L. Gray is a Dance/Movement Therapist, Somatic and Human Rights Psychotherapist, and long-time yoga and Continuum teacher. Her work traverses many interconnected heartlines: somatic and movement arts, international humanitarian work, sacred dance, planetary and human rights activism, and nature-based healing and wild wisdom. She facilitates with passion, humor, and a fierce commitment to embodied justice. Her forthcoming book, *Polyvagal-Informed Restorative Movement Psychotherapy* (W.W.

Norton, 2026), expands upon her original framework, Polyvagal-Informed Dance Movement Therapy (PVDMT), integrating neurobiology, movement, and ancestral wisdom in service of trauma healing and social justice.

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Schedule of Events

All times CT (GMT-5:00)

Part 1 – In Person Conference

Institute for Therapy through the Arts
1316 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201

Aside from the keynote address, no sessions will be virtual or recorded. Free and paid street parking is available surrounding our office. Limited handicap spots are available. Please refer to the parking guide at the end of the program. You can also access the venue via Metra, CTA, and PACE bus routes.

Community Art Project

Part 1 – We Want...: Community Multi-Art Collaboration

Location: Feltheimer Studio & Art Studio

Come create and collaborate on I-CAT's multi-dimensional art making project. Express through visual art, voice recording, poetry mad lib, and grounding exercises focusing on the theme of love & unity. All of the art and expression created will be featured at the end of conference at the **Closing Community Offering**.

- Visual art & Poetry Madlib : Throughout the day, come and add your own art on the wall by rearranging poetry prose and/or adding sticky note with expression.
- Voice Recording: During Lunch and at the end of each conference day, contribute to a group voice recording.
- Grounding movement: Throughout the day, find grounding exercises on the wall that offers movements to support you and your body throughout the day

Day 1 – Friday, June 5th, 2026

Registration & Breakfast

8:30am – 9:00am

Breakfast will be provided in the kitchen. We kindly ask that you avoid eating in carpeted areas of the office whenever possible.

Conference Welcome & Keynote Address (2 CEs)

9:00am – 11:00am

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Amber Elizabeth L. Gray

Location: Movement Studio (with overflow seating in the Richman Studio and Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room)

Dr. Amber Elizabeth L. Gray is a Dance/Movement Therapist, Somatic & Human Rights Psychotherapist, and long-time yoga and Continuum teacher. She works with survivors of war, torture, human rights abuses and historical trauma and oppression, in the US and in active and post conflict zones, refugee camps, and disasters.

Equally activist, artist, advocate, author, mystic and therapist, her clinical, healing, educational and organizational work endeavors to promote reciprocity and empowerment and incite meaningful change. She brings her Polyvagal, Heart & Spirit-informed Right-to-Embody somatic human rights framework and Body of Change eco-somatic regenerative retreats to communities of therapists, artists, global citizens and change makers world-wide. Amber co-originated Polyvagal-informed Somatic & Dance/Movement Therapy through 26 years of immersive mentoring and exploration of Polyvagal Theory. This work is a survivor-centered, multi-cultural & social justice framework that reflects many years of co-inquiry with her clients to understand how Polyvagal Theory promotes restoration and healing for survivors of egregious human rights violations. She has been teaching this work globally since 2003 and is the inaugural member of The Polyvagal Institute's Editorial Board.

Her forthcoming book, *Polyvagal Informed Restorative Movement Psychotherapy* (W.W. Norton, 2026), expands on her commitment to justice, embodiment, and the right of every human being to inhabit their body as they choose.

Keynote Address: Be The Mountain

Description: Those of us who steward a restorative process for others risk the vicarious impacts of witnessing and confronting suffering. Our own histories of hardship and trauma can amplify this. Historically, psychotherapy has been promoted as a space that requires neutrality. Currently, neutrality is a socio-cultural, socio-political bypass that perpetuates disempowerment and oppression. Living in a shared collective environment of danger, hostility, uncertainty and imposed, intentional fear, we all can feel like we must keep moving, circumventing, climbing or facing mountains. The effort required to do our work and live our lives can drain our time, energy and will. The more ancient ways of medicine, healing and restoration promote the principle "To know it, we must become it." As artists, creatives, therapists, healers, activists, how do we become, to be, the mountain? In this engaged, experiential keynote, we will explore our bodies primary and creative expressions of breath, rhythm, movement and dance as pathways to becoming the mountains of empowered resilience, resistance and reciprocity we are for ourselves, our clients and one another.

Objectives:

- Identify the impact of vicarious trauma and socio-cultural neutrality on embodied resilience in creative and therapeutic practice.
- Explore breath, rhythm, movement, and dance as somatic pathways to grounded presence and empowered response.
- Apply the principle of "becoming the mountain" to support sustainability, reciprocity, and collective care within professional and personal contexts.

Performance & Discussions (1.5 CEs) 11:15am – 12:45pm (90 minutes)

Performance: Red Pill Blues

Presented by William Main, MA/LCAT-P

Location: Movement Studio

Description: This presentation is an Auto-Ethnographic performance utilizing CoATT and role theory methods for a therapeutic theatre performance about young male experience in escaping the manosphere. The presenter will speak to role confusion, the power of language, and how education and understanding helps to break us from radical ideology and to connect.

Objectives:

- Learn an overview of therapeutic methods and young men's mental health.
- Explore the "alt-right pipeline" and how it impacts mental health.
- Learn how radical ideology preys on isolation and depression.

Discussion: Creative Exploration of Generational Trauma: K-Pop Demon Hunters

Presented by Rachel Lara, Ph.D, M.A. (art therapy, expected 2026) & Josh Ross, art therapy student

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: Generational trauma is explored through its representation in the film K-Pop Demon Hunters. Characters and plot elements from the film are used to distinguish and contextualize elements of generational trauma, including historical, cultural, and familial trauma. We conclude with an art directive that allows for exploration of generational trauma.

Objectives:

- Explore using a popular film, like K-Pop Demon Hunters, to highlight the distinctions between historical, cultural, and familial trauma and their effects on individuals and cultures.
- Use art therapy directives developed from themes in the film to better comprehend sources of oppression and resilience within one's individual and cultural identity.

Discussion: The Pillars of Neuroaffirming Care: Redefining Music Therapy with Neurodivergent Voices

Presented by Alyssa Stone, MM, LPMT, MT-BC

Location: Richman Studio

Description: Explore how neuroaffirming, trauma-informed, and anti-ableist frameworks transform music therapy with autistic and neurodivergent clients. This presentation introduces the Pillars of Neuroaffirming Care—grounded in neuroscience, autonomy, and advocacy—offering clinicians practical tools and evidence-based approaches to create inclusive, strengths-based, and empowering therapy environments that celebrate all brains.

Objectives:

- Attendees will identify strategies for incorporating cultural responsiveness and humility into neuroaffirming treatment planning with autistic and neurodivergent clients, as demonstrated through guided discussion and case-based analysis.
- Attendees will demonstrate understanding of treatment modifications based on client responses, sensory needs, and accessibility within neuroaffirming practice, as measured through experiential music interventions and group debrief.
- Attendees will apply neurological and developmental frameworks to design evidence-based, neuroaffirming interventions targeting communication, regulation, and social engagement, as evidenced by small-group application and scenario synthesis.
- Attendees will examine principles of social justice and client advocacy through the lens of anti-ableist and neuroaffirming care, as evaluated through reflective dialogue and written self-assessment.
- Attendees will gain personal resources that support mental and physical health to sustain ethical, neuroaffirming practice, as evidenced by self-reflection and action-plan creation during the session.

Lunch Break

12:45pm – 1:45pm

Lunch will be provided in the kitchen. We kindly ask that you avoid eating in carpeted areas of the office whenever possible.

LGBTQIA+ Attendees Affinity Group (No CEs)

12:45pm – 1:45pm

Facilitator: Karina Montalvo, MA, LPC, ATR-P & Cara Paden, LPMT, MT-BC

Location: CAT Studio 3

Description: ITA welcomes LGBTQIA+ identified individuals to gather in this affinity group to explore, discuss, and support each other through the challenges within and outside of the Creative Arts Therapy communities. This affinity group is closed for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, or agender to cultivate a private space for transparent and open discussion. **Lunch will be provided.**

Workshops (2 CEs) 2:00pm – 4:00pm (120 minutes)

What's Your HairStory?: A Drama Therapeutic Exploration and Understanding of Hair Autonomy through the lens of Character and Role

Presented by Alayna Hester, LCAT-LP, P-RDT

Location: Movement Studio

Description: This workshop explores Black hair autonomy through personal reflection, historical context, and drama therapy. Using the character Hairnesha and various wigs as projective tools, the study examines identity, societal expectations, self-expression, and healing. Participants engage in experiential activities to reflect on their own “hairstories” and definitions of hair autonomy.

Objectives:

- Understand the significance of aesthetics, specifically hair, in culturally attuned clinical care.
- Define and explore personal notions of hair autonomy through drama therapy techniques.
- Analyze how changes in hair expression can evoke shifts in identity, role, and self-perception.

Understanding Public Policy in the Mental Health Field

Presented by Amber Przybyla, LCPC, ATR-BC

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: Public policy is a complex process which can be difficult to understand and engage with. This presentation aims to educate participants on how occupational licensing, accreditation, and laws shape the field of mental health. We will review how these processes and institutions directly impact accessibility, quality of care, and career outcomes. Advocacy strategies and resources will be identified and shared to all participants. This presentation is intended to be informative and does not seek to influence or challenge any participants' viewpoints.

Objectives:

- Identify 3 ways occupational licensing shapes our mental health field.
- Identify 3 ways accreditation influences mental health legislation.
- Identify 3 ways to get involved or share their experience with state and federal representatives.
- Identify at least 3 organizations who actively work to improve the mental health field through the legislative process.

Reaching through the Screen: Identity Development, Art, and Embodied Presence for Youth with Active Virtual Lives in the AI Age

Presented by Chase Hommeyer, AB, Masters in Expressive Arts Therapy student

Location: Richman Studio

Description: This workshop introduces a group art therapy curriculum for youth with active virtual lives, integrating expressive arts, sensory regulation, and liberation psychology. Engaging in character design and sensory toolkit creation, participants explore embodiment, strengths-based identity development, and community building while gaining psychoeducation about screen addiction and systemic oppression by Big Tech.

Objectives:

- Learn narrative expressive arts and sensory-based exercises to support youth often labeled as “screen-addicted” in developing identity, social engagement, and embodied presence.
- Learn to reframe frequent technology use not as an individual pathology but as a potentially creative action within systems of oppression.
- Reflect on participants’ own sensory needs and relationships with technology to model mindful, regulated engagement for the youth and families they serve.
- Leave with practical tools and psychoeducational materials for families struggling to limit screen time or peacefully transition off screens, fostering empathy, empowerment, and community rather than control or conflict.

Workshops (2 CEs) 4:15pm – 6:15pm (120 minutes)

TNT Traysikel - Filipinx Voices in the Diaspora: A Culturally Adaptive and Decolonial Intermodal EXA Approach

Presented by Rachel Lastimosa, AMFT, MA in Counseling Psychology, Expressive Arts Therapy concentration

Location: Movement Studio

Description: TNT Traysikel blurs the lines of traditional practice and disciplines which include sculptural, spatial, relational, performative, and cinematic forms. Providing context of how a roaming cultural marker became a placekeeping, social practice activator, participants will engage in an experiential contemplating belonging, followed by a demonstration of narrative collection and karaoke.

Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of how intermodal art can respond to a community’s needs.
- Define ‘kapwa’ as it relates to the therapeutic relationship.
- Explain how culturally adaptive techniques can be integrated as expressive arts therapy.

Group-Based Art Therapy for Military Personnel Out-Processing as a Result of Culture Change and DEI Reversal

Presented by Rachel Lara, Ph.D, M.A. (art therapy, expected 2026)

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: This presentation outlines an eight-week art therapy group designed to explore issues of transition for military personnel undergoing out-processing. Special focus is placed on effects of changes to military D.E.I. initiatives and providing support and connection for LGBTQ+, minority, and other groups experiencing disenfranchisement or moral injury as a result of their military departure.

Objectives:

- Understand the effects of changes to DEI regulation on unit cohesion, personnel retention, and moral injury among active duty military personnel.
- Offer integrative, community-driven, art-based interventions to assist in rebuilding community connection and trust while processing the anger, grief, and fear inherent in military out-processing for individuals who may no longer feel safe remaining in the military.

Utilizing Embodied, Experiential Drama Therapy Approaches to Increase CBT Skill Retention

Presented by Rachel Couture, LCPC, RDT & Aubrey Benson, LSW, PEL

Location: Richman Studio

Description: This workshop will demonstrate how drama therapy interventions can be an important tool in increasing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy skill retention and mastery. We will review 1-2 CBT skills and engage in experiential learning via drama therapy techniques to reinforce skill acquisition. Experiential interventions allow for participants to increase understanding and comfortability in engaging CBT skills independently over time.

Objectives:

- Understand how using drama therapy to teach and practice CBT skills can increase retention and engagement.
- Develop methods and interventions that may enhance the teaching of traditional CBT skills.

Day 2 – Saturday, June 6th, 2026

Workshops (2 CEs)

9:00am – 11:00am (120 minutes)

Move & Play: A Dance/Movement Therapy-Informed Board Game

Presented by Jazmin Royg, BC-DMT & Rachel Singer, BC-DMT, LPC

Location: Movement Studio

Description: This session introduces the exploration of a Dance/Movement Therapy-informed board game to support children’s emotional expression, regulation, and executive functioning through structured, embodied play. Participants will engage in experiential activities, explore therapeutic applications, and learn how DMT principles can be integrated into game-based interventions to enhance embodied expression and clinical outcomes.

Objectives:

- Describe how DMT can be translated into a board game format.
- Implement more structure when implementing DMT interventions.
- Explore how structured movement-based play supports emotional awareness and regulation, social engagement and self-expression.
- Explore how structured movement-based play supports executive functioning skills such as impulse control, turn taking, frustration tolerance, and flexibility.
- Evaluate benefits and limitations of using structured movement games in a clinical setting.

Personal Ar(t)chiving for Self-Reflexivity, Cultural Humility, and Resilience

Presented by Karina Montalvo, MA, ATR-P & Zachary Van Den Berg, MA, LPC, ATR-BC

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: This experiential workshop invites participants to create an ar(t)chive from their personal aesthetic archive of images, poetry, movement, music, and drama. Through reflective artmaking and collective witnessing, participants explore how self-reflexivity, cultural humility, and creativity foster belonging, compassion, and resilience—strengthening clinicians’ capacity to cultivate wellness and relational care within divided healthcare systems.

Objectives:

- Describe at least two (2) ways the ar(t)chive offers a reflective and embodied method of making that fosters belonging, resilience, and self-understanding.
- Apply the five-phase ar(t)chive process to explore personal identity and self-reflexive awareness using one’s own art history or digital aesthetic archive.
- Identify and engage with at least one (1) aesthetic pattern emerging from a personal aesthetic archive that reveals implicit or explicit bias, assumptions, and/or potential for change across one’s art history.

I Am Tired of Moving Mountains: Can We Grieve Together?

Presented by Violeta Barba, LCPC (IL) LMHC (IN) ATR-BC

Location: Richman Studio

Description: This workshop explores global and local artistic responses to collective grief amid social and political upheaval. Through cross-cultural examples of community-based artmaking, participants will reflect, create, and discuss how creative practices help people cope with loss, build resilience, sustain one another, and inform art therapy practice.

Objectives:

- Examine current global and U.S. events and their emotional and social impact on individuals and communities.
- Identify cross-cultural examples of how communities around the world use the arts to express, cope with, and transform collective grief.
- Apply insights from global and communal art practices to support both clients and art therapists in coping, connection, and mutual care.

Performance & Discussions (1.5 CEs)

11:15am – 12:45pm (90 minutes)

***Performance:* 劈山 Cracking the Mountains - Translating Devised Performance into Trauma-Informed Therapeutic Practices**

Presented by Yimeng (Clara) Zhang, P-RDT, Ziwen (Agnes) Zhou, Gloria (Daosi) Zhang, Haoruo (Michelle) Zhang, MT-BC, Hantong (Holly) Shen, Yoyang Wang, Xin (Kwan) Fang, & Hao (Hazel) Zhu

Location: Movement Studio

Description: “劈山 (Cracking the Mountains)” reimagines an ancient Chinese legend of a daughter who rescues her mother from beneath a sacred mountain. The hybrid rehearsal process combines Theatre of the Oppressed aesthetics, psychodrama & playback techniques, and collective-based rituals to rework the myth. Together we examine Chinese women’s sociopolitical pressures across generations (gendered labor, migration, constrained public voice), and how creative processes can transform carceral myths into liberatory, communal healing.

Objectives:

- Identify how mythic and embodied storytelling can serve as trauma-informed, culturally responsive interventions within drama therapy and community performance.
- Analyze strategies for integrating creative process and liberatory frameworks (anti-carceral, decolonial, feminist) into therapeutic theatre practice.
- Experience and discuss performance as a site of collective regulation, witnessing, and repair.

Using Flexibility within Fidelity to Integrate Mental Health Practices to Music Therapy Methods

Presented by John Head, MT-BC, LPC Associate

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: Many mental health practices have been thoroughly studied in the literature and identified as efficacious. However, research into music therapy in mental health is often investigated in addition/compared to such treatments (e.g. CBT). The goal of this presentation is to demonstrate the use of Flexibility with Fidelity framework to adapt current EBPs into music therapy methods.

Objectives:

- Evaluate the role of creative arts therapy with existing evidence-based practice in mental health, considering the frequency, intensity, duration, and service delivery model, when developing a treatment plan.
- Identify core components of evidence-based treatments and their adaptable features to the arts through Flexibility within Fidelity.
- Employ the use of the Transformational Design Model to adapt core therapeutic core components to creative arts therapy methods.

What Does America Mean to You? Collaborative Arts-Based Learning in Music Therapy Pedagogy

Presented by Laura Pawuk, MM, MT-BC, Debra Gombert, PhD, MT-BC, Deborah Pae, MM, Jasmine Lin, Violinist Kinneret Weiss, music therapy student, & Elaina Braun music therapy student

Location: Richman Studio

Description: Explore the process-oriented collaboration between the Formosa Quartet's American Mirror Project and Eastern Michigan University music therapy students. Students responded to "What does America mean to you?" by showcasing musical responses in collaboration with quartet members and music therapy faculty, fostering cultural responsiveness, dynamic growth, and innovative music therapy pedagogy.

Objectives:

- Describe how a process-oriented showcase format can support cultural reflection and student growth.
- Identify ways that student collaboration with professional musicians can strengthen functional musicianship and creative expression in music therapy training.
- Examine ethical considerations when facilitating showcases, particularly around vulnerability, safety, and professional scope of practice.

Lunch Break
12:45pm – 1:45pm

Lunch will be provided in the kitchen. We kindly ask that you avoid eating in carpeted areas of the office whenever possible.

Attendees of Color Affinity Group (No CEUs)

12:45pm – 1:45pm

Facilitator: Jazmin Royg, BC-DMT & Sarai Benitez, Music Therapy Intern

Location: CAT Studio 3

ITA welcomes Black, Brown, and Indigenous attendees and attendees of color to gather as an affinity group to explore, discuss, and support each other through challenges that this community faces within the Creative Arts Therapy community and beyond. This group is a closed group for individuals of color to provide a private space for transparent and open discussion. Lunch will be provided.

Workshops (2 CEs)

2:00pm – 4:00pm (120 minutes)

Dance for Health: A Spectrum of Engagement for the Psycho-Physical Health of Aging Adults

Presented by Susan Imus, LCPC, BC-DMT, GL-CMA, Professor Emerita

Location: Movement Studio

Description: The Continuum of Approaches used in creative arts therapies for community wellness will be presented within the context of a mixed methods research study called Dance for Health; A spectrum of engagement for the psycho-physical health, wellbeing, and loneliness of aging adults. This workshop seeks to present a synthesized perspective of numerous factors and the health outcomes from the study and welcomes a discussion with all conference participants.

Objectives:

- Learn about the design, dose, delivery, methods, results, and discussion of the mixed methods research study, Dance for Health.
- Learn about the spectrum of engagement within the Continuum of Approaches in creative arts therapy.
- Increase awareness of the current frameworks for reporting and understanding arts in health interventions and their active ingredients, mechanisms, and health outcomes.

Therapeutic Presence in an Era of Reels and Brain Rot

Presented by Joy Willenbrink-Conte, MA, LPMT, MT-BC, Austin Vocal Psychotherapist

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: Therapeutic presence is foundational to therapy, and dramatic social and media landscape changes challenge activation of presence. Incorporating didactic and experiential engagement, participants will be invited to reflect upon and nurture their presence capacities, while also exploring how personal, social, and cultural differences impact experience and activation of therapeutic presence.

Objectives:

- Increase self-awareness related to personal style and activation of therapeutic presence and witnessing.
- Learn (through experiential engagement or witnessing) at least one practice for strengthening or nurturing therapeutic presence that could be utilized for future and continued professional growth.

Embodying the Story: How Chicago Playback Theatre Creates Space for Understanding

Presented by Luke Wallens, MA, RDT, Allison Sokolowski, Artistic Director of Chicago Playback Theatre, Lee Peters, Managing Director of CPTE, Evelyn Wohlbier, CPTE Training Coordinator, & Kennedy Frazier, Guest Artist

Location: Richman Studio

Description: This presentation and experiential will share the latest techniques in Chicago Playback Theatre that demonstrate empathy through embodiment of shared stories based on theme.

Objectives:

- Communicate what Playback Theatre is and how it can function within a variety of community settings including but not limited to libraries, recovery centers and multipurpose rooms of community centers.
- Share a breakdown of the procedures engaged with the Playback show and the most effective ways to share heavy storylines and sensitive topics through a trauma-informed lens.

Workshops (2 CEs) 4:15pm – 6:15pm (120 minutes)

Moving Through Memory: Dance, Displacement, and Embodied Testimony Across Borders

Presented by Saman Hajimohammad, Dance PhD/Dance Movement Therapist

Location: Movement Studio

Description: This presentation examines how dance functions as embodied testimony within contexts of displacement, cultural trauma, and collective resilience. Integrating dance movement therapy, neuro-somatic research, and global movement practices, it explores “Circle Connections” as a framework through which bodies archive memory, negotiate identity, and generate cross-cultural pathways for healing and transformation.

Objectives:

- Identify and explain how embodied memory and circular movement patterns (“Circle Connections”) function as therapeutic structures for processing displacement, cultural trauma, and cross-generational resilience.
- Learn to apply movement-based, trauma-informed strategies—grounded in somatic psychology and dance movement therapy—to support individuals and communities in expressing, reorganizing, and integrating suppressed or fragmented bodily memories.

Art Therapy Approaches to Birth Trauma

Presented by Christina Mihalopoulos, MA Art Therapy & Counseling Student & Jess Thompson, MA Art Therapy & Counseling Student

Location: Altenbernd & Hagerty Conference Room

Description: This presentation examines how prenatal, perinatal, and post-birth trauma arise from medical, social, historical, and interpersonal factors. It highlights systemic inequities, medical violence, psychological and somatic impacts, and disparities faced by marginalized groups, while offering trauma-informed understanding and an art-based directive to support healing and meaning-making.

Objectives:

- Identify and describe the prenatal, perinatal, and post-birth factors that contribute to birth trauma, including medical, structural, interpersonal, and generational influences.
- Analyze systemic inequities—such as racism, sexism, and healthcare disparities—and explain how they elevate risks for marginalized birthing populations.
- Apply trauma-informed approaches, including creative arts directives, to support meaning-making, emotional regulation, and client integration without retraumatization.

Joy as Resistance: Artful Play and Creativity in the Healing Process

Presented by Esther Han, LPC, ATR-P & Shea Love, LPC, ATR-P

Location: Richman Studio

Description: Amid ongoing trauma and systemic oppression, joy and play are radical. This workshop invites participants to reclaim artmaking as creative play and a source of resilience and relational repair in therapy. Through embodied, art-based activities, we'll explore how cultivating play and imagination nurtures connection and invites clients to rediscover joy. Participants will leave with trauma-informed frameworks for using art therapy interventions and creative spontaneity to restore safety, curiosity, and humanity in the therapeutic process.

Objectives:

- Explore joy, play, and creativity as liberatory practices that foster healing and relational repair.
- Engage in embodied and art-based activities that promote regulation, connection, and vitality.
- Apply creative, strengths-based interventions that ethically and sensitively integrate artful play and joy in diverse settings.

Community Art Project

Part 2 – We Can: Closing Community Offering

6:15pm – 7:00pm

To conclude ICAT, come join us in creating and appreciating one another through a live community sing-along focus on Love & Unity featuring art and voice recordings made by attendees throughout conference. This will take place in front of the ITA mural on Sherman Avenue (weather permitting).

Part 2 – Virtual Conference

Virtual presentations will occur live on the Zoom platform with recordings available by June 8th. Recordings will be available for viewing until June 22nd. Live captioning will be available for each presentation. Please email Conference@ITACHicago.org for additional requests for accommodations or questions regarding accessibility.

Sunday, June 7th, 2026

**Workshops (2 CEs)
9:00am – 11:00am (120 minutes)**

Anti-Oppressive Skill Building 101: Broaching as an Ethical Practice

Presented by Miki Nishida Goerdts, LCSW, LCSW-C, ATR-BC & Tsz Yan (Winnie) Wong, ATR-BC, LCPC

Description: Broaching is a crucial anti-oppressive clinical skill for therapists to practice. Through the use of art experientials, attendees will learn how relational safety, trust, and accountability over oppression and power interplay within a supervisory relationship as well as a therapeutic relationship. Attendees will practice broaching and identify their personal learning goal to advance their anti-oppressive practice.

Objectives:

- Define anti-oppressive practice in the context of therapeutic and supervisory relationships.
- Identify where participant is located on the continuum of broaching behavior.
- Name the next step in order to advance participant to the next level on the continuum of broaching behavior.

Liberatory Puppetry: A Lab for Care Practitioners

Presented by Yael Kievsky, MA, LMFT & Risa Dye, BA

Description: This hands-on workshop showcases the facilitators' unique development of found-object puppetry with theater of the oppressed (TO) narrative techniques, for applied use in psychotherapeutic and educational settings. We will cover TO theory and practice, and lead a collaborative storytelling and object manipulation lab, exploring various clinical applications for diverse settings.

Objectives:

- Introduce participants to the skilled manipulation and animation of ordinary materials, for use in clinical and educational settings (found-object puppet therapy).
- Introduce participants to Theater of the Oppressed (TO) principles, uniquely animated through puppetry/object manipulation.
- Practice and reflect on the TO principles of anti-oppression, community-led, participatory addressing of individual and social problems, via a short-form Forum Theater piece; and discuss clinical applications.

Lectures (1 CE) 11:15am – 12:15pm (60 minutes)

Physicalizing Parts: Art Therapy in the Treatment of Complex Trauma and Dissociation

Presented by Gwendolyn Tinajero-Belles, LCSW, ATR-BC

Description: The presenter will use her experience working with survivors of sexual violence that have complex trauma and dissociation. The presenter will discuss the benefits, considerations, and modifications when utilizing parts work and art therapy to treat complex trauma and dissociation.

Objectives:

- Identify three theories related to parts work.
- Explain the benefits and precautions when utilizing parts work.
- Demonstrate at least three applications to art therapy.

Evoking Post-Traumatic Resilience and Queer Liberation using Somatic-Based Creative Arts Therapy

Presented by Annie Arnold, ATR-BC, LCPC

Description: In the ever-evolving journey of self-discovery and identity, members of the LGBTQ+ community often face unique challenges and triumphs. Navigating a world that doesn't always understand or fully embrace diverse identities can be both empowering and overwhelming. It's a journey that requires resilience, self-acceptance, and radical authenticity to overcome the minority stress and disproportionate experiences of trauma. Somatic therapy, a holistic and body-centered approach to healing, has emerged as a profound source of support for LGBTQ+ individuals. There is a growing trend in the field of Creative Arts Therapy to embrace somatic-based therapies and the intuitive connection between the body and the creative process to foster post-traumatic growth. Somatic-based creative arts therapy offers a safe space for exploration and healing, addressing identity-related issues with sensitivity and compassion. Through the lens of somatic and creative arts therapy, we will develop insights into how movement, embodied narrative, breath, and artistic expression can support healing, deepen self-awareness, and foster transformational queer liberation. This lecture will highlight the value of combined somatic and artistic approaches for post-traumatic resilience, the need for these supports in the LGBTQ+ community, and practical applications for creative arts therapists interested in building somatic practices.

Objectives:

- Understand the etiology of somatic-based creative arts therapy.
- Learn ways LGBTQ+ clients experience barriers to self-exploration, healing, and body connections.
- Identify four practical applications of somatic-based creative arts therapies interventions that promote self-exploration, post-traumatic resilience, and queer liberation with LGBTQ+ clients.

Break
12:30pm – 1:30pm

Neurodivergent Attendees Affinity Group (No CEs)

12:30pm – 1:30pm

Facilitated by Lizzy Kunde, MMT, LPMT, MT-BC & Iona Dillon, Music Therapy Intern

Description: ITA welcomes neurodivergent individuals to gather as an affinity group to explore, discuss, and support each other through challenges that this community faces within the Creative Arts Therapy community and beyond. This group is a closed group for those that identify as neurodivergent, neuro-queer, non-neurotypical, including those who are self-diagnosed, self-realized, or undiagnosed, and those questioning their neuro-identity to provide a private space for transparent and open discussion. **This virtual affinity group is open to ALL neurodivergent conference registrants, even if you did not register for the virtual conference.**

Lectures (1 CE)
1:45pm – 2:45 pm (60 minutes)

Medical Syncretism: Creative Arts Therapy in the Medical Setting

Presented by Isabelle Rizo, ATR-P, IAHT, MACAT

Description: This presentation examines the application of syncretism and the Indigenous framework of Two-Eyed Seeing within medical art therapy practice. Syncretism—the blending of diverse cultural, spiritual, and clinical traditions—provides a pathway for art therapists to integrate multicultural knowledge systems into therapeutic care. Two-Eyed Seeing, a concept introduced by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall, emphasizes viewing the world through both Indigenous and Western lenses, allowing practitioners to honor multiple ways of knowing simultaneously. In hospital settings, where medical models often dominate, this dual framework offers a powerful means of broadening care beyond symptom management to include cultural identity, relational healing, and narrative restoration.

Objectives:

- Describe the principles of syncretism and Two-Eyed Seeing and identify at least two ways these frameworks can inform culturally responsive art therapy practice in hospital settings.
- Analyze case vignettes to evaluate at least three therapeutic benefits of integrating cultural symbolism, ancestral motifs, or ritualized art-making alongside evidence-based medical care.
- Design a draft outline for one art therapy intervention that incorporates both medical protocols and patient cultural perspectives, applying the Two-Eyed Seeing framework.

Evolving Roles of Music Therapy in Competency Restoration for Forensic Psychiatric Patients

Presented by Hanna (Hyun Hee) Woo, Ph.D., MT-BC

Description: This presentation explores current trends in treating individuals deemed Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) in the United States, with a focus on California. Drawing on qualitative research and content analysis, it examines music therapy objectives, methods, and approaches that support competency restoration and broader therapeutic outcomes within forensic psychiatric settings.

Objectives:

- Summarize current trends and approaches in music therapy practice with individuals deemed Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) in forensic psychiatric settings across the United States.
- Explain how board-certified music therapists conceptualize treatment rationale, assessment methods, and intervention strategies when working with IST populations.
- Identify common therapeutic goals and music-based interventions that support competency restoration such as cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and treatment engagement.
- Interpret key themes that emerged from qualitative analysis of practitioner perspectives to understand evolving roles of music therapy in forensic mental health care.
- Discuss implications of these findings for expanding the scope and effectiveness of music therapy practice in forensic and competency restoration contexts.

Workshops (2 CEs)
3:00pm – 5:00pm (120 minutes)

Holding Space, Holding Risk: Queer Creativity and Collective Courage in Research

Presented by Nicholas Denson, MA, LCPC, LCADC, ATR-BC, NCC

Description: Explore how queer history, creativity, and research intertwine to build courage and connection in divided times. This virtual panel and participatory workshop invites reflection, art-making, and dialogue on how creative inquiry can embody safety, belonging, and transformation while modeling liberatory ethics in the creative arts therapies.

Objectives:

- Examine how queer history and creative practices inform liberatory research ethics within the creative arts therapies.
- Identify systemic and ethical barriers that affect queer-centered research and practice in the current social and political context.
- Explore creative, embodied, and digital methods that promote safety, consent, and collaboration in research.
- Engage in a participatory art-making process that demonstrates collective resilience, imagination, and transformation.

CAT Nonprofit Fundraising Panel: Building a Framework that Centers the Service User and Value-Based Relationships

Presented by Jeffrey Wolfe, MM, LPMT, MT-BC, Lizzy Kunde, MMT, LPMT, MT-BC, Joey Sadlowski, LPMT, MT-BC, & Toni Goehring, Development Director

Description: Creative arts therapy nonprofits depend heavily on private philanthropy, grants, and donor engagement to sustain the broad range of costs associated with mission-driven services, regulatory compliance, and fundraising infrastructure. Reinvesting in the mission requires not only expanding access to care, but also strategically directing surplus revenue toward reserves, organizational capacity, and program growth. How can organizations uphold their core values while protecting the dignity and confidentiality of those they serve? In this panel discussion, members of ITA's Philosophy of Giving Committee share reflections on the development of a values-based framework.

Objectives:

- Understand the process, timing, and impact of using service user impact stories, testimonials, and advocacy
- Identify ways a nonprofit or business can build awareness, strengthen community support, and expand resource networks for service users.

REGISTRATION			
	Date	Cost	
Presenter Registration	December 11-17	<u>No CEUs</u> Free (day of presentation only) \$80 (virtual + 1 day in person) \$100 (both days of in person) \$150 (virtual + 2 days in person)	<u>With CEUs</u> \$25 (day of presentation only) \$105 (virtual + 1 day in person) \$125 (both days of in person) \$175 (virtual + 2 days in person)
Early Bird Registration	December 15 – February 13	25% off standard registration fees with code: 2026CANARYCAT	
Student Registration (no CEUs)	December 15 – June 7	50% off standard registration fees with code: 2026EDUCAT	
Standard Registration	February 14 – June 7	<u>No CEUs</u> \$100 (virtual) \$140 (1 day, in person) \$200 (virtual + 1 day in person) \$220 (both days of in person) \$300 (virtual + 2 days in person)	<u>With CEUs</u> \$140 (virtual) \$180 (1 day, in person) \$240 (virtual + 1 day in person) \$260 (both days of in person) \$340 (virtual + 2 days in person)
*Financial Assistance & Mutual Aid		75% off standard registration fees with code: 2026AID for a limited number of registrants 50% off standard registration fees available with the code: 2026AID2	
Registration Cancellation (to cancel registration, please forward your registration confirmation email to conference@itachicago.org)	Within 3 days of purchase before May 28	100% refund minus the transaction fees	
	Within 3 days of purchase between May 29 – June 4	50% refund minus the transaction fees	
	After June 4	No refunds	

Early bird registration includes entry into a raffle for a free creative arts gift basket, a value of \$50.

*Financial Assistance & Mutual Aid: ITA recognizes the importance of including all members of our community in this conference and the benefit of people attending with different economic backgrounds. Therefore, if you are not in a financial position to pay the full registration fees, use the discount code **2026AID** upon registering to receive 75% off standard registration. This rate is available to a limited number of registrants on a first-come, first-served basis. After the registration limit has been met, a 50% discount will be offered to the remaining registrants seeking financial assistance.

Attendees interested in volunteering for the conference should contact Conference@ITACHicago.org for additional information.

Continuing Education Credits

Presenters and attendees can receive up to **27 continuing education credits (CEs)** by attending or viewing any or all of the conference presentations. The CEs are sponsored by the Institute for Therapy through the Arts, a continuing education provider for LCPCs, LPCs, LCSWs, and LSWs in the State of Illinois (IL Lic. #197.000261) approved by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. Board Certified Music Therapists

may claim credits as Other Continuing Education. Please refer to the CBMT Recertification Manual for required documentation.

Continuing education credits can only be provided for participants who have attended the duration of the entire session and have completed the course evaluation for that session. For virtual sessions, participants must also receive a passing score of 70% on each session's quiz.

Recorded CE content will be available for viewing until June 22nd, 2026. Certification of CE credits will be provided by July 27th, 2026. If you require a CE certificate prior to July 27th, please notify the Conference Chair as soon as possible (Akash Bhatia: abhatia@itachicago.org).

Masking policy

Facemasks are optional at our in-person conference. However, we strongly encourage masking for immunocompromised and unvaccinated attendees. Additionally, if you are experiencing symptoms of any viral illness, including but not limited to COVID, please follow medical recommendations and mask accordingly. Masks will be provided at the venue. If you are ill and cannot attend the conference, please contact the Conference Committee at Conference@ITACHicago.org.

Childcare policy

ITA will not provide childcare at the in-person conference. Children 17 years and under are encouraged to stay home. If attendees cannot find childcare, then children under 18 are allowed in the conference space as long as they are supervised by their parent or guardian. All attendees 18 and over must register for the conference.

Community guidelines & engagement preferences

Be sure to review our [community guidelines](#) prior to attending. We will utilize an engagement preference system using symbols on name badges:

- Green / ●: I would like to socialize – please approach me.
- Yellow / ▲: I would like to socialize, but I would like you to wait for me to initiate.
- Orange / ■: Only socialize with me if we have arranged to do so prior to the conference.
- Red / X: Please do not approach me. I do not wish to socialize with anyone.

Hotels within walking distance

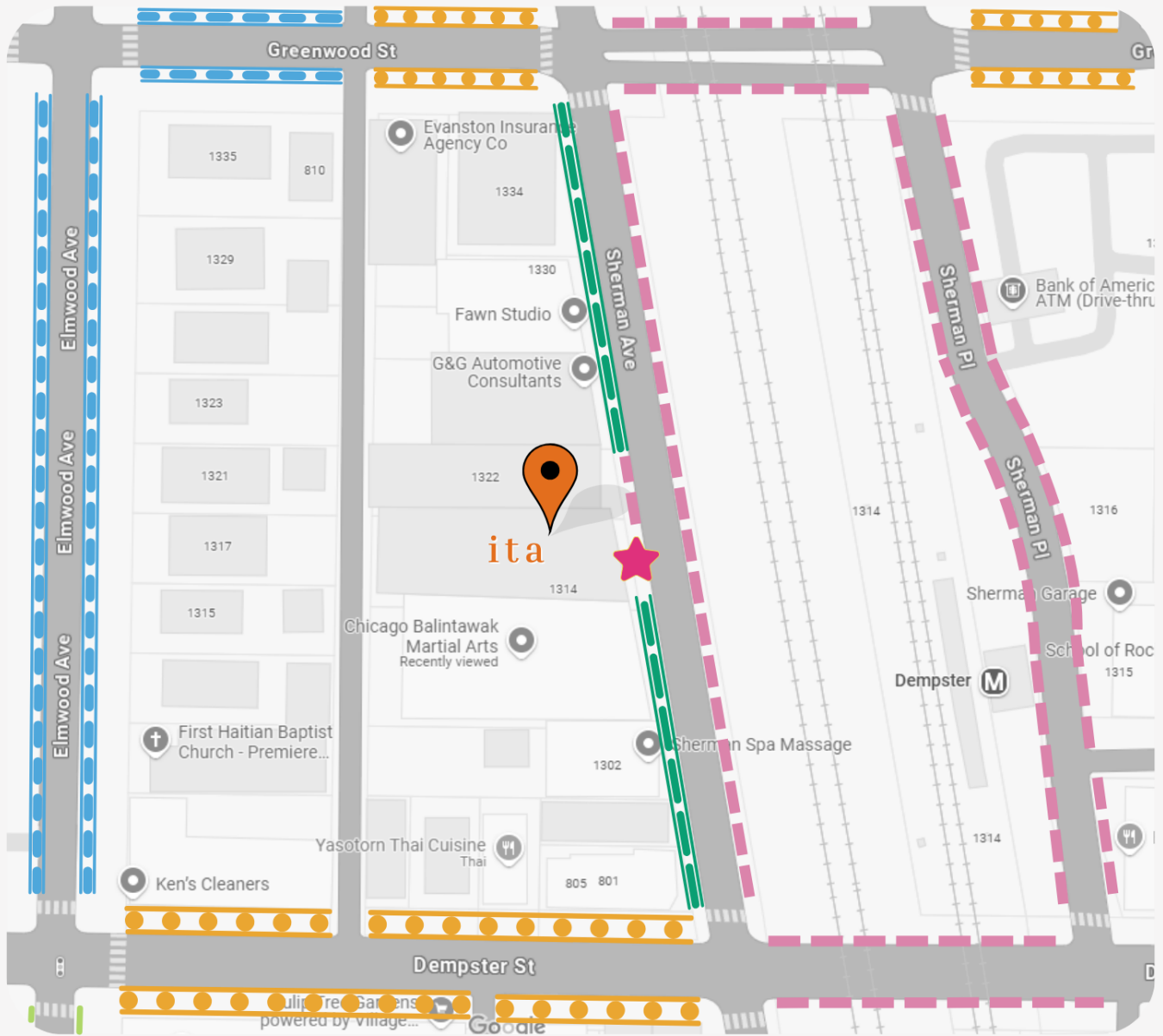
- Holiday Inn Chicago North-Evanston: 1501 Sherman Ave, Evanston – 847-491-6400
- Hyatt House Chicago/Evanston: 1515 Chicago Ave, Evanston – 847-864-2300
- The GEM Museum Suites: 1555 Oak Ave, Evanston – 847-440-4100
- Hilton Orrington: 1710 Orrington Ave, Evanston – 847-866-8700
- Graduate by Hilton: 1625 Hinman Ave, Evanston – 847-475-3300

Hotels near public transportation or within a short drive

- Hilton Garden Inn Chicago North Shore: 1818 Maple Ave, Evanston – 847-475-6400
- Hampton Inn Chicago North- Loyola Station: 1209 W. Albion Ave, Chicago – 312-265-5800
- House 5863 – Bed and Breakfast: 5863 N. Glenwood, Chicago – 773-682-5217



ITA PARKING MAP



- Metered parking
- Free parking
- Free parking with 2-hour limit
- No parking
- Handicapped parking

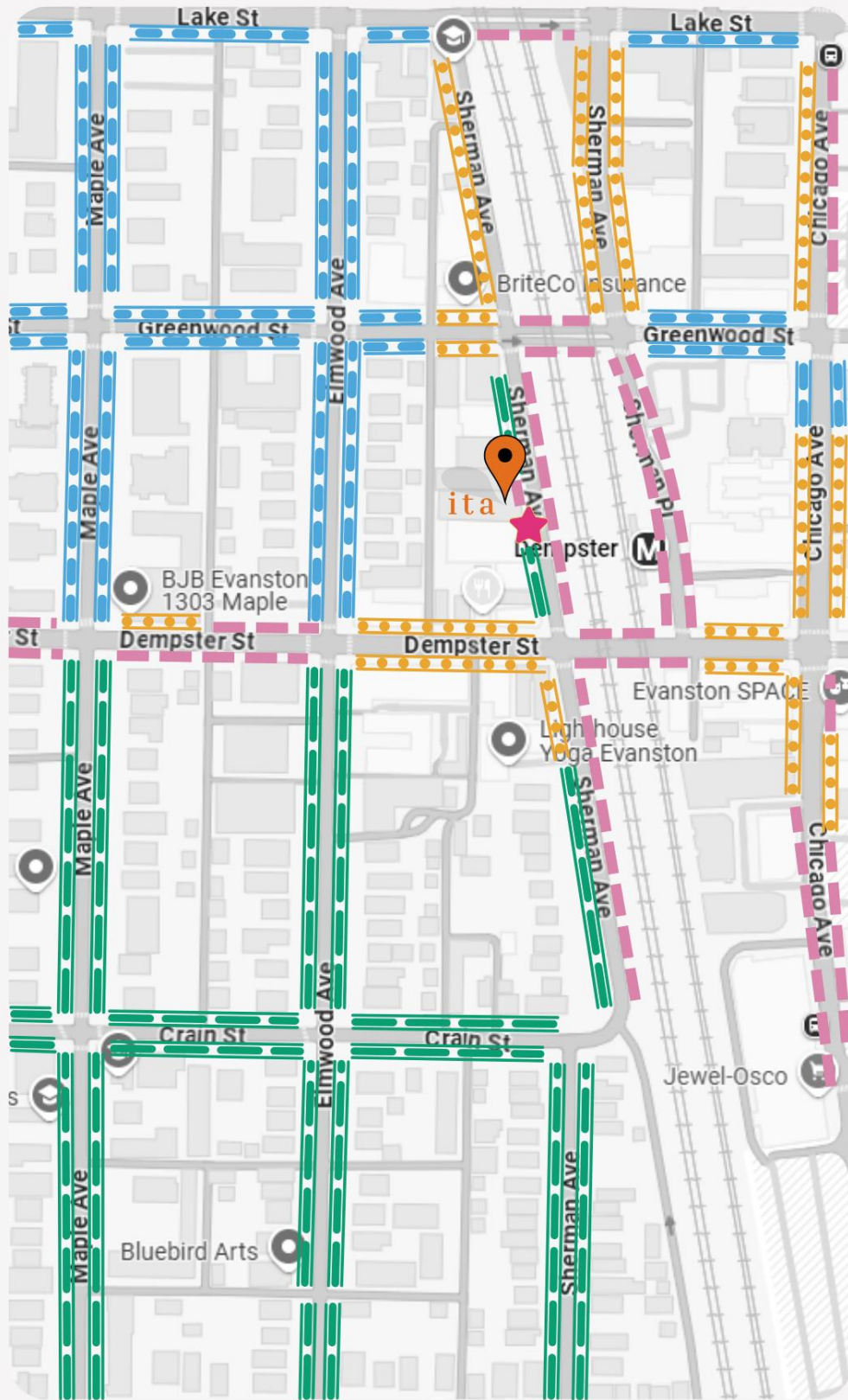
*Payment for parking in most paid spaces is in effect from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday



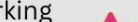


To pay or appeal a ticket, visit:
<https://evanston.rmcpay.com/>



Download the Park Evanston App:
<https://www.parkevanston.org/>





-  Metered parking
 -  Free parking
 -  Free parking with 2-hour limit
 -  No parking
 -  Handicapped parking
- *Payment for parking in most paid spaces is in effect from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday

