



Art Therapy Ideas

Start a Visual Journal

The goal of starting a visual journal is to have a safe place to hold your thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a creative way. Seeing your artwork in the order you made it can help you to learn about changes in yourself, your situation, and see how much you have learned.

- Use a notebook, an old book you aren't using anymore, or a pile of papers in a folder.
- Each day take 15-20 minutes to create art about how you are feeling. This might be images like the weather, a scene, something from your imagination, or just line shape and color.
- There is no right or wrong way to do this! It is not about making "good art." It is just about
- taking the time to think about how you are feeling each day and to make art based off of that.
- Journaling about your art after is also a great way to learn more about yourself!

Questions to think about:

How does this picture make you feel?

How is this picture different from the picture you made last? How do you feel after making this picture?

What would you title this picture?

Draw Your Breath

The goal of this exercise is to pay more attention to the way we breathe so that we can try to take more slow, big, deep breaths to relax.

- Start by sitting and just pay attention your breath.
- Using any painting or drawing material you like, start to draw a line for as long as you breathe in.
- Start a new line and draw or paint it until you've finished breathing out.
- Do the lines match in length? See if it is possible to get the lines to be the same length.
- Then try to take bigger and deeper breaths to extend the length of the line.
- Continue to draw or paint using big, deep, breaths until you feel you are done.

Keep your art somewhere you can see it as a reminder to breathe!

*Tip: Your belly should be moving just as much or more than your chest!

Questions to think about:

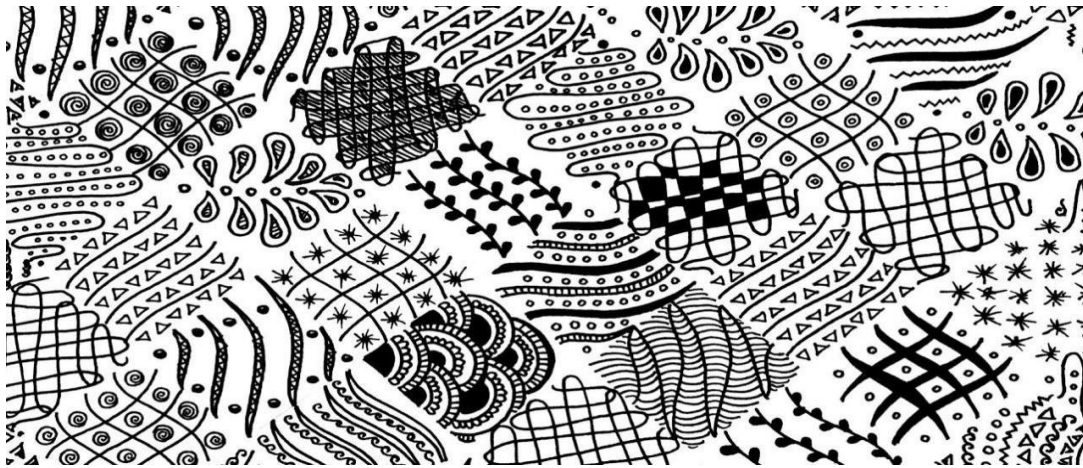
What felt the same or different in your body when taking deep breaths?

What did you notice about your thoughts?

How did your art change from beginning to end?

What did you learn about yourself?

Zentangle



The goal of this exercise is to stay focused on right now helping us to give our minds a break and relax. It is simple! A zentangle is made through simple “tangles” or patterns that come together without planning. The idea is not to plan, but to let the doodler in you take over and to make any “mistakes” a part of your design. So let yourself go with the flow and enjoy!

If you have access to the internet and want more tips check out this youtube link below:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBGVONBOKU>

If you are stuck here are a few steps:

- Start by creating a large simple scribble on the page.
- Pick a part of the scribble and begin to fill it with a pattern.
- Keep going in all the other areas of your scribble.

Questions to think about:

What was hard about this process?

What felt good about it?

Think about your body, how did it feel before, during and after?

Create a Safe Space Image

The goal of this exercise is to use all five of your senses to really imagine and feel the feeling of safety and calm.

- Sit for a moment and think of a time when you felt safe and calm.
- Now really try to imagine yourself in the memory. What did you see, hear, smell, and feel?
- Using your art materials, paint, draw, sculpt, or collage this safe place. Be thoughtful about trying to capture all five senses in your image.

Questions to think about:

What about this place, event, person makes you feel safe?

When do you most need to visit or imagine this place in your mind? How can you bring parts of this safe space into where you are now?



Positive Affirmation Cards

The goal of this exercise is to focus on thinking kind thoughts about ourselves. An affirmation is simply a statement that states that something is true. Often positive affirmations don't feel true, but with repetition they start to feel more true or more possible.

- Start by thinking of several positive thoughts about yourself. (examples: I am doing the best I can, I am kind, I am capable, I am smart...) Try to start with "I am..."
- Now challenge yourself to think of negative or difficult thoughts you'd like to change (examples: I am lazy, I am bad, I can't do this...)
- Take your negative thoughts and write the OPPOSITE to find a positive thought you can tell yourself. (Example: I am lazy → I do the best I can, I am bad → Even though I make mistakes, I am a good person, I can't do this → I can do this and it is okay to ask for help.)
- Take each positive affirmation you have created and write each one on a note card or small piece of paper.
- Take some time to decorate each card.
- Read these cards to yourself often to help think and feel more positively.

Questions to think about:

When do I most need to read my positive affirmations?

How can I make time to read these every day?

What was hard about writing the affirmations? What was easy?

Free Art Making

Practice being kind to yourself and not judging your thoughts, feelings, or artwork. Create a piece of art using you're the materials you like. It can be a picture your thinking of or it can be abstract using only line shape and color. Try not to worry if it is "good" or "bad". Instead focus your attention on what the process feels like. What does the crayon feel like on the paper? Can you smell the paint? What noises do your color pencils make while you color with them?

*Tip: It may help to set a timer for yourself for a short period of time like five or ten minutes. When making art in a short time it can help us to focus less on trying to make something "good" and allow us to just create and not think.

In times that we find ourselves with very little control, making art offers us a bit of that control back. We choose what we use, what we make, and how long we do it.

A note about art material choice

Think about when you have used different materials, paint, clay, drawing materials. How did it feel for you? For many people simple materials that are easy to control may help them feel safer and more relaxed. More difficult to control materials like paint and watercolor may make you feel differently. Think about which art materials would feel the best to use and how to use them. Do you need to sit and color a picture to just relax, or do you need to paint about what is happening or what you are feeling?



Worry Mandala

The goal of this exercise is to identify worried and stressful thoughts and to let them go in a creative way. By recognizing these thoughts, we can take control of them, challenge them, and work to let them go.

*This exercise requires specific supplies: coffee filters, **washable** markers, water with brush or spray bottle.

- Take a coffee filter and your washable markers. Use the markers to write or draw about stressful thoughts you might be struggling with (examples: I am scared, What if this happens to me?, STRESS, anything else you can think of...)
- Use the markers to continue to fill in the coffee filter with color, design, and/or words.
- Take your water in a spray bottle or on a large brush and begin to spray or brush the coffee filter. Imagine these thoughts melting away as you watch the ink bleed and the words fade away. *You might want to put something underneath of your art as it will get VERY wet.
- Allow the coffee filter to dry for a few minutes. While you wait for it to dry, brainstorm things you are grateful for or bring you comfort.
- Once the coffee filter is dry, use your markers or any other art materials you like to write, draw, or paint the things you brainstormed while waiting for the coffee filter to dry.
- Keep your artwork somewhere visible as a reminder that we can make our stressful thoughts and worries “blurry” and farther away in our mind if we work to focus on the positive.

**Remember that your stressful thoughts are not bad and it is okay to feel them! The only way to let them go is to recognize them and let yourself feel them. Just remember that you can focus on the positive when you need to. 😊*

Questions to think about:

How did it feel watching your worries melt into something different?

Look at your final piece of art, what stands out to you, what do you notice?

How can you focus more on positive thoughts?

Where can you put your art that you will see it often?

What would you title your artwork?



Letting Go and Receiving Hands



The goal of this exercise is to think about what we need to feel calm, safe, and happy. Sometimes that means asking for something we need, and sometimes that might mean letting go of or stopping something.

- Take a sheet of paper and something to draw with. Trace your left and right hand next to one another.
- On the first hand, draw, write, paint or collage about the things the you feel you need to let go of (thoughts, responsibilities, relationships...)
- On the second hand, draw, write, paint or collage about things you are needing (coping skills, supports, changes...)

Questions to think about:

Which felt easier to think about: letting go or receiving?

What would you title this piece of art?

What do you notice about your artwork?

Is there anything you would add or change? If so, what?

Ugly Picture Drawing

The goal of this exercise is simply to explore the way we see things. Often the longer we look at something the more our way we see them changes as we notice new things and see things in different ways. When things are hard it is more difficult to find the good in them. This exercise helps us to practice finding the good in hard things.

- Your task is simple. Try to create the ugliest piece of art that you can. **ON PURPOSE!**
- Use any materials you like, feel free to use materials in unique ways. You can rip, tear, stomp, smear...whatever feels right to you.
- Once you feel you have finished your artwork, sit with it. Look at it from very up close and from far away (think several feet away).
- If you feel comfortable, share your artwork with someone else and ask for their thoughts.
- Look at your artwork again and challenge yourself to find something good in it.
- Title your artwork.

Questions to think about:

How did your feelings about your art change the longer you looked at it?

If you asked someone else to talk about your art, how did this change the way you thought about your art?

What good were you able to find in your “ugly art”?

Think about a hard situation you have gone through, are you able to find something good that came from it?

What, if anything, surprised you about making “ugly art”?



Body Scan Drawing

The goal of this exercise is to think more about how our mind and our body is connected. Feelings cause a reaction in your body. For example, when you are scared, your heart might beat really fast or your hands might get sweaty. Or when you are stressed you might have a belly ache or a headache. Feelings are not right or wrong, they just happen. By talking about our feelings, we can pay the attention to them that is needed and then find ways to let them go. We often focus on one feeling and forget that most of the time we are feeling lots of feelings at one time.

- Use the included body outline. If you don't have a copy feel free to have someone print it from this document.
- Take a few moments to think about how you are feeling right now. Think about the way your body **physically** feels (does something hurt, are you relaxed, is something hot or cold?) all the way from the top of your head to the tips of your toes.
- Now take some time to try to think about the emotions you are feeling. If you are stuck, take a look at the feeling/emotion sheet that is included.
- Think about where you are feeling these things in your body.
- Using line, shape, and color, or pictures draw the way you're feeling both physically and emotionally on the front and back body outlines provided.

Questions to think about:

What connections did you discover between your physical and emotional feelings?

What stands out about your artwork?

Consider doing something like this each day to see what changes.

Create a setting around the body images. This can be an setting that shows what you need, or it can be about what is going on around you right now.



HOW DO I FEEL RIGHT NOW?



Aggressive



Angry



Anxious



Ashamed



Bashful



Bored



Cautious



Confident



Confused



Curious



Depressed



Determined



Disappointed



Disbelieving



Disgusted



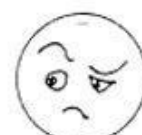
Ecstatic



Embarrassed



Enraged



Envious



Exasperated



Exhausted



Frightened



Frustrated



Grieved



Guilty



Happy



Hopeful



Hurt



Indifferent



Interested



Jealous



Joyful



Lonely



Loved



Loving



Miserable



Optimistic



Overwhelmed



Pained



Puzzled



Regretful



Relieved



Sad



Satisfied



Shocked



Shy



Smug



Sorry



Stubborn



Stupid



Surprised



Suspicious



Thoughtful



Withdrawn



