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ELISTAT PROJECT

Enriching the Lives of Seniors through the Art Therapy

2020-1-TR01-KA227-ADU-097696

ACTIVITY BOOK FOR ART THERAPY



Introduction

The ELISTAT project is aimed on enriching and improving the life of elder people – especially those who have been isolated during the pandemic or those who face stress, depression, anxiety or loss – through the use of art therapy techniques.

Given the fact that not all the elder people have access to art therapy sessions led by art therapists or specialized trainers, we believe that they would highly benefit from an activity book for art therapy, which includes specific activities dealing with emotions and guiding the people's focus on the positive aspects of their lives.

The main benefits for the seniors engaging in the activities proposed in this Activity Book for Art Therapy are revolving around:

- *promoting relaxation and reducing distress;*
- *reducing the feelings of isolation;*
- *dealing with emotions like sadness, fear, anger, loneliness etc.;*
- *promoting personal insights about oneself and increasing self-awareness;*
- *cultivating an optimistic attitude towards life and guiding focus on the positive aspects;*
- *increasing self-esteem and confidence;*
- *cultivating emotional resilience;*
- *improving communication skills;*
- *cultivating better awareness and understanding of the relationships with others;*
- *enhancing social skills and reducing conflicts;*
- *improving concentration;*
- *improving cognitive and sensorimotor functions.*

The ELISTAT Activity Book for Art Therapy is designed for seniors, but the activities may be beneficial for other age groups as well.

The ELISTAT Activity Book for Art Therapy is available for free downloads in English, Turkish, Italian, French, Romanian and Portuguese.

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Section 1: Getting Started

Preparation and planning

Art therapy, basically, lets people express themselves through different art techniques, such as drawing and painting, other visual arts, dance and movements, music and drama. The goal is to use the creative process to help explore self-expression and, in doing so, find new ways to gain personal insight and develop new coping skills. It is not needed to have artistic ability or special talent to participate in art therapy: art therapy is not an art class; it is more about letting participant focus on their inner experience.

Art therapy, as a sub-branch of psychotherapy, expresses itself through the use of every branch of art in psychotherapy. It enables individuals to express all kinds of emotions, thoughts and subconscious states that they cannot express verbally through artistic activities. In art therapies, a good knowledge of pedagogy and psychology is required as well as a good knowledge of art. Art therapies externalize the individual's expression in its most raw form, with a power beyond words. The aim of art therapy is to help individuals to convey every emotion, thought, trauma and many feelings and thoughts that they cannot express verbally, without intervention and direction through art. The most important point in art therapies is this: except those who have studied psychology, psychiatry and clinical psychology, they should be called art therapy practitioners. Art therapists do not have the authority to make a diagnosis unless they are psychiatrists or psychotherapists.

In order to have a successful art therapy session, there is required a certain amount of planning and preparation.

Plan for:

- a) methods to collect relevant information about the participants prior to the art therapy session (self-filling questionnaires, interviews etc.);
- b) setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable realistic, time framed) objectives for the art-therapy session (what are you trying to achieve with the art therapy activities);
- c) identifying the appropriate activities for the specificity of the participants and for achieving the objectives already set (how will you reach the objectives you previously set, what activities will you be carrying out with the participants in order to do that, what instructions will you need to give);
- d) providing all the materials and tools necessary for the activities planned for all the participants (for an effective activity, the participants need to have enough tools and materials and also keep in mind that errors or small accidents may occur, so plan for extra materials);
- e) methods and means to guide the participants towards relevant inner reflections or conclusions, once the activity has been completed, as the art activities alone are not able to trigger self-awareness and personal development, unless directed through dialogue afterwards (what questions will you need to ask the participants, what further instructions regarding the artwork or the reflective process you need to give).

Prepare:

- the space where the activity will take place (air the room, provide seating/ workspaces for all the participants, create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere);
- any hand-outs/ worksheets with specific information regarding the session (the objectives of the session, written instructions, a short history of the technique or any other relevant information that you think will be useful for the activity or afterwards or that might contribute to motivating the participants);
- the materials and tools which will be used during the activity (check them to be enough and functional for the participants to use them, ensure you have some spare materials).

Establishing expectations or ground-rules

Art therapy can be applied both in sessions and in different workshops. It can be applied in groups, couples, families, individuals, children, the elderly and adolescents, in every age group and in every disadvantaged group.

In art therapy there are three main elements: the artist or art maker, the artwork, and the art therapist. In this case, you will be the artist, your products will be your artworks and the Activity Book will act as your art therapist.

Please, keep in mind that:

1. you are the expert on the emotional and social aspects of your life, while the art techniques we are proposing are just a mean for expressing your thoughts and feelings;
2. you do not need to have special artistic abilities or talents to participate in art therapy activities.
3. art therapy is not an art class; it is more about letting you focus on your inner experience;
4. you are not required to do the activities in the Activity Book in a certain order, so choose the order you want to experience them;
5. the more you get engaged in the art activities you choose to do, the more extensive the progress and the psychological benefits you will experience.



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Section 2: Art Therapy Activities

THE BODY SCAN

1. Description

This study is an example of application of mindfulness-based and self-compassionate studies. It helps you learn to be kind to yourself, to express your feelings and to notice them. You can get in touch with your inner self.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Have you had anxiety and fears during the pandemic process? Turn on instrumental music, close your eyes to the accompaniment and think about your current feelings in a state of relaxation or deep relaxation. Think about the troubles that make you sad, worried and arising from inactivity. When you focus on your distress, examine it, its colour, pattern, texture. After you feel it and understand its shape and form clearly, draw and paint it with any pencil and coloured paints. Then close your eyes again and think about what part of your body you feel your emotion in. Where did it damage your body, did it make you sad, hurt you? Think about where it is in your body. Then draw, paint, etc. on the template or on the side. The results can be interpreted also with the help of your art educator or psychotherapist, during the regular sessions.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- drawing paper;
- pen;
- colouring pencils;
- markers;
- crayons.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

This study is very useful for you especially if you tend to neglect yourself and lack self-compassion or if you tend to prioritize the others above yourself. The healing process is triggered by discovering your own body, your emotions, what you feel and how awareness arises in your body while feeling it. This exercise might also help you learn how to cope with traumas, shocks and anxiety.

Ask yourself:

- What awareness did you experience?
- Did you want to make an effort to make sense of the feelings you couldn't make sense of before?



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BODY SCAN

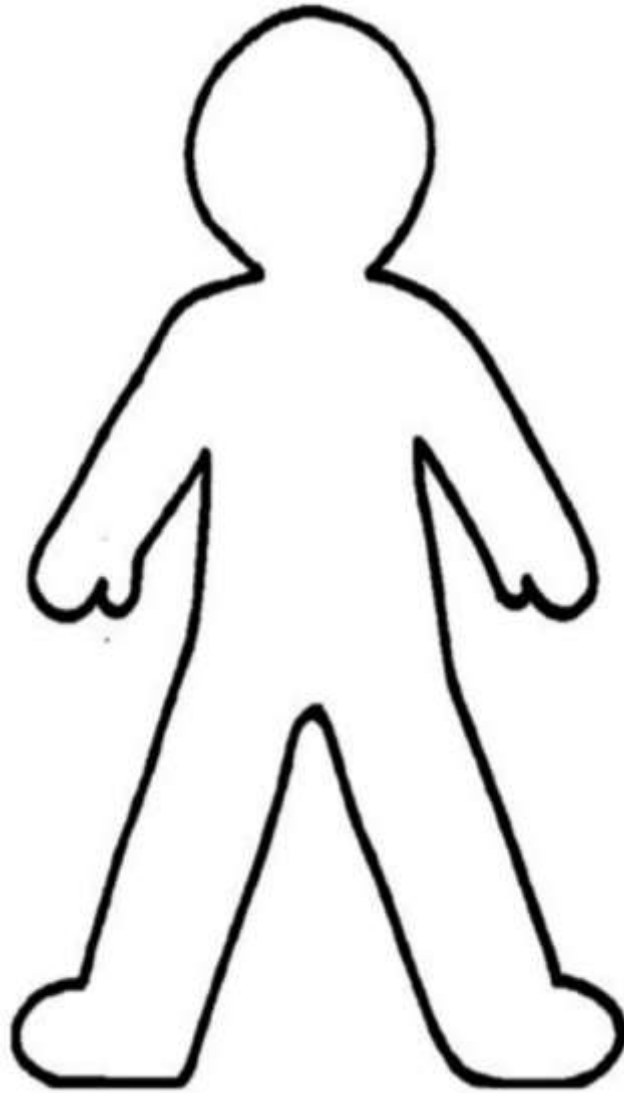
What are the colours of my soul and feelings ?



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BODY OUTLINE TEMPLATE¹



¹ You may use this template in case you feel any aesthetic disconcerting. It is just a template; you may draw yourself how you feel and imagine your emotions.



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REGRESSION RIGHT HAND-LEFT HAND

1. Description

With this work, you will be able to emotionally touch your past experiences, regrets, achievements and past feelings. Regression is just that: to be able to touch all kinds of emotional states and experiences you have experienced in the past on a very emotional level. It is a very good practice for expressing past things which are difficult to express in everyday life.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Look at the sample image bellow and draw the contours of your both hands on the paper, just like creating out a template. The left hand represents past life and the right hand represents future life. Right and left hand: your right hand will come, your left hand is your past. Think about everything that made you who you are, whatever your past regrets, happiness, mistakes and draw or write inside the left hand template. Think about your future, your dreams, your desires, your wishes and goals, think about what you expect from the future, where and with whom you want to be and draw or write your thoughts and feelings inside the right hand template. Observe the sample work below, but feel free to find your own way of expressing yourself.





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3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- pencil/ pen;
- coloured pencils;
- A4 size paper;
- watercolours.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

The activity is aimed to help you reflect and talk about your past experiences and future dreams, so share your drawing and your reflections with other people. Sometimes, experiencing high regression may trigger feelings such as sadness, loneliness, anger – that is normal, but don't try to hide them or experience them alone, speak about them with the people around you.

Further on, you may reflect on how you feel now, about your past regrets, about your anger or how you have experienced it. Here are some questions to help you reflect:

- Have all these introspections triggered awareness in you?
- Do you understand the concept of regression? In the regression study, did you have intense emotions or a tantrum?



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MASTERPIECE OF ART

1. Description

This activity is an example of visual arts therapy and it has an intermodal feature, simultaneously focusing on visuals and music.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

In this activity, you are supposed to try and guess the story of the visual art in the accompaniment of music. Look now at the painting bellow and try to guess the story behind it. After that, come back to reading the true story.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- A4 size paper for taking notes or tips;
- pen or pencil for writing notes or tips.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Here is the true story of the painting. The inspiration for John Everett Millais's oil painting, dated 1851-52, is Shakespeare's play Hamlet. The painting tells the tragic death of Ophelia, who fell into a creek while picking flowers to make a wreath from wildflowers after her father was killed by her lover Hamlet. She dies singing as unaware of the risk of drowning.

Completing the work in two stages, Millais paints 19-year-old model Elizabeth Siddall in the bathtub in his studio, after painting the outdoor background. Because of posing for this painting in the water who became cold after long hours, Siddall caught a cold and became seriously ill. If we look at the symbols in the painting, the flowers Ophelia carries symbolize her love and intelligence. The scattered around flowers indicate her corrupt innocence, which is restored by the fact that she dies for love.

Look at the painting again and try to find other hidden meanings of the details included by the artist. What emotions do you have while watching the painting? What emotions did the artist try to trigger in your opinion?



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MASTERPIECE OF ART





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POETRY THERAPY

1. Description

By choosing one of the 3 poems given in this activity, you will choose the poem that feels closer to your heart, thus revealing hidden emotions from the subconscious related to past experiences.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Three different poems are given. Try not to look at the information about their authors. You need to choose one of them, which you find appealing, and continue writing it with your own words, sentences and thoughts. Take your time and don't get discouraged. This task is not about writing talent, but about letting your emotions speak.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- A4 size paper;
- pen/ pencil.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Share your poems with other fellows. Check out the poems and find out their title and author. Reflect on the similarities and differences between the original and your own creation: do they refer to the same experiences or feelings?, do the poems have similar or different messages?, what symbols are there used?



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POETRY THERAPY

Poem 1²

And as his strength
Failed him at length
He met a pilgrim shadow
Shadow said he
Where can it be

Poem 2³

I shall not soon forget
The greyish yellow skin
To which the face had set
Lids tights: nothing of his
No tremor from within
Played on the surfaces

Poem 3⁴

The briefest moment
shared with you
the longest
on my mind

² (Edgar Allan Poe, Eldorado)

³ (Thom Gunn, Still Life)

⁴ (Lang Leav, A Timeline)

3 SONGS – 3 FEELINGS

1. Description

It is a frequently used activity in the mindfulness-based studies. Music is a very important branch of art and has an important impact upon the well-being of the individual. Music therapy has advanced quite a bit as a sub-branch of art therapy and is almost on its way to becoming a major in the universities. Expressing feelings and thoughts through songs is very valuable.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

First, you need to listen (and dance) to 3 different songs (see the list below). After listening and expressing how you feel by dancing, let your body take a shape which best represents the emotion you felt. Further on, you are invited to reflect upon the feeling in writing or by drawing.

Song 1: Thom Yorke, Unmade

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27c3JaZq4_c

Song 2: Fever Ray, Keep the Streets Empty for Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWFb5z3kUSQ>

Song 3: Thievery Corporation, Cosmic Game

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmamRc_kEB8&list=PL-wAT00jMEEuw_Tekmj1t9z81CZAjiGOe

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- A4 size paper;
- coloured pencils felt-tip pens and pencils;
- watercolour paper;
- watercolours.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Talk with your friends about your experience. Reflect upon the transformation of emotions into forms and shapes (see examples from the works of the artist Kandinsky).



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INNER SELF-PORTRAIT

1. Description

For Carl Gustav Jung inner reflections are very important practices in expressing the subconscious of the individual. With these inner reflections the individual can easily discover his subconscious image repertoire and symbolic language.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

You will draw your face by looking in the mirror or in your mind. After that you will think about your mind, about your feelings and thoughts. How would you represent them in your drawing? You will have to draw them and colour them or you could use a collage or assemblage technique. There is no sample or template in this activity, because you must show your feelings and subconscious directly in a raw and pure way.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- A4 size paper;
- coloured pens and pencils;
- watercolour paper;
- watercolours;
- scissors and glue for the collage technique.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

For further reflection and interpretation of your creation, check the writings of Carl Gustav Jung and Sigmund Freud about the analysis of dreams, the discovery of symbolic language and unconscious imagination studies.



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INNER SELF PORTRAIT



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PORTRAIT PRINT MAKING

1. Description

This activity is done in pairs, so find somebody to do this activity with. The objective is to paint a creative portrait of each other, which provides a collaborative artistic activity. In this portrait, the participants' physiognomic features are the basis of the canvas, but the choice of colours, the types of strokes and lines and all the artistic choices or materials selected to do it will be the artist's decisions in order to express the personal interpretation of the portrayed person.

This activity, in addition to providing moments of fun and sharing, also allows you to develop recognition of your own image and establish emotional bonds with the other.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

This activity should be done in pairs. You should ask your partner to hold the acrylic glass (plexi-glass) at face level, while, with the help of a brush and coloured paints, you will draw his/her face on the acrylic glass, detailing the hair, eyebrows, eyes, nose and mouth. When finished, you must place the acrylic glass on a flat surface and press a white A4 sheet on it. Then you must carefully remove the sheet and reveal the portrait to your partner. Below are some examples of the final results of this activity.



3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- acrylic glass (plexi-glass) at least 15x20 cm in size;
- acrylic paints;
- paint brushes;
- water;
- A4 sheets of paper.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

The person who made the portrait should explain to the other partner about the colours he/ she used, the lines, the traits he/ she illustrated and how these choices relate to his/ her interpretation of the person he/ she portrayed.

Here are some questions to help you reflect:

- Why did you choose those colours?
- How are they related to the person you have portrayed?
- Did you have fun?

The person portrayed must reveal how the portrait makes him/ her feel, if he/ she identifies himself/ herself with the portrait and what he/ she thinks of the artist's interpretation of oneself.

Here are some questions to help you reflect?

- How do you feel about your portrait?
- Do you identify yourself with the portrait or not? In what way or why not?
- Did you have fun?

Also, you may present the portraits to other members of your group and ask for their opinion regarding the way that the portrait reflects yourself.

You may take away from this activity a range of new interpretations of yourself and you may even gain awareness of characteristics that others see in you.

If desired later, you may frame the coloured portrait and hang it somewhere in your house where you may see it more often, so that you remember the moments of fun and happiness during the activity.



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DANCING TRAIN or WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU SEE IN ME?

1. Description

This activity is to be done in a group. It allows for a moment of fun, togetherness and self-esteem improvement. You are invited to dance to several songs, form a dancing train and challenged to announce a quality for each member of the group.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Before starting the activity, it must be established who will be the locomotive: that is the leader of the convoy. Afterwards, music is played – ask a person (who will not participate in the activity) to help you by being the DJ – and all participants should spread out around the room and relax and dance to the rhythm of the music.

Every 30 seconds, the music should change to another rhythm, while everyone dances and adapts to the rhythms. When the music stops, the train leader must choose another participant, who should mention a quality that he/ she sees in the leader of the train. The two come together and begin to form what will be the dancing train. All participants continue to dance until the music stops again and the last member of the train chooses another participant who must reveal a quality about the one who chose him and who will consecutively join the train. The process is repeated consecutively until all participants are part of that dancing train. When the last participant joins the train and when the music stops again, it must be the leader who reveals a quality about him/ her.

You may repeat the activity as many times as you wish, switching places in the train to gather qualities from other participants.





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3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- playlist with different types of agreeable music for the participants;
- music device (and a person who accepts to be the DJ).

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

The objective of the activity is to help people have fun, but also to promote and reinforce the characteristics of each individual and to help raising the participants' self-esteem and self-confidence. In order to promote this positive effect, at the end of the activity, all participants should remember the qualities attributed to them and express what they feel about them.

You and the other participants may also reflect to other strong points of yours and share those reflections with the others. This moment of sharing can also allow new bonds to be formed between the participants.



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YOU SMELL LIKE...

1. Description

In this activity you are invited to make a handmade soap to offer to someone you want to. You can customize the soap by choosing its shape, essence and decoration. This customization should be carried out in such a way that everything in the soap, from the essence to the shape and decoration, reminds you of or identifies with the person to whom it will be offered to.



2. Instructions for a successful activity

For this activity you may use moulds that are especially designated for the making of soap or improvise with cookie cutters, silicone baking moulds or other hard plastic, wooden or metal boxes and shapes. You may also use food colouring and your favourite essences, dried plants etc.

The activity may be carried out alone or you may organize a group of friends to do it with you. Read carefully the instructions you must follow to manufacture handmade soap before you start. Start by making one soap bar to get the hang of it and then continue experiencing with more shapes and fragrances. If you don't like the result, you may melt it and try again. At the end of the activity, you will have a unique soap to offer to someone.

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Put on the disposable cap and gloves.
2. Heat the glycerine base soap in an enamelled pan, on low heat (you may also use a ceramic/ glass bowl in a microwave, but use just 10-20 seconds at the time, because it melts very quickly).
3. When it is liquid, add a few drops of almond oil and 2 teaspoons of herbs (optional).

4. Mix it well.
5. Pour the mixture in a mould.
6. Then add a 2-4 drops of colouring and 5-15 drops of essential oil of your choice for fragrance and half of teaspoon of grey clay (optional) in each form.
7. Mix it again gently with a toothpick.
8. Leave in the moulds until the soap dries completely (4-5 hours to one day) and unmould.
9. After unmoulding the soap, place it in a cellophane bag (optional) and decorate it with stickers and ribbons.

Some suggestions: you may write the name of the person to whom you are going to give the soap with permanent marker; you may write a message on a tag; you may use a decorative ribbon around the soap instead of the cellophane bag.

Precautions to be taken during the procedure:

- Avoid iron, stainless steel, aluminium and clay materials and watch out for plastics that can melt. Choose to use silicone pots and spoons, resistant plastics and glass.
- Pans should be enamelled ones as they do not release residue and do not react with the ingredients (glass or porcelain pot also work well if you use a microwave).
- In the melting process always use an electric stove. The old technique of melting in a water bath can contaminate the product, as the steam can cause humidity in the final result.
- The environment for the procedure must be light and airy. The space must be clean, reserved only for practice.
- You must handle the materials with a cap and disposable gloves. It's for your own protection.
- Don't allow pets in the same environment.
- Avoid preparing the product near open windows, as dust can contaminate the soap.

3. Tools and materials/ ingredients:

You will need:

- disposable cap and gloves;
- electric stove;
- enamelled pan;
- glycerine base;
- almond oil;
- essential oils/ fragrances;
- colouring (food or cosmetic);
- aromatic herbs;
- grey clay;
- teaspoons or measurement spoons;
- small forms or moulds;
- decorative materials (optional);
- permanent marker (optional);



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- small stickers for writing messages (optional);
- decorative ribbon (optional).

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

This activity allows you to achieve a sense of personal fulfilment by developing your individual skills and building something to offer to another. It is a form of sharing in which one puts a little of oneself and a little of the other into what one is making.

Like any other manual activity, it allows you to reach a state of calm, reducing anxiety and giving space for creativity.

Here are some questions to help you reflect about this activity and reach your emotional part:

- What emotions did the activity trigger in you?
- How did you feel while making the soap?
- How do you feel now that your products are finished?
- Are you excited to give the soap you made?

Take photos of the moment you offer the soap to the person(s) you have chosen, so you can remember this moment of sharing whenever you want to.



WRITE A POEM AND LET YOUR IMAGINATION FLOW

1. Description

In this activity you will take a random word from a box and reflect on the meaning, memories or feelings that the word represents to you. Then, you will write a poem about it.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

You are invited to cut random words from newspapers and magazines and to put them in a box. After the box is filled with cut words, take a word from that box. You may do this activity in a group – in this case each participant should pick up a cut word.

The word you pick from the box is what you need to use as inspiration for the elaboration of your poem. Let go of all your worries and outside thoughts and just focus on the moment. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and let all things related to your word reach your mind. Take your time and be aware of what that word awakes in you, what it makes you feel, related memories, experiences etc.

As soon as you feel ready, you should open your eyes and start writing your poem.

It is very important not to worry if you can't immediately build sentences for the poem. You may start by writing single words. With these words start then building sentences and go on building the poem.

If the word removed from the box is not significant to you and does not trigger any inspiration, you may take another one.

This poem is only for you! So, there is no right or wrong, it is just a moment of self-contemplation.

The poem will only be shared with others if you wish so!

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- newspapers, magazines;
- scissors;
- a box or other container to put de words;
- worksheet to write;
- pen or pencil.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Writing poetry has been described in the literature as an effective way to relieve stress and depression. But more than that, it is presented as a tool that helps to process life's great



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emotions, whether positive or negative. By expressing feelings, thoughts, emotions, desires or dreams, you will allow the good ones to make you smile and the bad ones to set you free.

Without any kind of pressure, consider sharing your poem with others. Also, you may want to reflect and express what you felt when writing your poem.

Here are some questions to help you reflect on your poem:

- How did the activity make you feel? Comfortable, relaxed, stressed...?
- Have you had any difficulty writing about the word you have took out from the box?
- Was the construction of the sentences easy or did you have difficulty with it?
- How do you feel now?
- What title would you give to your poem?
- Re-read your poems after a while and reflect on the way they make you feel.

Example:



*"Hiker, it's your tracks
the **way** and nothing else;
Hiker, there's no **way**,
make **way** when walking"*



[illegible]



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ORIGAMI: A PAPER CONSTRUCTION

1. Description

In this activity you will have the opportunity to build origami: art of paper folding, which is often associated with Japanese culture. This millennial art consists of creating objects and shapes from a square piece of paper, without cutting it.

According to Japanese culture, the person who builds a thousand origami pieces has the right to ask for a wish that will come true.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

For this activity, you will be given a template bellow, but you may also find other ones that you like on the internet (there a lot of free templates on the internet to be downloaded, for example in <https://www.comofazerorigami.com.br/origami-de-borboleta-2/>). Choose the one you like best and follow all the instructional steps that are in the template.

You must know that building an origami is a challenge which is often only possible through a process of trials and errors. Don't be discouraged! Get involved and enjoy the various stages of building the figure, even if the shape does not match exactly the template! The process of building is the funniest part!

If you are having too much difficulty building your origami, maybe it's because it's a complex one. Feel free to choose and try another one!

After completing the construction of the figure, you may decorate it by painting or colouring it.





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3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- sheets of coloured paper;
- crayons or ink (if you want to decorate the origami);
- scissors.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

When doing an origami, manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination are being developed. It is a tool to improve concentration, memory and fine movements, functions which provide well-being and quality of life.

At the end of the activity, you may choose to show your origami to other fellows.

Here are some questions to help you reflect on your work:

- Have you had any difficulty choosing the figure?
- Why did you choose that figure?
- How did you feel building the origami?
- Was the construction easy or did you have difficulty?
- How do you feel now?
- What title would you give to your work?
- Do you like your origami?

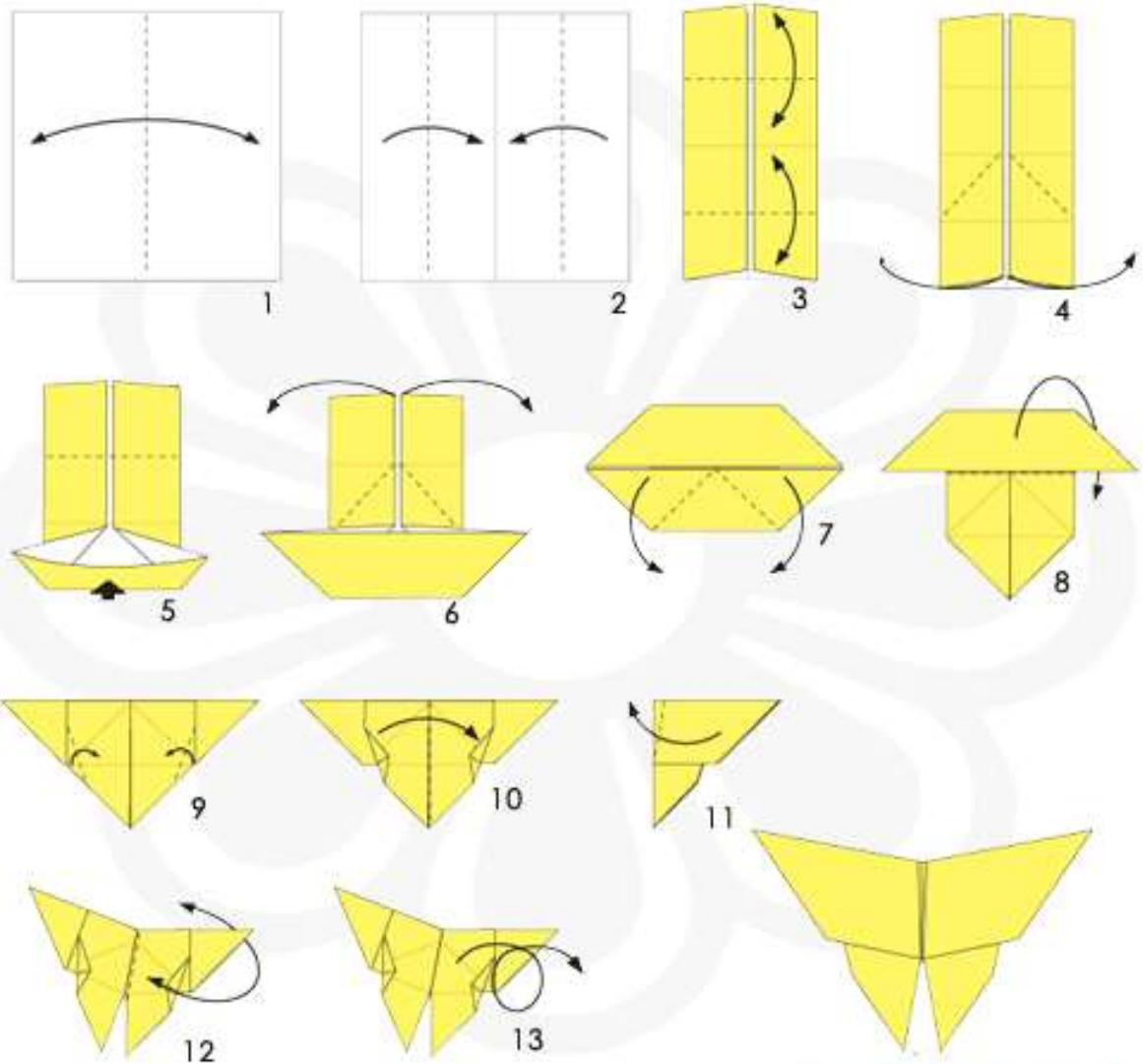
Feel free to download and try other templates!



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ORIGAMI BUTTERFLY TEMPLATE



www.amorigami.com.br



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PLASTER SCULPTURE

1. Description

This is a manual activity in which you will have the opportunity to create an artistic piece through plaster modelling.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

You will learn how to build a plaster sculpture from the beginning, from the preparation of the plaster consistency to the modelling itself.

This sculpture can be built with the help of moulds or it can be created freely, just using your own hands and creativity.

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Place the plaster powder in a plastic or glass container, large enough to fit the volume of all ingredients and to be able to stir.
2. Then add the water little by little and mix with a spoon or spatula to dissolve it well, without lumps.
3. Finally, pour the plaster quickly into the mould before it hardens.
4. Allow to dry (about 24 hours).
5. Remove the mould. After it is well dried, you may paint the sculpture.





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3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- plaster powder;
- a plastic or glass container;
- warm or room-temperature water;
- spatula or spoon;
- moulds (if necessary);
- brushes and acrylic paint (optional – if you want to decorate the sculpture).

Examples of plaster casts:



4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Shaping the plaster to build a figure, especially when using your own hands, works on flexibility and motor skills, reduces tension and stress, increases concentration and improves self-expression. This activity promotes a sense of self-fulfilment and increases self-esteem.

The time has come for you to reflect on the interpretation of your work of art. Here are some questions to help you reflect:

- Why did you choose that shape? What does it mean to you?
- What emotions did the construction of the sculpture awaken in you?
- Did those emotions pass into the sculpture? Perhaps in the choice of colours? Or not?
- Are you going to offer it to someone? Or will you keep it?



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Examples of plaster sculptures:





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THE WORLD I LIVE IN

1. Description

You are invited to create a collage with images, words, phrases or colours from magazines and newspapers and compile a collage which, as you feel, reflects the world you live in, as well as your personal feelings about it. The collage can be completely abstract or it can more concretely reflect participants' emotions and feelings with the words, phrases etc.

Collage is a great medium to take advantage of in art therapy sessions. Many people may not feel sufficiently confident in their drawing skills to create something from scratch on a blank page, whereas collage may help you to express yourself creatively without the pressure of making a realistic drawing.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Collect old magazines, newspapers, picture books, markers, pencils, scissors and glue and prepare cardboard or thick paper for the base of the collage. The more diverse the materials you have, the more creativity you may engage while expressing yourself. Some calm and soothing music might be used for the background noise to boost the creativity process.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- pencil/ pen/markers;
- colouring pencils/ crayons;
- glue;
- printed pictures (optional);
- old magazines, newspapers, books;
- scissors;
- cardboard or thick paper for the base of the collage.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

After it is finished, the collage can then be scanned and printed as a postcard which can be easily carried around as a personalized reminder of your unique vision of the world depending on your background and other circumstances.

Also, since the collage topic is quite vast and implies some constant changes, it might be a good idea to create such collages regularly to reflect on how your perception of the world changes depending on your feelings and emotions at a certain period of time.

BEHIND THE MASK

1. Description

Most people are very familiar with “presenting a certain face to the world” and creating another version of themselves to cope with the outside world's challenges and norms. “Behind the mask” is an excellent art therapy activity which allows you to explore your inner self and share your perception of how the outside world sees you.

Wearing and creating a mask is a part of our human nature to get integrated into society and to get through some life hardships. The problem starts when masks become our second nature and we lose ourselves in the process of trying to please others. This activity may allow you to boost your self-awareness about the different masks you wear and reflect on the reasons behind it, which might become an excellent way to gain back control over your true self and to explore your inner world.

Even if you feel shy, you may consider sharing what you have created with others, because such a presentation may lead to fruitful discussions giving some insights or positive feelings.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

“Behind the mask” is a quite simple activity which does not have any strict rules – any way to create a mask is correct. Anyway, this activity should be carried out in a quiet room with preferably no distractions (i.e. turn off phone notifications and try not to let other people get in or pass by your art therapy room during this activity). It might be a good idea to put some calm and soothing music in the background to foster the creativity process.

There are two ways to do this activity:

- 1) Print two copies of the mask worksheet and create two versions of your masks: (a) one which shows how, according to you, the outside world sees you and (b) another one demonstrating who you really are;
- 2) Or print only one copy of the mask worksheet in order to create only the outside version of your mask and reflect upon the misinterpretations or some things which differ from your inner mask in a written manner (or oral if you decide to share your reflections with the others).

The choice depends on your time availability and what you believe would fit you better.

While doing this activity, bear in mind that although the outside of the mask may have pieces of yourself, it may also contain misrepresentations or differences in how you truly feel. For example, friends may consider you as an outgoing person, whereas in reality you may feel quite shy.

On the inside version of the mask, engage yourself in showing your true self: this may be done in any way you like, using pictures, poetry, words, phrases etc. If you do not feel confident about drawing, you can prepare some collage materials, like journals, newspapers, scissors, glue

etc., to carry out this activity. If you prefer drawing, pencils, pens, watercolors will be sufficient to organize this activity.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- masks;
- coloured pencils and markers;
- glue;
- scissors;
- watercolours;
- journals and newspapers;
- glitter (optional);
- notebook or some paper to write on.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

To reflect on the artwork, engage yourself in answering the following questions and writing the answers down or sharing them with the others if you feel comfortable:

- Are the inside and outside parts of the mask similar or different?
- How do the outside and inside aspects of you relate to each other? How do you feel about this?
- What have you learned about yourself through this activity?

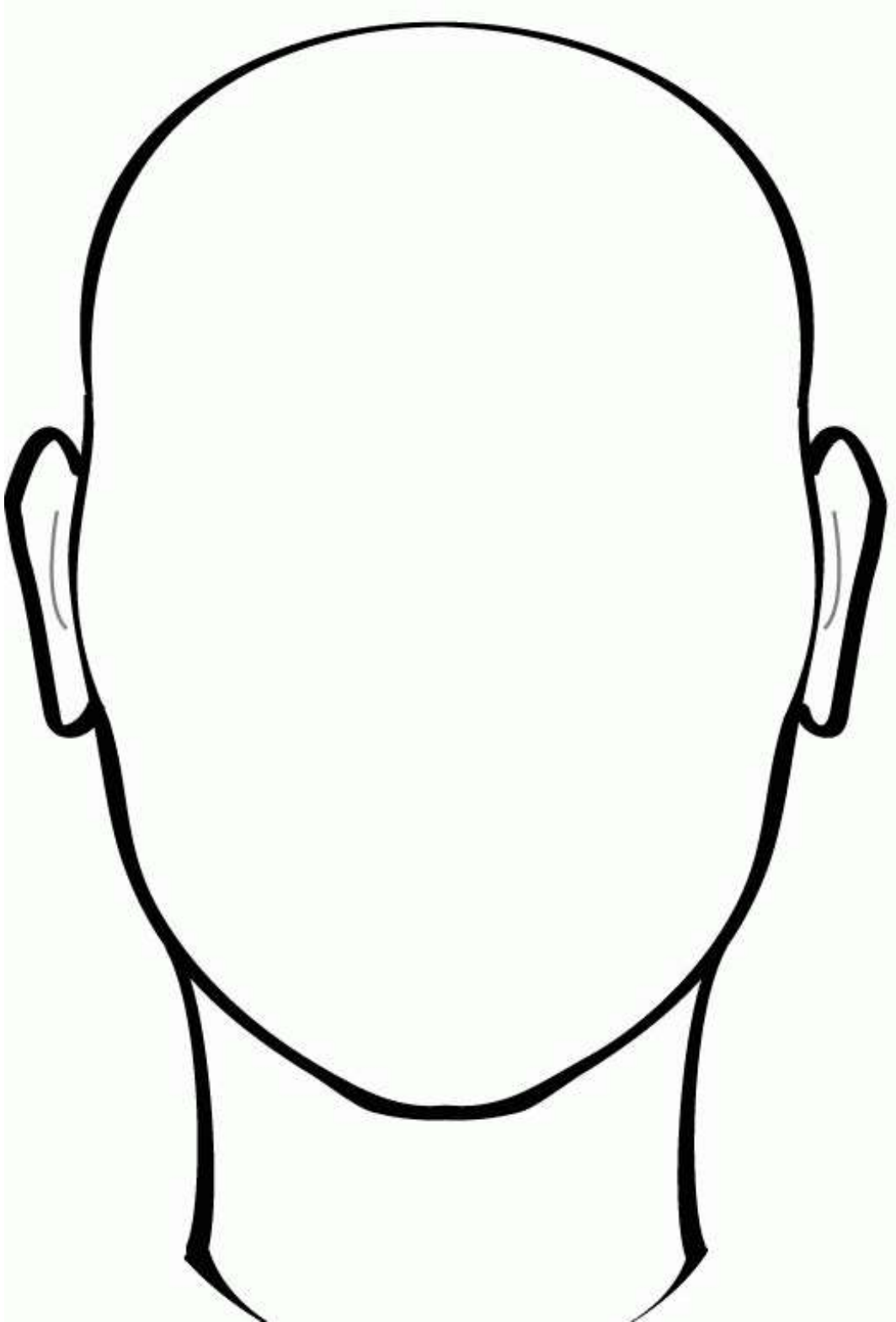
In order to prolong the effects of the activity, you may reflect on your behaviour and catch some moments in your day-to-day lives when you tend to «put the outside mask on». Questioning your behaviour may bring some positive effects, bringing more awareness and inner peace in your everyday lives.



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MASK TEMPLATE

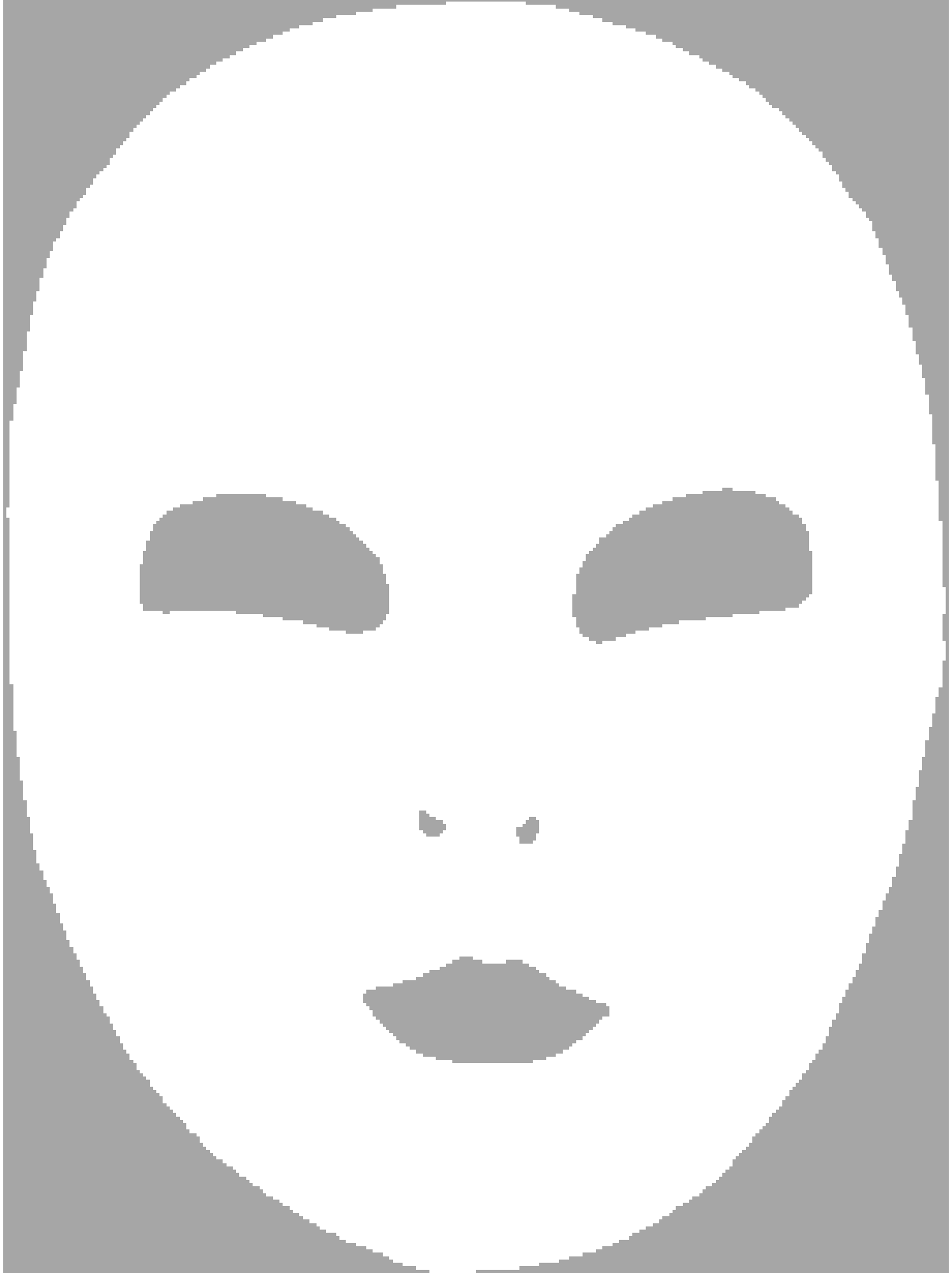




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MASK TEMPLATE





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EXQUISITE DRAWING

1. Description

The “exquisite drawing” or “exquisite corpse”⁵ is a collective drawing in which a group of people all draw the same character, either person or animal, with all its components: face, body, legs. You may also do this activity alone (although not ideal), but then you need to change your perspective from one phase of the activity to another.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

You will need a single sheet of paper and two other partners to draw with. Fold the sheet of paper in three equal parts and then open it. The first person draws the head of a character and folds the piece of paper hiding all of the drawing but a few lines. The second draws the body just under the head and folds the piece leaving just a few lines in the open. The last person draws the legs and proceeds to the big reveal. If you are doing the activity all by yourself, you will draw all the parts, but try to use your imagination and create something else in each segment. Observe the sample work bellow for a better understanding.



Copyright: Surrey Art Gallery, Sandeep Johal

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- coloured pens;
- pencils;
- paper.

⁵ For more details, you can watch the following video by Canadian artist Sandeep Johal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VjuP8ScVfA>.



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4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

This method is intended to disrupt the waking mind's penchant for habit and logical order and support collective/ collaborative imagining, intuitive insights and metaphorical thinking. It can be applied to the drawing of any character: animals, humans, humanoids etc.

This method is based on surrealist parlour games from the 1920s and is focused on gaining insights and supporting dialogue about specific themes, projects or issues from multiple perspectives. It gives space to individual perspectives and avoids “group-think” and/ or domination of visioning by more vocal people and it creates a light-hearted vehicle to share multiple perspectives and approaches that arise in trans-disciplinary work.

MANDALAS

1. Description

In Sanskrit language, “mandala” means circle. A mandala is a geometric design or pattern that represents the cosmos or deities in various heavenly worlds.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

The mandala template and patterns are usually already drawn. You can find them in many libraries, drawing stores or even print them out from internet. You may also try to draw them yourself, using rulers with geometrical shaped templates or free hand drawing.

The instruction here is very simple: you have to colour the template. As there are multiple shapes and patterns you are the one deciding the colours and combinations. You are also the one deciding in which order you want to proceed.

If you colour a mandala from the inside out, you are taking a decisive approach. Just like challenges, you go directly to the heart of the issue and then work your way out.

If you colour a mandala from the outside in, you are taking a meditative approach. You are gradually peeling each layer of external thought or worry and focusing on being present and grounded in the current moment.

Don't fear white! Many assume that you need to colour all the details of the mandala to complete it. The thing is, you don't! Leaving some areas out is perfectly fine and makes the mandala more open and freer.

Remember, there is no mandatory duration, you can take as many minutes, hours or even days as you wish. Indeed, colouring a mandala is a progressive activity: you can start, stop and come back to your drawing whenever you want. You are the one deciding how to organize your work, which parts to colour and when.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- coloured pencils;
- paper;
- mandala template.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Colouring mandalas allows the brain to enter a peaceful state by focusing on filling in the geometrical shapes instead of thinking about your worries. It increases creativity, self-awareness and self-confidence. It also decreases anxiety by relaxing the muscles.

You can colour as many mandalas as you want if it makes you feel good. Giving mandalas to other people (your family, friends, entourage etc.) is a really thoughtful and caring gesture.



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SAMPLE MANDALA



Copyright pictures: Freepik

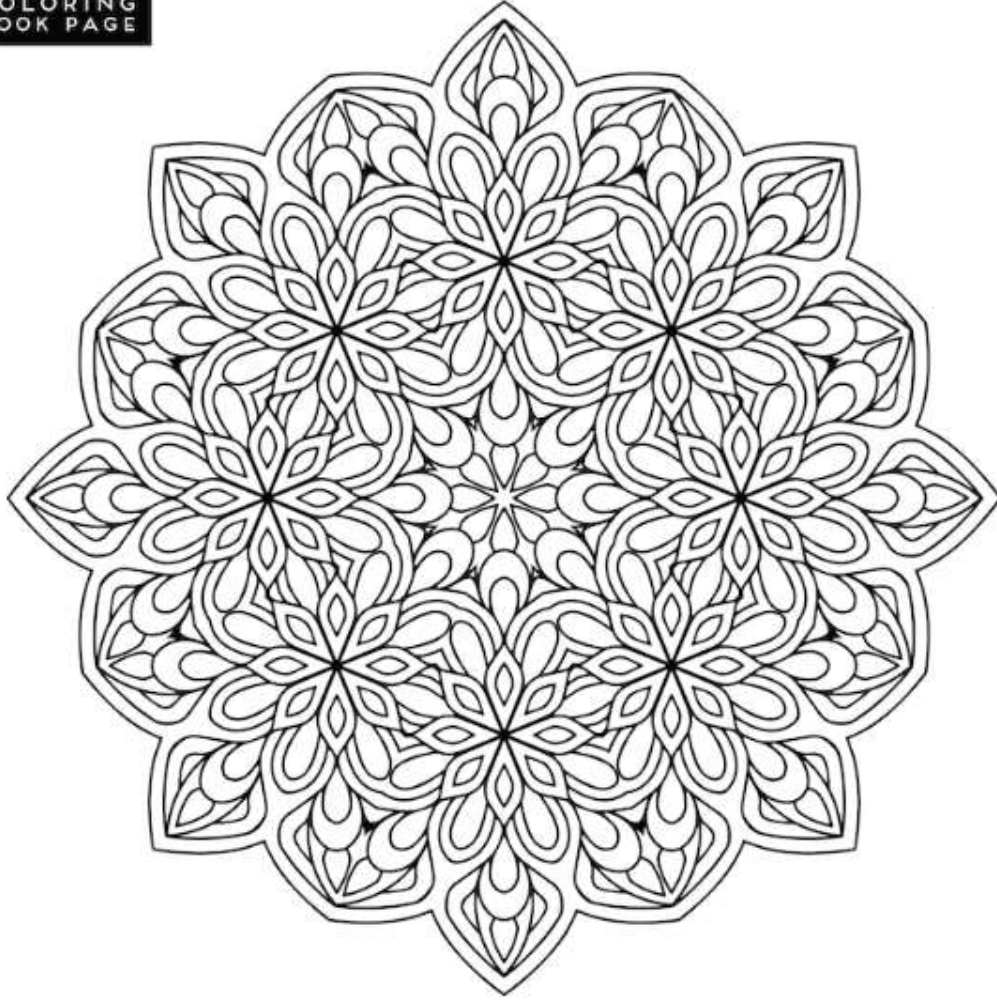


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MANDALA TEMPLATE

MANDALA
COLORING
BOOK PAGE





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MACRO MAGIC

1. Description

This activity allows you to explore your environment and a common artistic discipline: photography.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

For a moment, spend some time noticing your surroundings and stop when you spot a scene or an object that catches your eye.

With your camera or your phone camera, play with the zoom function to focus in and out. Take photos of what you think is eye pleasing or intriguing in some way.

Make a collage with the different photos you took. It can either be electronic (with your computer) or on paper (print the photos, cut them and glue them on a sheet of paper).



Copyright: Raw Pixels.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- photo camera or phone camera;
- computer (for the electronic collage);
- paper, glue and scissors (for the paper collage)



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4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

What matters in this activity is valuing your perspective and observation capacity. This exercise is a good introduction and stimulus to photography.

Make sure you use the zoom functionality, as you can present an object or a person from different perspectives using different zoom levels.

Having the option of making an electronic or a paper collage allows you to adapt the activity to your level of digital competency, but if you have a little experience to use computers or graphic programs, try to challenge yourself with a digital collage.

The important thing to keep in mind is that anyone can be a photographer and everyone has something to show from an individual perspective and personal gaze.



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LAUGHING OUT LOUD

1. Description

Laughing yoga is a method to induce laughing and relaxation. It is usually practiced in a group setting, such as a club or a workshop and led by a trained laughing yoga instructor, which coaches attendees through various exercises to promote enjoyment and laughter. Most sessions begin with simple breathing techniques, clapping, and chanting to help people relax.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Invite people to join in the activity and ask the group to create a laugh. One of the participants should step forward and trigger laughter by making a specific facial expression, a specific sound or a specific gesture, such as raising their arms, putting their hands on their stomach or on their cheeks, pulling their hair, touching their heads etc. Whatever inspires them and has the right effect on the group goes. The other members of the group should imitate his/ her gestures, sounds or facial expressions.

Repeat with as many individuals as you want. Each time, the group imitates the designated leader.



Copyright picture: Freepik



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3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- just your smile!

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Reflect together on your experience:

- How did you feel while triggering the laugh?
- How did you feel while imitating the laugh?
- Can you feel the mental and physical impact of laughing?
- How do you feel in general after this activity?

Laughter has many physical and mental benefits. It boosts the immune system, lowers the level of stress hormones, relieves pain, protects your heart and lungs and gives your abs some workout!

You can further experience the benefits of laughing even if you are alone at home. Just laugh at yourself in the mirror.

THE FIVE SENSES

1. Description

It is an experience with a variety of objectives to combat stress through the senses. Pleasant smells, tastes, sounds, touch, and sights can help you relax, thereby counteracting some of the negative impact of stress. You can use the power of images to elicit positive sensations and memories to create a booklet.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

The experience is built on the understanding that images can be powerful communicators that can access and express the subconscious. One way that you can use the power of images for effective stress management is by creating a visual booklet inspired by positive sensory experiences.

Think about a pleasant place or experience. Make a list of sights, smells, tastes, touches and sounds you like. Next, create a booklet. It is possible to print photos or browse through magazines to find images that represent the pleasant sensorial experiences from the list.

To insert the images in the mini book, they can be classified according to the sense; you can add words or draw and paint in the book. The goal is to create a book full of pages that are pleasant and that recall positive physical sensations.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- pencil/ pen;
- coloured pencils/ crayons/ coloured felt tip pens;
- glue and printed pictures/ stickers;
- scissors;
- tape;
- stamps;
- A4 size papers in several colours (in case different colours are needed);
- cardstock;
- calm and quiet place to exercise.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

After completing the task, take a few minutes to reflect on the art making process and to ask yourself:

- What kind of sensory experiences did you choose? Are you mostly about sound? Texture? Sight? Smell?
- When you look at your favorite image in the book, what do you experience?



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- How are you feeling now that you've spent time focusing on positive sensory experiences?

You may use this booklet as a tool whenever you feel stressed or when you are dealing with challenging emotions.



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SLOW DOWN AND CALM DOWN

First Take 3 Slow Belly Breaths!

List 5 things you can SEE

List 4 things you can TOUCH

List 3 things you can HEAR

List 2 things you can SMELL

List something you like to TASTE

Finished? Take Another 3 Slow Belly Breaths!



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THE FIVE SENSES

Directions: Choose two senses. Draw a picture and write a sentence for each.

Sight ★ Smell ★ Hearing ★ Taste ★ Touch



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PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

1. Description

It is an experience which allows you to express emotions through drawing, a way to put out negative feelings. It's about drawing someone to improve your relationship.

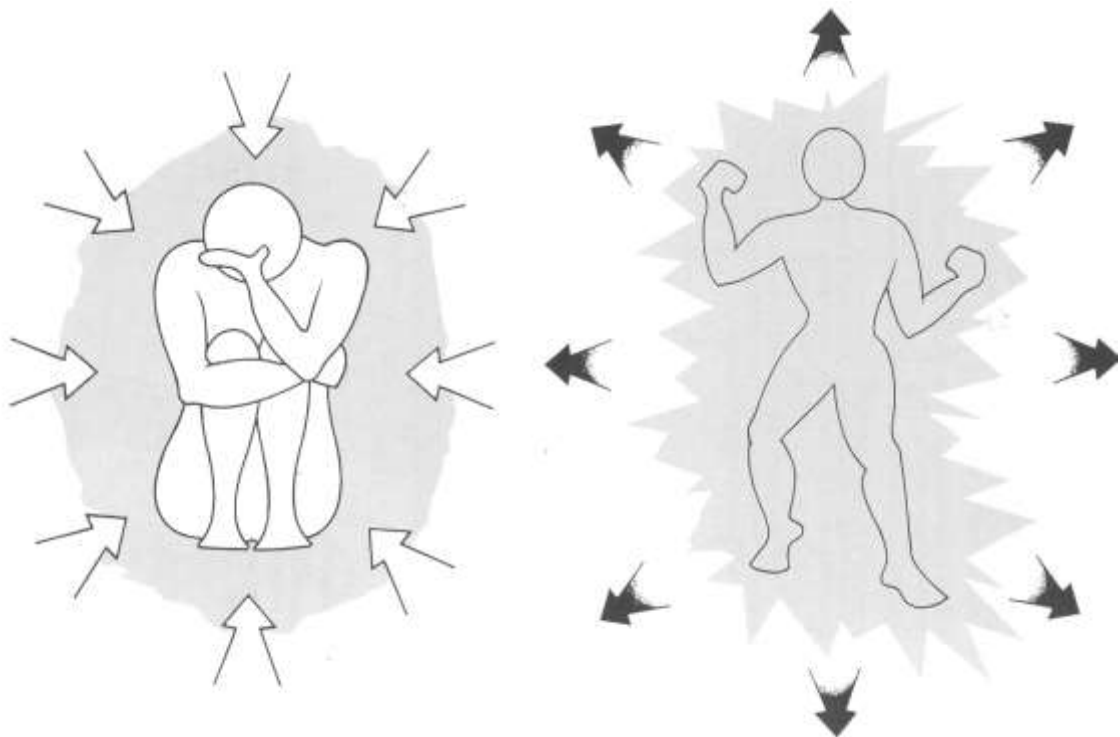
Conflicts are an unavoidable part of human relationships. Even in the best of families or in the best of jobs, they do emerge. Through this exercise you are guided to make conflict a constructive aspect.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Illustrate how you feel when you experience conflict with someone and reflect on the reasons for which the conflict appears. Try to answer these two questions:

- How do you behave in conflict situations?
- How do you resolve the conflict situations?

Reflection may focus on problematic relationships, business life, wants and needs. Healthy and effective methods of relating to others may be examined. Try to share your reflections with other fellows.





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3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- drawing paper;
- pen/ pencil;
- colouring pencils/ crayons/ markers.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

This activity allows you to understand that many people do not like conflicts and try to avoid them at all costs, accumulating resentment. Resentment, in turn, can give rise to passive-aggressive behaviours such as sarcasm. It's much better to bring the problems to the surface and talk about them in a respectful way, so that people can decide together on a plan of action or a solution.

This exercise allows you to become aware of your emotions and to control the behaviour and, therefore, better understand others. Instead of attacking the person, we ask you to focus on the problem, to improve things.

Try to develop (individually or through discussions with other fellows) a toolbox to manage well the relationships.



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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF MY LIFE

1. Description

This experience consists in writing and drawing a story about your life. In a stapled booklet, you will write and draw symbols, people, places and things representative of your life.

Objectives of this activity include strengthening one's identity and improving self-esteem.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

You will make a booklet, divided into three parts. The subdivision into decades depends on your age. You may write about your life, draw symbols, people, things that are representative of your life during each decade.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- paper;
- pastels/ crayons/ markers;
- post-its;
- booklet (A4 paper and a stapler).

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

After allowing yourself time to write, reflect on what you have decided to include or to leave out. Share the content of your booklet with others, focusing on important events in your life.

Explore your experiences, both positive and negative and focus on how to use past strengths and experiences to deal better with present and future challenges.





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THE POWER OF PLEIN-AIR PAINTING

1. Description

Plein-air essentially means that you are going outside to paint nature. Also it's a good experience to relax your mind and calm your stress; a good opportunity to relive a pleasant moment through water colour and painting. It's not important to be an artist.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Draw or choose a printed image and paint a favourite landscape, such as the sea or the mountains, a countryside landscape or a flowery meadow. For this experience is important to create a relaxing environment. Relax and explore the power of water colour to bring out memories of happy moments.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- water colour paints;
- water colour paper;
- brushes;
- cup with water.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

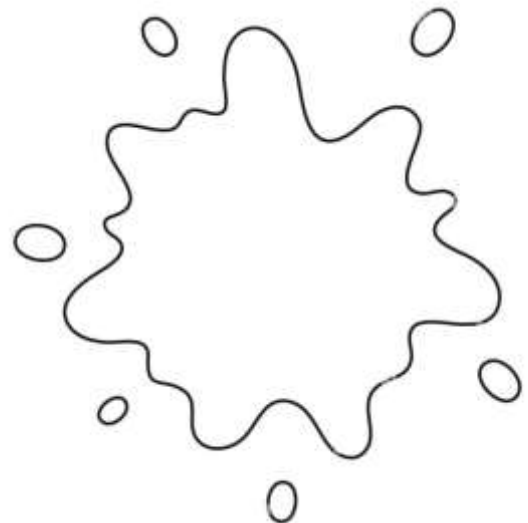
After the creative process, please reflect upon your masterpiece and upon your experience, by trying to answer these questions:

- Is there any memory in your past that could match your landscape?
- What emotions did you feel?
- How did you feel when you were painting?
- How do you feel now?
- You completed this art therapy workshop. Did you like it?
- Did it make you feel good?

Finally, it is possible to give a title to the painting.

**"Painting is just another
way of keeping a diary"**

Pablo Picasso





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THE HIDDEN POEM

1. Description

This activity consists in a poetic writing method which helps to write poems and thoughts not starting from a blank page, but from already written texts: pages torn from waste books, articles of newspapers and magazines, but also texts in digital format. Thanks to the interaction with various expressive artistic techniques (such as collage, painting, watercolour etc.) visual poems are created: small masterpieces that through words, signs and colours give voice to emotions that are difficult to express in everyday life.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

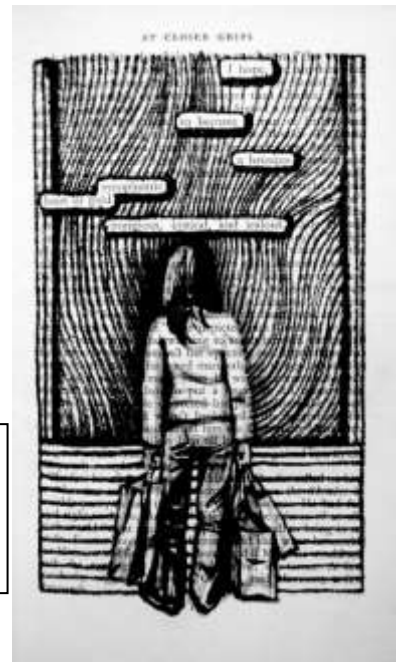
Choose one or more pages from an old book, a magazine or any text you may have at hand. Read the texts, try to individualize words and create a poem from words you find in those texts... Try to reveal the “hidden poem”. Do this activity by reflecting and using/ thinking of your life experiences.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- pencil/ pen;
- colouring pencils;
- pages from old books/ magazines/ newspapers;
- scissors;
- tape.

**The poem hidden in
a page**



4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

You may share with others what you liked about the creative writing process, how you approached it, if it was difficult or easy, how did you feel during the activity.

You might also reflect how you feel about creative writing, what it means for you, does it prove helpful.

This activity also offers you the opportunity to learn about cultural heritage, about writers and poets, while improving your creative writing skills, your communication skills and teamwork.



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THE FLOWERPOT FIGURE

1. Description

The activity is based on a creative approach to self-discovery. The challenge for you is to create a figure which should be self-representative in some way. Creating puppets is an artistic form widely used with subjects of all ages, including people with difficulties.

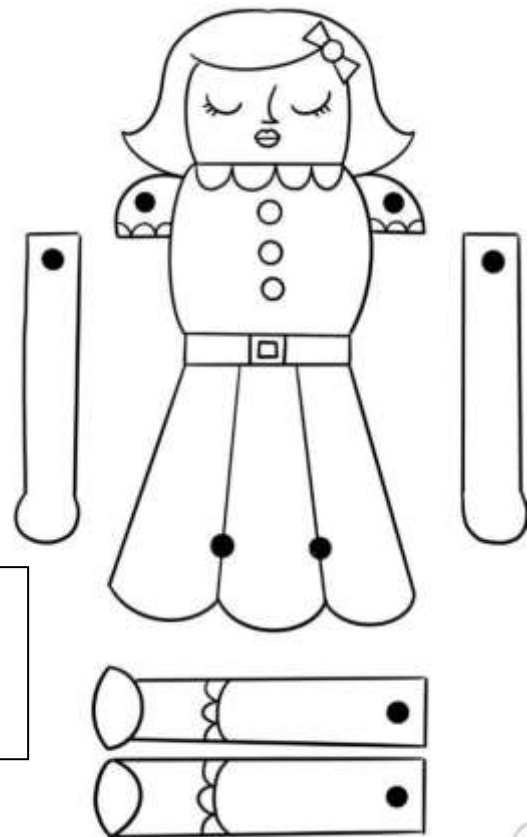
2. Instructions for a successful activity

You will be creating a figure which should be self-representative in some way. The flowerpot will be the body and the Styrofoam ball will be the head. Paint them to match your figure and let them dry. Then glue the head on the body with the hot glue gun or other type of very strong glue. You may now add a face, hair, hat, arms and any other decorative pieces.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- small flowerpots;
- glue;
- glue gun;
- Styrofoam ball;
- acrylic paint;
- glitter (optional);
- wool (for the hair);
- sequins (optional);
- feathers (optional);
- pipe cleaners (for the hands);
- wiggle eyes.



WHEN WORDS ARE NOT
ENOUGH,

MAKE ART!

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Reflect upon the resemblances and differences between the artwork and yourself. Focus on the way the figure is designed and the way you imagine yourself. You may share your reflections to other fellows.

This exercise allows you to bring out dreams, hopes, but also anxieties and fears and to fully explore your personality.



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THE TREE OF THE THINGS I AM MOST PROUD OF

1. Description

You are invited to create a poster of the things you are most proud of. There is a template of a tree in which you may include your thoughts. You may also do it as a list or as a matrix if you prefer or include everything in a painting.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Reflect upon the things you are most proud of. Try to identify at least ten. Write or draw or stick pictures about them in the circles in the tree or around them. Hang it as a poster in a place which allows you to look at it often.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- pencil/ pen;
- colouring pencils/ crayons/ coloured felt tip pens;
- glue and printed pictures (also cuts from magazines may work)/ stickers.

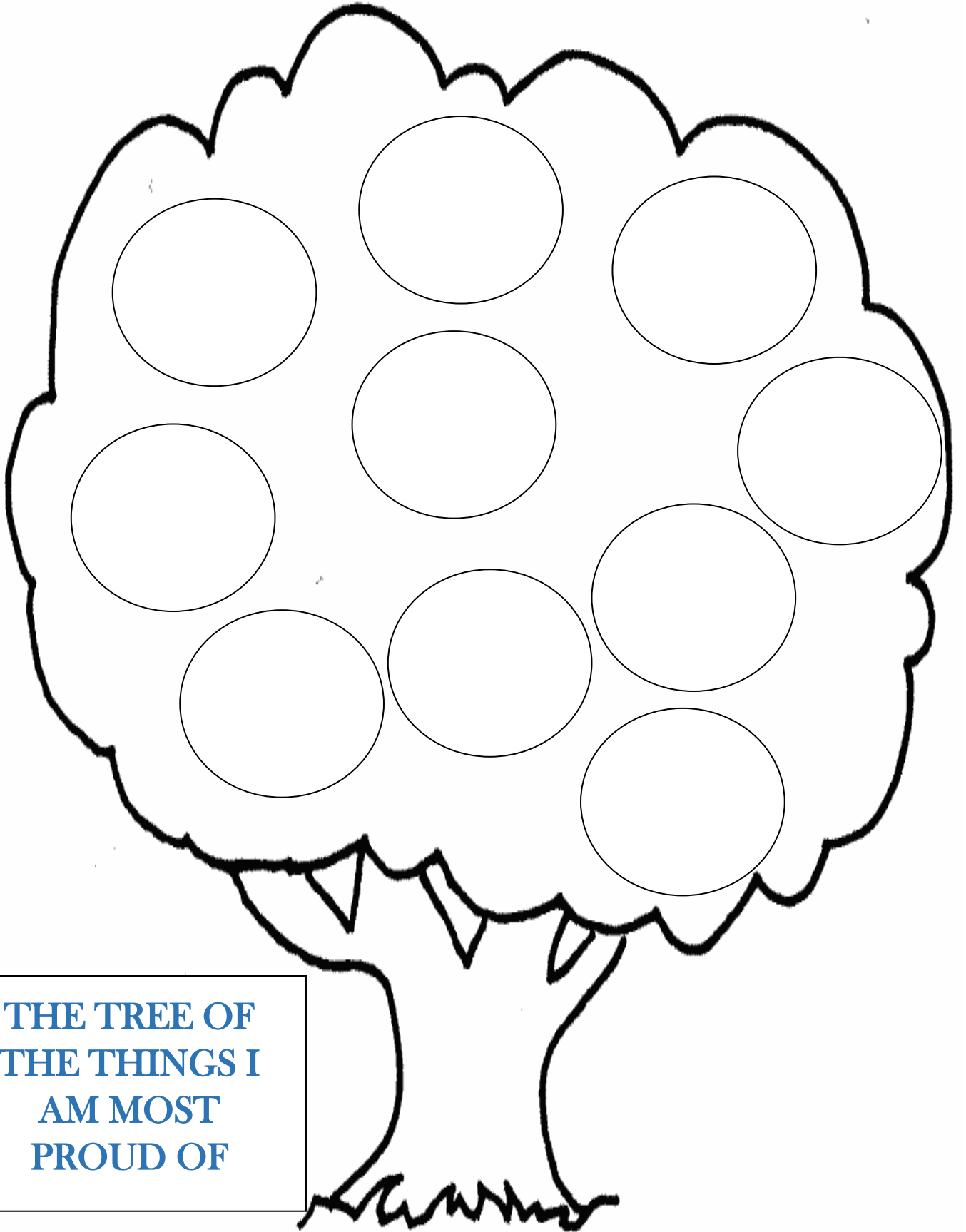
4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Having the poster at hand every day and being able to see the results of your reflection on a regular basis remind you of the things you are most proud of. Reminding us about the things we are proud of makes us feel better about ourselves and offers us encouragement for the things to come.

If you are proud of yourself, do share it with the others and ask them about the things they are proud of.



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**THE TREE OF
THE THINGS I
AM MOST
PROUD OF**



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TODAY I CHOOSE JOY AND PEACE OF MIND

1. Description

When was the last time you coloured in a colouring book? Why not try it now? Take your time, choose your colours and reflect upon the choice you have every single day in your life: you may choose how you feel!

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Reflect upon the way you feel now. Do you like that feeling or you would prefer to feel something else? Well, nothing is stopping you from feeling exactly the way you choose. Why not try to choose joy and peace of mind today? Colour in the page and reflect upon your choice. Let the feeling sink in.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- colouring pencils/ crayons/ coloured felt tip pens;
- the colouring page template.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

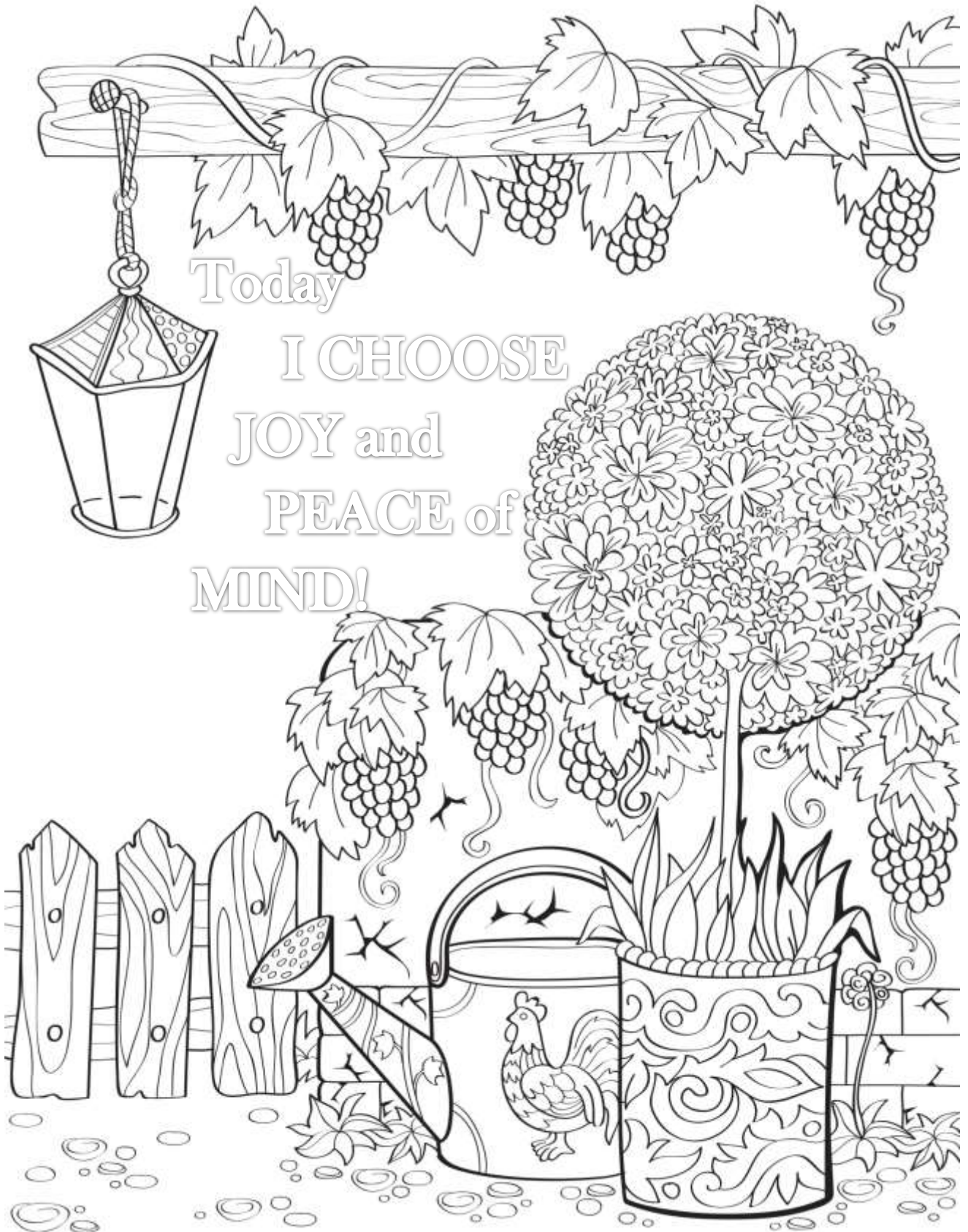
Reflect upon your emotional processing. Here are some questions to help you:

- Do you feel better now after the activity than you felt before it? Why do you think that is?
- What do you find helpful in managing to feel the way you choose?
- Has this activity helped you in any way or has it made you aware of anything?
- What emotion will choose tomorrow?

Try this again and you will master your emotions, instead of letting them rule you.



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Today
I CHOOSE
JOY and
PEACE of
MIND!

<https://www.freepik.com/vectors/flower-print> Flower print vector created by valadzionak_volha - www.freepik.com

PAINT YOUR FEARS

1. Description

You are invited to plunge deep into your soul and identify your fears. Try to represent them symbolically by using colours, shapes, texture and without using brushes, just your hands. Let your hands feel your fears!

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Reflect on the things you are fearful about. Use no instruments, just your hands to paint your fears. Take as much time as you need to complete the painting. Reflect upon what you have painted and the meaning of it. Reflect upon your personal resources which may help you overcome those fears.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- finger paints;
- thick paper or cardstock.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Reflect upon your emotional processing. Here are some questions to help you:

- Are you sure you have identified all your fears?
- Look at your painting. What does it mean? What the message of it?
- If your fears would have voices, what would they say?
- What are your personal resources which help you overcome those fears?
- What do you take away from this activity?

Try this with other emotions which tend to make you feel vulnerable: sadness, helplessness, guilt, shame, loneliness.



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PAINT YOUR FEARS

by just using your hands (or other parts of your body, but no tools)!



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THE BRACELET OF MEMORIES

1. Description

You are invited to select the most precious memories you have and create a paper bead bracelet/ necklace/ keychain.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Cut out the triangle pieces from the template. You may also use them as templates or models to cut triangles from coloured paper of your choosing. Write a short sentence in which to describe a meaningful event from your life on each triangle. The more events with meaningful memories you have, the longer the chain of beads.

After you have all the memories, roll up the triangles starting from the base to the pointy angle, with the help of a skewer or a toothpick, so that the written part remains hidden inside. Put a little glue on the pointy angle, so that it stays in place. You may varnish the beads. String the beads to create a bracelet or a key chain that you may use.



3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- template and coloured papers;
- scissors;
- pencil/ pen;
- glue;
- skewer/ toothpick;
- string;
- key ring (optional);
- varnish (optional).

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

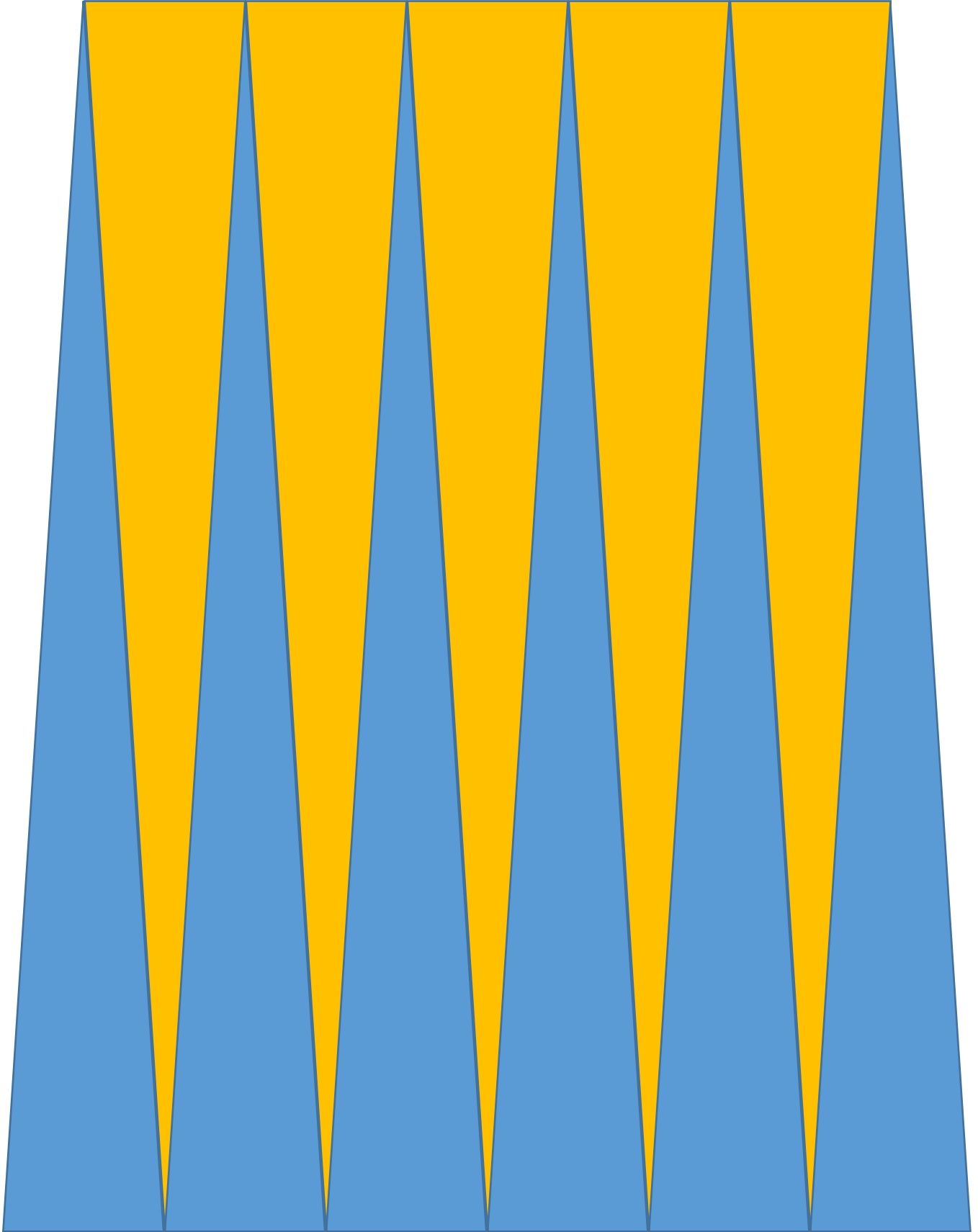
Try to remember all the memories you have hidden within the beads. You may also share them with the others.



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THE BRACELET OF MEMORIES





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TAGS

1. Description

People tend to label other people and also themselves. Sometimes we keep these tags imprinted in our souls for a long time and we act by them, without maybe realizing that we do not deserve them or need them. Become aware of your tags! Choose the ones you want and need and define who you are.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Reflect upon the tags that people have labelled you with during your life. Some may be good, some may be bad. Also reflect upon the ways you label yourself when thinking about your personality and behaviours. Now choose the tags which you feel make you a better person and would like to keep. If you feel there is nothing worth keeping, no problem, make up new ones that you feel you want to be defined by. Create a poster or a journaling page in which to include those tags.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- pencil/ pen;
- paper/ notebook to write down your reflections;
- journal;
- scissors;
- glue;
- colouring pencils/ coloured markers/ felt-tip pens;
- stickers;
- magazine cut-outs.

4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Keep a journal with your reflections. You may write, draw, paint, collage in it. It is the proof of your voyage through the world of emotions and personal development and it will become your empowering tool if you want.

MY LOVED ONES WHO LOVED ME

1. Description

You are invited to think about the people you have loved in your life and who also loved you (they may be parents, brothers or sisters, romantic partners, best friends, daughters and sons etc.). Reflect upon the feelings and sensations that loving and being loved brought you and upon the influence those feelings had upon your growth and development as a person. Then design a collage poster with photos or drawings of your loved ones who loved you along with the meaning they had in your life.

2. Instructions for a successful activity

Take a seat somewhere comfortable and quiet, where you can reflect peacefully. Take a cup of tea with you if you please. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, relax...

Think about the people you have loved in your life who also loved you. They may be parents, brothers or sisters, romantic partners, best friends, daughters and sons etc. Bring back in your mind their images, past or present, but also their voices and their words.

Reflect upon the feelings and sensations that loving and being loved brought you. Let those feelings flood in, feel them in your body. How do you experience them?

Reflect upon the influence those feelings had upon your growth and development as a person. How did your loved ones help you become who you are today? How did your love for them shape you as a person? What is the meaning that these persons had in your life?

Design a collage poster with photos or drawings of your loved ones who loved you along with the meaning they had in your life. Gather up the photos of your loved ones which you would like to use or create drawings of them. Trim them if necessary. Arrange them in a poster and glue them down.

Complete the poster with symbols and words to express the role and significance that the loved ones who loved you had in your life. Use colours or scrapbook paper according to your feelings and the aesthetic you are going for. Put your creativity to use and create a collage poster to your liking.

3. Tools and materials

You will need:

- photos of your loved ones;
- glue;
- a basis for the poster – A3/ A4 construction paper/ cardstock;
- colouring pencils, felt-tip pens, gel pens,
- scrapbook paper;
- a quiet place for reflection!



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4. Suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity

Now that your collage is ready, give it a title and find a place to exhibit it. What is the feeling that you experience while watching it?

Keep the poster in every day's sight so you can enjoy it. This way you will be reminded of those people who have contributed, through the mutual love, to your becoming.

You may also share this piece of art and the experiences behind it with your friends.



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Section 3: Practices to Take Onwards

Collecting feedback and suggestions from the seniors

Collecting feedback during and after an education process is extremely important, as it helps understand the trainee's perspective upon the training. Sharing information on what may and needs to be improved contributes to:

- 👂 optimizing the training process and reaching the educational goals in lesser time;
- 👂 creating a clear picture and increasing transparency, thus improving the communication process;
- 👂 adopting new knowledge sooner and avoiding repetitive mistakes;
- 👂 learning new skills and getting better results.

Feedback may take many forms, such as oral or written, formal or informal, descriptive or evaluative, peer or self-assessed feedback. It is the quality of the feedback that counts. It is advisable to combine several methods and types of feedback in order to have a complete overview upon the development process of all participants involved in the art-therapy activities.

Oral and written feedback

Oral feedback is usually given during an activity and it may be spontaneous or solicited. It is less formal, but it can be very powerful and effective, as it is honest, easy and timely. The seniors may be asked: "What is your opinion about this task...?" or "How does this issue match your expectations...?" in order to stimulate their thinking about their learning process.

Written feedback is usually given after a task or at the end of the session. It provides the participants with a record of what they are doing well, what needs to be improved and what is still needed to do. Effective written feedback needs to be timely, focused on specific aspects and on collecting actionable and understandable information, so it may point to the participants and to the art-trainer the objectives achieved and the objectives which are still needing work.

Formal and informal feedback

Formal feedback is planned and included systematically within the development process. It is usually associated with assessment tasks and it is focused on identifying the level of achievement of relevant criteria or standards.

Informal feedback is not planned and may occur at any time, spontaneously, during the development process. It is based on the current emotions of the person offering feedback, which may be positive or negative, and it is facilitated by a relationship of trust between the trainer and the participants.

Descriptive or evaluative feedback

Descriptive feedback is a qualitative sort of feedback, which offers clues about the things that cannot be measured, but are equally important to be taken into consideration when structuring the development process of adult learners. It may be given or solicited early in the development process or at the end of it, as it triggers self-reflection and motivation.

Evaluative feedback is more quantifiable and it offers a clearer view regarding the progress that has been made within a certain time frame, so it is more often used at the end of a session or program or in a pre-test and post-test form, in order to be able to statistically compare the results and measure the achievement of the competencies.

Peer or self-assessed feedback

The trainer/ facilitator is not the only expert involved in the development process in the adult education context. The adult learners are self-aware of their personal development process and are also aware of the changes that their peers are experiencing. With basic instructions and a little support, the participants may learn to offer valuable feedback to one another. Providing the participants with regular opportunities to give and receive peer feedback has the potential of enriching the learning experiences and contributes to facilitating more profound relationships and to raising the cohesion of the group.

The self-assessed feedback is fundamental for supporting the participants' autonomy, self-efficacy and self-coordination of the learning and personal development processes. In order to teach the participants to be able to offer valuable self-assessed feedback, the trainer should explicitly identify and share the goals of the development process and clarify its indicators, model the application of these indicators by using samples and provide guided opportunities for self-assessed feedback, explain and exemplify how to use feedback to structure a new set of objectives and steps and allow time for self-reflection.

Either the choice of approaching the activities from the ELISTAT Activity Book for Art Therapy – in a self-taught approach or a in a group approach – the experiences of the seniors performing the activities is very valuable and must be collected and shared. It matters if the activities were understandable, comfortable, helpful and the benefices they art therapy experiences are bringing for them. This feedback may be further used to recommend other art therapy activities or other types of complementary therapeutic activities, but also to improve the practice of enriching the lives of older people through art therapy activities.

In order to be able to collect feedback in a more efficient manner, it is recommendable to be supported by another trainer: thus one trainer will be communicating with the seniors, while the other will be taking notes to keep the track of the proposed suggestions and of the strong and weak points.

Suggestions for implementation from art therapists and trainers

This activity book contains 32 art therapy activities which may be used individually or in group sessions. Here are some tips to help you choose the next activity to carry out:

- ✍ check the list of materials and tools to use: do you have everything you need? do you feel safe using them?

- ✍ take the time to understand how to do the activity by reading the instructions and available materials and decide if it is suitable for you;
- ✍ check if you need specific help and if so, ask for it;
- ✍ don't worry about the artistic result: it's not the product that matters, but the benefits while carrying out the activity;
- ✍ assess your experience with similar activities and materials in the past (if it was a positive experience, try to repeat it over time).

Suggestions for implementation of the activities in an individual setting:

- 🎵 choose the activity you do in a certain moment according to your needs and preferences (you don't need to do them in a certain order);
- 🎵 read carefully the description and the instructions of the activities (you are also invited to watch the complementary video tutorials, prepared for some of them);
- 🎵 prepare the necessary materials and tools indicated for each activity before you start (you may also use your creativity for replacing certain materials or tools in case you lack them);
- 🎵 read and apply the suggestions for enhancing the positive effects of the activity, in order to benefit as much as possible from them (reflecting on your art-making process is an important part of the art-therapy itself and the development process it presumes to trigger);
- 🎵 repeat the activities if you feel they help you relax or trigger your self-awareness.

Suggestions for the implementation of the activities in a group setting, coordinated by an art-therapist/ adult educator:

- 👉 have in mind the personal development objectives which you have set or agreed with your group when choosing the activities you are doing together in the group;
- 👉 choose and adapt the art activities according to the particularities of your group and participants;
- 👉 read carefully the descriptions and instructions and be sure you have understood them completely and you are able to transmit them to your group (you may also print some hand-outs with the main points for your participants if you want);
- 👉 prepare the art therapy space in order to create a safe and pleasant environment to work in for all the participants;
- 👉 make sure you have enough materials and tools for all the members in the group and some extra for unforeseen accidents;
- 👉 get to know your group and individual participants as much as possible before the actual work session (you may use self-filled questionnaires, interviews or information from other parties);
- 👉 if the members of the group have never met each other and have not worked together previously, you will need to plan extra time for them to get acquainted with one another and stimulate the groups dynamics processes towards an atmosphere of trust, tolerance and mutual support;
- 👉 gain the participants trust, by being open and supportive, while listening to their specific needs (encourage them to share their thoughts and emotions in general, as well as their expectations and fears regarding the art therapy sessions);



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- 👂 offer support and guiding to each member of the group during the activity, while respecting the work rhythm of each person and the specific sets of needs;
- 👂 always spare time at the end of the art activity for self-reflections and conclusions, as this is the most important phase of the whole process, as it's the one triggering the personal development process (use the provided questions and reflection instructions to start the discussions, but don't limit yourself at those; go with the current flow of the discussions and further stimulate the reflections and learning exchange between the participants, as learning and development also happen in connection to the peers).

Prevent ageism

Older adults often hold negative age-based self-stereotype that they are less capable than others or less creative. These negative stereotypes are called ageism. According to the WHO, ageism refers “to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) we might hold towards others or ourselves based on age”.

As an older person, beware of the self-perceptions and self-beliefs you tend to use when you make decisions or approach different activities. In order to do that, you may ask yourself: do I think less of me in comparison with other people? do I tend to reject new ideas and activities? do I perceive old age as a handicap? If one or several answers to these questions are affirmative or if you feel that your self-perceptions and self-beliefs are dysfunctional and are holding you back, try to exit those patterns and do things differently. Challenge yourself to try new activities and learn new skills, try to be fair when comparing yourself to other people and accept we all have our strong and weak points and leave your fears aside and just have fun!

As a trainer, have a positive and empowering discourse towards seniors' artistic activities and creativity. Age stereotypes are internalized over the life course and affect how people view their own abilities to create as they age. As a trainer, work on your seniors' participant self-confidence. In order to enhance creativity and decrease the negative effects of internalized ageism, it is important to ensure access to lifelong learning, including tailored artistic interventions. Empowerment can also come from individuals holding more positive attitudes toward their own aging. To prevent ageist behavior, we advise you to, at first, recognize it in your way of communicating with the seniors and reflect on what its effects are on your art therapy sessions. Ask yourself such questions as: how do I make the participants feel about themselves and our relationship? does it help me to create a comfortable and trustful atmosphere in my sessions? It is important not to talk down to seniors and not to use childish vocabulary to avoid ageist behavior.

Activity and material adaptation

There might be activities that are not suitable for some people in the exact same manner they are described in the ELISTAT Activity Book for Art Therapy. In such cases the activities, materials or tools might need to be adapted to the physical, sensorial or psychological particularities of the person or group:

- 🎵 in case of manual limitations and shaking, there are adapted brushes and pencils which may be used;
- 🎵 use prescription glasses or magnifying devices in case of visual impairments;



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- ♪ use enhanced hearings aids, increase the volume of the audio material or replace the music with simple beats in case of hearing impairments;
- ♪ if further instructions are needed, check the resources and references and the end of this activity book or the ELISTAT art therapy videos;
- ♪ prolong the time of the activity if necessary or break it into several sessions, but don't put pressure on yourself or on the group activity participants;
- ♪ make sure the space offers comfortable sitting options, available toilets and that the temperature is adequate.

Useful resources and references

Category/ Topic	Link/ Reference	Languages
Articles and practical guidance for general use and for specific types of difficulties	https://arttherapyresources.com.au	English, Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Italian
American Art Therapy Association - general aspects	https://arttherapy.org	English
Arts and crafts store online - it provides tools and materials, but also tutorials and ideas	https://www.hobbyland.eu	English, Italian, German, French, Spanish
Books about expressive arts therapy	Paolo J. Knill, Stephen K. Levine, Ellen G. Levine (2005) - <i>Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics</i> (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)	English
Books about expressive arts therapy	Sally Atkins, Melia Snyder (2018) - <i>Nature-based Expressive Arts Therapy</i> (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)	English
Books about expressive arts therapy	Cathy A. Malchiodi (2020) - <i>Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy: Brain, Body, and Imagination in the Healing Process</i> (Guilford Publications)	English
Books about expressive arts therapy	Susan I. Buchalter (2009) - <i>Art Therapy Techniques and Applications</i> (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)	English
Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Five Senses	https://www.mentalhelp.net/stress/emotional-impact/	English
Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Five Senses	https://innergrowththerapy.com/how-art-therapy-uses-the-5-senses-and-helps-to-reconnect-to-the-body/	English
Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The	https://www.creativehearthealer.com/blog-1/using-your-5-senses-during-art-journaling-to-manage-stress	English

Five Senses

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Five Senses

<https://creativityintherapy.com/2016/05/create-a-sensory-self-soothing-kit/> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Five Senses

<https://www.artastherapy.ca/art-as-therapy-blog/2016/9/3/stress-and-the-five-senses> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - Hidden Poem

<https://youngwritersproject.org> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - Hidden Poem

<https://sanctuarycenters.org/blog/poetry-therapy-guide-to-the-hidden-mind-antidote-to-chaos/> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - Hidden Poem

<https://kingdompen.org/the-hidden-art-of-blackout-poetry/> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - Hidden Poem

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf6k8aW2Toc> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Power of Plein Air Painting

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/plein-air-painting-therapy-sarah-pollock?trk=pulse-article_more-articles_related-content-card English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Power of Plein Air Painting

<https://www.sarahburnsstudio.com/life-of-a-wandering-artist-blog/2017/6/22/artists-social-anxiety-1-plein-air-art-therapy> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Power of Plein Air Painting

<https://www.outdoorpainter.com/artists-helping-art-therapy-for-struggling-adults/> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The Power of Plein Air Painting

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pW55JsM3xOo> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - The People in Your Life

Working with conflict through visual mediation - Marian Liebmann:
https://www.academia.edu/64487367/Workshop_Working_with_Conflict_through_Visual_Mediation English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools - A Brief Summary of My Life

6 ways that art therapy can help people with memory loss:
<https://lesley.edu/article/6-ways-that-art-therapy-can-help-people-with-memory-> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Creating Puppets and Masks

loss

Bianca Roberts (2023) – *The power of puppet therapy helping many aged care residents stay forever young:*

<https://agedcarenews.com.au/2023/01/24/the-power-of-puppet-therapy-helping-many-aged-care-residents-stay-forever-young/>

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Creating Puppets and Masks

Creating Puppets and Masks for Art Therapy:

<https://arttherapyresources.com.au/puppets-masks/>

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Creating Puppets and Masks

How to make Paper Puppets | Easy Puppet Making Ideas | Craft:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQDR5Glz-7E>

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Creating Puppets and Masks

How to make a Hand Puppet: English

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Hand-Puppet>

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Creating Puppets and Masks

How to Build a Quality Puppet: English

<https://www.instructables.com/How-to-Build-a-Quality-Puppet/>

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Creating Puppets and Masks

<https://www.thirstyforart.com/blog/mask-art-therapy-activity> English

Articles and practical guidance for specific art therapy techniques and tools – Collage

<https://creativityintherapy.com/2012/07/collage-art-therapy-part-1/> English