

These suggested activities for stress reduction are not intended to diagnose or treat mental health conditions, and are not a substitute for clinical mental health services, if you are in need: please call:
Tennessee Mental Health Hotline at 1-866-903-3787

Learn more about art therapy at <https://arttherapy.org>



Art Therapy

The goal of art therapy is to utilize the creative process to help people explore self-expression and, in doing so, find new ways to gain personal insight and develop new coping skills. The creation or appreciation of art is used to help people explore emotions, develop self-awareness, cope with stress, boost self-esteem, and work on social skills. Art Therapy is lead by a mental health professional, working with a minimum of a masters level education.

+

Stress Reduction

Did you know, an average person has **60,000** thoughts per day and 95% of them are exactly the same day in, day out? And **creating art** provides a distraction, giving a break to our brain from usual thoughts. It allows us to focus only on the moment, become grounded, and helps us alleviate free-floating anxiety. And leaves us to feel clear and calm.



Coloring Books

Coloring has shown great benefits for adults. It generates wellness, quietness, and mindfulness. It can take you out of your present worries and let your brain have much-needed rest and relaxation. Ten minutes or two hours: Coloring sheets can be printed from online resources and coloring books can be found at most major retailers.



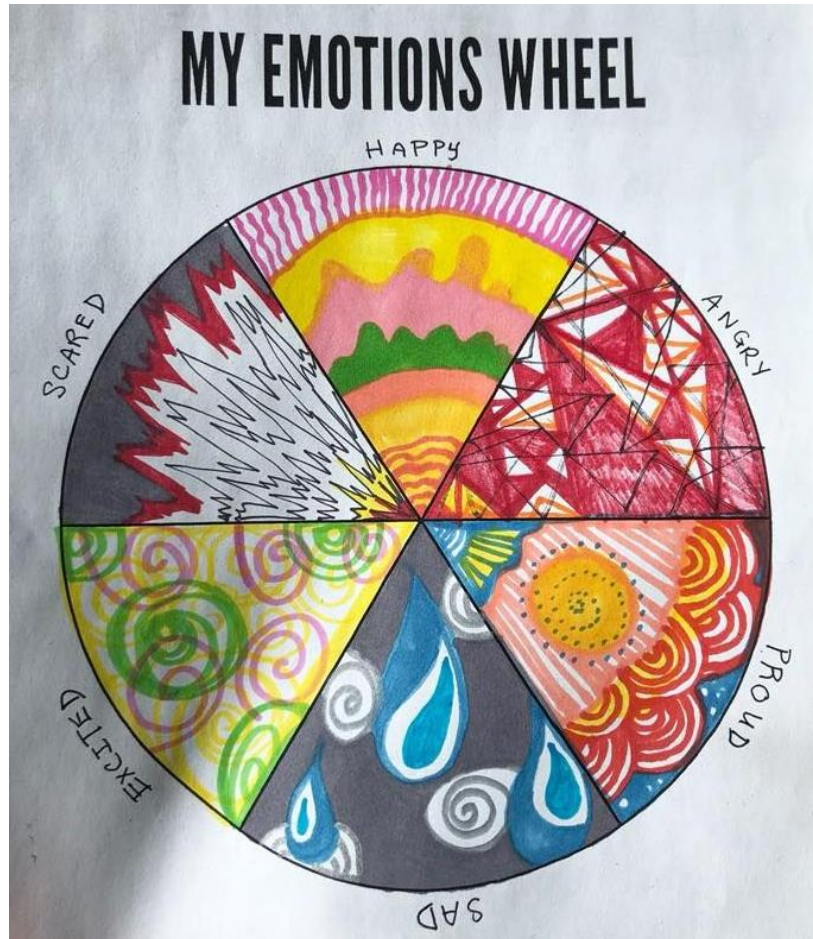
Draw In The Dark!

So much of the stress we experience when making art (and in life) comes from the judgments and criticism that seem unavoidable every step of the way. Try creating artwork in total darkness (or without looking) to make art free from that inner art critic inside your head. Think of it as a form of blind contour drawing. You're suddenly freed up to create lines, shapes and patterns simply because you feel like you should. When you turn back on the lights or open your eyes, we suspect you'll be surprised by what you find.



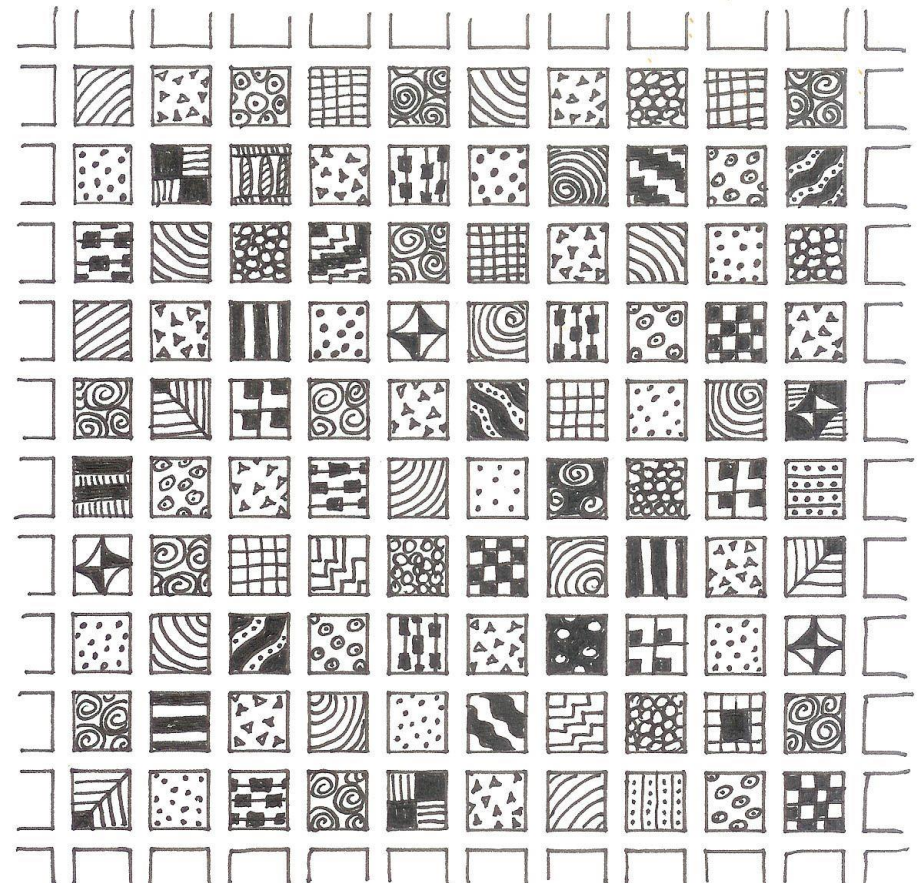
Painted Emotions Wheel

Grab some paper and some paint! What emotion are you feeling the MOST in the moment? Happy? Sad? Stressed? Calm? Let's imagine what that looks like- what color is this feeling? What shape? How large or small? Grab a new sheet of paper and identify the second largest emotion you can feel. Paint it! Now, what emotion would you most like to add to this current collection? Imagine it's size, shape, color, texture and create it too! *Short on time/supplies? Use colored pencils or markers and explore your emotions on one page (shown below)*



Zentangle

Zentangle is a drawing method invented by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, designed to make drawing meditative and accessible to all. Easy to do in the notebook margin, nice art paper, or on junk mail in as little as five minutes! Take a pen or pencil and start doodling- these are made of patterns, repeated lines, connected shapes. Here's some ideas:



Nature's Free Art Supplies

PLAYdoh

Not just for kids! Playdoh (clay, silly putty, model magic, etc.) in your hands can release energy in a contained "less-mess" way- the product can be squeezed, smashed, pulled, created and destroyed. Take time to sculpt a symbol of your stress (examples: a book to represent school, a phone for relationship problems, a car to represent bills, etc). Deep breaths in and out, slowly "melt" the symbol of stress by pressing it flat. Repeat as needed!



(Take it one step further and make your own playdoh! Use the good 'ole Google search to find a recipe that works best for your kitchen!)

Walking in a park, outside of class on campus, or maybe your own front yard- find some leaves, flowers, rocks, branches... Focus on shape, color, symmetry and see where your items take you. Most often, items collected from nature are used to create a mandala [geometric configuration of symbols, most often a circle, used to focus attention, aid in meditation, and inspire peace]

