Art Therapy Explained

with 10 Exciting Arts Therapy Activities!

mindful arts therapy

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Welcome

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So, What is Mindful Arts Therapy?

Mindful arts therapy is a therapeutic approach that combines the principles of mindfulness with the creative process of art-making. This method was first formally introduced by psychologist Laury Rappaport in 2009. The core idea is to use art as a medium to practice mindfulness, which involves being fully present and engaged in the moment without judgment. By integrating these two practices, individuals can explore their emotions, thoughts, and sensations in a safe and expressive way.

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What are the Benefits?

One of the significant benefits of mindful arts therapy is its ability to enhance self-awareness. By focusing on the present moment and the act of creating, individuals can become more attuned to their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. This heightened awareness can lead to better emotional regulation and a deeper understanding of oneself. Additionally, the non-judgmental nature of mindfulness helps individuals develop self-compassion, as they learn to accept their experiences without criticism.

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Helping those with Mental Health Issues

Mindful arts therapy can be particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health issues. The creative process provides a non-verbal outlet for expressing complex emotions that might be difficult to articulate.

Moreover, the practice of mindfulness has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression by promoting relaxation and reducing the impact of negative thoughts. Engaging in art-making can also be a soothing and enjoyable activity, which can improve overall well-being and quality of life.

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What Happens in One on One Sessions?

In a typical mindful arts therapy session, a therapist guides the individual through mindfulness exercises such as meditation or deep breathing to help them become more aware of their present state. Following this, the individual engages in creating art, which could include drawing, painting, sculpting, or other forms of artistic expression. The focus is not on the artistic outcome but on the process of creation itself. This mindful engagement with art allows individuals to express and process their emotions, reduce stress, and gain insights into their inner experiences.

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Want to Give Art Therapy a Go?

On the following pages, are a ten of my favorite art therapy activities.

Give them a go and let me know what you think!

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The Reverse Onion!

You Will Need:

8 sheets of colored paper | Pen

Purpose:

To help celebrate your wonderful qualities

Create:

Make a list of 8 things you are good at.

Write one on each piece of paper.

Take the first piece of paper and scrunch it up.

Take the second sheet and wrap that around the first tightly.

Keep going until you have wrapped all 8 sheets of paper.

Now, unwrap each piece of paper.

Reflect:

Why do we hide our good qualities?

What would happen if we revealed them?

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Dreaming Discs

You Will Need:

Sheets of colored paper | Markers or pencils | Old used CDs or DVDs | Old coat hanger & String | Glue & Scissors

Purpose:

To display your dreams for your future.

Create:

Make a list of things you would like to change in the future.

Use a CD to trace circles onto the sheets of paper & cut them out.

On each circle, draw or write one dream you have.

Glue them to the CDs and create a hanging mobile.

Hang it where you can be reminded of your dreams each day.

Reflect:

Why do we forget about our dreams and hopes?

What would happen if we shared them with others?

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Collage of Joy

You Will Need:

An art journal or paper | Old magazines | Glue

Purpose:

To remind you of all the things that bring you joy.

Create:

Find images in old magazines that bring you joy.

Tear each one out - don't use scissors.

Glue them to create a collage of joy.

Reflect:

Were you surprised about all the things you like?

What emotions arose during this activity?

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Nature Notes

You Will Need:

An art journal or paper | Pen

Purpose:

To remind you of the healing power of nature.

Create:

Sit quietly in your favorite natural place.

Take a few deep breaths and use your senses to notice what is going on around you.

Write or draw what you see, hear, feel and smell.

Reflect:

Why do you think nature is so powerful?

Were you surprised by how many things you noted?

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Music Meditation

You Will Need:

Calming music or Solfeggio Frequencies | Candles

Purpose:

To meditate on the positive things in your life.

Create:

Put your phone on silent and make sure you won't be interrupted.

Play the music and sit quietly, taking long, deep breaths.

Focus on all the positive things in your life.

Do this activity for at least 20 minutes.

Reflect:

What emotions did you experience?

Was it hard to sit still and focus?

Why do you think that was the case?

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Hands of Gratitude

You Will Need:

An art journal or paper | Pen | Colored pencils or markers

Purpose:

To think about all the things you are grateful for.

Create:

Trace around your hand.

Around your hand write all the things you are grateful for.

Fill the inside of the hand with bright, joyful colors.

Reflect:

Were you surprised about how many things you are grateful for?

What does this tell us about our lives and how lucky we are?

Share this activity with your family and friends.

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Anchor of Love

You Will Need:

An art journal or paper | Pen | Colored pencils or markers

Purpose:

To focus on the things that keep us safe and grounded.

Create:

Draw or copy an image of an anchor at the bottom of the page.

Draw a rope from it to the top of the page.

Along the rope list all the things you love.

Don't forget to include yourself!

Reflect:

Was it a long list?

Was it difficult to add yourself?

Why do you think this was the case?

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Emotional Landscapes

You Will Need:

An art journal or paper | Paint | Brushes & Water

Purpose:

To think about how your emotions affect your behavior.

Create:

Create a landscape where the hills are your emotional highs and the valleys are your emotional lows.

Paint happy things on top of the hills and sad things in the valleys that relate to you.

Reflect:

Were your hills very high and your valleys very low?

What does this tell you about your emotional landscape?

What can you do to even out the highs and the lows?

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Unmask Your True Self

You Will Need:

A cardboard mask | Beads, feathers & stickers. | Glue

Purpose:

To think about your true personality and ways to make it shine.

Create:

Decorate the mask.

As you are working, think about the parts of your personality you keep hidden.

Reflect:

Why do we sometimes hide certain parts of ourselves away?

How does this affect our mental health?

What would be a healthier alternative?

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Float Your Troubles Away

You Will Need:

Paper | Pen

Purpose:

To let go of a trauma that is affecting your mental health.

Create:

On the piece of paper, write a letter to the person or event that caused you trauma.

Be as honest as you like.

Use as many details as you can.

Fold the paper into an origami boat (check online for instructions)

Let the boat float away on a river or the sea.

Reflect:

What emotions did you feel doing this activity?

How did it feel letting the boat float away?

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In Conclusion

Overall, mindful arts therapy offers a unique and holistic approach to mental health care. By combining the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness and art, it provides a powerful tool for self-exploration, emotional healing, and personal growth. Whether used as a standalone therapy or in conjunction with other treatments, mindful arts therapy can help individuals navigate their emotional landscapes and build resilience in the face of life's challenges.

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Discover more!

Thank you again for taking the time to go through this workbook. If you stumbled upon it online or it was gifted to you, please sign up to my newsletter. It is full of tips and advice, as well as more free workbooks and guides. You are also more than welcome to join me online by clicking on the links below - Susan x

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