

Unlocking the Creative Mind

A self-guided resource for creative self-discovery

About this booklet



What if the stories you tell, the images you create, and the music that moves you could unlock deeper insights into your emotions, thoughts, and personal growth? Since ancient history, humans have turned to creativity – through art, mythology, music, and storytelling – to make sense of their experiences and explore what it means to be human.

This workbook is an invitation to explore yourself through the lens of creativity, using engaging exercises designed to foster self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and personal transformation.

An introduction

Creativity is often seen as a talent reserved for artists, musicians, or writers, but in reality, it is an innate part of being human. It is how we make sense of the world, express ourselves, and problem solve in everyday life.

Neuroscientific research has shown that engaging in creative activities enhances brain plasticity, strengthens neural connections, and stimulates the release of dopamine, which is associated with pleasure and motivation. Creativity also activates multiple brain regions, including those responsible for problem-solving, emotional regulation, and self-reflection.

Engaging in artistic expression has been linked to reduced stress levels, improved mood, and increased cognitive flexibility. By integrating creativity into your daily life, you can foster mental resilience, enhance emotional wellbeing, and develop a deeper understanding of yourself. Through storytelling, collage-making, character exploration, nature-based reflections, music, and art, this workbook aims to offer accessible tools that help you connect with yourself on a deeper level.

The power of self-exploration

Self-discovery is a lifelong process. It requires curiosity, openness, and the willingness to step beyond the familiar. The exercises in this booklet are designed to encourage reflection in a playful yet profound way. By engaging with them, you will have the opportunity to:

- Uncover hidden aspects of yourself.
- Gain clarity on your thoughts and emotions.
- Recognise patterns in how you relate to yourself and others.
- Find new ways to express and process your experiences.

Each chapter of this workbook introduces a creative exercise paired with psychoeducational insights to help you understand the psychological processes behind the activity. You will be encouraged to engage with these activities at your own pace, in a way that feels meaningful to you. Whether you prefer writing, visual art, or simply reflecting, these exercises are adaptable to your personal style. No prior artistic or creative experience is required – only a willingness to explore and experiment.

Let's embark on this journey together – one creative step at a time.



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Scan this QR code using your phone to view our video introduction to unlocking your creativity

1. Story making and setting intentions



The power of storytelling

Stories are one of the most ancient and powerful ways we understand the world and ourselves. From folklore to modern cinema, narratives help us process emotions, make sense of challenges, and imagine new possibilities. But stories are not just external—they are internal as well. The stories we tell ourselves shape our identities, influence our decisions, and define our personal journeys.

Creating a story

In this section, we will use Mooli Lahad's Six-Part Story Method to create a fictional story. You'll be guided to create a story by following six prompts. In each of the boxes on the next page, write or draw the first thing that comes into your head in response to the prompt. There are no right or wrong answers, nothing too 'boring' or too 'weird'. Try to follow your intuition with whatever comes to mind. Let's dive in! If you need more space, you can complete the exercise in your own book or on a large piece of paper.



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Scan this QR code using your phone to view our video talking you through this creative exercise about story making.

Getting your story started

Who is the main character? Where are they? This might be a fictional person, animal, object or something else!	
What does the character want?	
What or who is stopping them from getting what they want?	
What or who comes to help?	
What happens when the character faces the obstacle with this help?	



Reflecting on your story

Once you have completed your story, take a moment to reflect. You may find the prompts (right) helpful in this process.

Setting your intention

Using the insights from your story, set an intention for your creative journey.

- What do you hope to explore?

- What inner strength will guide you?

Prompts for reflection

- Where do you see yourself in the story?
- Does the story reveal something about your personal goals or struggles?
- How does it symbolise the way you ask for or receive help?
- How does it symbolise your beliefs around how things work out in the end?
- Is there anything surprising about your story?

By framing your journey with a purpose, you give meaning to your creative explorations and open yourself to new personal revelations. Let your story be the beginning of something transformative.

The science behind the story

In the 1980s Alida Gersie, an Anglo-Dutch dramatherapist, had the idea of taking the fundamental story structure and using it as a skeleton on which new stories could be created. She taught this story technique to Mooli Lahad, an Israeli psychologist and trauma expert who developed it into 6PSM as part of his project to identify coping styles in the general population. Lahad has gone on to publish descriptions of the method and teach it internationally. The tool is now widely used in dramatherapy and play therapy and has been taught on training courses for clinical psychologists and Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) practitioners. It is also used in trauma recovery, as well as in self-exploration and creative expression.

Storytelling is more than an artistic exercise. It has deep psychological and neurological significance. When we engage in storytelling, we activate multiple brain regions, including those involved in memory, emotional processing, and problem-solving. Neuroscientific research shows that narrative processing helps integrate different aspects of our experiences, allowing us to make sense of past events and imagine future possibilities. From a psychological perspective, storytelling enables us to externalise inner conflicts and see them from a new vantage point, a principle utilised in dramatherapy and play therapy. Additionally, the subconscious plays a crucial role – by creating fictional narratives, we often reveal deeper truths about our fears, desires, and coping mechanisms that might not emerge in direct self-reflection. By crafting and reflecting on your creative stories, you engage with both your conscious and subconscious mind, unlocking insights that can guide you on your journey of self-discovery.

Next steps

In this section you've set an intention for your creative journey and been introduced to the concepts of creative self-discovery. When you're ready, move on to section two where you'll dive deeper into self-exploration through art.

“When we engage in storytelling, we activate multiple brain regions, including those involved in memory, emotional processing, and problem solving.”

2. Collage self-portrait: the many aspects of you



Who am I?

Our identities are not just defined by our appearance or the roles we play in life; they are made up of experiences, qualities, hopes, fears, dreams, and much more. This creative exercise invites you to explore your identity beyond the surface, helping you reflect on the complexity and richness of who you are.

In this activity, you will create a 'self-portrait'—not one that focuses on your physical features, but one that highlights the deeper layers of your identity. Through collage-making, you'll have the opportunity to reflect on the elements that make you uniquely you.

Materials needed

- Old magazines, newspapers, or books (these can be easily and cheaply found at charity shops if you don't have any lying around)
- Scissors (or just rip with your hands)
- Glue or a glue stick
- A large piece of paper or cardboard as your canvas



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Scan this QR code using your phone to view our video talking you through this creative exercise about creating a collage self-portrait.

Instructions

Selecting: Begin by collecting a variety of magazines, books, or any other sources of images and words. You're looking for things that resonate with you, whether that's a specific image, a word, a phrase, or even a colour that captures something about you. You might think about qualities that you identify with, things you aspire to, experiences that have shaped you, or even emotions that feel important. Don't overthink it – try to follow your intuition. You may not understand why you've selected something at first – stay with the creativity and trust the meaning will emerge.

Creating: Once you've collected a variety of images and words, begin arranging them on the page. There's no right or wrong way to do this. The collage should be an organic expression of who you are. You can overlap pieces, cut things up, or leave blank spaces whatever feels right to you. You might explore, through where you position things, what aspects of yourself are related or close to each other, and which are unrelated.

Reflecting: Once you've glued everything down, take a step back and look at your self-portrait. You might like to think about or journal on this using the prompts for reflection (*right*).

You may wish to revisit this collage in the future to reflect on how your identity has evolved. This activity can serve as a snapshot of who you are in this moment, but your self-portrait is always open to transformation, just like you are.

Prompts for reflection

- How does this collage make you feel? Does it evoke any particular emotions or memories?
- Are there any qualities, experiences, or aspects of yourself that are prominently featured? What do these say about you? How do you feel about these aspects?
- Is there anything in your collage that you would change or leave out? Why?
- Do you notice any patterns or themes emerging in the images or words you've chosen?

The layers of self – embracing our complexity

This collage activity is an invitation to explore and celebrate the many facets of your identity. By choosing images and words that represent your experiences, qualities, and values, you acknowledge that you are made up of far more than what meets the eye.

We are not static beings; we are constantly evolving and adapting. We also have more than one 'self', being made up of many different versions, or aspects, of self. Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a therapeutic approach that focuses on this multiplicity. IFS theorises that we all have different parts within us, which can represent various aspects of our identity, emotions, experiences, and internal dialogues. These parts may include the nurturing, protective, wounded, or rebellious aspects of ourselves. Rather than seeing these parts as conflicting or problematic, IFS encourages us to approach them with curiosity and compassion, recognising that each part has a purpose and a role in our overall wellbeing. In this exercise, the collage serves as a visual representation of the different 'parts' of you. Some parts may stand out more than others, and some may be hidden beneath the surface. By creating a collage, you allow yourself to honour these parts, just



as IFS encourages us to listen to and integrate our inner voices, no matter how conflicting they may seem.

Carl Jung's theory of archetypes offers another powerful way to understand the many aspects of our identity. Jung believed that we each carry within us universal, archetypal patterns that shape our behaviour, thoughts, and experiences. These archetypes, such as the Hero, the Sage, and the Trickster, are not just external symbols but internal forces that reflect parts of ourselves.

Jung emphasised that true self-realisation and wholeness come not from ignoring or suppressing the darker or unloved aspects of ourselves, but from integrating both the 'light' and 'shadow'. The shadow represents the unconscious, often hidden parts of ourselves that we may find undesirable or uncomfortable. Jung argued that embracing our shadow – by acknowledging, accepting, and integrating these aspects – leads to a more complete and authentic self.

When we allow ourselves to see beyond surface-level definitions, we open ourselves to a more fluid, authentic, and holistic view of who we are. We are not simply a collection of isolated traits or roles. We are complex, dynamic beings, and acknowledging this multiplicity empowers us to embrace our full selves with compassion and acceptance. Just as the collage invites you to connect with many parts of yourself, so too does the integration of light and shadow create a more complete picture of your identity.

Next steps

Having illustrated an overview of the many parts of yourself through your collage, it's time to move on to another technique to help you further identify and explore the different aspects of yourself. When you're ready, head to the next session: exploring character, exploring self.

**“The
integration
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3. Exploring character, exploring self



In this section, we will explore one of your favourite fictional characters. This could be from a film, book, TV show, and could be a hero, villain or side character – anyone you admire, are drawn to, or feel connected with for some reason. All you need for this exercise is a piece of paper.

Step 1: the character's qualities

Down the middle of the page, list the character's qualities. Think about all aspects of their personality, perhaps they're confident, clever, brave, a bit reckless, stubborn, or misunderstood. Write down as many as you can.

Step 2: reframing

To the left of each quality, write the words "I am". For example:

- I am confident
- I am brave
- I am a bit reckless
- I am misunderstood

Step 3: speak the list out loud

Once you've completed the "I am" statements, say each statement out loud. As you do, pay attention to your feelings. Which of these qualities



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feel easy to embrace and claim as your own? Which ones feel difficult or uncomfortable? Are these uncomfortable ones 'positive' or 'negative' in your opinion?

Step 4: reflect

Take time to reflect on the exercise. Remember what we learned in section 2 – aspects of our personality aren't 'good' or 'bad'. We all have light and shadow, and through embracing and understanding all our aspects we can become whole.

You might like to think about or journal about your reflections. The prompts (*right*) may help.

You can repeat this exercise with a different character. Why not try it with a character you particularly don't like, a villain perhaps, exploring what that might reveal about parts of yourself that are difficult to accept or acknowledge.

Understanding projection, rejection, and integration of self

It's common to admire qualities in others, particularly in the characters we look up to, that we find difficult to own within ourselves. In fact, Carl Jung's concept of projection suggests that we often place qualities we don't fully accept onto other people or characters. For example, if you find yourself drawn to a character who is incredibly confident, it may be because you have an inner desire to express that confidence, but perhaps you've repressed it or don't fully embrace it as part of your identity. This is projection at work—seeing in others what we have difficulty acknowledging in ourselves.

Similarly, we may project traits we dislike or fear onto others. For example, if we despise a character who is selfish or manipulative, it may point to aspects of our own personality that we've rejected or are uncomfortable confronting. Jung believed that the 'shadow', the unconscious part of ourselves that contains these repressed qualities, is an essential part of self-growth. By bringing these hidden parts into the light and integrating them, we become more whole.

Rather than pushing away parts of ourselves that we judge as negative or unworthy, Jung argued that true self-realisation comes from embracing both the light and the shadow. By recognising the qualities we project onto others, we are invited to bring them back to ourselves and integrate them into our identity. For example, if you admire a character's bravery but find it hard to embrace your own courage, exploring this quality more deeply can help you develop it within yourself.

Prompts for reflection

- Which statements felt natural to say? Why?
- Which statements felt uncomfortable, or even impossible to say? Could they still be true? What might be preventing you from fully embracing those qualities in yourself?
- Do you believe others would identify these qualities in you? Why or why not?
- Which qualities do you admire most and wish to embody more fully? What might support you to do this?

Neuroscientific research has shown that projection isn't just a psychological phenomenon; it is also deeply rooted in the brain's processes. When we project our feelings, traits, or desires onto others, the brain regions involved in self-perception (like the medial pre-frontal cortex) and emotion regulation (such as the amygdala) can be activated. Studies suggest that these neural pathways become activated when we observe others and attribute qualities to them that align with our unconscious thoughts or feelings. For instance, a person who represses their own anger may attribute aggressive traits to others, projecting their own suppressed emotions onto them.

Mirror neurons, which are involved in empathising with others' emotions, play a role in this as well. Mirror neurons allow us to 'feel' what others feel, which is helpful for empathy but also lays the foundation for projecting internal emotions onto external figures. This means that our unconscious qualities are often projected onto characters we encounter, whether we like them or not, triggering strong emotional responses.

Embracing the entirety of yourself – the light and the shadow, the strengths and the weaknesses – creates space for personal growth and the development of a more authentic self. Just as you can admire a character for their positive traits, you can also embrace their flaws and see them as reflections of your own complex and evolving nature.

Next steps

In this activity, by identifying aspects of your character that resonate with you, you are engaging in an act of self-integration – acknowledging and accepting both the strengths and weaknesses you might be hesitant to accept. Every part of us, whether we deem it 'good' or 'bad' has something to offer in our journey toward self-understanding.

In the next section, 'the sound of self', we switch from drama to music as we continue our self-exploration.

“Neural pathways become activated when we observe others and attribute qualities to them that align with our unconscious thoughts or feelings.”

4. The sound of self

Scan this QR code using your phone to view our video talking you through this creative exercise about creating a playlist that represents you.



Scan me!



Music has a unique power to reflect and evoke our emotions, memories, and identities. It speaks to our unconscious and can offer profound insights into how we perceive ourselves and our life journey.

In this activity, you'll create a playlist that represents who you are through songs that resonate with your identity. The process of selecting these tracks will give you an opportunity to reflect on your different versions, emotional experiences, and the changes you've undergone.

Step 1: Curating your playlist

As we've already discovered, there are many different aspects of our personality. It might be difficult to create just one playlist to encompass our complex, multi-faceted self (although you're welcome to try!). Here are some ideas for playlist themes to narrow down your search:

Soundtrack of your journey – think about an important time from your past, and choose songs to represent the experiences and emotions from that time.

Future Me's favourite songs – Explore a potential future self, what songs represent who you want to become?

Songs for emotions – select an important emotion, or group of emotions, and select songs that speak to those feelings.

The shadow self – embrace the 'shadow' aspects of your personality through songs, perhaps your anger, fear, or sadness, those parts of yourself that are repressed or ignored.

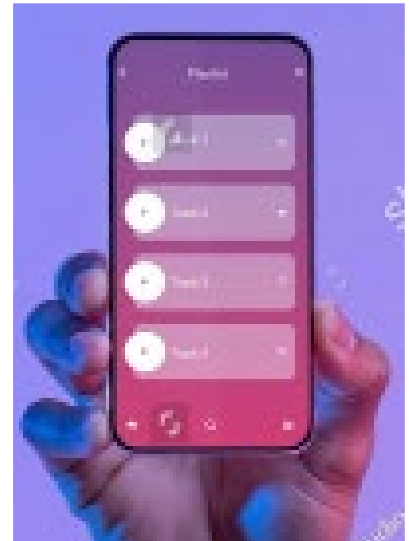
The empowerment playlist – celebrate your inner strength, resilience and self-worth through songs that make you feel confident and powerful

These are just a few ideas, choose a playlist theme that speaks to you and your intentions for this creative journey that you explored in section 1.

Step 2: Listen and reflect

As you listen to your playlist, pay attention to the feelings, sensations, thoughts and memories that arise. You might like to think about or journal on this. Try using the prompts (*right*) to aid your reflection.

To bring together your reflection, you could write a short story, song or poem that weaves together the themes, emotions and/or lyrics of the songs. You could also revisit your playlist(s) at different phases of your life, considering what changes you would make and how these changes reveal your evolving self-concept and how your identity continues to develop.



Prompts for reflection

- How does the playlist make you feel?
- What emotions or memories are evoked by each song?
- What themes emerge about who you are, where you've been, and where you're heading?
- Are there any lyrics that stand out to you?
- Are there any songs or lyrics that surprise you?
- Do you notice any songs that maybe used to resonate with you, but don't now? Or resonate with a part of you, but not another part?

The neuroscience of music and self-identity

Music isn't just an external experience; it shapes and is shaped by our internal world, providing insights into our emotional and psychological states.

Listening to music activates several regions of the brain, including the amygdala, which is associated with emotions, the pre-frontal cortex, which is involved in decision-making and self-reflection, the hippocampus, involved in memory retrieval. Music triggers dopamine release, the brain's reward and pleasure chemical. This can explain why hearing a beloved or nostalgic song can feel so comforting, as it not only evokes positive emotions but also reinforces the connection to specific moments or people. Music's connection to memory is so powerful that it has been used in therapeutic settings for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Music is also used therapeutically with other client groups. Music therapy is a well-established form of treatment that uses music to promote mental health and emotional wellbeing. It has been shown to help individuals process emotions, reduce stress, and enhance self-awareness for people of all ages.

Music also helps us both form and explore our identity. When we listen to a song that resonates deeply, we can emotionally connect with a version of ourselves that may be difficult to express through words alone. This is why music is often described as a universal language—it bypasses cognitive filters and speaks directly to our emotions and subconscious.

Our musical preferences play a crucial role in how we form and express our identity. Studies have shown that music can be a significant marker of social identity, with different genres or artists serving as symbols of personal values, beliefs, and even group affiliation. In this sense, creating a playlist is a way of physically manifesting your inner world—your values, memories, aspirations, and emotions—into a concrete form.

Next steps

As music evokes deep emotional responses and memories by activating key areas of the brain like the amygdala, so too can creative expression through art—both offering powerful outlets for exploring and reflecting on our emotions and helping us better understand the inner landscape of our selves. In the next section: 'emotional art – drawing how you feel' you'll be introduced to the power of artmaking for emotional regulation and self-understanding.

“Music’s connection to memory is so powerful that it has been used in therapeutic settings...”

5. Emotional art – drawing how you feel



Art has long been recognised as a form of self-expression, but its ability to help us explore and understand our emotions goes far beyond surface-level creativity. In this exercise, we will focus on creating abstract art to express how you feel in the moment. Rather than trying to create a recognisable image or figure, the goal is to use shapes, lines, colours, and textures to communicate your emotional state. Through this process, we will explore how art can be a mirror for your internal landscape.

Step 1: setting up

Find a quiet space where you can comfortably work without distractions. Gather your materials — this could include markers, pencils, crayons, paints, or any other medium you feel comfortable with. If you're working on paper, have a large sheet so you can move freely with your emotions. Take a moment to check in with yourself and notice how you're feeling physically and emotionally. Are you feeling calm, stressed, excited, or anxious? You don't need to label your emotions; simply notice them without judgment.

Step 2: free expression

Begin by allowing your emotions to guide your hand. This might be using a 'top-down' approach (i.e. bringing emotions to mind and turning them into



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art) or a 'bottom-up' approach (i.e. creating art without thought or intention and exploring it afterwards to see what emotions are portrayed).

Use colours, shapes, and lines that feel right to you. You don't need to create anything recognisable or 'pretty'. Let go of any expectations and focus on how it feels to express yourself. You might feel the urge to draw sharp, jagged lines if you're angry or use softer, flowing strokes if you feel peaceful. The aim here is not to create a masterpiece, but to express your internal emotional state on paper.

If you're unsure where to start, here are a few ideas:

- **Colours:** Choose colours that resonate with your emotions. Red may symbolise passion or anger, blue might reflect sadness or calmness, and yellow might express joy or energy. But you might also have your own unique resonances with different colours, for example red might remind you of a pair of shoes from your childhood, or green might reflect your love of nature.
- **Shapes:** Do you feel closed off or open? Circular shapes might indicate a sense of wholeness or containment, while sharp, angular shapes might reflect feelings of tension or conflict. Try to let your hand guide you, rather than the other way around.
- **Textures:** Experiment with different materials (e.g. crayons, charcoal, paint) to create a variety of textures. The way you apply your medium – thick or thin, smooth or rough – can add another layer of emotional meaning.

Step 3: reflection

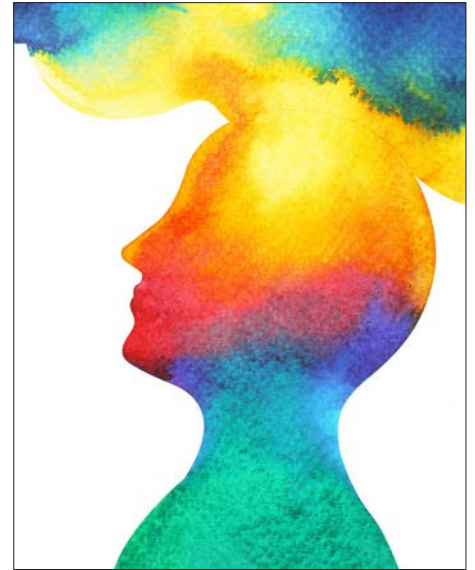
Once you've completed your drawing, take a moment to reflect on the process and the artwork. Look at your creation and use the prompts (*right*) to help you reflect on your work.

Spend some time just being with the image, not analysing it but simply experiencing what it evokes. It may surprise you how much your unconscious mind has communicated through the abstract forms and colours.

You might want to journal about your experience, considering questions like:

- How did I feel before I began drawing? Did the drawing process shift my emotional state?
- Were there any surprising moments during the process? Did any emotions surface that I wasn't initially aware of?
- How does the art make me feel now that I've finished?

You may have done this exercise alone or with a friend. Speaking about your experience may help solidify the insights gained through creative expression.



Prompts for reflection

- What emotions do I see reflected in the shapes, lines, and colours?
- Does the artwork evoke any memories or emotions as I look at it?
- What does this piece tell me about how I'm feeling in this moment?

Unlocking emotions through art

Artmaking is not only an act of creative expression but also a profound psychological and neurological experience. When we create art, especially in an emotional context, we activate several brain regions that are essential for emotional processing, cognitive regulation, and self-reflection. This intersection of neuroscience and psychology reveals why art can be such a powerful tool for emotional exploration and healing.

When we engage in the creative process, the amygdala activates in response to the emotional content we are expressing. This allows us to externalise emotions that might otherwise be difficult to articulate, offering a safe outlet for processing complex feelings. At the same time, the pre-frontal cortex helps us make sense of these emotions, organising them and integrating them into our larger sense of self. This dual involvement of both emotional and cognitive areas helps regulate our emotional state, fostering emotional resilience and clarity.

In addition, creating art can lower cortisol (the stress hormone) levels, which decreases tension and promotes relaxation. By expressing ourselves visually, we reduce the body's overall stress load and induce a calm, focused state of mind.

In psychological theory, particularly in Jungian psychology, art is considered a powerful tool for accessing the unconscious and exploring the depths of the psyche. Carl Jung believed that creative expression allows us to bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious mind, bringing hidden emotions, desires, and conflicts into awareness. Art, then, becomes a symbolic language that speaks to the deeper layers of our identity, revealing parts of ourselves that are often neglected or repressed.

Art therapy is an established way of integrating artistic expression with psychological techniques to improve emotional wellbeing. Art therapy helps individuals process emotions, reduce stress, and gain insight into personal challenges through the creative process. Unlike traditional talk therapy, art therapy allows people to express themselves non-verbally, which can be particularly beneficial for those who struggle to articulate their feelings or experiences through words.

In art therapy, the act of creating art is considered the therapeutic intervention itself. The process allows individuals to externalise their emotions and thoughts in a safe space, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves. Art therapists guide clients in exploring the symbolism and meaning behind their artwork, helping them uncover unconscious thoughts and feelings. This therapeutic approach has been shown to be effective for individuals dealing with anxiety, depression, trauma, and other emotional challenges. Additionally, the act of creating something tangible can instil a sense of accomplishment, boosting self-esteem and reinforcing a sense of control over our emotions.

“By expressing ourselves visually, we reduce the body’s overall stress load and induce a calm, focused state of mind”

Next steps

As we near the final chapter of our creative journey, we take our exploration outside, connecting not only with our inner world but also with the natural world around us. Just as emotional art helps us externalise and process our feelings, engaging with nature offers a unique opportunity to deepen our connection to both ourselves and the world around us creatively, in our everyday lives.

6. Creative connections with nature



Nature has always been a powerful source of inspiration, offering us a sense of peace, perspective, and connection. Whether we are walking in the woods, sitting by the sea, or simply observing a flower in bloom, the natural world provides endless opportunities for reflection, creativity, and self-discovery. This section invites you to engage with nature through metaphor, allowing you to tap into the personal connections and lessons that the natural world has to offer.

Engaging with nature through metaphor

In this activity, we will use nature as a mirror to reflect on your inner world. The aim is to help you connect more deeply with yourself and the environment around you by observing the natural world and drawing meaning from it. Through simple yet profound questions, nature becomes a living symbol that offers insights into your personal growth, emotions, and life journey.

Step 1: Take a journal out into nature – whether that's a forest, a beach, a garden, or local park.

Step 2: Begin with mindfulness – engage all your senses, notice the tiny details of nature around you. Notice your breath and how you are feeling. Give yourself permission to be fully present.



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Scan this QR code using your phone to view our video talking you through this creative exercise about connecting with nature.

Step 3: Notice what natural objects or symbols you're drawn to. Open your curiosity, beginning to explore what's around you through asking metaphoric questions. Here are some examples:

- "If this tree was trying to teach me a lesson about growth, what would it be?"
- "If this flower was an aspect of myself, which aspect would it symbolise?"
- "How might the weather right now symbolise my emotions?"
- "If the waves could talk, what would they say to me?"

Creative explorations

This activity doesn't have to be a one off. Getting into the habit of engaging with this type of metaphoric exploration allows us to more deeply connect with ourselves and the world around us every day. You might choose to take your explorations further by creating a living sculpture or a nature ritual.

Living sculpture

A living sculpture might involve arranging natural objects – such as leaves, stones, or flowers – into a meaningful shape or design. You might create a sculpture of yourself or a part of yourself, of an emotion you're feeling, or to symbolise an intention or hope for the future.

Nature ritual

Creating a personal ritual in nature can be a profound and transformative way of connecting with yourself. Here are some easy steps to creating your own ritual:

Step 1. Set an intention – this might be to let go of something, to welcome something new into your life or to mark a transition. How do you want to feel at the end of your ritual?

Step 2. Plan the ritual activity – choose an activity that metaphorically expresses your intention. This can be quite simple, for example finding a stick to symbolise your worries and send it down a river, finding a natural object to symbolise your hopes and planting it, or drawing/writing a difficult emotion or experience in the sand and watching the waves wash other it.

Step 3. Create a simple structure – try a three-step format: opening (e.g. taking a deep breath, lighting a candle, setting an intention), main practice (the ritual activity you planned), and closing (e.g. taking a deep breath, blowing out the candle or expressing gratitude).

Step 4. Reflect – have any feelings or thoughts shifted, do you feel any differently?

Natural benefits

Connecting with nature has profound benefits for both our mental and emotional wellbeing. In recent years, ecotherapy – the practice of healing through interaction with nature – has gained widespread recognition as a





powerful therapeutic approach. Studies have shown that spending time in nature reduces stress, lowers levels of anxiety, and improves mood (promoting the release of endorphins), providing a natural remedy for the challenges of modern life.

The practice of mindfulness – paying attention to the present moment without judgment – can be naturally cultivated in nature. The sights, sounds, and sensations that surround us invite us to be fully immersed in the present, reducing rumination and promoting emotional balance. In this way, nature serves as both a mirror and a teacher, helping us to be more present with ourselves and fostering emotional healing through mindful engagement.

Ecotherapy is grounded in the belief that human beings are intrinsically connected to the natural world, and that by reconnecting with nature, we can experience profound emotional healing. This approach can involve a variety of activities, from nature walks, forest bathing and gardening.

An example of ecotherapy is Environmental Arts Therapy developed by Ian Siddons Heginworth out of the creative arts therapies. Environmental arts therapy is the therapeutic use of natural materials, natural locations, natural themes and natural cycles, using myths and metaphors that relate to the time of year and the geographical and cultural location within which the therapy takes place.

By connecting with the natural world through creative exercises and mindfulness, we not only learn more about ourselves but also find peace and clarity in the larger context of the world around us. Nature becomes both a mirror and a guide, offering us the opportunity to reflect on our emotional journey while providing the space for renewal and growth.

“Nature becomes both a mirror and a guide...”

Final reflections

Thank you for joining us for Unlocking the Creative Mind. As we reach the conclusion of this journey, it's important to take a moment to reflect on the path we've travelled. From storytelling and collage to music, art, and the natural world, each section has invited you to explore your inner landscape in a creative and meaningful way. These exercises have not just been about self-expression – they have been opportunities to uncover new perspectives, challenge limiting beliefs, and foster a deeper connection with yourself.

Creativity is not just about producing something beautiful or profound. It is a process, a way of engaging with the world and with ourselves. Through these exercises, you have tapped into the power of metaphor, imagination, and symbolism to explore different facets of your identity.

Looking forward: continuing the creative path

The journey of self-discovery does not end here. The tools and practices you have explored can be revisited and adapted as you continue to grow and evolve. Creativity is fluid—it can change with your circumstances, your emotions, and your personal development. Consider integrating these exercises into your daily life, whether through journaling, mindful observation in nature, or simply allowing yourself the freedom to create without judgment.

Additionally, embracing both light and shadow, as discussed in previous chapters, reminds us that wholeness comes from accepting all parts of ourselves. The hero and the villain, joy and sorrow, certainty and doubt—all of these coexist within us. True self-awareness is about acknowledging these contrasts and finding balance between them.

A final invitation

Before you move forward, take a moment to reflect by completing these sentences:

- I'm moving away from _____
- I'm keeping with me _____
- I'm moving towards _____

Remember, there is no 'final destination' in self-discovery—only a continuous unfolding. Keep exploring, keep creating, and most importantly, keep listening to yourself.

Your creative mind is a powerful tool. Let it guide you.



Resources and further reading

Story making and setting intentions

- The British Association of Dramatherapists: <https://www.badth.org.uk/>
- Mooli Lahad's research: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mooli-Lahad-2>
- Six-part story method: <https://www.loompsychology.co.uk/news-insights/six-part-story-method>
- Narrative therapy: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-therapy/types-of-therapy/narrative-therapy/>
- The psychological power of storytelling: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363415383_The_Psychological_Power_of_Storytelling#:~:text=Storytelling%20is%20associated%20with%20diversified,mutual%20understanding%2C%20and%20increased%20empathy
- Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/advances-in-psychiatric-treatment/article/emotional-and-physical-health-benefits-of-expressive-writing/ED2976A61F5DE56B46F07A1CE9EA9F9F>
- How creative writing boosts wellbeing: <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/articles/how-creative-writing-can-boost-wellbeing>

Collage self-portrait - the many aspects of you

- Internal Family Systems: <https://ifs-institute.com/>
- British Association of Art Therapists: <https://baat.org/>
- Collage and the treatment of trauma: <https://collageresearchnetwork.wordpress.com/2020/05/29/putting-the-pieces-together-collage-as-a-mode-in-the-treatment-of-trauma/>
- Carl Jung: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Carl-Jung>
- Shadows and light: understanding our archetypal nature: <https://www.archetypalnature.com/blog/2015/3/11/shadows-light-our-archetypal-nature>
- Archetypes: <https://myss.com/free-resources/sacred-contracts-and-your-archetypes/appendix-a-gallery-of-archetypes/>

Exploring character, exploring self

- Jung on projection: <https://www.jungian-confrerie.com/phdi/p1.nsf/supppages/8209?opendocument&part=15>
- British Association of Dramatherapists: <https://www.badth.org.uk/>
- Mirror neurons: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3898692/>
- Cinema and video therapy: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8786706/>
- Self-expansion through fictional characters: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264001589_Self-Expansion_through_Fictional_Characters
- Which character are you? A statistical test: <https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/characters/1.php>

The sound of self

- British Association for Music Therapy: <https://www.bamt.org/>
- Music and the brain: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5618809/>
- Psychology of Music journal: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/pom>

Emotional art – drawing how you feel

- British Association of Art Therapists: <https://baat.org/>
- 100 Art Therapy ideas and prompts: <https://www.alternativetomeds.com/blog/art-therapy-ideas/>
- Art and the brain: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2815940/>
- Dreams, art and the subconscious according to Jung: <https://jungutah.org/blog/dreams-art-and-the-unconscious-a-jungian-perspective/>

Creative connections with nature

- Environmental Arts Therapy: <https://www.environmentalartstherapyuk.co.uk/>
- Ecotherapy: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapy-and-counselling/ecotherapy/>
- Mental health benefits of nature: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/nature-how-connecting-nature-benefits-our-mental-health#:~:text=Nature%20can%20generate%20many%20positive,particularly%20lower%20depression%20and%20anxiety.>
- The impact of nature on creativity: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2015.02.006>

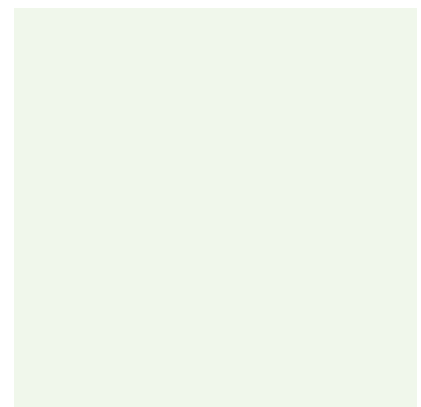
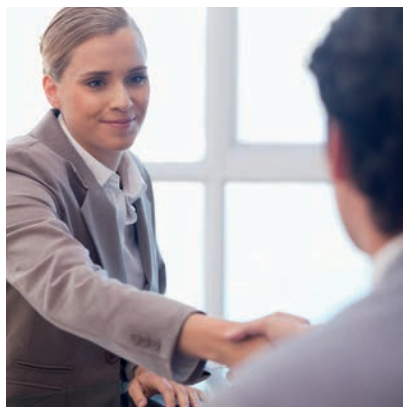
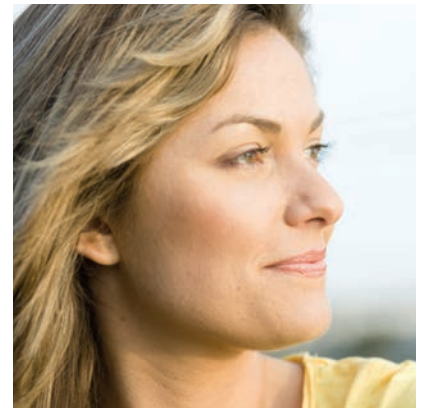


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