

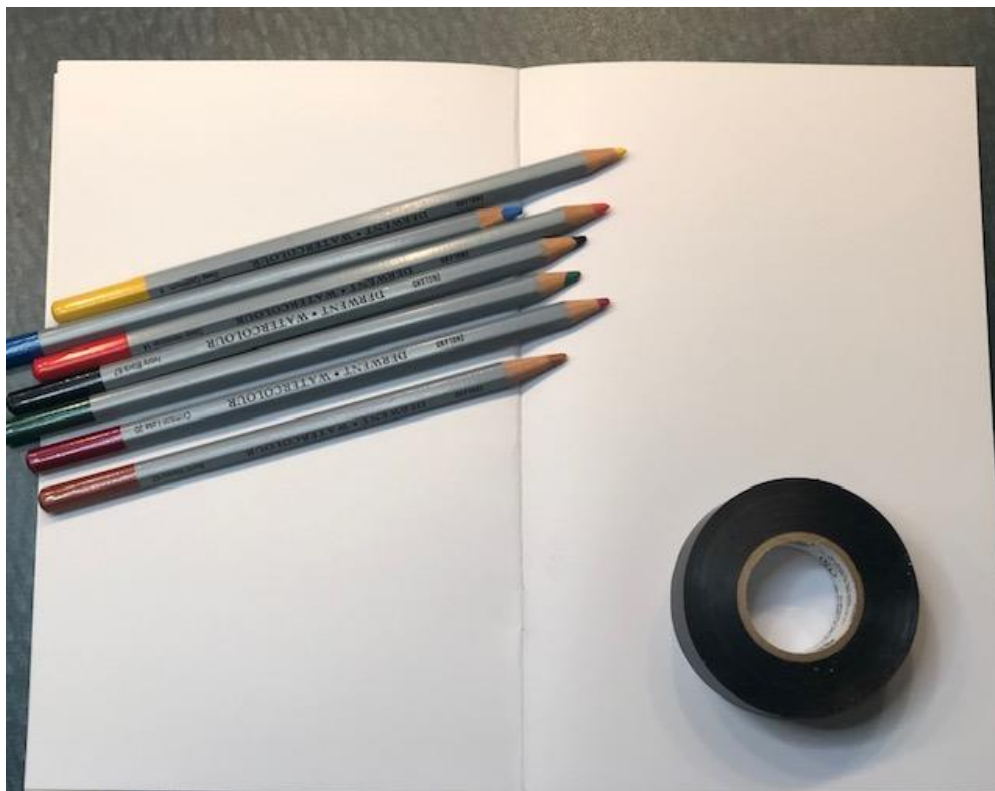


STRESS REDUCTION - ART PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

What most people think is stress is actually a jumble of more specific emotions. Figuring out exactly what you are feeling, and why, can be very helpful in the reduction of stress. For example, is your “stress” actually fear of some future event, or regret or wishing something in the past didn’t happen?

SUPPLIES:

- 2 pieces of paper or blank pages of a journal
- Something circular to draw around, this item should be smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$ width of your paper (I used a roll of electrical tape in this example).
- Something to add color to your paper (colored pencils, crayons, markers, paint..)



STEP 1:

Close your eyes and try to pinpoint your exact emotions within your “stressful” feeling.

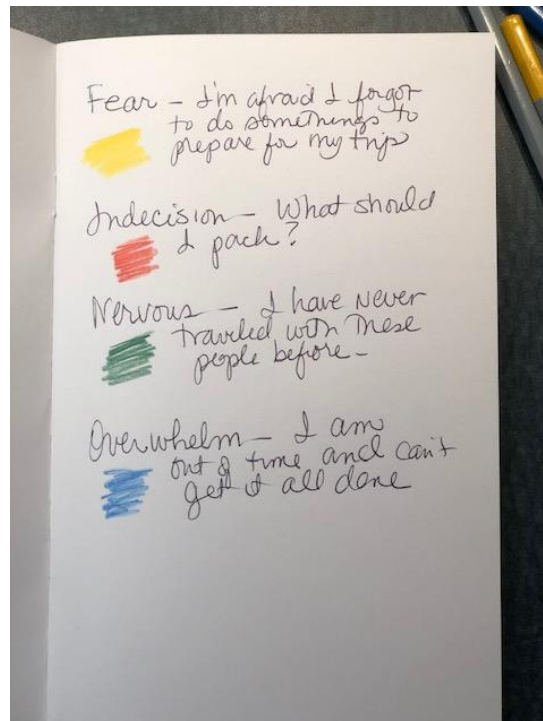
Examples might be:

Fear, regret, panic, overwhelm, restless, indecision, grief, annoyed, confused

Record as many specific emotions as you can identify on one sheet of paper.

After writing these emotions down, try to guess the thoughts that are creating each emotion and write the thought beside each emotion.

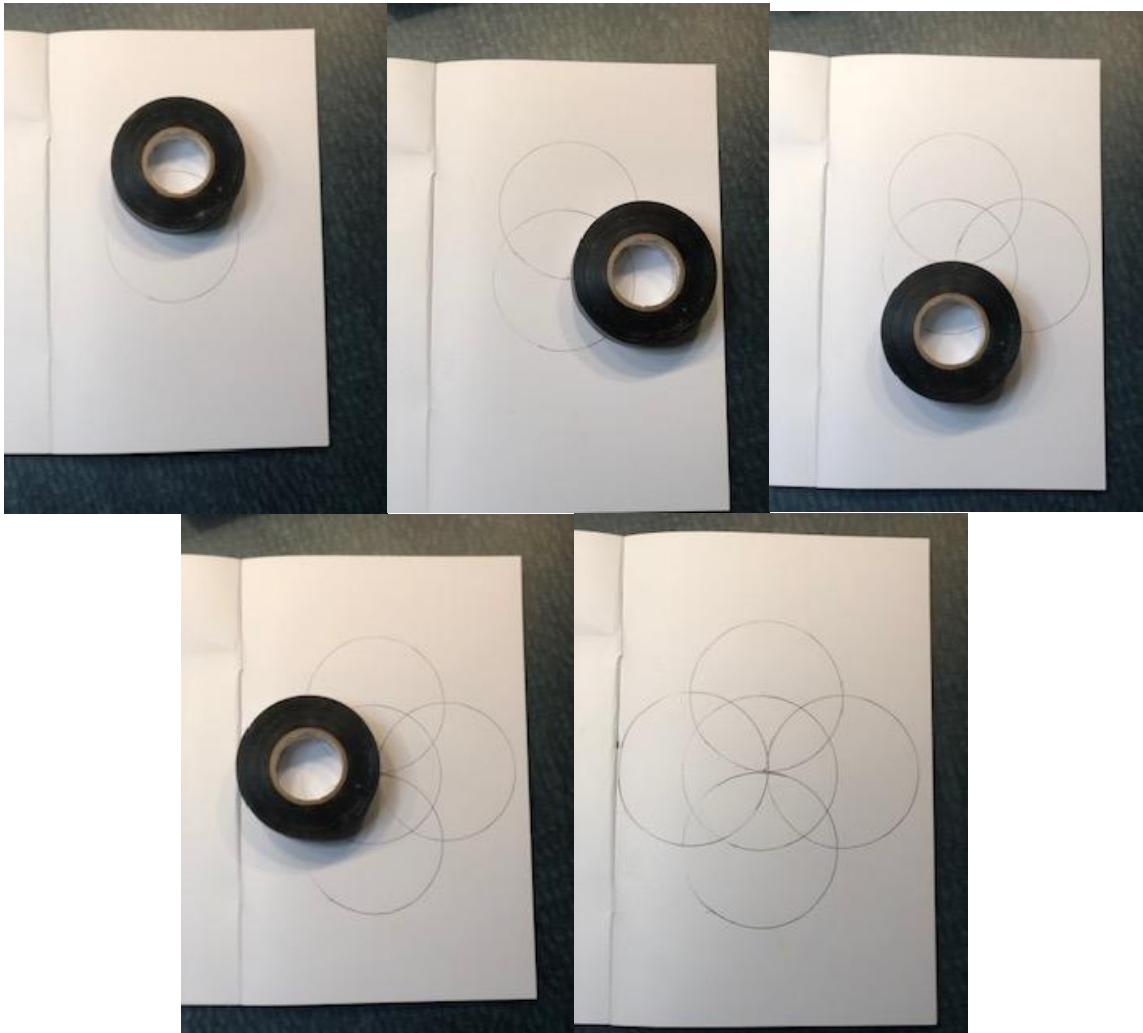
Close your eyes again and think of each emotion, assign a color that seems to represent each emotion to you.



STEP 2:

Draw a simple mandala on the other sheet of paper. The mandala is one of the oldest and most sacred meditative symbols. There is no right or wrong way to create a mandala.

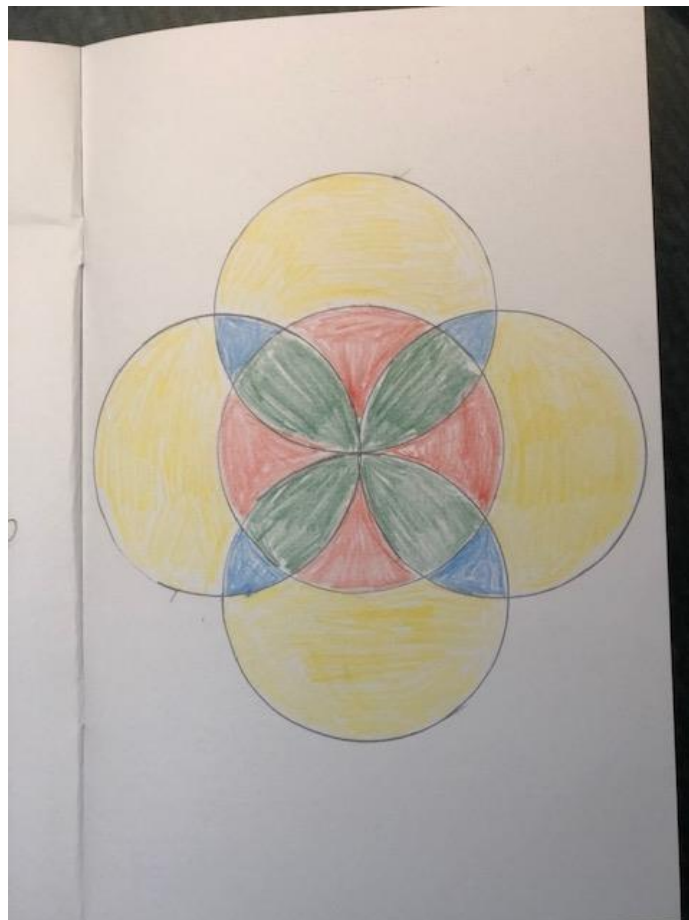
Put a dot in the middle of the page. Then use your circular item to draw a circle around the dot. Add 4 circles with the edges beginning at the center dot.



STEP 3:

Begin coloring in your mandala. Give the most space to the color that corresponds to the emotion you are feeling the most strongly right now. Give the least space to the color representing the feeling you feel the least of the ones you listed and all the variations in between.

You can stop here and take a look at a creative representation of your stress.



How do you feel?

As you create, you distract your mind, bringing yourself into the present moment - the now. This may be an easier way for some of us to meditate, because you are allowing the *doing* of the art to guide you into the meditative state, rather than sitting still and trying to stop the mind.

You can keep embellishing this mandala as long as it's fun for you. As you do, hopefully you will feel less stressed by the process of creating and by evaluating the thoughts that are creating the stress. As you focus on your mandala, consider if the thoughts you wrote are true or even have any value. Maybe consider releasing them.

Repeat this project as often as needed.

My embellishment doodles with fine tip markers:

