



Designing a Handbook of Activities:

Using Art Expressions to Benefit the Well-being
and Mental Health.

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ABSTRACT

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Artistic expressions have been proved to have therapeutic benefits in individuals' well-being, especially in the mental health field. Nevertheless, art is not widely used for welfare improvement purposes, and many institutions such as schools, medical centers and youth centers, still do not have enough art related activities in their agenda. That is the result of a lack of guidelines and established forms of applying this type of activities, where art is used for the benefit of the participants.

This thesis aimed to design and develop a series of activities in the form of short workshops, involving different art expressions such as music, painting and drawing. The purpose of the resulting handbook of activities was to serve as a guide for those willing to improve the participant's well-being and mental health.

The theoretical part begins by explaining and defining concepts such as well-being, mental health, and art expressions. It proceeds by recounting the methodology implemented to create said workshops, and the research carried out behind each activity. The practical result of the thesis consists of a handbook to be used as a guide to carry out the workshops, by particulars or professionals from different fields such as educational institutions, cultural houses, youth workers, etc.

Keywords: art, music, well-being, workshop

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are several aspects that directly affect how our well-being and mental health develops: sleeping and eating habits, a physical and mental exercise balance, sun exposure, social environments, etc. Many entities such as schools, youth centers, and medical centers, among others, constantly search for methods and techniques to help improve those aspects in the life of individuals of all ages and backgrounds.

It has been proved that artistic expressions, such as music, drawing and painting, have therapeutic benefits in individual's well-being, especially in the mental health field, helping the individuals have a better knowledge of themselves and their specific needs. That is why some methods that include artistic techniques are becoming more popular among the health and education professionals, but still art is not widely used for welfare improvement purposes, and many institutions such as schools, medical centers and youth centers, still do not have enough art related activities in their agenda. That is the reason why I came up with the idea of designing a method in a form of a handbook, addressed to those (professionals or not) that would like to apply artistic methods to the pursuit of well-being of individuals.

This thesis aims to plan and design a series of research-based activities involving different art expression, where various aspects affecting individual's well-being are explored through art and creativity, allowing the participants to take an introspective look of their mental health and self-evaluate their well-being. The structure of this document consists of an introduction to basic concepts such as mental health and well-being, and how those work hand to hand benefiting each other. Subsequently, each activity of the Workshop Handbook will be explained, followed by the research and meaning behind it, and the mental health and well-being aspects it expects to deal with. After that, the handbook and its structure will be presented.

Finally, this thesis will include an implementation planning for the Workshop to clarify the way to implement it. That section will serve as a more accurate

explanation on how to carry out the technical preparations previous to the implementation of the activities, such as the logistics planning, the selection of the target aimed by the organizer, and other relevant aspects to consider, while following the Handbook guidelines.

This thesis aims to gather existing research and conclusions from many authors and researchers, to create a solid method to apply these conclusions in the form of art activities, whose goal is to serve as a guide for those willing to improve the participant's well-being and mental health. It is relevant to mention, that all the data presented in this document has a solid research behind it, and the information has been retrieved and contrasted from different reliable sources.

2. MENTAL HEALTH

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services describes mental health as “our emotional, psychological and social well-being”. They state that our mental health affects the way we think, feel and act, and help us determinate the way we relate to others, the way we handle stress and how we make decisions. It is important in all stages of life; from childhood to adulthood. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services). By the other hand, the World Health Organization (WHO) points out that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. It is fundamental for us as a collective and as individuals, to enjoy life. (World Health Organization, 2020).

2.1 Factors that determinate the mental health

There are many aspects that determinate our mental health. Those can be biological risks or external factors. The biological risks that make people vulnerable to mental health problems are:

- Specific psychological and personality factors, usually based on the present and past experiences the individuals go through.
- Genetic factors, inherited from direct relatives, which can manifest throughout life.

Some of the external factors that make people vulnerable to mental health problems are:

- Violent environment.
- Racism
- Rapid social change
- Gender discrimination
- Social exclusion
- Unhealthy lifestyle
- Physical ill-health
- Human rights violations

Those factors can lead to mental health problems and disorders that can really affect individual's life in different degrees. Some of the symptoms caused by these mental health problems can be:

- Insomnia
- Appetite changes
- Mood changes
- Apathy
- Nervousness
- Difficulty thinking
- Low energy
- Suicidal thinking

2.2 Detection of mental health problems

There are different ways to detect mental health problems in both children and adults. An evaluation session with a certified psychologist can help detect signs of a bad mental health and find ways to further treating these problems in collaboration with other professionals such as psychiatrists (Bayo Clinic, 2020).

However, sometimes, it is hard to find the courage or to even realizing we might need some professional help to cope with some mental issues. Moreover, it is the goal of this workshop to enable participants to explore their mental state to conclude if they could use some professional help for any disturbing issue they might detect on their way of acting and feeling during it. An early detection of any mental health issue has better long-term outcomes after professional treatment (Mental Health America, 2016). Therefore, activities like this workshop can play a big role in the healing process.

3. WELL-BEING

Well-being is not only the state when an individual's mental health is good, but also when that is accompanied by physical health, current life satisfaction, a good ability to manage stress, and the sense of having a purpose. Well-being is different to everyone as social, cultural, and economical aspects, among others, determine it. (Davis, T. 2010)

As we can notice, mental health and well-being are tied together concepts as well-being cannot happen with a good mental health, and a good mental health cannot happen without well-being. Therefore, it would make sense to state that to pursue mental health; we need to also focusing on other aspects around us that help improve our well-being.

3.1 Well-Being key components



Figure 1. Well-Being key components. Retrieved from Albany Senior High School “Introduction to Health and Well-Being at Home” 2019.

As observed in the picture above, some of the key components of well-being are mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and social aspects (5 Ways to Well-Being, 2011). These aspects can be defined as:

- Mental aspects: the ability to manage stress, how we make friends and socialize, and the ability of making choices (Melkonian, L. 2022).
- Emotional aspects: Feeling good and experiencing mostly positive emotions. Being satisfied with life (Melkonian, L. 2022).
- Spiritual aspects: finding a purpose in life and have a moral that guides our actions as individuals (Saymeh, A. 2021).
- Physical aspects: individual's lifestyle choices regarding sleeping, diet, sports, and hygiene habits (Stevenson, 2021).
- Social aspects: the sustaining of meaningful relationships with others, and the sense of connection and belonging with other individuals. (Sinclair, J. 2021).

The harmonic presence of these aspects, directly affects the feeling of well-being of the individuals who experience them. Therefore, to aim for a general well-being of a society, those aspects need to be guaranteed.

4. ART EXPRESSIONS USED IN THE HANDBOOK

The definition of art has always been into debate, because of its deep transcendent meaning. As a generic description of that term, art consists of any creation or activity that has an esthetic and communicative goal, throughout which ideas, emotions and, in general, a view of the world is expressed, using different mediums and resources (Nieters). That creativity can be performed in different ways, for example, drawing, writing, making music, painting, making different types of crafts, etc. These expressions are called “art expressions”, as they are the different ways human creativity can be portrayed (Brittney 2021).

Using art is a crucial way for individuals to express their true self in ways that are not established or conditioned by rules. The use of a determinate art expression depends on the individual desires or accessibility to resources. The criteria to choose the expressions can be based on the familiarity the individual has with the techniques used in that expression, the price and availability of the materials used on it, the connection the materials or techniques have with the feelings or ideas the individual wants to portray, etc.

Using different materials and techniques can help individuals activate their feelings, which allows them to reflect different experiences or ideas. In addition, when individuals observe an artistic expression, it can change and affect their feelings, make them have a more meaningful life, and provide them with a new perspective of the world (Brittney 2021).

4.1 Music

Music is an art expression provided in the form of sound. Technically speaking, sound is spread through sound waves, that reach our brain through our hearing, and stimulates it provoking different feelings and sensations in our body. Nevertheless, as an art expression, music can be defined as:

Music, art concerned with combining vocal or instrumental sounds for beauty of form or emotional expression, usually according to cultural standards of rhythm, melody, and, in most Western music, harmony. Both the simple folk song and the complex electronic composition belong to the same activity, music. Both are humanly engineered; both are conceptual and auditory, and these factors have been present in music of all styles and in all periods of history, throughout the world. Music is an art that, in one guise or another, permeates every human society. (Epperson 2022)

4.2 Drawing

Drawing is a visual art expression. “Visual art” consists of those art pieces that are to be appreciated by the sense of sight. It includes drawing, being that one of the most ancient forms of artistic expression (Britannica). A more accurate definition of that term can be:

Drawing, or sketching, is one of the fundamental types of art. Whether they are painters, sculptors, or digital artists, many artists will learn to draw as a fundamental artistic skill. But drawing is not just a precursor to other types of visual art; it is a recognized art form itself. Drawings are works of art in their own right, but they can also be used to plan or instruct. (Edden Gallery 2021)

4.3 Painting

Painting is also a visual art expression, which consists of using a medium (paint such as acrylic, gouache, tempera, oil, etc.) on a surface of choice (canvas, paper, cardboard, walls, etc.). That expression can be defined as:

Painting is usually defined as consisting of some kind of paint applied to some kind of surface, usually a flat, two-dimensional canvas. But that doesn't mean that the only works of art considered painting will be those made of oil paint on cloth canvas. Painting is one of the oldest art forms, and when societies began crafting tools and making fire, they were also learning to represent the world in pictures. These pictures were recorded in cave paintings that still exist today. (Roberts 2021)

5. RESEARCH-BASED HANDBOOK ACTIVITIES METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

In the previous chapter, the definition and explanation of each art expression was mentioned. This time, aspects of those art expressions will be deeply explored, focusing on how can their use benefit the participants of each activity. Every section will start by explaining the activity methodology, followed by the aspects the activity can stimulate on the participants (teamwork, self-analytics of emotions, empathy towards other participants, etc.). Then, the research-based information and sources backing up those benefits will be analyzed, and conclude each section.

The design of the activities, is mostly based on the artistic experiences from me (the author of the thesis), and influenced by the research achieved during the thesis writing process. A part from the artistic and psychological aspects I considered when I devised the activities, I also thought about how accessible they could be for a wide public, and the capability of each activity to be adapted to different groups regarding their age and background. Therefore, it would be right to say that those activities are the result of the mind of an artist, combined with research on multiple art and psychology sources.

Since the beginning of this thesis, every activity has been revised and improved multiple times to adjust to the research done before and after the design of these, to avoid meaningless steps in the activities that do not bring any clear benefits. Furthermore, the activities are presented in the handbook (annex 1) in a more didactic format, with clear instructions. The methodology to apply this handbook, then, is to previously read and get familiar with the concepts of this thesis, to better understanding the benefits and application of the activities on the book.

5.1. Preliminary activities

5.1.1. Presentation of the workshops to be executed

Before starting any activity, the instructor will introduce itself and its role during the activities (workshops), and a brief explanation of the activity or activities to be implemented, and the structure they have. It is important, that the instructor is aware of the abilities of the different participants, as well as their special needs, if any.

5.1.2. 10-min of stretching

The instructor will guide the group on a five-minute stretching session to relax the muscles and joints, before starting the first activity.

The exercises could be the following, based on the images of the figure 2:

- Roll the head in circles, in both directions
- Stretch the arms above the head
- Rotate the arms in circles, in both directions
- Rotate the hips from one side to the other.
- Stretch the legs by holding them one by one, for few seconds.
- With straight legs, try to touch the floor with both hands.

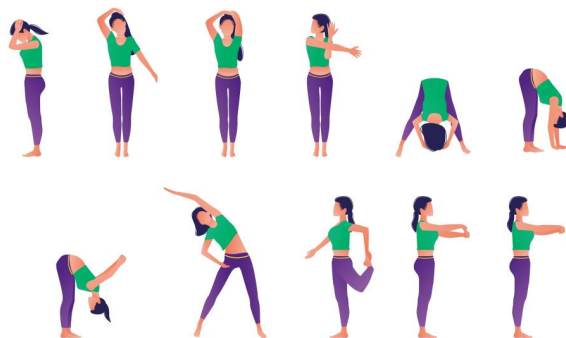


Figure 2. Stretching illustration examples. Retrieved from Wapa Magazine (2019) “Stretching: Técnica para Fortalecer Nuestros Musculos”.

Many studies have shown that 5 to 10 minutes of dynamic stretching prior to any type of mental or physical activity, can benefit in multiple ways how our body and mind develops during them. (Previte) Firstly, stretching different muscles improves the synchronization between the mind and the body, making individuals more aware of their movements. This can lead to focusing to your present surroundings, connect to the present and be more prepared for what it is happening in the moment. (DeokJu 2015)

A big benefit that stretching can provide to this workshop is the ability it has to develop clearer minds and improve the mood. It happens because it makes our body release hormones that regulate our metabolism, and it stimulates the blood flow and circulation improving the brain functionality. As an experienced athlete myself, I can corroborate this information, as stretching has always been a crucial part in all my trainings, and it has protected me from injuries and improved my performance and well-being in general.

5.2. Music activities

This section includes a series of activities involving musical elements, presented in different forms and approaches, as it has previously been reported that playing instruments, singing and listening to music have positive influences in the mental health and well-being of the individuals (Mosing 2019). For some individuals, both making music and listening to it, is a way to de-stress after long working or studying days, serving as a way to canalize the stress (Corcoran 2020).

5.2.1. Songs through words

This activity consists on the participants listening to three different songs, and describing into words what feelings, emotions or ideas those songs separately produce in them. There will be three jars in the space given, with the name of each song. The songs will be different between them: one up-tempo song with many elements, a simpler song, and a song in a language any of the participants can understand. During each song, the participants will write down in separate papers, any emotions, feelings, ideas or words those songs produce to them. At the end of each song, they will put these papers folded in each jar, and the instructor will read them aloud. Every time one paper is read, the participants have to rise their hand if they can relate to that feeling while they listened to the song.



Figure 3. Jars illustration where the participants will deposit the papers.

Image designed by Badji, M. (2022)

This activity is a way of warming up and starting putting out emotions, with the help of music, as a way to stimulate the brain. By writing down how they felt during each song, they can practice how to project emotions into words, and see if that could help them understand themselves better. By listening to what the others had written down, they can see how the others reacted to the songs and compare their feelings with the others, to see how a same situation can affect in a different way for everyone. It has been scientifically proved, that music engages our brain as it activates certain parts of the brain. By doing that, it motivates individuals to want to learn more, and it helps with the memory improving the information retention. (Stanborough 2020)

As this activity is the first one in the workshop, the participants are probably not as active as they will be in the next ones. Therefore, music as the first art expression to work with can help them activate their brain through that stimulus, and boost their performance in the following activities where less stimulus is provided. The accurate choice of the three songs in this activity is based on a research based research-based selection, proving that different genres are able to produce different emotions and feelings to the listener. (Patel 2019)

For example, classical music is known for being relaxing and calming, but at the same time, various studies have proven that it helps focusing on tasks and performing them. It is most probably that the lack of lyrics allows our brain to focus better, as they can be a distraction. It also depends on the instruments the piece contains, as a big brass section can be counterproductive when trying to relax.

In the case of punk music, considered as “extreme music” (Sharman 2015), and characterized for being short song with fast tempos, anti-establishment lyrics, and simple melodies and harmonies, the effect on the brain is quite interesting in an emotional sense. It is usually thought that extreme music would make us more aggressive when, in fact, it helps us canalize and regulate emotions such as anger. (Moore 2015). Moreover, each music genre, and even each individual song, has its own way to affect our brain and emotions, even in a physical way.

In addition, that shows the big impact music and sound has in humans, and how it can be used as a therapeutic way to improve well-being and regulate emotions.

5.2.2. Spot the choice

The big group will be separated into group of three people. They will be given a song (a different one for each group), and a paper with the information found in the Figure 4. Each group has to listen to the song they are given, and make a collective choice for the different categories from the grid above. After they have finished, they will come back to the big group, show a short part of the song, and explain their choices to the rest of the group.

	ANIMAL	FOOD	BODY PART	COLOR	SPORT	VERB	FEELING
SONG NAME							

Figure 4. Grid with the categories for the activity.

This activity is based on the popular game called “Stop”, where each player has to find a word for each category that starts with the letter given. However, in this case, instead of a letter, a song will be given. The goal is that the members of each team work as one, in the sense that they can work on their empathy towards other’s feelings. They need to communicate between them what the song provokes to each one individually, so they can discuss and find the words that summarize their feelings as a group. Many times, we encounter situations where miscommunication can lead to problems and barriers between individuals. A good communication and an empathic understanding of other’s feelings can avoid these problems, and this activity is a dynamic and fun way to practice and develop tools to apply in those day-to-day situations.

Music has many functions, but an important one is the power it has to connect people and create a cohesion feeling. Some examples of that would be anthems, protest songs, love songs, lullabies, etc. These are all ways to communicate a

collective feeling through sounds and rhythms. Actually, most songwriters claim that they are better at transmitting their feelings through song, rather than talking. Taking the case of Kanye West, he has stated in many of his songs that he has always had difficulties choosing the right words to explain his ideas when talking. Through rap music, he found a way to carefully project his feelings and ideas to others. That shows how music can be used as a tool of communication, especially for those who have trouble doing that in a conventional way. (Doherty 2019)

5.2.3. Rhythm chain

All the participants will sit in a circle. After giving each of them an egg shaker, they will be asked, one by one, to create a rhythm that fits with how they feel in the current moment. Everyone will repeat the rhythm as a chain. This first part of the activity is a way to get familiar with the egg shaker, and try to learn how to transmit emotions through it. By repeating how each one moves the egg, it can help the rest of participants to understand how the other participants feel, and try to understand them in a non-verbal way.

After that, the instructor will distribute to each participant a piece of paper with a scenario written on it. They have few seconds to think on how to transform the scenarios into rhythm. Then, one by one, they will present it to the others, and all of them will repeat the rhythm at the same time.

Scenarios ideas:

- The beach
- The woods
- In the car at a busy city
- A library
- The metro
- A swimming pool
- An island
- A dog

Many people, especially those with mental health disorders, have big difficulties expressing their emotions in a verbal way, and that can make others have a hard time to understand them. At the same time, many people with (or without) mental disorders has big difficulties understanding non-verbal emotion expressions, which makes it difficult for them to understand how other's might be feeling, when those others are not expressing their emotions with words. Therefore, this activity tries to break the barrier between those who have trouble expressing verbally their feelings, and those who have trouble understanding non-verbal expressions.

Regarding this activity of the workshop, the egg-shaker is an easy instrument to play and does not require much playing skills. This way, the participants can experience in a basic way in which it feels to project feelings into an instrument and, consequently, create a sound sample with a concrete meaning.

5.3. Drawing activities

This section includes a series of activities involving drawing tasks. Most art expressions, but in this case drawing, have been proved to lower stress levels on individuals, as well as enabling the mind to stay calm and focus on the present moment. That specially helps people suffering with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), as they can focus all their attention into the art piece they are making, instead of holding on into the triggering memories (Scripps Affiliated Medical Groups). Therefore, these series of activities are designed to maximize the benefits of this art expression.

5.3.1. Portraying situations

In this activity, instructor will mention different situations, and build up a story that will describe better what happens in them. For example, the action of going to the supermarket at a rush hour, or being in the middle of an exam at school. The participants will have to transform their thoughts and feelings about these situations into basic sketches in the paper, depending on how they usually feel when they are experiencing those same situations. After each drawing, they can

have some time to explain to the others why they feel in that certain way, and explain their sketches.

This activity makes the participants analyze day-to-day situations, and express in a non-verbal way how they feel during them. The participants can ask themselves how they usually feel during those situations, what things around them make them feel in a certain way, what difficulties do they encounter, or how would they prefer to experience those situations and why. This exercise can provide them with some tools to self-analyze their mindset in daily activities, and find aspects during those that may difficult their experience: loud noises, loads of people, time pressure...

Drawing can be a crucial tool for those searching ways to manage symptoms caused by anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental conditions (Raypole 2021). For example, many of us have found ourselves drawing small lines or circles in a piece of paper while we were listening at a zoom class, as a way to keep our brain stimulated, and avoiding zooming out the lesson. That is a basic example of a situation where we have used our drawing skills as a coping technique.

Another benefit of drawing is that it can be used as a method to portray feelings and emotions into paper, as a way to relieve the mind, and therefore the body, from those emotions we feel we need to let out.



Figure 5. Sketch of the artist Riftress, called Reach, as an example of emotional expression through drawing.

5.3.2. Drawing chain

In this activity, the participants will start by writing in a piece of paper an emotion (fear, confusion, happiness, sadness, etc.). They will put those papers in a box to mix them, and then everyone will randomly pick one paper and stick to the emotion they picked. They need to represent that emotion drawing on paper, with colored crayons. After 10 minutes, the participants will give the drawing to the person next to them, and that person will have to continue the drawing sticking to the emotion they picked from the box.

After the drawings have changing hands multiple times, the drawings will return to the person who started the drawing. Each individual will have to analyze and try guess which emotions the participants drawing on their paper, wanted to portray.

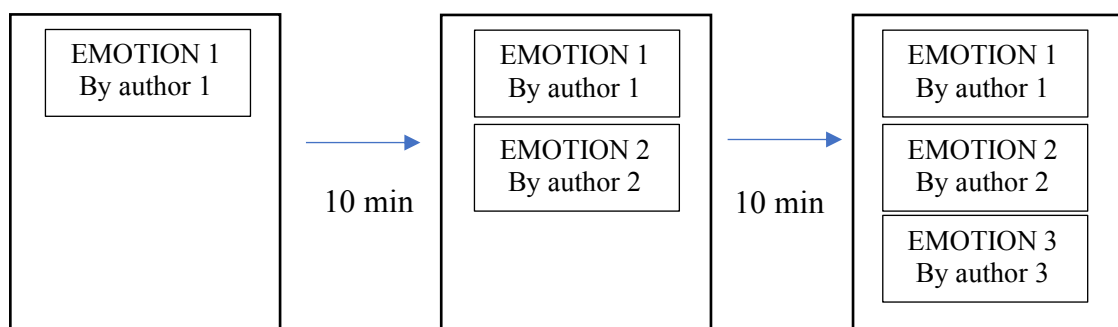


Figure 6. Activity graphic plan. Designed by Badji, M (2022).

This activity tries to picture in a dynamic way in which other's emotions can affect our own emotions. When participants get the drawing of the person next to them, they are somehow absorbing the feelings the previous participant wanted to portray in the drawing. This applies to real life situations when we absorb others feelings, usually in an unconscious way. In the drawings, it is easy to distinguish which drawing made each participant, and which emotion the participant wanted to project, but in real life, it is much harder to detect when an emotion that we are experiencing, comes from the emotion someone else is having. This activity

actually aims to make the participant realize how some emotions they feel, are absorbed from someone else's, and hopes to help them detect those intrusive feelings in future situations.

For example, how many times have we found ourselves yawning right after we see someone doing that? Have you ever wondered why that happens? Researchers from the University of Parma in Italy, discovered in 1990 that our brain contains "mirror neurons" which are the ones helping us imitate actions from other individuals. These neurons are found in the prefrontal cortex of the brain, near the eyes:

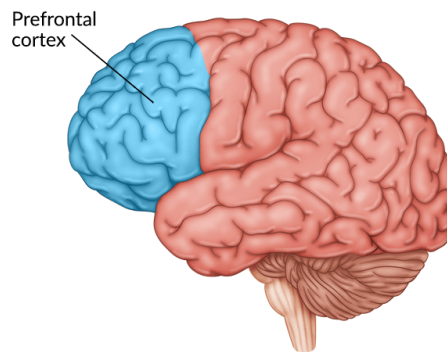


Figure 7. Illustration of the brain, and the Prefrontal Cortex (in blue). Image retrieved from Flint Rehab (2020).

This specific area of the brain is, among other things, responsible of our morality and social-interaction. So, is not a surprise that the "mirror neurons" are found there, as they interfere in the way we relate to others around us (Shuler 2020). Giacomo Rizzolatti, one of the researches from the University of Parma, says that those "mirror neurons" may also play a big role in the capacity we have feeling other's emotions. That can develop our empathy, to the point of understanding why others feel in a certain way.

However, the problem appears when some people, specially introverts and Highly Sensitive Persons (HSP's), cross the line from understanding other's feelings, to the point of absorbing and making them of their own. The consequences of that can be mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress. Therapist Keir Brady exposed some techniques that can help detecting absorbed emotions and feeling from others, to protect our mental health. Starting by naming the emotion we are feeling, can help us understand if that belongs to us, or it was the same emotion that someone we hanged out with was feeling. Secondly, it is important to ground ourselves in our present situation to realize that there is not any problem in the present moment provoking that emotion. Finally, asking to the person experiencing in first place the emotion, can make us separate what we feel from what they feel, in an easier way (Brady). To get rid of the intrusive emotions, releasing them though art, sport or any other healthy activity can be a great solution. In fact, this activity of the workshop, aims to create scenarios that would imitate how we absorb other's emotions, and help the participants develop techniques to detect and release them through artistic expressions.

5.4. Painting

This section includes a series of activities involving painting tasks. Among other benefits, painting is an activity that boosts our memory skills though conceptual visualization and the way we implement it. It also helps those introvert and shy individuals to release inner thoughts in a non-verbal way, which may feel less intrusive for them. The emotional intelligence of those who paint seems to be also positively affected as this practice makes them learn how to manage with their moods and stress levels. Therefore, these series of activities presented in this section, are designed to maximize the benefits of this art expression. (Fox Hill 2020)

5.4.1. New world

Using paints of different colors, on thick paper, the participants will have to freely painting anything they want, as long as they do not use the original colors of

things. For example, if they want to paint a banana, the banana cannot be yellow, if they want to paint a forest landscape, the trees can be green, or the sun can be yellow, etc.

This activity is specially a challenge for those who suffer from different degrees of anxiety, and usually feel anxious when things go differently as they should. People that is afraid of change, of getting out of the norm, or that has difficulties doing things in a different way they are used to, may benefit of this activity, as it will make them think out of the box and see how sometimes doing things differently can open new doors, in this case, creatively. Being afraid of change comes from our history as humans when change often brought lack of safety. When our ancestors faced new weather conditions, for example, they had to adapt to them as a way to survive. Therefore, change always came hand to hand with survival (Mandriota 2021).

Nowadays, the situation is not that drastic, but we still face this same situation in a different scale. Some people, even though they are aware that they are in a failing relationship with someone, they continue on it, as they fear ending it. Another example could be when one experience anxiety and heart palpitations when some unknown situation is presented to their routine. That feeling of fear can stop many from pursuing what they really want to experience. That, in extreme cases, can be a disabling condition.

There are many ways to treat this type of anxiety for the unknown, but a popular technique used by therapists, is the Exposure and Response Prevention Therapy (ERP). It is usually used on patients with OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), and consists on exposing the individuals into stress-inducing situation, without letting them carry on the compulsion (activity or action) in which they engage to relieve the anxiety that situation produced in them. Little by little, they will get use to not engaging into those compulsions, and the anxiety will cease (Deupree 2021). Even though, this technique is used in therapeutic forms, I took the idea of it to be applied in the workshop through the “New World” activity. In this case, we will expose the participants into the situation where they need to go against the “safe” option by not following the nature of the things they paint.

Some of them might not experience any trouble on doing that, but some others might find themselves in a complex situation where they do not know how to do things differently as they are used to, and they start to get a feeling of confusion. By engaging to this activity, the goal is to expose them into tiny stress-inducing situation, so they can analyze how they feel during it, and compare it to other day-to-day situations where they might experience a similar feeling.

5.4.2. What I have

The participants will make a list on a paper about the things they currently have in their life. It can be material things like a house, their favorite cereal, a game, but also intangible things such as feelings, emotions, dreams, etc. Those things can be things they consider positive, but also things that they consider negative. After making this list, they will have to create three different colors with the primary colors paints they will be offered (red, yellow, blue). The creation of these colors should be according to the list of things they have. They can also use some primary paint without changing the tone, as long as they consider it fits with their list. When the three colors are ready, they have to paint with them in a bigger thick paper, anything they want (realistic or abstract) according to the feeling the colors based on the list gave them.

This activity is one of the most abstract ones of the handbook, as the participants, do not have much rules to follow, a part from their own respective feelings, experiences and emotions. Writing down the things they have, is a way to take an introspective look to their life in that exact moment, and realize which things (good or bad) they have present on it. Realization is a really important phase in mental health, as it can help us become aware of our own emotions, and where they come from. The result of this activity aims to be a portrayed picture of the current state of the participants mind set, though the colors and shapes they will create.

Through colors, we can communicate different messages and emotions to others in just few seconds. How we perceive them, can really affect the way we think,

feel and behave, and these reactions are based on psychological components, our biological condition and our culture (Gremillion 2019). As pictured in the Figure 8, Warm Colors are those bright ones such as yellow, red or orange, that usually are related with the feelings of happiness, confidence, energy, etc. While Cool Colors are those mostly dark and muted like blue or grey, usually related with calmness, sadness, serenity, etc.

The Emotional Triggers of Colors

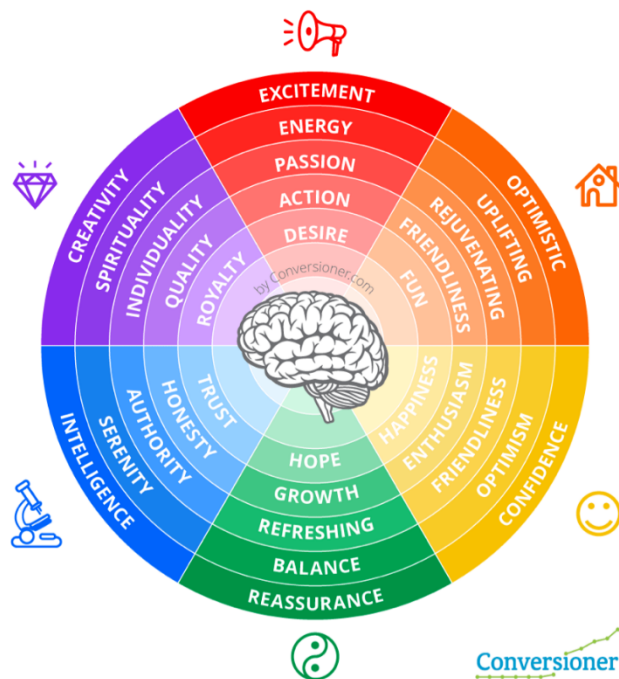


Figure 8. Illustration about the emotions produced by colors.

By Wolf, T. (2015) at “The Emotional Power of Colors”.

Chromotherapy, for example, is a method of treatment that consists on using colored electromagnetic radiation to cure different diseases (Mohsin Raza 2005). As colors have a big impact in our psychology, it is compressible that the feeling projected by different art pieces involving colors, is conditionate by the way the colors are used on it. Most artists usually chose colors that help the narrative of the piece to be understood by the viewers. However, it is not an easy task to do

so, and it requires some experience and understanding of the colors and what they usually help communicate.

This activity, will introduce the participants into the coloring world, though a dynamic approach where the colors are the main communicators in the art piece they will create. They will transform feelings and ideas into colors they think that fit to the concept, and use those to paint a piece that will portray their actual state. It hopes to get them familiar to using colors in a determinate way to better portray and communicate their feelings and ideas to others, in future artistic works.

5.5. Final expression/s

In this final activity, each participant is free to choose an art expression from the previous ones (music, drawing and painting), and create a final piece. The criteria for them to choose the art expression can be anything as long as they chose something that overall makes them feel good. That can be for many reasons: because they found it easy, because it made them think, because it made them realize about something, because it was difficult but they managed to do it, etc. They can also combine the different art expressions for this final piece.

They will have some time to peacefully working on it, and to wrap up the main feeling and ideas they got during the previous activities. After finishing the piece, they will be able to present it to the rest of the group. This last activity can help the participants chose an art expression that they found helpful to connect with themselves, and that they could explore more in the future to help benefit their well-being and mental health.

6. HANDBOOK GUIDE DESIGN

These activities will be presented in the format of a digital handbook to be used as a guide for the organizers of the workshop. The content will consist in an introduction of the workshop and its methodology, and followed by a detailed explanation of how each activity should be performed, the materials needed and clear instructions.

Each activity will be presented in the following format:


3 MUSIC ACTIVITIES

SONGS THROUGH WORDS 20' approx.

MATERIALS:

- 3 JARS
- LITTLE PIECES OF PAPER
- PENCILS
- 3 SONGS OF YOUR CHOICE
- MUSIC PLAYER

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Add the name of each song in a different jar, and distribute the 3 jars in the space given.

2. Provide each participant with 10 to 20 small pieces of paper, and pencils.
3. Play the 3 songs consecutively, while the participants write on the small papers any feelings, emotions or ideas that they might get when listening to them. They should put those papers in each song respective jar.
4. After the songs have been listened, you will read out loud each paper. After each paper, the participants have to rise their hand if they can relate to that feeling mentioned, while they listened to that song.

Art Expression used.

Title of the activity.

List of materials needed for the activity.

Instructions to follow by the instructor to guide the participants though the activity.

Figure 9. Page extracted from the handbook of the Workshop. Designed by Badji, M. (2022)

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Where there signs of cooperativity during the activity?
- Did the participants have similar feelings throughout the songs?

NOTES:

Questions that the instructor should consider to self-evaluate how the activity developed.

Space to write notes and observations during the activity.

Figure 10. Page extracted from the handbook of the Workshop.
Designed by Badji, M. (2022)

A digital version of the Workshop Handbook can be found in the annexes of this document. (Annex 1)

Even though the guide will be presented in a digital way, the following images simulate how the handbook would be presented in a physical format:



Figure 11. Handbook presented in a physical format. Designed by Badji, M. (2022)



Figure 12. Opened handbook presented in a physical format. Designed by Badji, M. (2022)

7. IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING OF THE WORKSHOP

In this section, we will go through the planning of the implementation of the workshop, and the relevant aspects to plan before the event. The methodology will be based on the knowledge acquired during the Event Production Minor course during the Degree, and on the practical training experience on the field. This section can be used as a template according to the circumstances and resources available by the instructors holding the workshop.

7.1. Target

There is not an idea target for this workshop, as it could benefit many groups from a wide age range, and backgrounds. The activities can be applied either for kids or for adults, as those exercises can easily be adapted to the target selected. It is up to the organizer to determine the target basing that decision on, for example, the following aspects:

- Closeness of the participants to the event location, to reduce transport costs and difficulties.
- Similar age range, as a way to get more narrow results, and to facilitate the dynamics between the participants.
- Similar background, to get results as a group.
- Same language, so the workshop can be held in a language that everyone understands.

It is important that the organizer selects the target well in advance so the planning and logistics can be arranged with enough time, according to the number of participants and its specific needs.

7.2. Location and schedule

It is important to note that, this workshop is designed to be carried out in a physical space and not as a virtual experience. In any case, holding any kind of event requires of a space to implement it, either if it is a physical place, or online. While planning the execution of this workshop, the organizer needs to find a suitable premise accessible by all the participants, which allows the implementation of the activities without any risks or inconveniences. Such place can be:

- A room in a school
- A room in a cultural house
- A space in a public library
- A private space designated for events

Of course, the selection of the space will be conditioned by the resources the organizer has. For example, in case of a teacher implementing this workshop, the use of a room in a school will be the most accessible premise.

Cultural houses and public libraries also dispose of spaces free to book for educational purposes, and that will suppose a more affordable option rather than a private space where rent has to be paid.

The scheduling depends on the time available. Some aspects to consider when planning the schedule of the activities are the following:

- Age of the participants: In case of younger public, the activities should be more spaced between them, and even carried out in different sessions (days).
- Physicals or mental condition of the participants: A public with special needs, might need more time to carry out the activities, so a wider range of time should be applied.
- Specific aspects to treat: If the organizer only wants to carry out some specific activity of the workshop, then the duration of it can be amplified, to get more extended outcomes.

Considering all these aspects, a good tip is to create a grid with the timetable of the session/s:

TIME	ACTIVITY	DURATION
16.00h	10- min Stretching	10 minutes
16.15h	Portraying situations	40 minutes
17.00h	SNACK BREAK	15 minutes
17.15h	What I have	1 hour

Figure 13. Grid example of the activities timetable.

Designed by Badji, M. (2022)

7.3. Logistics and budget

In an event, the logistics are a crucial part that need to be planned well in advance, to decrease any future problems while developing the activity. A logistic plan consists on listing all the materials, items and structures needed before, during and after the event. The type and quality when selecting the materials will depend in different factors such as the budget of the project, the specific needs of it, the transportation methods available, among other aspects (Paris 2021).

In the case of this workshop, a list of the items needed in each stage of the event, should be done as following:

ITEM	QUANTITY	STORE	PRICE
Pencils	(number of units regarding the number of participants)	(name of store)	(price per unit)
Erasers			
Din A4 Drawing paper			
Small Notebooks			
Crayon Colors			
Acrylic paints 1L (blue, red, yellow, black, white)			
Din A3 Drawing paper			
Din A2 Painting paper			
Painting Brushes			
Paper plates			
Glass pots			
Egg Shakers			
Paper tape			

Figure 14. Grid example of the list of materials needed before the event.

Designed by Badji, M. (2022)

ITEM	QUANTITY	STORE	PRICE
Cleaning wipes	(number of units regarding the number of participants)	(name of store)	(price per unit)
Cleaning brush			
Trash bags			

Figure 15. Grid example of the list of materials needed after the event.

Designed by Badji, M. (2022)

8. CONCLUSION

As it has been stated in the pages of this thesis, art expressions such as music, painting and drawing, can be used as a tool to address aspects concerning mental health and, therefore, well-being. Writing this thesis, I had the chance to further explore those main two concepts, to realize that they depend from each other, as a good mental health, cannot happen if the individual is not experiencing a stable well-being. Furthermore, by understanding the elements that affect the development of those two concepts on individuals, I have provided myself with enough information about the topic that, combined with my knowledge using different art expressions, has resulted on a series of workshops (activities) presented in the form of a Handbook whose goal, is to operate as a guide for professionals (or not) on how to apply and perform art activities to benefit the mental health and well-being of the participants.

The idea of this project came from the need I noticed of established guidelines for using art expressions in a functional way regarding mental health and well-being. Currently, we can find multiple research studies and articles explaining how beneficial art can be to our well-being, and how recommended it is to everyone. However, there is a lack of content informing and guiding on how to apply those art expressions in a practical way, so individuals can profit from their benefits.

Thanks to the research done during this thesis, previous to the creation of each workshop, I have been able to design functional activities that approach the mental health of the participants in a non-intrusive way, as each individual explores itself through the specific art expressions employed. Structuring the thesis on different sections, I wrote the theory parts previously to the development of each activity, to make sure that they were completely based on the research done. Later on, after interiorizing the information, I started developing each activity, and creating the handbook. Yet, to better connect the written thesis with the practical part (the handbook) I decided to shortly explain each activity in the different sections of the written part, so the reader can connect the activities with the research behind them.

All the workshops are addressed and can be adapted to different kinds of groups of participants, as they have been designed to be accessible to a wide range of people with different backgrounds. Still, for future updates of the handbook, those activities should be adapted to not only groups of people with different mental health backgrounds, but also to those with diverse physical conditions. Those improvements could be done by evaluating how the activities perform throughout different audiences, to later on adjust the handbook to participants with special needs.

I hope this project contributes to the development of more methods on how to apply art for the benefit of individual's well-being, to maximize the healing power of art, and give it the importance and recognition it deserves. I expect this handbook to help fulfill the mentioned lack of guidance books and platforms using art as a tool to help individuals, and I hope it can be used to develop even more extended tools that can be applied for many other human concerns.

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10. ANNEXES

10.1. Annex 1. Handbook

Art Your Mind

WORKSHOP HANDBOOK GUIDE



DESIGNED BY MARIA BADJI

CONTENTS

1. WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION

2. 10 MINUTES OF STRETCHING

3. MUSIC ACTIVITIES

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WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION

The goal of this workshop is to help the participants explore and take an introspective look at each one's mental state, through different art expressions. The idea is to involve the participants in different challenging situations, that could help them detect different personality traits, and how those affect their day to day life.

Previous art experience is not required, as the activities are really easy to perform according to each participant level. The main thing to focus on during the workshop, are the feelings and emotions the participants get when performing each activity, rather than the artistic results.

The workshop will be led by the instructor, that will explain and moderate the activities, following this guide. The guide contains all the necessary information regarding the materials needed for each activity, as well as the instructions to perform those.

After each activity, there is a section of question to answer by the instructor, to self-evaluate how the activities were carried out by the participants.

2

10 MINUTES OF STRETCHING

10'
aprox.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Before starting the activities, place the participants in a circle, to start a short session of stretching, as doing that prior to any type of mental or physical activity, can benefit in multiple ways how our body and mind develops during them.

2. The stretching exercises are the following:

- Roll the head in circles, in both directions
- Stretch the arms above the head
- Rotate the arms in circles, in both directions
- Rotate the hips from one side to the other.
- Stretch the legs by holding them one by one, for few seconds.
- With straight legs, try to touch the floor with both hands.



3

MUSIC ACTIVITIES

SONGS THROUGH WORDS

20'
aprox.

MATERIALS:

- 3 JARS
- LITTLE PIECES OF PAPER
- PENCILS
- 3 SONGS OF YOUR CHOICE
- MUSIC PLAYER

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Add the name of each song in a different jar, and distribute the 3 jars in the space given.



2. Provide each participant with 10 to 20 small pieces of paper, and pencils.
3. Play the 3 songs consecutively, while the participants write on the small papers any feelings, emotions or ideas that they might get when listening to them. They should put those papers in each song respective jar.
4. After the songs have been listened, you will read out loud each paper. After each paper, the participants have to rise their hand if they can relate to that feeling mentioned, while they listened to that song.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Where there signs of cooperativity during the activity?
- Did the participants have similar feelings throughout the songs?

NOTES:

SPOT THE CHOICE

20'
aprox.

MATERIALS:

- PENCILS
- A SONG FOR EACH GROUP
- CATEGORIES GRID



	ANIMAL	FOOD	BODY PART	COLOR	SPORT	VERB	FEELING
SONG NAME							

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make groups of 3 to 4 people, and provide them with the categories grid, a pencil and a song.
2. Each group will listen to their song, and make a collective choice to fulfill each category of the grid, basing that decision on what the song suggests for them.
3. After 10 minutes, they will come back to the big group, and by turns, each team will show a short part of the song, and explain to the others their choices.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Where there signs of cooperativity during the activity?
- Did you notice any participant having difficulties to speak up their mind in the groups?

NOTES:

RHYTHM CHAIN

MATERIALS:

- **SCENARIOS / OBJECTS WRITTEN IN PAPERS** (BEACH, FOREST, DOG, ETC.)

- **EGG SHAKERS** (OR SIMILAR) FOR EACH PARTICIPANT (OR SIMILAR)



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make the participants sit in a circle and deliver an egg shaker to each one.
2. To get started, ask them to reproduce how they feel in the current moment, though the sound of the egg shaker. They will play their sounds all at the same time.
3. After that, provide each participant with a piece of paper with a scenario or object written on it.
4. One by one, they have to try to reproduce that scenario or object though the sound of the egg shaker. They can play it faster, slower, harder, softer, with a specific pattern or rhythm, accompanied with a dance, etc.
5. After each performance, the whole group will repeat it at the same time.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Was the egg-shaker accessible to all the participants?
- Where the scenarios or objects presented easy to interpret by the participants?

NOTES:



DRAWING ACTIVITIES

PORTRAYING SITUATIONS

45'
aprox.

MATERIALS:

- 3 DIN A4 WHITE PAPERS FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- PENCILS
- ERASERS
- 3 SITUATION IDEAS WITH A NARRATIONAL SPEECH (FOR EXAMPLE, "GOING TO THE SUPERMARKET" AND NARRATE IT AS A SHORT STORY DEFINING THE ACTIONS DONE, THE ENVIRONMENT, ETC.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Provide each participant with 3 papers, a pencil and an eraser.
2. Mention the first situation and describe in a narrational style what happens on it, defining the environment, sounds, etc. Meanwhile, the participants are asked to draw what they interpret from the narration, from their own experiences.
3. Allow them 10 to 15 minutes to sketch up the drawing, and after that time, they can have some time to explain to the rest their sketch.
4. Follow the same procedure for the rest of the situations.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Did you notice a lack of experience or agility from the participants when drawing?
- Did you find any difficulties while narrating the scenarios? Did the participants follow the story line?

NOTES:

DRAWING CHAIN

MATERIALS:

- 1 DIN A3 WHITE PAPER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- COLOR CRAYONS
- ERASERS
- LITTLE PAPERS
- JAR

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a small paper, each participant has to write a feeling or emotion. Next, the papers will be mixed in a jar, and each participant will pick one from it.
2. What they need to do next, is trying to represent that feeling they picked from the jar, with the crayons on the big paper.
3. After 10 to 15 minutes of drawing, they will switch their drawing with the person on their left. That person, needs to continue the drawing sticking to the emotion they got in first place from the jar.
4. After 10 to 15 minutes, they will switch one last time their drawing with the person on the left. Once again, that new person needs to continue the drawing sticking to the emotion they got in first place from the jar.
5. After 10 to 15 minutes, they will stop drawing, and return the drawing to the first author. The author needs to observe and identify the new emotions drawn in its drawing.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Did they find it challenging to continue someone else's work?
- Did they find it challenging to let someone else finish their work?

NOTES:



PAINING ACTIVITIES

NEW WORLD

30'
aprox.

MATERIALS:

- 1 DIN A3 WHITE THICK PAPER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- PAINTS OF DIFFERENT COLORS
- A PAINTING BRUSH FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- WATER JAR FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- SOME TYPE OF RECIPIENT TO PROVIDE PAINTS FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Provide each participant with a Din A3 paper, a brush, a small water jar to clean the brush, and a recipient (plate) with different paints.
2. Ask them to paint anything they want, as long as they don't paint these objects in the conventional colors. For example, if they intend to paint a banana, it cannot be yellow. If they intend to paint a tree, it cannot be green, etc.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Did they find it challenging to not paint according to the conventional colors of the objects?
- Could you observe any participant distressing during the activity?

NOTES:

WHAT I HAVE

30'
aprox.

MATERIALS:

- 1 DIN A2 WHITE THICK PAPER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- PAINTS OF DIFFERENT COLORS (YELLOW, BLUE, RED, WHITE BLACK)
- A PAINTING BRUSH FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- WATER JAR FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- SOME TYPE OF RECIPIENT TO PROVIDE PAINTS FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- 1 SMALL PAPER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- PENCILS

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Each participant has to write on a small paper the things they currently have in their life. It can be material things like a house, their favorite cereal, a game, but also intangible things such as feelings, emotions, dreams, etc.
2. After that, provide them with paints of the basic colors and a brush, and they will have to create 3 new colors based on the list of things they wrote down. They can also use some primary paint without changing the tone, as long as they consider it fits with their list.
3. Provide them with a Din A2 thick paper and a jar with water to clean the brush.
4. Now, using the 3 new colors, they have to paint anything they want (realistic or abstract) according to the feeling the colors based on the list gave them.
5. When they have finalized their piece, they should observe it and consider if somehow it adjusts to the list they made in first place.

CHECK POINTS OF THE ACTIVITY:

- Where the participants engaged to the activity?
- Did they present any difficulties to perform it?
- Did they find it challenging to create new colors from the basic ones? Did you have to instruct them on how to create colors?
- Did they find it useful to previously make a list of the things they have, to later on make an art piece about it?

NOTES:



FINAL EXPRESSION/S

30'
aprox.

- In this final activity, each participant is free to choose an art expression from the previous ones (music, drawing and painting), and create a final piece.
- The criteria for them to choose the art expression can be anything as long as they chose something that overall makes them feel good. That can be for many reasons: because they found it easy, because it made them think, because it made them realize about something, because it was difficult but they managed to do it, etc.
- They can also combine the different art expressions for this final piece.
- They will have 30 minutes to peacefully work on it, and to wrap up the main feeling and ideas they got during the workshop.
- After finishing the piece, they will be able to present it to the rest of the group.



THOUGHTS & COMMENTS

15'
aprox.

MATERIALS:

- DIN A4 COLORED PAPER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
- PENCILS AND CRAYONS

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Give a paper to each participant, a pen, and different crayons.
2. They need to write down a final conclusion of how they felt during the activities, what challenges they encountered, which one they liked it the most, if they would like to continue doing some art expression in the future, etc.
3. They can use the crayons to color the paper and add some personality to the final conclusion.
4. After they are done, there will be a round of comments from those who would like to share something of what they wrote.

