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## **Art Therapy and Mindfulness 1 (Aug 2014)**

There is an increasing awareness (excuse the pun) of Mindfulness lately. I for one strongly believe in it and try to incorporate it into my day as much as possible both through meditation and awareness. But what exactly is mindfulness?

Have you ever started eating a chocolate or a sandwich, taken a couple of bites, then noticed all you had left was an empty wrapper or plate? Or been driving somewhere and arrived at your destination only to realize you remember nothing about your journey? Most of us have! These are common examples of 'mindlessness', or being on 'automatic pilot mode'. In our fast past modern lives, we constantly are rushing from one task or place to another. Unfortunately it's so easy to lose awareness of the present moment.

As humans, our minds are so easily distracted by thoughts of the past and future, to fears and worries as we try to pay out and to plan the future. This is exhausting and creates extra stress and pressures on our health. We cannot expect to stop our thoughts and worries, but what we can learn to do through repetition, is to continually bring our mind back to being aware of only the present moment. Again and again. Mindfulness, is allowing oneself to surrender into the present moment and to be conscious of the now, which is all that we really have control over.

### **An Art Therapy exercise to increase mindfulness**

Here is a simple creative exercise to help you to get more in touch with the present moment. Set aside about 20 - 30 minutes of quiet uninterrupted time. Take a sheet of light paper and some crayons/coloured pencils/chalk/paint. Whatever you have available is perfect. The art medium is merely a vehicle to carry out the exercise below.

Place your chosen art material in your hand and place your hand in the centre of the page. Become aware of your breathing. Follow your breath for a few moments as it goes in and out of your body. This should help to start to still your mind and bring it into the current moment. Remember that there is no wrong way of doing this exercise. If your thoughts increase, just bring your mind back to your breath and become aware of your hand holding the art material. Breathe in some compassion and stillness into your body to gently allow yourself to relax and let go.

Then notice the shadow that your hand creates on the page. Become curious about this shadow. Notice the size and shapes of the shadow(s). Breathe with the flow of the shadow(s). Slowly start to use your art material to follow the lines of the shadow. You may like to first do the outlines and then fill in the middle. Or the other way around. Let the shadow dictate the flow of the art medium. Move your hand around on the page and notice how the shadow(s) move too. Be inquisitive like a child and enjoy the unfolding of the flow of the shadow. Remember to keep coming back to your breath.

Remember that this Art Therapy exercise allows for the process of making art to be more important than the outcome or the creating a pretty picture at the end of the exercise. Let the image unfold. You may want to spontaneously change colours or change hands. You may notice certain shapes appearing that you want to add to. E.g. a circle may become an eye or a sun. You don't need to 'know' or understand what it is that you have created. Acknowledge as you go along if this feels easy or uncomfortable and tell yourself that this is OK! Push through any discomfort or mind talk saying that it is perhaps 'wrong' or 'silly'. Breathe in some acceptance...and also some joy! It is what it is! Continue with your image until you feel that it is complete. You may even want to give it a title at the end...

Congratulate yourself for trying something new and for allowing yourself some mindfulness time out... that which we all need daily in order to fuel up our engines to actively participate once again in life out there! But with more awareness...

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#### UPCOMING COURSE DATES 2014

COURSE:	DATES:
<b>Art Therapy 5-Day Intensive Course CAPE TOWN</b>	<b>5- 12 Nov 2014</b> (Runs for 5 consecutive days excl weekends) <b>20 CPD Points</b>
<b>Art Therapy 5-Day Intensive Course JOHANNESBURG</b>	<b>2;3;4;7; 8 September 2014</b> <b>20 CPD Points</b>
<b>Art Therapy Intro Eve</b>	Mon 20 Oct 2014 Cape Town 5:00pm - 7:00pm
<b>Vision Boards</b>	Create and manifest your dreams 2014  A 1/2 day workshop for teams/groups on request
<b>CORPORATE TEAMS</b>	<b>Book your year end function now!</b>
<b>Course Bookings</b>	<b>Online bookings:</b> <b><a href="http://www.arttherapy.co.za/bookings.html">http://www.arttherapy.co.za/bookings.html</a> or</b> <b>email: <a href="mailto:info@arttherapy.co.za">info@arttherapy.co.za</a></b>

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