



## The Power of Creativity

*“To practice any art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. So do it.” - Kurt Vonnegut*

Perhaps you don't think you are creative. Maybe when you were young, someone told you they didn't like your picture of flowers and you decided that you must not be any good at painting. Maybe you concluded that in order to be creative, you must colour within the lines, write eloquently, sing beautifully or master Beethoven's *Fifth*.

If you feel this way about exploring your creative side, I invite you put those thoughts aside for a moment. In 2010, the US National Library of Medicine published an article exploring the relationship between creativity and health. Not only did they find a connection between the two, they found that “there is evidence that engagement with artistic activities... can enhance one's moods, emotions, and other psychological states as well as have a salient impact on important physiological parameters.” In short, they found that practicing creativity is very, very good for you.

The idea of incorporating creativity in to your days can feel overwhelming when life is busy and you are experiencing stress and strong emotions. One of the nice things about being creative is that there are no rules. You do not have to adopt a

routine in order to reap the benefits, although scheduling time may be helpful for some people. Listed below are some ideas for ways to tap in to your creative side. Most of the activities can be done in just a few spare minutes of your day!

### **Writing**

Some people have little trouble jotting down their thoughts and feelings on to paper. For others, it can feel challenging. Writing can be a useful tool if you're experiencing stress, having trouble making a decision or if you just have too much going on in your head and you're struggling to get it out. If you're feeling stuck for ways to start, here are some prompts to help you get started.

*Freewriting:* Ask yourself a question or think of a key word. Set the timer for as long as you like – it could be 60 seconds or up to 20 minutes. Put your pen to paper and write until the timer

makes noise. The key to this exercise is not to think too much, but to let your thoughts flow freely without concerning yourself with form, grammar or structure.

*The Letter With No Address:* Write a letter that you will not send. Sometimes there are people in our lives that we want to say so many things to but for many reasons, we can't. Try putting all of those things in to a letter. You can choose whether to keep it or throw it away.

## **Painting/Drawing**

*Mountains and Valleys:* Let the mountains represent times when you were happy or excited and the valleys show times when you were sad or low. Create several mountains and valleys so you can see the flow of ups and downs.

*Music and Paint:* Put on your favourite music, get some paper and paint and combine any colours and shapes that come to mind! This can be a great way to relax at the end of a long day.

*Colouring Books:* They're not just for children! Try making your way through a mandala colouring book (found at Banyen Books on West 4th in Vancouver) for a calming activity.

## **Music**

Just a reminder: you do not have to be able to play a sonata to experience creativity through music!

*Rhythm:* Find some maracas, tambourines, drums or even pots and pans and let it all out. Better yet, join a drum circle! Lyle Povah has been facilitating drum circles for years and has seen dramatic benefits from participating. Drum circles have been shown to boost health and build communities. Find out more at [www.drummingandhealth.com](http://www.drummingandhealth.com)

*Sing, Sing, Sing:* Singing can be an amazing tool for lifting spirits and connecting with others. There are many community centres that offer free singing groups. If singing in front of other people feels too scary, try belting out songs in the car, while making dinner or in the shower or bath.

## **Movement**

Creativity does not have to be visual or musical—it can also be physical!

*Living Room Dance Party:* This can be helpful when you're feeling low, angry or in need of some energy. Put on your favourite up-beat song and dance in whatever way feels best! If you have mobility issues, you can also tap your feet to the beat of music or move your arms in your chair.

*Watchful Walks:* Try going for a walk to a place that makes you feel calm. Take some time to notice the sights, smells, temperature and people, animals or things around you. If you're feeling bold, try taking your *Living Room Dance Party* outside!

***“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” - Pablo Picasso***