

CREATIVE
PLATFORMS



ACTIVITY BOOKLET

promoting
mental
wellbeing



 mind
Coventry and
Warwickshire

Heart of England  Community
Rail Partnership



Hello

In this booklet you'll find exercises and ideas to help calm a busy mind through drawing. Using your hands can distract the mind, calm the breathing and build distance from anxious thoughts. The therapeutic properties of art are what got me drawing in my late 20s to detract from a difficult time in my career and eventually led to me starting a new life as an illustrator. The power of the pencil is mighty, whether you're looking for something to help you unwind after work or to distract you from a difficult task or overwhelming environment.

These activities can be practiced in your own time, in any place and in any order that you like. They are designed to help you focus on feeling present, grounded and calm. Try them and see how they make you feel. Drawing can help release stress, inspire creativity, focus wandering attention and create connections to your surroundings. These activities can also be a useful tool to deploy in advance of stressful events.

I hope you'll find a few that you like and return to time and time again.

Materials

You will need something to draw on and a pencil or pen. A sketchbook is great, but if you find yourself in a situation where you don't have drawing paper to hand, anything can become a sketchbook.

Try drawing on a leaflet, a train ticket, a napkin, a receipt. These are items that can often be found in public spaces or at the bottom of pockets. Even if you don't have a pen, practice these activities by tracing your finger over the paper. Busying the hands in this way is just as effective at calming the mind.



Activity ONE

Breathing and drawing waves

A simple task to focus on our breathing. Take a pen, pencil, or really any material you have to hand and draw some relaxing wave shapes. Try to draw them slowly and then try and match your breathing to the shape of the wave, breathing in on the way up and out on the way down. Fill in the shapes with repeating lines.

If you ever feel your breathing getting a little faster or shallower than you'd like, start drawing. Try to breathe slower by drawing consciously and slowly.



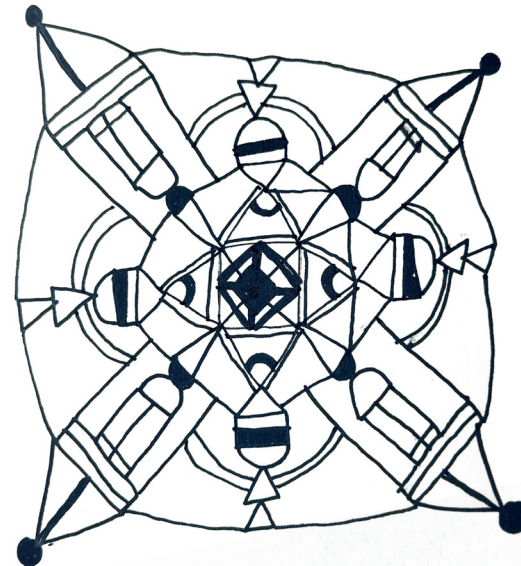
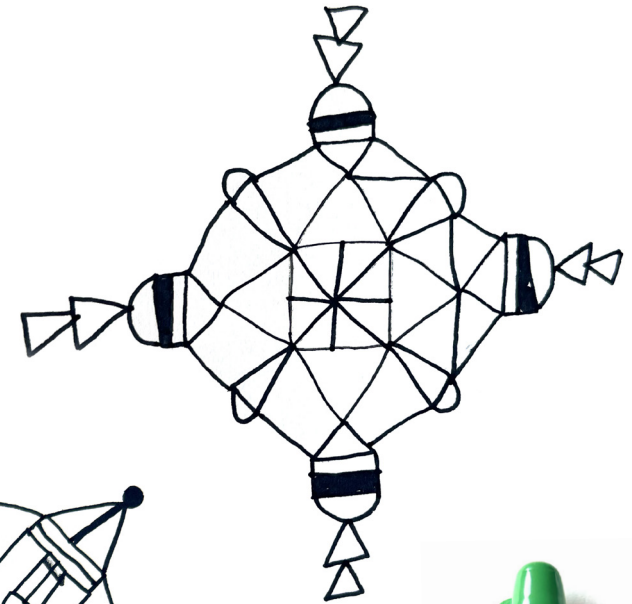
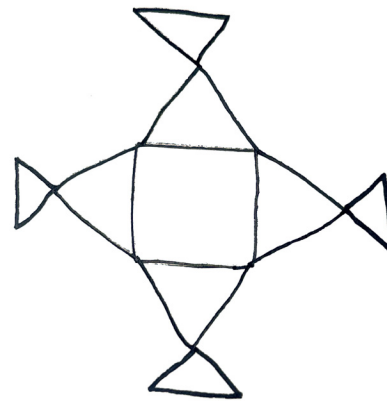
Activity TWO

Patterns

Making patterns is really satisfying! There's no comparing to any object, you can do as much or as little of a pattern as you like, a small 5cm square or a double page spread in your sketchbook. Use just one colour or make it multicoloured. Draw shapes and switch colours as you go.

To start, draw a shape such as a square. Then draw a shape from each side of the square, like a triangle, circle, dot, line, rectangle or semi circle. Copy the shape on all sides of your pattern. Keep adding to the edges and filling in the gaps, remembering to repeat your design on all 4 sides.

If you prefer a simpler task, draw lines of repeated shapes, it's so satisfying.



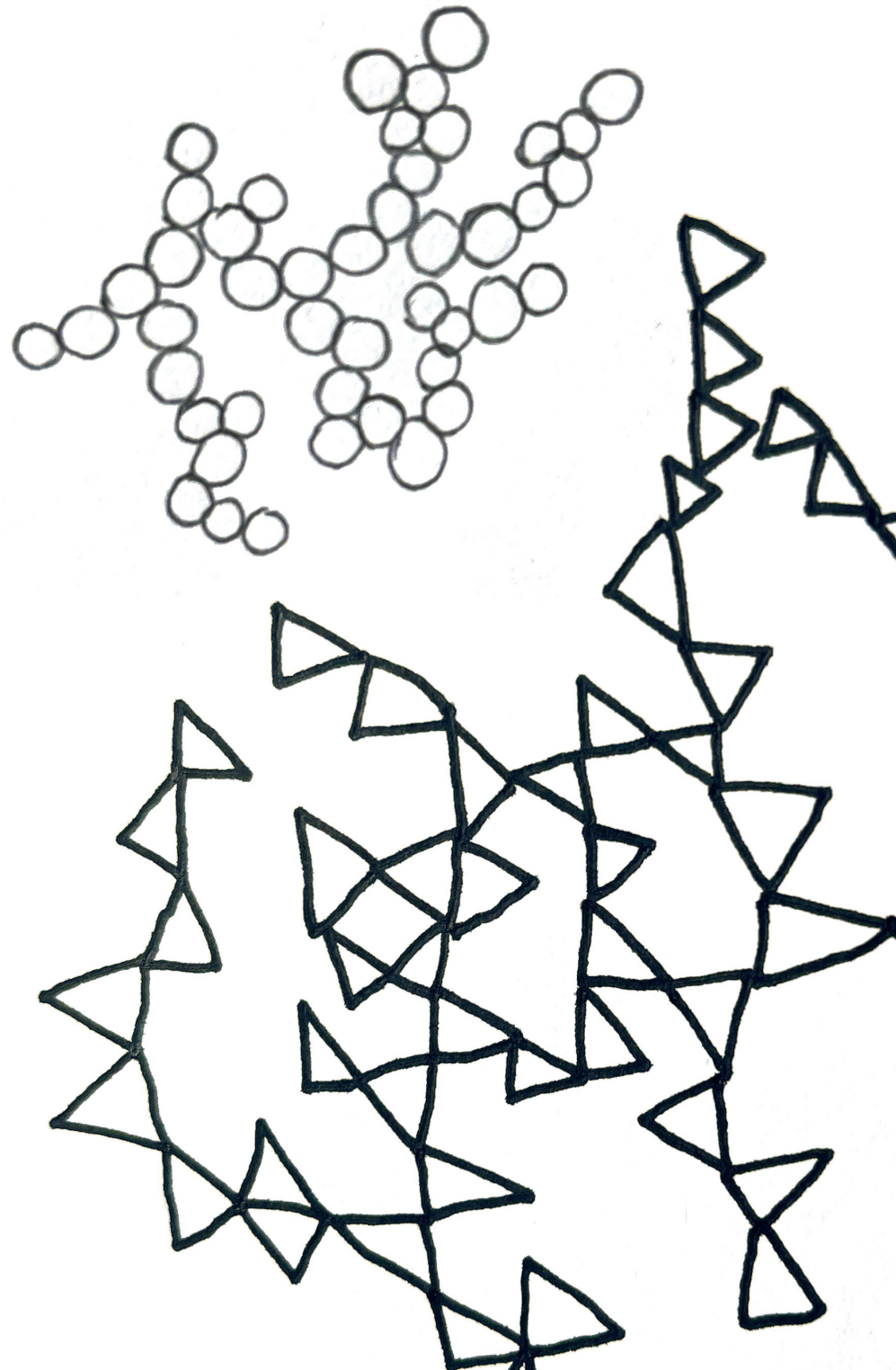
Activity THREE

Repetition

Drawing repetitively is a great, easy technique to busy your hands and fill your mind. It's really simple too. Choose a shape such as a square, circle or triangle and start repeating them on a page.

Try:

- a) Draw repeated shapes in linked paths, without thinking too much about where to place the next shape. Let your hand guide the process instinctively.
- b) Draw a shape on either side of your page and create a path of repeated shapes to link them together. Feel free to wander all over the material to make it to the other side.
- c) Colour in your shapes. This is a super satisfying task and a grounding technique for an anxious mind. It's also a really enjoyable way to connect with drawing. Try this meditative practice for 5 minutes during the day.



Activity FOUR

Details in Nature

Draw the details of a natural object, like the texture in a shell, the tone of a leaf, the shape of a feather or petals of a flower. Try to really focus in on the details. This activity is calming as we focus in on the tiny details which can help us feel connected to our surroundings. Choosing natural items like leaves, shells, bark or flowers can be very soothing too.

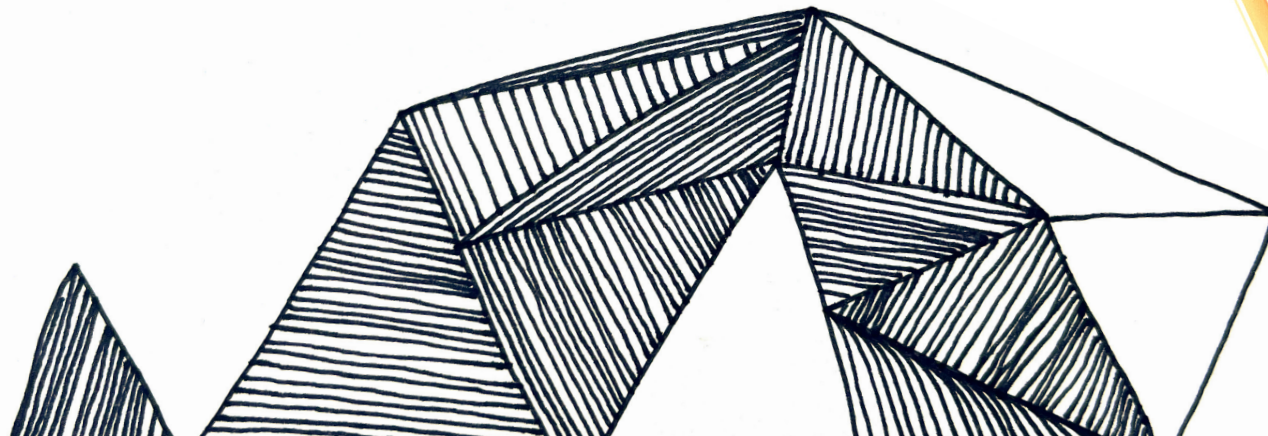


Activity FIVE

Geometric shapes

Draw geometric shapes and fill them in with parallel lines. If you want super linear lines, find a straight edge such as a credit card or stamp booklet. Use this to create nice even gaps. Alternatively use your pen or pencil and slowly draw the lines by hand, embracing the wobble and satisfaction of building a picture that is dynamic and direct.

Drawing repeated lines can give us the same characteristics as the line itself such as direction, strength and purpose. This can be really useful ahead of an event where we need to feel confident, calm and purposeful, such as a job interview or social gathering. These drawings also offer up unexpected results making mountainous scenes appear on the page.

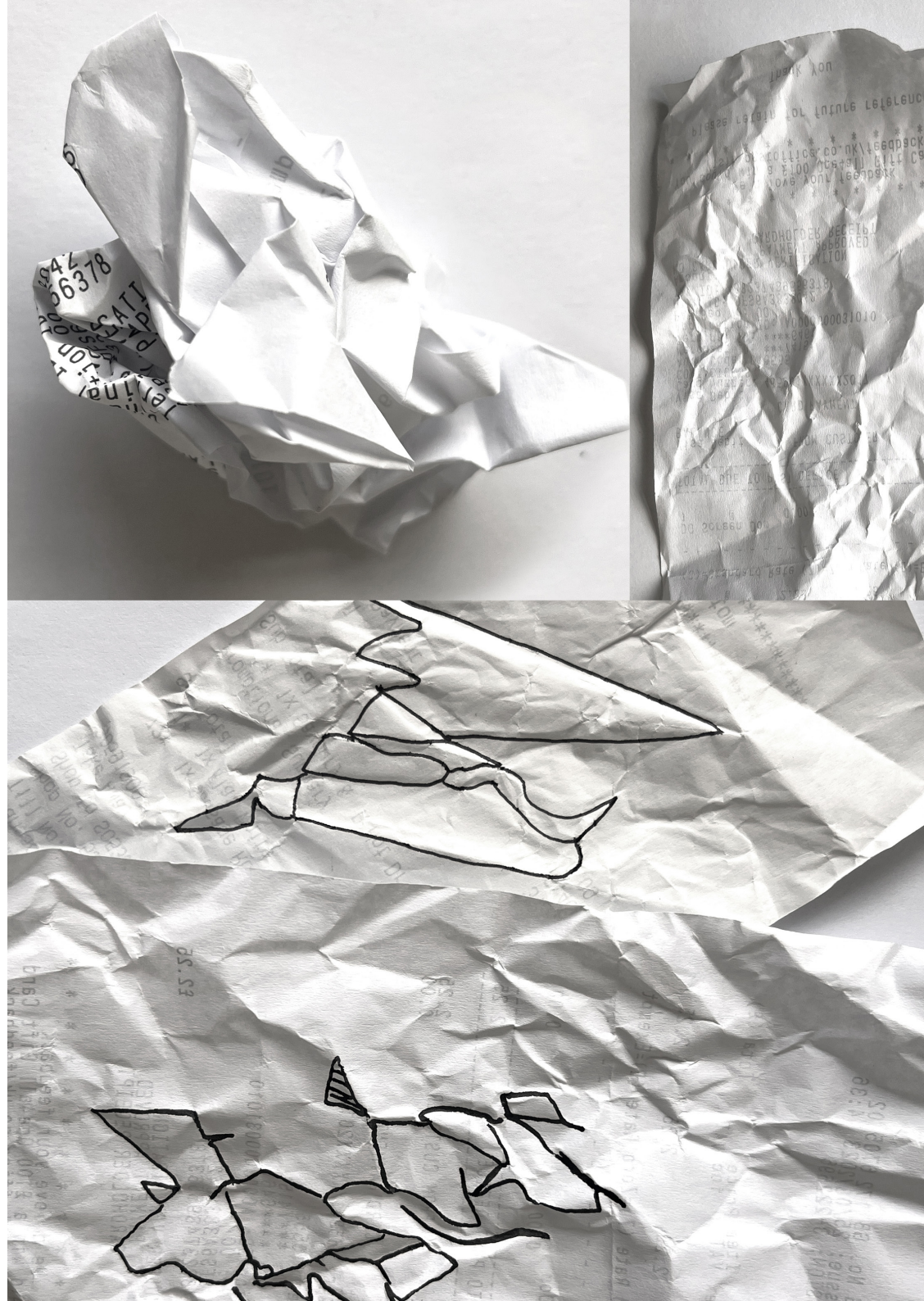


Activity SIX

Drawing in the crease

Drawing in the crease takes the pressure off drawing. There is no need to concentrate on any special outcomes as the paper dictates the process. Using a scrap of paper, a receipt is perfect for this one, scrunch it up into a ball in your hand. Release the scrunch and flatten the paper back out. You'll see all the little divets, crease and lines in the page. With a pencil or pen, begin tracing the lines. Some will seem feint and others more defined. Try not to be too precious about accuracy and also try not to lift your pen off the page moving back and forwards over every crevice, letting the line wander. This can also be used to help clear your mind or unravel a mental block by allowing your mind to wander with the pen.

Continue working on the page by colouring in the shapes shade them in or make patterns within them.



Thank you

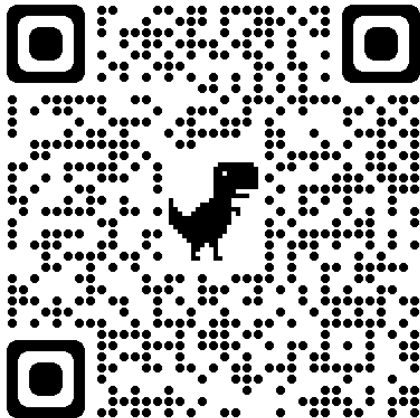
Creative platforms is an initiative designed by Julia and Emily. We're focussed on helping people develop an artistic toolkit to help alleviate anxiety. We're not medial professionals but these activities have helped us with our own experiences of anxiety, so we hope they help you too.

For more information about our work visit

www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk/cp
[@heartcrp](https://twitter.com/heartcrp)

www.emilykayeillustration.com
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