



# MBAT4Seniors: Mindfulness Based Art Therapy as Effective Tool to Improve Mental Health of Seniors in the context of COVID19 pandemic

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## IO1: TOOLKIT - Painting techniques



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## Short summary

Painting connects us with colors, symbols and body movement. All these “ingredients” are keys that open our consciousness to the “now”, the present dimension where stress, ego etc. disappear when we enter it. The energies that are inside us and need to be transformed can be externalized through painting, creating a very powerful theoretical practice.



Drawing gives people a safe way to express their ideas, feelings, worries, issues, wishes, hopes, dreams, and desires. It acts as a platform for the expression of both conscious and unconscious issues and beliefs. The freedom of creative expression gives the individual the ability to express his or her inner and outward worlds however they see fit. There are no judgments made, and the seniors are advised that they are free to draw however they desire. Older adults are preferably provided with markers, oil pastels, and occasionally crayons and colored pencils. Seniors seem to prefer using markers for their drawings. According to Susan Buchalter, author of "Art Therapy and Creative Coping Techniques for Older Adults" (2011), It is best to provide seniors with two different sizes of paper (27.5x35cm and 22.9x30.5 cm). This way, seniors can choose the materials they want to express themselves. Making decisions is crucial since it improves cognitive abilities, promotes independence, and boosts self-esteem.

Groups of senior citizens are more effective when they are organized and given clear instructions. The rules and artistic concepts may always be followed or altered by the participant, as this way usually promotes motivation and creativity. Seniors who are hesitant to draw will typically engage if the paper has some kind of structure, for example, including a circle that has already been created. People with backgrounds in art are an exception to this rule; they might like coming up with their own designs. Seniors can examine, analyze, and relate to the representations and figures shown when the artwork is discussed during the session. This enables conversation among the group and gives the opportunity for feedback. The drawing of symbols gives room for group discussion and the expression of ideas that would not otherwise be expressed verbally. Seniors gain from the drawings in a number of ways. They can be

preserved and used as references later on in therapy. Additionally, they serve to illustrate a collection of the seniors' thoughts, issues, and solutions. Images act as tools for communication, development, and understanding.

# Clay dough and painting

"Imagine a world where one hand washes the other, where two hands come together and create something." - Leonardo da Vinci

Clay painting in mindfulness-based art therapy training for the elderly is a great method for creative activity and emotional expression. Clay painting during mindfulness-based art therapy training in the elderly can offer many benefits such as emotional balance, stress reduction and mental awareness, as well as providing individuals with a creative expression tool.

"Sculpting and painting clay is an adventure where your imagination comes true." - Paul Cezanne. This process helps older adults express themselves, make sense of their emotional states, and discover their inner potential.

"Feeling the texture of clay is a way to go deep into your soul. You can find peace in working with it." - Isamu Noguchi

"Clay is an art that combines shaping and coloring and giving life." - Dale Chihuly

Clay painting can support older adults' emotional, mental, and social well-being and serve as a means of creative expression.

"Clay lets you set your imagination free. It removes boundaries and lets your creativity flow." - Richard Long

## **Clay painting can provide a number of benefits to older adults. Here are some of the benefits of clay painting in mindfulness-based art therapy training for older adults:**

- **Emotional Expression and Relaxation:** Clay painting can help older adults express their inner world and emotional state. The use of colors and patterns can provide a vehicle for expressing emotional experiences. This process can reduce stress and provide relaxation and mental calm.
- **Self-Discovery and Expression:** The clay painting process encourages older adults to explore themselves and express their inner world. Creativity and originality can boost older adults' self-confidence.
- **Mental Awareness and Focus:** Clay painting can improve attention and mental focus skills. While painting patterns, older adults may increase their ability to direct their minds to awareness of the moment.
- **Social Interaction and Connection:** Group clay painting activities can help older adults get together to strengthen their social connections and interact in a supportive environment.
- **Harmony and Patience:** Clay painting is a process that requires patience and attention. It can help older adults develop adaptability and patience by observing how ceramic pieces change as they are shaped and painted over time.
- **Finding Meaning and Storytelling:** Clay painting allows older adults to tell

their inner stories and find meaning in the patterns created. This can be an emotionally and mentally helpful experience.

### *Relaxation with clay painting*

#### **Benefits:**

- Developing attention and focusing skills
- Supporting memory and cognitive functions
- Emotional expression

#### **Necessary materials:**

- Baking soda,
- Starch,
- Water-based paint
- Paintbrush

#### **Application instruction**

**Phase 1 Start:** When starting this practice, participants may answer if they have worked with clay before.

#### **Next phase:**

- Take a glass for measure.
- Add baking soda to half the glass.
- Add half of the baking soda starch and water.

#### **Stage 2:**

- Shaping by Kneading;
- Knead with your hands until it becomes thick.
- Then give shapes with your hand or any tool you want.

At this stage, participants may express their feelings. They have to put all kinds of sadness, joy, anger on the clay in their hands, and help them realize their inner experiences, provide emotional expression and explore their creativity by asking questions such as:

- What do you think about working on clay?
- Can you notice how these thoughts affect you?
- How do you direct your attention when working on clay?
- What strategies do you use to deal with the feeling of being scattered?
- How do you experience your every move on the clay?
- How do you make a connection between your dexterity, your movements and your body?

#### **Stage 3: drying and coloring;**

- Wait for the clay to dry.
- Paint with water-based paints available at home.

*After this painting, the participants may answer*

- Do the colors and patterns you apply on clay have a meaning?
- What are your life experiences or feelings in connection with these colors and patterns?
- How do you notice your mind or thoughts while painting?
- What thoughts or impulses arise?
- What do you feel in your body during the painting process?
- How can you notice your body's reactions?
- How do you direct your attention while painting?
- How do you maintain focus and manage the feeling of dispersion?
- How do you connect with yourself while painting?
- Do you feel that you are experiencing an inner dialogue or discovery process?

**Tips:**

This technique can easily release and relieve many emotions that people cannot cope with or express. He can express his feelings not only by making clay dough but also by using different colors. Based on participants' responses, therapists can provide more specific support to understand emotional difficulties, thought patterns, or emotional blockages and advance the therapy process.

# Painting on the stones

**Materials:** Natural stone in different sizes and shapes, poscatusch in different colours. Where the activity is held: A good seat at a table inside or outside in the garden, garden room

**What to paint:** Patterns, writing small quotes, symbols, plants, animals, etc.

The activity can be divided into two activities

## **Activity 1: Finding stones in nature**

Go for a walk, for example, by the beach or in the forest, where it is possible to find stones.

### **Phase 0:**

Instruction in the activity of painting on stone

### **Phase 1:**

Get ready for the walk with appropriate clothing, footwear. Bring any drinking water, a basket or bag for stones.

### **Phase 2:**

Instruct that the walk takes place in silence. We intend to be here. Notice the body and breathing. Regardless of what is noticed, we practice acknowledging what we feel. Next, notice what the mood is right now. Regardless of the mood, it's perfectly fine. It should not be pushed away. Notice the thoughts. Are there many thoughts and what is the content?

The participants get ready for the walk and the instructor instructs that the participants walk at a pace that is suitable for the individual. Agree, if necessary, where you gather again at a given time, e.g., after 30 min. Here, too, the instructor has instructed how the participants walk with attention to sensory impressions, thoughts and feelings along the way, while at the same time finding space.

### **Phase 3:**

The participants now go out and collect stones and practice being present here and now on their own at the same time as the activity of collecting stones that are suitable to be painted on.

### **Phase 4:**

The instructor brings the participants back together and ends the activity. It can be concluded by the participants taking turns showing the stone they like the most and explaining why in one sentence. A short round can be added where the participants tell how they experienced walking in silence and having a mindful approach to collecting stones. What did the participants notice? The instructor and other participants listen without commenting.



## **Activity 2: Paint on stones at a table in the garden, terrace, garden house or inside.**

### **Phase 0:**

Watch possibly a video demonstrating painting on stone.

### **Phase 1:**

A specific time is set aside for the activity. Ex. 30-45 min.

Materials for the activity are found and made ready on the table where the participants will be seated. Make the room and the table ready and inviting for the activity. Fresh air, possibly water bottle, possibly flowers on the table. Simple and only very little, so that it does not interfere with the activity. Consider whether there should be music in the background.

### **Phase 2:**

The participants now take their seats by the materials and get ready. They are instructed to do the activity as quietly as possible. You don't talk unnecessarily with others and if it happens pay attention to what it does to your focus.

We prepare ourselves to be here and to do an activity which is to paint on stones. Notice the body and breathing. Take a few minutes to discover it. Regardless of what is noticed, we practice acknowledging what we feel. Next, notice what the mood is right now. Regardless of the mood, it's perfectly fine. It should not be pushed away. Notice the thoughts. Are there many thoughts and what is the content of the thoughts?

### **Phase 3:**

The instructor shows how the activity can be carried out - follow-up on video.

The participants now start the activity. Finds stones and gets ideas for motifs, quotes etc.

The participants are continuously guided in noticing how it feels to do the activity. Is the body relaxed, is the mind calm, etc. Is there an urge to perform and do it "nicely" and/or can you stay in the process. Do you become preoccupied with being "better" than the other participants? It is not the product that is central, but the process.

### **Phase 4:**

The instructor ensures that the activity is completed. The participants sit for a few minutes and are guided in discovering body and mind right now. Next, there may be a time when the participants go around and look at the stones of the other participants.

The participants say in a few words what it was like to do the activity and how they can do it at home when they are alone.

Anne Marie Kirketerp: Health and well-being through craft activities.

Anne Marie Kirketerp: Craft psychology

Lone Fjordback , Tatiana Chemi , Elvira Brattico : Art and mindfulness education for human flourishing

# Color empty spaces

**Benefits:** This technique is based on doodling and aims to help seniors achieve mindfulness and relaxation with a creative outcome. This drawing technique can be combined with painting, by using painting materials.

**Materials needed:** Drawing paper, pencils, markers, crayons, oil pastels.

## Instruction

### Phase 1:

Ask the participants to draw freely on the paper by making loops, swirls, and lines without lifting off the paper, using any art material of their choice (pencil, pen, crayons, marker, etc.)

As more lines are getting crossed, the connected lines will create more spaces for the participants to fill in with colours.

### Phase 2:

To end the patterns, the participants connect the continuous line with the starting line.

### Phase 3:

The participants choose different colors and fill in the empty spaces that were created with the material of their choice. (markers, crayons, oil pastels, paint.)

**Tips:** You can use relaxing music while doing this activity



# Body scanning

**Benefits:** This drawing technique is about focusing on participants' bodies and the reflection of their physical state in a mindful way. Firstly, the participants will go through a mindful experience with the help of meditation music and focus on their body parts, and afterwards they will draw how their body parts felt before and after the mindful/relaxation process.

Explain the benefits of the specific technique you are going to propose

**Materials needed:** Drawing paper, pastels, crayons, markers  
list what materials are needed

## Instruction

### Phase 1:

Put some meditation music on, and have the participants close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so) and suggest they relax their eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, jaw, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, chest, stomach, thighs, legs and toes. Go through each body part slowly and in a soft, low voice.

### Phase 2:

Ask participants to fold their paper in half. Suggest they draw how their body felt before the exercise on one side of the paper, and how their body felt after the exercise, on the other side of the paper.

### Phase 3:

Discuss their drawings for self-reflecting.

**Tips:** Soothing music may be playing during all the phases.

## Other painting techniques

Two of the very few art therapy techniques with no restrictions are painting and drawing. It seems liberating and unrestricted to be able to paint anything and everything.

Regarding painting, it involves manipulating and contrasting pictures using blank canvases, paintbrushes, and various paints including watercolors, acrylic paints, or spray paints.

Additionally, a few supplies are needed to get started painting: a white canvas, some paint, and some brushes. Seniors usually prefer painting realistic scenes, as they want to understand what they are painting. Also, they often may get frustrated when they get dirty with paint. The instructor is also the one who will clean any mess in the room after the activities.

Below you will be introduced to different examples of artistic and mindfulness-based painting techniques. (explain in detail the characteristics of the techniques you propose related to the art involved, i.e. music, dance, painting, etc. Explain also the general benefits that using this kind of art can bring to the learners)

### ***Daily Activities***

**Benefits:** This activity focuses on connecting daily activities with mindfulness. This might help seniors to develop mindfulness in their everyday life by associating it with daily activities

**Materials needed:** Painting materials (canva or paper, acrylic or watercolor paints, brushes, water cups, aprons or old clothes to protect clothing, palettes or disposable plates for mixing colors)

### **Instruction for the implementation:**

#### **Phase 1:**

Asks the participants the following questions:

1. "What are the regular activities that allow you to cultivate mindfulness?"
2. "Consider how mindfulness might affect a routine action, for example:
  - "How you might take pleasure in a cup of coffee in the morning or afternoon"
  - "How you enjoy walking in nature"
  - "Listening to songs that make you feel calm"
  - "Watching your favorite tv show"
  - "How you practice mindfulness before bed to relax and sleep."

#### **Phase 2:**

The participants paint their favorite activities on which they can experience mindfulness.

#### **Phase 3:**

The participants present their paintings and discuss their favorite daily activities

Tips

Explain the instructions to seniors as simply as possible, provide aid when needed

and positive feedback during and after the activity.



### ***Draw a heart***

**Benefits:** The participants are requested to paint a heart along with people/things they love and share it with the rest of the group for discussion. This will help them develop their self-awareness and their social skills.

**Materials needed:** Painting materials (canva or paper, acrylic or watercolor paints, brushes, water cups, aprons or old clothes to protect clothing, palettes or disposable plates for mixing colors)

### **Instruction for the implementation:**

#### **Phase 1:**

Ask the participants to paint a heart, including inside the heart people, objects, pets or anything else that they love and are in their hearts.

#### **Phase 2:**

The participants introduce their painting to the rest of the group and discuss it.

**Tips:** You can give a pre-drawn heart to the participants to save some time. This way, the participants will only have to paint inside the heart.

