



# MBAT4Seniors: Mindfulness Based Art Therapy as Effective Tool to Improve Mental Health of Seniors in the context of COVID19 pandemic 2021-1-LT01-KA220-ADU-000030408

## IO1: TOOLKIT - Reading techniques



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## Short Summary/introduction about these techniques

Reading can also be a mindfulness practice. We can do it with a mindful attitude (and it can be easy as we usually read alone in silent spaces like a room) but also because we can read texts that are about mindfulness, wisdom, inner peace etc. Literature is full of powerful and useful texts that can be highly useful. Also using words can help us to learn mindfulness.

# Gratitude technique

**“Today is the happiest day of my life, because...”**

Gratitude techniques are exercises or practices designed to cultivate and express feelings of gratitude. These techniques encourage individuals to focus on and appreciate the positive aspects of their lives, relationships, and experiences. Practicing gratitude can help people shift their mindset from a focus on what they lack or what's wrong to what they have and what's going well.

## **Benefits:**

Gratitude techniques are important for several reasons, as they offer numerous physical, psychological, and social benefits.

**Improved Mental Health:** Practicing gratitude can lead to a more positive outlook on life, reduced symptoms of depression, and lower levels of anxiety. It encourages a focus on positive experiences and emotions, which can counteract negative thought patterns.

**Enhanced Emotional Well-Being:** Gratitude techniques can help individuals become more aware of their emotions and foster a sense of happiness and contentment. Expressing gratitude can boost one's mood and increase overall life satisfaction.

**Stress Reduction:** Gratitude practices have been shown to reduce stress levels by promoting relaxation and reducing the body's stress response. When people focus on what they are thankful for, it can help them cope with challenging situations more effectively.

## **Materials needed**

paper and writing material (optional)

## **Instruction for the implementation**

### **Phase 1:**

Take a piece of paper. Use all your senses: you can take a precise look at it, you can touch it, and feel the size, thickness, the shape of the paper. You can even smell it or try it with a tip of your tongue. Take your time.

### **Phase 2:**

take a pencil or pen (you can use any other painting material) and think of several things that make your today's day the happiest day of your life. You can write it down or paint any associations.

### **Phase 3:**

Take your time. Concentrate on your breath. Breathe in, breathe out. Inhale, exhale. When you write or paint the thing you are happy about take your time, don't rush.

With every new thought say thank you for the thing that makes your day the happiest of your life.

### **Phase 4:**

think of as many things as you can, but don't judge yourself if you can't think of anything more. Just say "Thank you for today"

## **Tips**

Seniour can write different or even the same things every single day. Encourage him/her to work on this gratitude techniques everyday or as often as possible

# Breathing Canvas

Mindfulness Art-Based Therapy with Breathing Exercises is a holistic approach aimed at promoting self-awareness, relaxation, and gratitude through the combination of artistic expression and focused breathing. This technique integrates the benefits of mindfulness, creative expression, and intentional breathing to enhance mental well-being.

## **Benefits:**

1. **Enhanced Self-Awareness:** The combination of art and mindful breathing allows individuals to connect with their thoughts and emotions, promoting a deeper understanding of themselves.
  2. **Stress Reduction:** Engaging in mindful art while incorporating intentional breathing helps reduce stress levels, promoting a sense of calm and relaxation.
  3. **Improved Concentration:** The practice encourages individuals to focus on the present moment, enhancing concentration and attention to detail.
  4. **Cathartic Expression:** The creative process serves as a form of emotional release, allowing individuals to express their feelings and experiences through art.
- Materials needed: canvas or paper; artistic tools (paints, pencils, markers, etc.).

## **Instruction for the implementation**

### **Phase 1:**

- Find a quiet and comfortable space. Sit or stand in a relaxed position.
- Place a canvas or paper in front of you. Take a moment to observe it using all your senses. Feel the texture, notice the color, and take in any scent associated with the materials.

### **Phase 2:**

- Choose your artistic tools (paints, pencils, markers, etc.). Begin to create a visual representation of things that bring happiness to your current day. This could include people, activities, or even abstract symbols.
- Allow your creativity to flow without judgment. Express your thoughts and feelings on the canvas.

### **Phase 3:**

- Shift your focus to your breath. Inhale deeply, exhale slowly. Pay attention to the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body.
- As you continue to create on the canvas, synchronize your breath with your artistic movements. Inhale during positive strokes, exhale during moments of release or expansion in your artwork.

### **Phase 4:**

- With each stroke or element added to your artwork, express gratitude for the positive aspects of your day. Say "thank you" silently or out loud for each thought that contributes to your happiness.
- Take your time and be present in the moment. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath and the creative process.

### **Phase 5:**

- Once you feel a sense of completion, take a moment to admire your artwork. Reflect on the emotions and gratitude expressed.
- Conclude the session with a final deep breath, acknowledging the positive energy you've infused into your creation.

**Tips**

This Mindfulness Art-Based Therapy with Breathing Exercises provides a powerful avenue for self-expression, mindfulness, and gratitude, promoting overall mental well-being.

# Mindfulness poetry

Mindfulness poetry is a powerful way to connect with the heart of the experience of mindfulness. Whether or not we have a formal mindfulness practice, mindfulness poetry can help us keep, or regain, our footing in a world of upheaval. They can inspire you and bring you closer to the wonder of living a mindful and compassionate life.

## **RUMI Guest House**

### **Benefits:**

It is very natural for us to want to resist and push difficult thoughts and emotions away. The poem helps us to use the analogy of a guest house to allow painful thoughts and emotions to arise. To invite them in. To allow them to be present. To notice, in detail, how their presence makes us feel. Then, just like a guesthouse, we open the door and allow them space and to be free. Allowing them to pass through without us attaching to them. This practice encourages us to meet our thoughts and emotions with courage and warmth and kindness.

When we are in the midst of difficult times in our lives – when our hearts are wide open, or when we ruminate over our dark thoughts, we often dwell on the pain.

Rumi shows us that, even though we cannot see it at the time, allowing the difficult emotions and thoughts to pass through, creates space for something better to come. A bit like having a spring clean. Then the challenging thoughts and emotions can eventually pass through, if we allow them to. Like guests in a guesthouse. They come, they go.

### **Materials needed:**

A comfortable and quiet space.

IF the instructor doesn't read out the poem, the following is needed:

A device or platform to play audio

Optional: headphones for a more immersive experience

## **RUMI Guest House poem**

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honourably.

He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

### **Instruction for the implementation**

#### **Phase 1:**

Find a comfortable and quiet place. Sit or lie down in a relaxed position. Take a moment to set an intention for this activity. It could be to find calmness, gain insight, or simply to enjoy the experience. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to center yourself. Allow any lingering thoughts to fade away.

#### **Phase 2:**

Play / read out loud, the poem or audio recording. Listen attentively to the words, the rhythm, and the emotions conveyed. Pay attention to the nuances of the speaker's voice. Notice the tone, pace, and any subtle inflections that convey meaning. Allow yourself to connect with the emotions conveyed in the poem. How does it make you feel? What memories or images does it evoke? Let the words paint pictures in your mind. Visualize the scenes or emotions described. Let your imagination roam freely. Throughout the listening experience, maintain awareness of your breath. Use it as an anchor to stay present.

#### **Phase 3:**

After the poem concludes, sit in silence for a few moments. Reflect on how the experience made you feel and any insights it brought forth. Take a moment to express gratitude for the opportunity to engage in this mindful listening practice. Acknowledge the emotions and thoughts that arose.

#### **Tips**

You can use other mindfulness poems instead of the one presented here. Using other poems may require a slight adjustment of the instructions to the participants. The adjustments depend on the focus of the mindfulness poem.