



Students scribble on large sheets of paper and refocus with a mandala-designing activity using a circle template.



Students enjoy the playful activity of scribbling followed by the calming experience of creating their mandalas.

SCRIBBLE IT OUT

Lisa Kay

Art-making is a great way to channel emotions, de-stress, and manage frustrations. In this two-part series about the use of therapeutic art approaches, I draw on my practice and experience as an art therapist working with adolescents and young

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adults in a hospital and special education school and as an art educator in a university setting.

These art experiences are suggestions for use in the classroom or other alternative settings and as self-care strategies for educators. It is important to note that the art experiences presented here have therapeutic value; however, they are not art therapy.

Have you ever wondered...

- what to do when students' energy levels are high and they need to calm down?
- what to do when students are stressed and need to de-stress?
- how to transition students into a lesson when they need to refocus?
- what you could do as an art teacher when there has been a

traumatic event in your school or community?

- how to use art to take care of yourself when you hear students' sad and painful stories?

Scribbling

For this activity, you'll need large sheets of drawing paper and paper with a circle drawn on it. To warm up, take a crayon in both hands and scribble large circles in the air for a minute. Next, transfer those marks to the large paper. Fill the entire paper with scribbling. Channel any frustration, stress, and tension in the body through your arms onto the paper. Use deep pressure to scribble as hard as you can.

After scribbling for three to four



Students use two markers to create a balanced mandala design that starts at the center and radiates outward.

minutes, select two marker colors. Use the markers on the paper with the circle to create a balanced mandala design that starts at the center and radiates outward. After drawing the mandala, cut it out, give it a title, and place it on the large scribble paper.

Adaptations

Provide students with 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) newsprint paper and ask them to scribble solo. If time is an issue, you can use smaller paper for the scribble portion and smaller circles for the mandala drawings.

When the mandala drawings are complete, ask students to reflect on the process—what they noticed, what they liked or didn't like. Ask

them to compare and contrast the scribble drawing with the mandala drawing in their journals. Arrange the mandala drawings in a circle on the scribble drawing and discuss.

Refocusing

Students can use this opportunity to release or let go of whatever they need to by scribbling it out. They are often surprised to be asked to scribble; some students have not scribbled since they were quite young. Play energizing music during the scribbling phase of this experience and calming music for the second part. Music is used to guide the process of discharging the negative feelings and refocusing inward.

It's interesting to observe and lis-

ten as students participate in this art experience. They are actively engaged, talking and laughing with each other during the scribble phase. They enjoy the playful, regressive activity of scribbling and then the calming, centering experience during the mandala drawing. The contrast is usually dramatic. The energy in the room shifts from playful and lively to meditative. One student explained, "This was an interesting exercise because while it did have limits, there were also a lot of possibilities within the limits." ©

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