

Easy ways art can help ease stress and anxiety



This article was written by a Kooth worker (she/her) and contains mentions of the following themes: art, stress, anxiety, mental health, mindfulness.

We may not all be the best at art, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't create. Several studies have shown that art can help improve our mental health; even activities as simple as doodling, colouring, and working with clay can help reduce stress and anxiety.

Why does making art help ease stress and anxiety?

Whether it be painting, drawing, colouring, working with clay, or making a collage, creating art can help ease stress and anxiety by making us more focused on what we're doing in the present. It also makes us pay attention to our senses. In her famous book, *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron says, "Art opens the closets, airs out the cellars and attics. It brings healing." Art can help us heal by helping us clear our minds.

We often hear about practising mindfulness when it comes to dealing with stress and anxiety; mindfulness is all about being aware of the present moment - letting our thoughts come and go, and noticing our breath, as well as what we feel, see, and hear.



Easy ways art can help ease stress and anxiety

If you'd like some help practising mindfulness, you can listen to our Kooth Mindful Moments guided meditation podcasts on [Apple Podcasts](#) or [Spotify](#).

Making art can help us with mindfulness because when we're creating something, we're more focused on the present moment of creating. We have to be in tune with our senses - especially, sight, touch, and feeling - to create. Think about a photo-like oil painting of fruit; the painter must pay attention to its colours, textures, shapes, and the light in the room to paint it accurately. Art can help calm us by connecting what we're thinking, doing, and seeing in the present moment.

Oftentimes, we feel stress and anxiety when there are situations we feel like we cannot control - we may have unhealthy tendencies to want to control everything around us, to help us feel safe. Making art allows us to freely express ourselves while still feeling safe and having a healthy sense of control; if we want to paint the sky pink, we can, but at the same time, we can wildly splash paint all over a canvas, if we choose.

While our fear and anxiety may cause us to focus on negative thoughts, creating art can help take our minds away from fear and negativity. Art can help us release feelings and experiences we may not know what to do with.

What are some easy ways you can use art to help manage your stress and anxiety?

Let's discuss a few easy ways you can use art to help you when you're feeling anxious or stressed, and why they might be good for you.

1. Doodling

Many studies have shown that doodling can help reduce anxiety, and even help you remember more information if you're doodling while listening to something else. Doodling can help us with mindfulness because we're connecting our minds and bodies while creating in the present moment - and there's no pressure for things to be perfect! Randomly doodling can help free us from the need to have everything turn out a certain way. It allows us to create without judgement, and can even help calm us when we're in stressful situations - for example, a loud, crowded classroom.

2. Colouring

Though we may view colouring as something only little kids do, it is frequently associated with stress relief because you have a limited number of colours, set boundary lines, and you don't need to stress about the "right" way to do it. It's a



Easy ways art can help ease stress and anxiety

simple activity that allows you to focus on the present moment and what's in front of you, making you focus on shapes, colours, and small hand movements, rather than negative or rushing thoughts. There are now so many types of colouring books - both simple and complex, and for all ages. If colouring is something you enjoyed when you were younger, why not give it another try?

3. Working with clay

Although it may be more difficult to come across, working with clay allows you to work with your hands in a more physical way that may be a better form of stress relief for you. Whether it be modelling clay or pottery clay, working with our hands can create a satisfying connection with our senses. Think of the way children may like to play in the mud, sand, or dirt. There is something satisfying about using our hands to dig into and shape things, which can help release tension that leads to stress.

Of course, there are so many ways you can use art to help reduce stress and anxiety, but these are just a few suggestions to help get you started. Making art may feel a bit intimidating or unnatural if you're not used to doing it, but just remember that if you're doing it to help support your mental health, it's the process that matters more than the end product. There's no need for perfection or judgement, just be open and attentive to what you're creating in the present moment.

Would you like a safe space to explore the issues raised in this article? At [Kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com), you can read more, use an online journal, chat with our community and access confidential and anonymous support - all for free, with no waiting lists.