



VISUAL JOURNAL

What is it?

Visual journaling is an effective tool in the field of arts therapy. It combines written and visual languages to express feelings, thoughts and emotions. A place to play with ideas, to contain emotions and life's dramas, and to serve as a source of self-care.

The VJ is particularly used as an approach to assist recovery from trauma or loss, PTSD, anxiety, and as a form of stress reduction. It assists emotional reparation and supports self-regulation and stress reduction.

A few tips:

- Relax before you start: take a few deep breaths and get started. Don't overthink anything, and have fun!
- Record the Date you completed the image and a title or other words that may come to mind.
- Safety First: consider keeping your journal in a safe place, especially if writing about traumatic events, losses or interpersonal problems. With your youngest clients, especially children, you can offer to leave their journals with you for safekeeping between sessions especially if they are in danger of domestic violence or abuse.

Examples of Visual Journal Themes:

How Do You Feel Today? Keeping a feelings journal between sessions and spending a little time each day drawing "how I feel today".

"Non-Dominant Hand Drawing" or "with eyes closed Drawing" provide a spontaneous form of expression that helps individuals let go of control and judgment about creative output.

"Making an intention" and reinforcing it over time serves as a reminder and it is an imaginal commitment to change.

"Working Within a Circle" creating images within and/or outside the circle gives a double containment to our feelings and allows to structure the drawing experience.

"Dream Journal" of some key words, phrases and visual images recalled from your dreams.

"Photo collage Journal" collecting your favourite images, words or quotes from magazines or books, as well as small items that can be easily pasted on your journal. The process focuses on assembling, organising, establishing relations and priorities amongst the elements.

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THE RED PENCIL (International)

53, avenue Blanc, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland
welcome@redpencil.org

IDEAS FOR DIRECTIVES

- Draw on a large paper using the entire body in movement
- Draw the ugliest drawing that you can make in this moment
- Draw a moment from the past you often think of
- Draw yourself in a situation in which you felt helpless
- Draw with the colors that match your current mood
- Draw a recurring bad dream
- Draw the people and things that matter to you
- Draw a lifeline (representing your life...mark different points and indicate your age at each point. Then draw the highs and lows adding images and color)
- Draw what you do when you feel angry
- Draw what makes you angry, a scary place, something scary, the last time you cried, a place that makes you happy, how you feel this minute
- Draw yourself as you are, how you wish you looked, when you are older
- Go back to a time when you felt most alive...the first thing that pops into your head
- Draw where you wish you could be...an ideal place, a favorite place or a place you dislike, the worst thing you can think of
- Draw something you feel guilt about and find a way to let go of the drawing
- Draw your family now, your family in symbols, as animals, as bits of color
- Draw your family with each person doing something
- Draw the part of you that you like the best, and/or the least
- Draw how others see you, how you wish they would see you
- Draw a person you like, hate, admire, are jealous of
- Draw yourself as a monster, a demon
- Draw a lonely feeling, what you do when you feel depressed, sad, lonely, jealous, hurt
- Draw something that annoys you about someone in the group, someone close to you, the world around you
- Draw your day, your life now, your past, and your future
- Draw happy lines, tender lines, sad, angry, afraid lines
- Make sounds or body movements as you draw
- In a group, pair off and each draws the other without looking at the drawing, and without taking the pen off of the paper
- Draw something with a partner (agree on a theme)
- Draw a secret
- Draw being alone, being with others, being serious, and being silly

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- Just allow your hand to move over the paper and do whatever it wants to
- Throw out a word and have people draw quickly to represent the word (love, hate, beauty, anxiety, freedom etc.)
- Think back to when you were very little and draw something that made you happy, excited, made you feel good, something you did, and something that made you sad
- Draw something you are worried about
- Draw three wishes
- Touch your face and then draw it
- Imagine if you had the power today to do anything you want in the world
- Draw what you would do
- If you had magic powers, where would you like to be?
- Draw your power

You may also want to simply relax, choose the colors which seem to attract you and draw anything which comes to your mind. Be completely non-judgmental in looking at your own creation and ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my general impression of the drawing?
- What comes to mind when I look at it?
- What do the colors and forms mean to me?
- Am I particularly attracted to some part of the drawing? If yes, what do they mean to me?
- If the drawing could speak to me, what would it say?
- If I could make the drawing look more positive, more hopeful, happier, how would I do that?
- What would this mean to me into my life?

If you feel like it, write a few words, or more. Take a few deep breaths. Be thankful for the message received. Look around gently to reconnect with the world you live in and enjoy life!

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