

Newark Community Art Club with Elaine Winter Session no. 27 (Summer Term):

Mental Health Awareness Week

Connect with Nature Through Art



Introduction

This week (week commencing 10 May 2021) is Mental Health Awareness Week and this year the theme for the week is Connect with Nature, with a focus on how being in touch with nature is good for our mental health. You can read more from the Mental Health Foundation on this link <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week/why-nature>. This week use your arts skills to connect with nature and by default give yourself a mental health boost.

Ideas for Art that will connect you to Nature

This week there isn't one single task for you to follow but instead here are some ideas to get your started and most importantly get you to connect your art with nature.

- 1) Go for a walk somewhere you will encounter nature. It can be around the local lake, along a cycle path that has trees and plants near it. Take photographs of textures and shapes in nature that catch your eye as you go. If there is a natural sound that is interesting like wind through the leaves, birdsong then make a short recording to capture it. When you get back from your walk look at your photographs and sounds. Make a piece of art from your findings – could be a painting, could be a poem, could be a map of your route with labels of what you connected with along the way.

- 2) Get outside and take some paper and a pencil with you and start collecting textures by doing frottage. Hold a piece of paper up against some tree bark and rub a pencil over the paper to get the texture coming through. Look for stones and other surfaces with interesting textures you could capture in this way.
- 3) Take something to rest on (a bit of sturdy cardboard will do) plus some paper, a pencil and any other portable materials you have and get outside and draw and/or paint what you see. If you feel a bit odd about doing this in a park or a public place then do it in your own garden if you have one and if you don't have a garden then look out the window for something natural to focus on. Even a weed growing out of the gutters of pavement will be great!
- 4) Look for something from nature that you can focus on indoors to draw. This could be a houseplant, a shell you saved from a trip to the beach, or if you can't see anything obvious then why not look for some images of close ups of leaves and forests to get you started. Take time to really notice the shape and form of the details and get into the flow of drawing them.
- 5) Here are some short mindful drawing prompts – have a go at a few of them, none take long to do but to connect to nature use something like a plant, a few twigs, or a flower for your subject:
 - Look and draw your subject in the time it takes to breathe in and breathe out. Don't hold your breath!
 - Draw your subject with your non-dominant hand (so if you are left-handed draw with your right hand and if you are right-handed draw with your left hand).
 - Do a continuous line drawing of your subject. By continuous line, we mean once your pencil has gone down on to the paper it has to stay on the paper without a break so your drawing will look like it is made of a continuous line of string.
 - Draw your subject in 5 lines only
 - Draw your subject in 3 lines only
 - Hold your pencil lightly from the top (with all 5 fingers) and dangle it over the paper drawing your subject.

- Look at your subject and draw it without looking at your paper once – no cheating!
- Draw your subject in dots and specks only (no lines)
- Draw only the outline of your subject in one, strong gesture
- Draw your subject without blinking (you might need to be quite quick to do this!)
- Draw your subject's shadow only
- Draw your subject starting not on the outside edges but right in the middle and draw it using shading only (no outline or contour lines at all)