

Relieve stress and anxiety by creating art

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Image 1. Students sculpt with clay in an art class. Studies have shown that making art can be a way to relieve stress and anxiety. Photo: Blend Images/Hill Street Studios via Getty.

What can you do to help relieve feelings of stress and anxiety? If you're an artist, you keep making art. And if you have never considered yourself an artist, now is the time to take up an artistic pursuit such as drawing or painting. It is never too late to start. Everyone can do it. If you can hold a brush or crayon or marker, you can create art.

Making art doesn't have to be a big investment. All you need are a set of watercolor or acrylic paints, a brush, markers or crayons, and paper.

You will be greatly rewarded emotionally, physically and spiritually for your creative efforts. As the famous artist Pablo Picasso once said, "Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life."

History Is Full Of Art

Art has been in existence since the dawn of humankind. People have always had a natural impulse to use line, shape, color and form, to make meaning out of life and express themselves. Children do it as soon as they have the fine motor skills necessary to hold a crayon. Through this impulse,

artists express the joys, sadness, fears, triumphs, beauty and ugliness of life. Artists are truth-tellers. They are often perceived as a threat and are the first to be censored during times of war and strife.

Telling the truth is transformative, both for individuals and groups – and that is the medicinal power of art.

In The Mood

Creating art heals not only the mind and spirit but also the body since all of these are interconnected. As you draw or paint, your breathing slows, your blood pressure lowers, and your mind lets go of daily struggles. This slowing down allows you to fully experience the moment. The process not only relaxes you but also brings a feeling of joy, increasing your energy and enthusiasm for life.

Making art also allows you to play, freeing you to explore and experiment with new materials and methods. It also lets you express gratitude by seeing beauty where others may not. Creating art gives you an outlet for expressing your anger and frustration, as well as your personal views.

Engaging with the arts is a way of engaging with yourself because it lets you connect with yourself at a deeper level and express ideas and feelings that you cannot easily put into words. Making art can help you to connect with other people, too. If you take an art class, you will likely share ideas with other students. The creative process will help you make new friends and foster existing relationships in a positive environment.

Unleashing Your Creativity

Although the process of making art is the most important part, your finished product is significant too. Your painting or drawing will serve as a visual reminder of the lessons you learned while making it, and you are likely to feel energized just by looking at it.

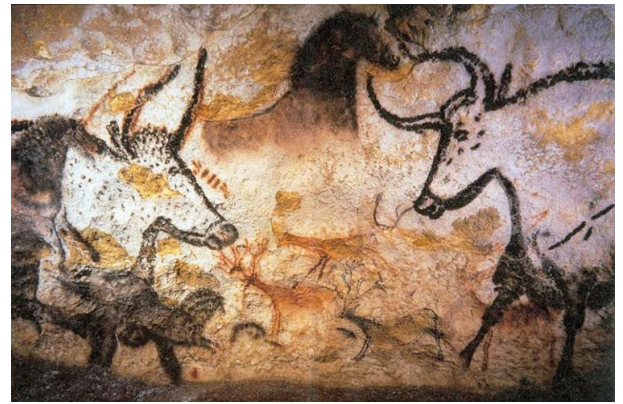
If you don't know how to begin, here are some ways to start creating art. You will find that once you start, your creative energies will be unleashed and one idea will lead to the next. If possible, set aside a small table with your art supplies so you can get creative whenever the mood strikes.

Play And Experiment With Color

Without thinking about it, choose colors that appeal to you and start painting with them, or tear pictures with those colors out of magazines and glue them down, combining them with paint. Don't think too much about their shapes or making anything recognizable – just enjoy the colors.

The act of concentrating on the colors and determining color combinations will give you something to focus on other than the stresses of your daily life.

Draw In A Sketchbook Or Visual Journal Each Day



Doing this will keep you grounded in the moment, alert to the sights around you, and ready to record fleeting thoughts and ideas.

Make A Small Painting Each Day

It only takes about an hour, but the benefits of daily painting are many. Not only will you relieve stress, but your painting skills will improve quickly and you will be able to try new painting methods without fear of ruining a picture you have worked on for a long time. Plus, you will feel a sense of accomplishment as a result of creating something new every day.



Paint Or Draw Your Mood

Artistic elements such as lines, color and shapes can help to express your feelings. Will you draw short dark marks or long flowing ones? Will your shapes be jagged with sharp edges, or rounded and curved?

Practice Blind Contour Drawing

This type of drawing trains the eye to draw what it really sees rather than what it thinks it sees. To try it, pick an object, look at it while you draw its outline. Don't look down at your paper as you draw, no matter how tempting it is. By staying focused on the object, you will draw it more slowly and truly capture its uniqueness.

Join An Art Class

While you can do all of the above alone, it can be even more helpful to create art with other people. Building connections with others will serve you well the next time you are stressed and could use a friend.

Quiz

1 According to the article, making art can improve one's quality of life.

Which paragraph from the article BEST supports the idea outlined above?

- (A) What can you do to help relieve feelings of stress and anxiety? If you're an artist, keep making art. And if you have never considered yourself an artist, now is the time to take up an artistic pursuit such as drawing or painting. It is never too late to start, and everyone can do it. If you can hold a brush or crayon or marker, you can create art.
- (B) Creating art heals not only the mind and spirit, but also the body since all of these are interconnected. As you draw or paint, your breathing slows, your blood pressure lowers, and your mind lets go of daily struggles, allowing you to fully experience the moment. The process not only relaxes you but also brings a feeling of joy, increasing your energy and enthusiasm for life.
- (C) Although the process of making art is the most important part, your finished product is significant too. Your painting or drawing will serve as a visual reminder of the lessons you learned while making it, and you are likely to feel energized just by looking at it.
- (D) Artistic elements such as lines, color and shapes can help to express your feelings. Will you draw short dark marks or long flowing ones? Will your shapes be jagged with sharp edges, or rounded and curved?

2 Read the list of sentences from the article.

1. *Telling the truth is transformative, both for individuals and groups – and that is the medicinal power of art.*
2. *It also lets you express gratitude by seeing beauty where others may not.*
3. *You will find that once you start, your creative energies will be unleashed and one idea will lead to the next.*
4. *Building connections with others will serve you well the next time you are stressed and could use a friend.*

Which two sentences, taken together, provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that creating art can change a person's perspective of the world?

- (A) 1 and 2
- (B) 1 and 4
- (C) 2 and 3
- (D) 3 and 4

3 Read the following paragraph from the section "Play And Experiment With Color."

Without thinking about it, choose colors that appeal to you and start painting with them, or tear pictures with those colors out of magazines and glue them down, combining them with paint. Don't think too much about their shapes or making anything recognizable – just enjoy the colors.

How does the last sentence of the paragraph contribute to the development of the idea that art has no rules?

- (A) It demonstrates why all people have a natural impulse to create art.
- (B) It suggests that some types of art are better at relieving stress than others.
- (C) It explains one specific way to create art that can reduce stress levels.
- (D) It shows the importance of letting go and being creative when making art.

Art has been in existence since the dawn of humankind. People have always had a natural impulse to use elements of art, such as line, shape, color and form, to make meaning out of life and express themselves. Children do it as soon as they have the fine motor skills necessary to hold a crayon. Through this impulse, artists express the joys, sadness, fears, triumphs, beauty and ugliness of life. Artists are truth tellers, which is why they are often perceived as a threat and are the first to be censored during times of war and strife.

Why does the author include this paragraph in the article?

- (A) to show that art is a natural part of human life and has played a major role in human history
- (B) to explain the contributions of several prominent artists and how they influenced world events
- (C) to suggest that governments should limit the ability of artists to express themselves
- (D) to demonstrate why art was an effective stress reliever throughout history