

# Drawing and Coloring Therapy

Allowing students time to free draw or color mandalas has been shown to reduce anxiety and frustration, and improve focus, particularly before a test. Mandalas are circular designs made up of symmetrical shapes (Carsley & Heath, 2018). Coloring mandalas has been associated with improving engagement and focus, and creating a state of mindfulness (Carsley, Heath & Fajnerova, 2015). For some students, a free drawing activity has been proven more effective at reducing test anxiety (Carsley, Heath & Fajnerova, 2015). We recommend giving students both options as part of this intervention.

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**Grade Level:** All

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**Materials:** Mandala coloring pages, blank paper, colored pencils or crayons

**Duration:** 5-10 minutes, as needed.

**Implementation:** 1. Provide students with a piece of paper or mandala drawing before a test or other stressful event such as an oral presentation. Give students the option to choose which they would like.  
2. Provide students with drawing materials.  
3. Give students a few minutes to draw or color. You may play light music in the background while students draw/color.

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## Does it work?

In one study of an afterschool activity group, students colored mandala art while listening to soft music or conversing with school counselors. This was found effective in reducing school anxiety among teenagers (Kostyunina & Drozdikova-Zaripova, 2016). With a classroom focus, an additional study researched 150 students in grades 4-6 in Canada (Carsley et al., 2015). Students in this study were assigned to either a mindfulness-based coloring activity (mandala) or free drawing (control) before a spelling test to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness on reducing test anxiety. Both activities were shown to reduce test anxiety (Carsley et al., 2015). Additionally, a coloring activity has proven effective in helping students regulate their emotions. In a study of 100 children ages 6-12, participants were asked to think of a time when they experienced disappointment (Drake & Winner, 2013). Students were then randomly assigned to a "distract" or "vent" condition. The "distract" group was told to draw a picture of a house and the "vent" group was told to draw the experience they reflected on. Following the activity, the "distract" group experienced higher levels of positive emotion and greater enjoyment in the activity (Drake & Winner, 2013).

### References:

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