



# Resting, Relaxation & Reflection

Activities to help with introspection and creative expression for healthcare professionals

This toolkit has been created as part of a collaboration between MSc student Catherine Watson, Artlink Central, Artist and Illustrator Orla Stevens, the University of Stirling, and their Vice Chancellors Fund.

This is the final product of a project proposed by Catherine Watson to provide workshops and a self-led resource pack for Paramedic Sciences and Nursing students at the University of Stirling. This project was aimed at exploring self-expression and representation from healthcare students, as a means of encouraging improved appreciation for holistic interventions, alternative methods of communication, and reflective practice.

After five workshops over five weeks, proposed activities for this toolkit were explored with healthcare students at the University of Stirling within the Lochview Wellbeing Suite. The activities that are within this toolkit are a result of the engagement from healthcare students and their feedback across different themed workshops. It is through exploring this project with students that we have created this toolkit that can benefit both healthcare students and professionals through their personal journeys in healthcare.



Pictured left to right:  
Orla Stevens,  
Silvia Sinibaldi  
(Artlink Central),  
Catherine Watson

**Disclaimer:**

This toolkit is aimed to help provide a framework for those working in healthcare to use art for its therapeutic benefits by utilising different mediums at any frequency for individual reflection as a form of self-care. This toolkit is not and does not claim to be a form of Art therapy, which must always be facilitated by an HCPC licensed Art Psychotherapist within a therapeutic setting for refined mental health treatment.



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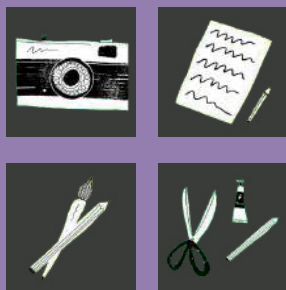
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## How to use this toolkit



Coloured Band on the side of the page: Activities are organised by their duration. Look for the colour band on the side of each page to identify whether it's a **short**, **medium**, or **long** activity.

Clock Icon in the top right corner: Indicates the estimated completion time for each activity.



Icons at the bottom right corner: These icons categorise each activity based on the art form; photography, creative writing, drawing/painting, and mixed media.

The Tree Icon, located at the bottom right corner (just above the art form icon) suggests to try the activity outside in nature, see next page for details.



Consider the available time you have and your preferences for the art form. Pay attention to the coloured band and clock icon to choose an activity that fits your schedule. Some activities are suitable for either an indoor or outdoor setting; if you plan to do an outdoor activity and you're at work or university, you'll find some suggestions in the next page. Alternatively, feel free to try the activities in your local park/walk.

On the page for your chosen activity, you will find a list of materials needed (if optional this will be indicated) and a series of steps to follow.

Feel free to add your unique twist and creative ideas to personalise your project! Take pleasure in the creative process and the joy of making something unique.

If you'd like, share your completed work or experience on social media by **tagging @artlinkcentral** or using **#creativehealthcare**, or show it to friends and colleagues.

## Using the toolkit outdoors



When you see the Tree Icon on an Activity page, this means we suggest you try the activity outside in nature, where possible. Depending on where you are when accessing the toolkit, we have put together some suggestions for you.

### Forth Valley Royal Hospital, Larbert

There are courtyard gardens right next to the buildings, with woods and a picturesque pond just a short stroll away. The woodland was once part of the private grounds of Larbert House – now anyone can enjoy them. The paths are firm and dry, with lots of seating and rest areas.

Larbert Woods - map [here](#)



## Using the toolkit outdoors

### University of Stirling

The University of Stirling's campus is arguably one of the most beautiful in the world, with a variety of walking routes to explore the campus and beyond. You can find information about walking routes on campus [here](#).

If you are looking for some creative inspiration, the campus also holds some surprising secrets and hidden corners, from the Japanese Sculpture Trail to the Garden of Time, the Pathfoot Building Art Collection and more. You can find out more about the hidden cultural gems on Campus [here](#).

Also on campus, you can explore The Airthrey Dance Trail.

Immerse yourself in nature with dance and poetry from local artists to inspire your journey. The Airthrey Dance Trail is a series of dance films (accessible via QR codes along the trail) set in and inspired by the University of Stirling's beautiful environment. Created by dancer Grace Turner, filmed by Michael Rea and accompanied with original poetry by Frances Ainslie, the films are inspired by the mindfulness of being in nature.

More information and map [here](#)



# Short Activities

- **A Day in Your Life**
- **Haikus or Lunes**
- **Changing Perspective**

The following pages contain activities that can be completed within 10 to 20 minutes, using a variety of mediums. Of course please spend as much time as you like on them, but these are good options if you only have a short break.

# A Day In Your Life

## DESCRIPTION

*Sometimes when we're so preoccupied with the high and lows of our life, we can miss the moments in between. This exercise is an opportunity to document and reflect of the moments that may otherwise pass you by, giving you an opportunity to reflect on how much you do.*

## MATERIALS

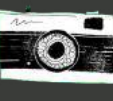
A camera or smartphone,  
printer - optional

## STEPS

Pick a day, any day. It doesn't have to be a specifically monumental or significant day. If you're spending this day with others, say to them beforehand that this is something you'll occasionally be doing.

Take pictures! Experiment with lighting, shadows, colours, and textures. These pictures don't need to be taken at any specific time intervals, just follow the theme of when you're doing something different, take a picture.

This could be mealtimes, relaxation time, getting ready, hobbies, socialising, working (whilst maintaining confidentiality of unknowing or unwilling participants), or being in nature. Experiment with perspectives – will the pictures be taken from the way you see things? Or of you doing different tasks?





# A Day In Your Life



## STEPS CONTINUED

Once you have completed your day, reflect on the photos you've taken. Select 10 that represent moments of your day that really stand out to you.

If you'd like, print these images off and arrange them to make one collective image.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Did capturing images throughout the day make it feel different?

Did you feel more present throughout the day?

Were there any surprising events?

If an image was of a subject or event that occurs often, did capturing this incite any emotions? For example, if you took an image of your kitchen at breakfast, did you feel more appreciation for your kitchen?



# Haikus or Lunes

## DESCRIPTION

*Traditional haiku describes a moment in time using words that awaken the senses. Matsuo Basho, a famous haiku poet, described haiku as "simply what is happening in this place at this moment." Haikus are very short poems that are composed of 3 lines and a total of 17 syllables. 5 syllables on the first line, 7 on the second, 5 on the third. No rhyming necessary!*

## MATERIALS

Paper, Pen or Phone or laptop



## “The Old Pond” by Matsuo Bashō

An old silent pond  
A frog jumps in to the pond—  
Splash! Silence again

An old si lent pond  
A frog jumps in to the pond—  
Splash! Si lence a gain

*The Haiku to the right has been underlined and split into syllables to highlight the structure.*

Alternatively, you can write what is called a “lune”. 3 words on the first line, 5 on the second, and 3 on the third, regardless of syllables.

The junk man  
dreams of a new car,  
an old truck



# Haikus or Lunes



## STEPS

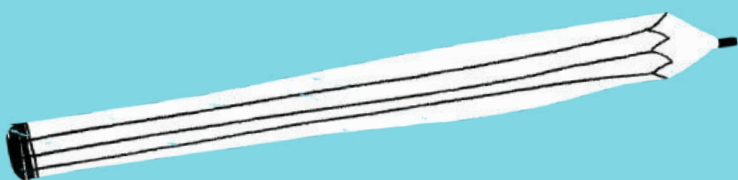
Decide your method: Haiku or Lune?

Choose a moment you wish to describe. The present? Something you saw on the way here? A childhood memory? A moment in practice?

Describe two separate images on the first and second line.

Do not rhyme!

Reflect on what you've written.

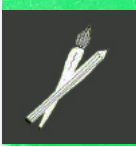


## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Why did you choose this particular moment in time?

How did it feel to be restricted to the rules of haiku?

Were you surprised with what your final haiku came out as?



# Changing Perspective

## DESCRIPTION

*How many times do you pass the same item, room, or scene and really stop to look at it from all angles? When out within the campus grounds, have you ever taken a moment to consider what things would look like from a different perspective? Sometimes changing the way we view something can change the way we understand it.*

## MATERIALS

A camera or smartphone

*This exercise is all about seeing things differently, and really paying attention to the way positioning and light can influence your viewpoint.*

## STEPS

Look around the room or go for a walk. Find an item or perspective to explore.

Try taking pictures from different angles and distances from your chosen subject. For example, if it's a flower, try taking a picture from far away, close, from down on the ground (if able) or up above.

Perhaps play with focus by focusing in on certain aspects of your subject and blurring out others. Does this change the overall picture? Consider using a hair tie to create a ring around your subject and focusing in the middle for a makeshift filter!

Consider the way light comes into play when photographing your subject.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Were you surprised at all by how changing perspective on the subject made it appear? Did this exercise facilitate noticing your surroundings more? Did you find anything in your environment that you didn't realise was there before?

What drew you to your subject? How did your curiosity lead you?

Would you consider looking at things from a different perspective in the future?



# Medium Activities

- **Improving Focus**
- **Through Your Eyes**
- **Campus Nature Book**
- **Guided Poem**
- **A Cup of Self-Care**
- **Shield of Strength**
- **Building Boundaries**
- **Polaroid Mark-making**

The following pages contain activities that can be completed in approximately 30 to 40 minutes, using a variety of mediums.

# Improving Focus



## DESCRIPTION

*This exercise is all about improving our focus of our values. What do you enjoy? What do you fear? When we further identify our values, we can live truer to our own unique selves. This exercise provides writing prompts to explore your feelings and what is important to you. By exploring what's important to us, we can prioritise what brings us fulfilment in a nourishing way.*

## MATERIALS

Journal, Pen or smartphone with a note keeping app

## STEPS

In your journal, write several sentences to complete each of the following writing prompts:

I want...

I need...

I hope...

I expect...

I fear...

I wish...

I am...

I love...

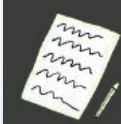
Look back at what you wrote and circle what is important to you.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How can you take action to balance your time and include everything you want?

Were you surprised by any of your responses?

Which response evoked the most emotion?



# Through Your Eyes

## DESCRIPTION

*When we see something beautiful, these days, we tend to take a picture of it with our phones. In this exercise, this is somewhat similar, but we're going to draw what we see through our own eyes. The beauty of this is that our vision is subjective, and what we pay attention to in an environment differs from person to person. For this exercise, you can choose an item within the room, or you can go out onto the campus and find a scene you enjoy. You can try to draw things as you see them exactly or let your inner child's*

*imagination run wild. For example, the clouds in the sky may look like horses, so why not draw horses running through the sky? Or a dragon instead of a swan? (Aside from breathing fire, there's not much difference between the two). You can be as factual or imaginative as you see fit, it's all down to your perspective.*

## MATERIALS

Paper, Pencil, Coloured pencils - Optional

## STEPS

Take a few minutes to consider what you're seeing and if you want to create a snapshot of this. Once decided, how detailed would you like it? You could set a 10-minute timer and see how much you can get down on paper before the timer runs out, or you could get lost in the details! The main point is that you're paying attention to what's in front of you.

Begin drawing an outline of what you're seeing. Press lightly with your pencil to create a whisper of the image that you can built upon as you continue. Consider the way the light and shadow play a part in how you see what's before you. How can you recreate textures?



# Through Your Eyes

## STEPS CONTINUED

If you wish to get imaginative with it, consider how your scene may change on the page.

When you have finished drawing with your pencil, you may wish to add a pop of colour to highlight the main areas of interest. Is there a particularly beautiful tree? Or plant? Or lava lamp? Colour can bring our drawings to life, even when used sparsely.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How did your chosen scene make you feel that you wished to draw it? Why?

What was most difficult about this exercise?

Did incorporating imaginative content (if you chose to) feel easy or difficult?

Did you have a main focus point on this scene? Anything you chose to highlight?

What did this mean to you?





# Campus Nature Book



## DESCRIPTION

*In this exercise, we'll be creating a story book scene by responding on nature on campus (or near your workplace). Imagine going for a walk around this area in your mind or take a stroll as you create! What do you see? Pathways, reeds, trees, animals?*

## MATERIALS

A4 paper, pencil or pen or coloured pencils or coloured pens or paint or oil pastels, scissors - optional

## STEPS

After a walk amongst nature, or after taking time to consider a previous walk amongst nature, consider the landscape.

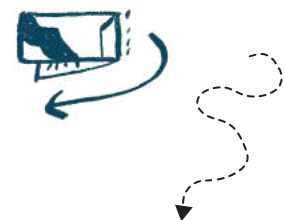
Take an A4 piece of paper and fold it in half length ways. Place the paper landscape in front of you.

Starting at the bottom left corner, work along the bottom half to the right side of the page and draw or paint the landscape in your mind's eye.

If painting, let the work dry before continuing. Turn the page over so that the scene you painted is now facing the table.

Start the landscape off again, working from left to right. Try to start and end the piece at roughly the same height, as this will match up later. Consider using different colours or textures per side.

Once your piece is dry, fold the page in half, to create an A5 size page.





## STEPS CONTINUED

Now fold this in half again to create an A6 page.



Unfold everything until it's now a flat A4 page.



This time, place your painting portrait. Fold over to create an A5 page (no art should be on the inside of this fold). You will see the fold lines from your previous folds.



From the centre of the A5 page on the folded edge, tear/cut downwards towards the centre of the paper.



Unfold back to A4.





## STEPS CONTINUED

Position the page landscape, and fold lengthways again.



This time, holding the folded paper in each hand, push towards the centre. The length cut previously should allow the pages to meet, and form a star shape – this is forming the pages of our book.



Fold the pages over each other to form a spine; and there you have your own landscape book!



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How did you feel in your body as you mentally walked through the landscape?  
What details did you include in your book? Did you focus on some details more than others, such as flowers or animals or trees?

What did you find enjoyable about the landscape you explored?

Did you explore the textures and colours of the landscape?



# Guided Poem

## DESCRIPTION

*Words have a way of providing insight and healing, especially when we least expect it. Poetry is a powerful way of expressing your feelings, but sometimes can be daunting to even attempt. In this exercise, we'll be creating a poem of 5 lines, and each line will contain a random word. By using a random word per line, we can be curious about where our thoughts and feelings can take us, without getting lost on the way. This exercise looks to increase and explore problem-solving skills.*

## MATERIALS

Magazine, Scissors,  
Bowl,  
Glue, Journal or  
smartphone or computer



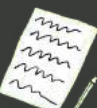
## STEPS

Cut at least 10 words (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) from a magazine.

Place 10 words in a bowl so you can't read them.

Pull five of the words from the bowl.

Use the words to create a poem by glueing one word on each line of your journal.



# Guided Poem



## STEPS CONTINUED

Alternative Steps:

Go to <https://randomwordgenerator.com/adjective.php> and generate 3 adjectives. Write them down.

Go to <https://randomwordgenerator.com/noun.php> and generate 3 nouns. Write them down.

Go to <https://randomwordgenerator.com/verb.php> and generate 4 verbs. Write them down.

From your list of 10 words, cut them out, place them in a bowl, and select 5 pieces of paper at random.

Use the words to create a poem by placing one word on each line (either types or written).



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What feeling words came up for you?
- How does the poem relate to your life?
- Who would you like to share your poem with?



# A Cup of Self-Care

## DESCRIPTION

*The meaning of self-care has taken on many different forms and can mean many different things. Sometimes we can think of self-care as the maintenance of our physical body; for example, bathing or getting a haircut. Whilst these activities are indeed self-care, it's important to remember that self-care is also about nurturing the inner self as an equal priority. We live in a society that is filled with rushing around, tackling to-do lists, and constantly multi-tasking.*

## MATERIALS

Paper, Pen

*This exercise is about slowing things down, and taking stock of how we can prioritise and care for ourselves. We cannot pour from an empty cup, and when we try, this can lead to feeling burned out. So, how do you or would you like to fill your cup?*

## STEPS

Draw a large cup on your paper.

Write down self-care activities inside your cup.

Include activities that you can do to feel good throughout the day. For example you might include how you like to enjoy a cup of tea, take a bath, play with paint, schedule a therapist appointment, review your goals, buy yourself some flowers, or take a walk.

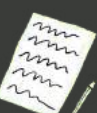
## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

You need to nourish to flourish. How are you taking care of yourself?

Do you allow yourself time to play, relax, and enjoy the moment?

What is the first self-nurturing activity you are planning to do? Schedule it!

Were you surprised by any activity's others listed?





# Shield of Strength

## DESCRIPTION

*Shields are used for protection in battle, and their symbols are used to demonstrate protection and strength. Some shields have unique coats of arms, representing who they are protecting. In this exercise, we'll be creating a shield that represents and protects you. Think of your own strengths,*

## MATERIALS:

Pencil, Paper, Coloured pencils - optional, Scissors

*and how they are used to protect you. Maybe you're creative, and you use your creativity as an outlet to cope? Maybe you are considerate, and you use this to connect with and care for others?*

## STEPS

Draw a shield on the paper. If you need help, search for a shield shape on the internet and trace it onto your piece of paper.

(Optional) Cut out the shield.

Use the pencil to divide the shield into four equal parts.

Identify four of your strengths and write each one in a separate part of your shield.

Use the coloured pencils to add colour to your art. Try using only colours that represent strength to you.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How do you use your strengths to connect to those around you?  
Where did your strengths come from? What encouraged them to grow into such a powerful part of you?



# Building Boundaries

## DESCRIPTION

*Sometimes it can be difficult to understand and communicate our limits and boundaries to those in our lives; be it family, friends, or colleagues. Healthy boundaries are important for protecting yourself, your values, and your beliefs, but at times, knowing what these boundaries are and putting them in place can feel impossible. This exercise is about exploring what your boundaries may look like. For example, you may feel uncomfortable discussing your personal life at work, or you may need quiet time to yourself at least once per day.*

## MATERIALS

Paper, Pencil,  
Coloured pencils

*Boundaries in different settings can look different – such as personal vs professional boundaries. Or boundaries with your family vs boundaries with your friends. It's important to step back and look at your needs in every relationship. Your boundaries form an important wall between you and overextending yourself, so what may this look like?*

## STEPS

Take 10 minutes to identify the limits on where you feel comfortable with the people in your life on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels.

Give yourself permission to hold these boundaries. It may be beneficial to consider how you may give advice to a friend in a certain situation. For example, if you find it difficult to enact a boundary to say no when someone asks you for a favour on a late weekday evening when you have work early the next day – would you support a friend saying no? Respect your boundaries as you would respect someone else's.





# Building Boundaries

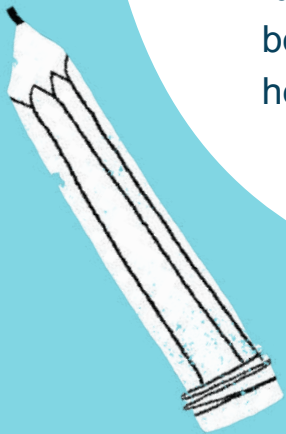


## STEPS CONTINUED

Draw yourself in the middle of the paper.

Colour blocks around your portrait to create a healthy boundary wall. Consider writing your boundaries within these blocks. For example “I need time to myself” or “I’m unable to talk about this topic in this setting”.

Identify one person you need to establish boundaries for and draw them outside your healthy boundary wall.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How can you create healthy boundaries in order to express your feelings? Is there anything in your life that you would like to say “no” to?

Did you find any boundaries difficult to include? Be curious about these and consider why this may be. Would you support someone else having this boundary?

What is the benefit to you for not including this boundary, and why?



# Polaroid Mark Making

## DESCRIPTION

*In this exercise, we'll be exploring colour and process through play. By separating the page into different polaroid squares, we will create snapshots of our expression and play through art. We will be focusing less on creating a specific image, and more on tuning in with the movement of the materials and how they make us feel. The goal is to create abstract compositions that are tied to our experiences in the present moment, purposefully engaging with the materials we use.*

## MATERIALS

Thick paper or card, Frog Tape or Masking Tape or Medical Tape, Paint, Coloured pencils, Coloured Pens, Oil Pastels or Soft Pastels, Hairspray, Craft Knife and Board, Guillotine or Scissors & Ruler

## STEPS

Use the tape to separate the paper into sections.

Let your inner child take the wheel! Using your chosen medium, explore shape, colour, texture, movement, and effects. Each box is a new opportunity to explore the fluidity of art and break away from the confines of creating something for any other purpose than play.

Consider changing colours or mediums per polaroid box and exploring what does and doesn't work for you!



# Polaroid Mark Making



## STEPS CONTINUED

Once your piece is dry, spray with hairspray and allow to set.

Peel the tape off of your paper to reveal the border. This step is very satisfying!

Once finished, cut in the middle of the borders to create your separate polaroid pieces.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How did you feel starting this exercise compared to how you felt during or after? Did you feel uncertain or anxious? If so, did this change throughout your exploration? How easy did you find it to engage in this type of play? If this was difficult, consider if this aversion may translate over into other areas of your life. Are you allowing yourself to play regularly in different ways?

Did your polaroids look different or similar? Do some invoke more emotions than others? Why?

Were you surprised with the outcome of any polaroids? For example, did you try a new technique you've never tried before?



# Longer Activities

- **Parts of You**
- **In Your Head Collage**
- **Photography in Nature**
- **Wildflower Garden**
- **"I AM" Collage**
- **Painting to Sound**
- **Three Portraits of You**
- **Pinterest Mood Boards**
- **Goals Journey Collage**

The following pages contain activities that require 45 minutes or more to be completed. These are good options during free time or can be completed in stages during shorter breaks.

# Parts of you

## DESCRIPTION

*We are all made up of a sum of parts. These parts can be experiences, relationships, likes and dislikes, hobbies, passions, places you've been, your family, your friends, there's so many different parts! Each part makes up a bit of who we are in our own unique measures.*

## MATERIALS

2 Sheets of paper, Pencil, Colouring pencils - optional, Scissors - optional, Glue - optional

*This exercise is about looking at these parts, and reflecting on what makes you so uniquely you.*

## STEPS

Draw an outline of you, this can be your face, your shoulders up, or your entire body. Keep this outline to the side.

Take a few minutes to think of some of your parts and how you can draw them. For example, if you really love tea, you could draw a steaming mug. Or if you're from a certain place, try drawing the outline of that place. You can incorporate words, as well! Have a phrase that sees you through the day (a personal favourite is "Water off a duck's back"), feel free to include it. Try to keep the drawings small, as we'll need them to fit inside your outline.

Draw as many or as little parts as you feel comfortable with. Once you're finished, begin either ripping or cutting the drawings out. Alternatively, if you don't have scissors or glue, consider drawing them directly onto the outline.



# Parts of you

## STEPS CONTINUED

Take time to consider their placements in place of step 4 throughout the process.

Arrange the drawings inside your outline. Take consideration to how central some of these parts are for you when placing them in your outline.

Glue your parts down. If you do have words you wish to include and didn't want to draw and stick them in, consider overlapping them on top of your drawings.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Did any parts come up that surprised you?

When arranging your parts, did you anticipate some would be more important than others? If they are, why?

How can you honour these parts more often?

What parts are your favourite?



# In Your Head Collage

## DESCRIPTION

*Sometimes you don't realise how busy you are and how full your mind is, you're concentrated on what the next thing is you need to tackle. Creating a visual representation of our thoughts can help us take a step back and better understand what's occupying our minds. This activity gives us a way to help separate healthy and unhealthy thoughts.*

## MATERIALS

Magazines, Scissors,  
Glue, Paper,  
Assorted markers

## STEPS

Choose an image from a magazine to represent yourself. Cut it out.

Alternatively, you can draw a depiction of yourself in the middle of the page.

Glue the image onto the paper.

Use the markers to surround the image with lines and designs that illustrate the thoughts in your head. You can find other images in magazines that also may represent your thoughts.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What thoughts take up most of your time?

Are there any thoughts that are not serving you?

Think about the colours and shapes of the thoughts you've put on the page. Are there more calming ones or aggressive ones? Do your thoughts seem overly worried or overwhelming?

How can you cultivate more positive or calm thoughts?

What will help to let go of some thoughts that may not serve you?



# Photography in nature

## DESCRIPTION

*Sometimes, day-to-day life can be overwhelming. One way to combat this is to spend some intentional time in nature, engaging with your natural surroundings. In this exercise, you can purposefully ground yourself through paying attention to your breath and the steps you take. Taking the time to slow down and consciously work to make yourself aware of your immediate surroundings can be a difficult but necessary practice.*

## MATERIALS

Camera or  
Smartphone, Printer  
- optional

*If you find yourself drifting back into worries about your responsibilities, gently redirect yourself to the present moment. This exercise is focused on relieving stress and refining your focus.*

## STEPS

Go for a 30-minute walk in nature. Depending on whether you are using this toolkit on campus or at FVRH, check out pages 5 and 6 of this toolkit for ideas on where you could go.

Force yourself to examine all the things you see at a more exhaustive level than you may have previously.

While you walk, pay attention to your breathing. Take deep, slow breaths, and feel the air fill your lungs.

As you continue to walk, focus your attention on your surroundings, and work to quiet your mind. As day-to-day thoughts come into your mind, such as what you need to do tomorrow, let them come in and then let them flow out. Envision them as leaves on a stream and let them float away with the current.





## STEPS CONTINUED

Look for things in the environment that visually interest you.

If you see something that is beautiful or strikes an emotion, take a photo of it.

Throughout your walk, take images of anything that evokes an emotion.

Give each of your photos a name.

If you have a printer available, you may want to print a few of your photos to remind yourself of the emotion you felt in that moment. For example, if you took a picture of a lake because it was calming, you may want to leave a copy of that picture in your desk drawer to refer to when you are feeling stressed.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

When you get home, review your images. Do you feel the emotions you felt when you took the photos?

Have your feelings changed since you originally took them?

When looking at the photos, do any new things pop up? Anything you didn't previously notice in the setting?



# Wildflower Garden

## DESCRIPTION

*Wildflower gardens are beautiful, develop organically, and are full of rich variety. Wildflowers and people have so much in common. We're unique, persistent, beautiful, and capable of tremendous growth. Healthcare is about fostering the garden of humanity, allowing each flower an opportunity to grow. As Healthcare students and professionals, you are also part of this garden, with your profession making up a part of how you grow. What does your wildflower look like? In this exercise, we'll explore what makes up your petals, leaves, stem, and centre. Are you made of many experiences, memories, feelings, and colours?*

## MATERIALS

Paper, Scissors, Pen, Paints or Colouring Pencils or Coloured Pens, Glue

*Do they converge into one definitive flower, or a flower made up of many parts? Here, we will explore your identity through wildflowers, and consider what helps you grow. Underneath your petals, you can explore what you'd like to bring into your identity and your profession. In single words or complete sentences, what does healthcare mean to you, and what do you wish to bring to it?*

## STEPS

Draw the outline of several petals, leaves, and the centre of a flower.

Take some time to consider the parts that make up who you are, and how these may communicate into your flower. Does your flower contain many colours, or just one? Will there be patterns, details, seeds?





## STEPS CONTINUED

Colour the drawings in using whichever colour medium you have chosen. If you have chosen pens or pencils, consider adding patterns that reflect a part of you. If you feel relaxed, try playing with wave patterns. If you hold big emotions, consider incorporating large and bold colours and patterns. If you have chosen to use paints, try playing with textures as a way of expressing your feelings and memories.

Once this has been done, cut out your drawings to start building your flower.

When you're cutting out these parts, consider textures you could use in the process. Are your petals smooth or jagged? Curved or curly? Are your leaves pointed or round? Do they have small cuts around the edge as part of their texture?

At this stage, consider writing messages on the back of your petals. You can write a word or a sentence that sums up something about you, or something you would like to work on or change in yourself or your profession. Consider additionally perhaps writing how parts of your work within your profession – if a petal communicates your kind nature, consider writing a sentence about how your kindness helps people heal, etc.

Begin to assemble your flower. Start by gluing your petals onto the underside of the centre. Then add your leaves in as you see fit. If you wish to have a flower you can hold, try rolling up a small piece of paper into a stem to stick to the underside of the completed flower.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How did it feel to try to communicate the part of you using colours, patterns, and textures? Easy or hard? Have you ever tried to consider yourself in this way before? Consider the petals and what informed each of them. Why were these petals more important to your flower than other ones?  
Do you feel this flower represents you?



# "I AM" Collage

## DESCRIPTION

*Sometimes we don't focus enough on our strengths and uniqueness, and doing so can be incredibly empowering. This activity is an opportunity to confront your greatness and explore all the unique things that make you who you are. Keeping this activity around will help in times when you feel low or insecure, perhaps by a mirror you regularly use.*

## MATERIALS

Pen, Paper,  
Magazines, Scissors,  
Glue



## STEPS

Write "I AM" in the centre of the paper.

Look in magazines for words that represent all your positive attributes. Cut them out. Alternatively, try different writing styles and colours to create your own words.

Glue words on to the paper radiating out from the words I AM.

Keep this image where you will see it often to increase your self-esteem.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How does it feel to see all these words you've come up with?  
How can you further represent these strengths in your daily life?



# Painting to Sound

## DESCRIPTION

*This exercise is about tuning into how music makes us feel and move. By exploring tools, colour, and expressive mark-making through improvisation, we are connecting our body to the sounds around us. This activity can be done individually or in groups!*

## MATERIALS

Wallpaper Lining or Paper, Speaker, Paints and Drawing Materials, Music!

## STEPS

Take a spot around the paper in front of you.

Listen to the song playing and think of a word you'd associate with it. Allow your body to move with the music for a moment.

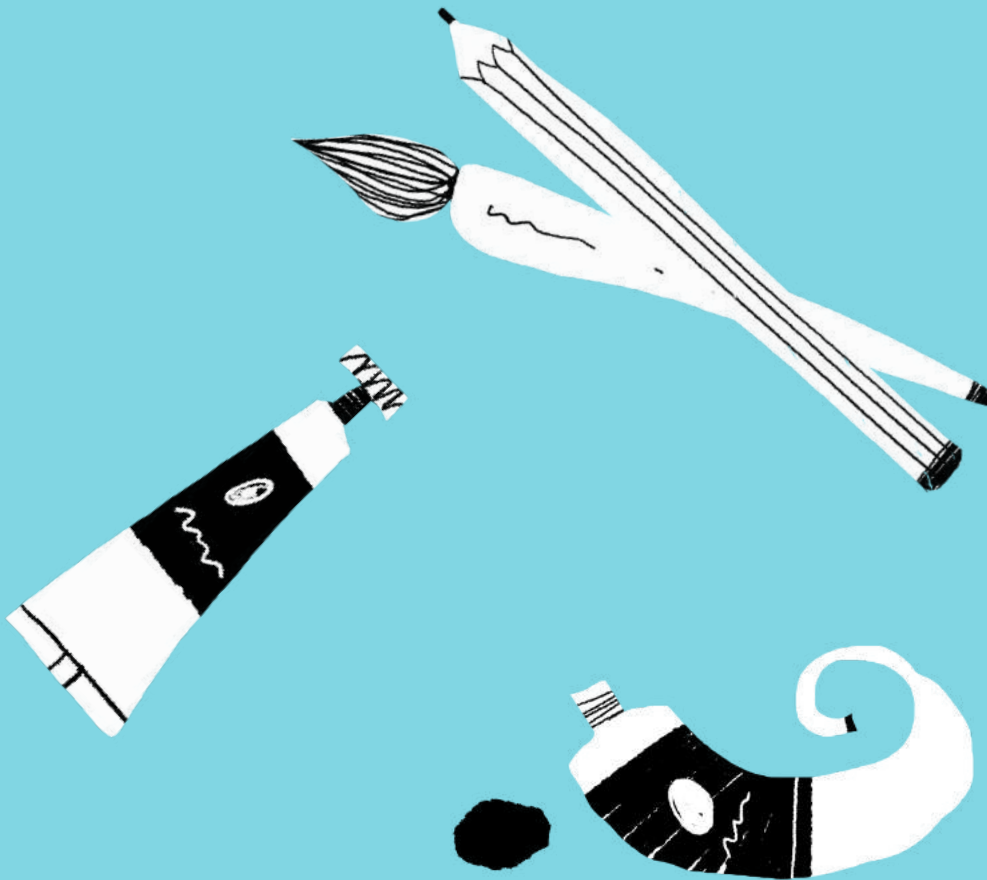
Pick a tool to draw or paint with, and a colour that reflects the word you've chosen.

Whilst the music is playing, create some abstract textures and marks in front of you. Think about your movement and the movement of the tool you're using. Are you putting hard or light pressure onto it? Are you moving the tool fast or slow, gentle, or aggressive?

When the music stops, move clockwise to another part of the paper, or if in a group, to another person's section on the paper. Continue drawing, responding to the music, and building on a moving (and potentially collaborative) piece.



# Painting to Sound



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

(If done in a group) How did it feel to work collaboratively in a piece?

Did it feel freeing, or confining?

Did you find yourself embracing the present moment and your movements? Or did you focus on the overall look of the piece?

How did you assign a word to the music? Do you feel the word translated onto the page?

How did it feel to focus on your movement and the abstract concept of sound?

Would you consider doing this more often?



# Three Portraits of You

## DESCRIPTION

*Self-portraits can be a varied expression of how you view yourself, and how you wish others to view you. By creating three portraits at the same time, we can explore different aspects of ourselves with purposeful intention. In this exercise, we'll be using facial expressions and body language to communicate three different views of who you are.*

## MATERIALS

A Camera or Smartphone.

## STEPS

Take a photo of how you see yourself.

Take a photo of how you think others see you.

Take a photo of how you would like to be seen.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Which portrait was the easiest to create? Which one was the most difficult?

Do you see any similarities between the portraits?

What are the differences between the three?

How much did your body language change?



# Pinterest Mood Boards

## DESCRIPTION

*Pinterest is a website/ app that allows you to create “pins” that are a collective of images under different themes. In this activity, we’ll be focusing on creating a pin mood board. You can search for images that resonate, represent, or explore your every mood – and you don’t have to worry about the mess!*

## MATERIALS

Computer or phone, Pinterest - Website or App

## STEPS

From a browser or on your phone, go to Pinterest.

Sign up or log in.

Create a board and title: Mood Board.

Search in the finder tab for objects, places, colours, and images that resonate with your current mood and place them on your Mood Board.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Did you go into your mood board knowing what mood you were in? Did this stay the same throughout?

What feelings emerged as you began to visualise your mood?

Do you have a favourite image on your mood board? Why is this?

Do the colours or style particularly represent the mood you’re exploring? In what way?





# Goals Journey Collage

## DESCRIPTION

*We all have some kind of goal in life – be it financial security, career prospects, safety, love, connection. In order to maintain direction on our path, it's important to keep in mind a goal, no matter how big or small. This activity is an exploration of your goals in life, and what steps you can take to get on your journey towards them.*

## MATERIALS

Paper, Drawing pencil, Magazines, Scissors, Glue

*Do you want to improve your relationships, mindset, feelings? Gaining clarity on your goals is the first step towards obtaining them.*

## STEPS

Divide the piece of paper into three equal parts.

For each of the three sections, identify one area in your life you would like to work on. For example, part one could be family, part two could be social life, and part three could be work.

Choose three goals in each section that you would like to focus on.

Cut out images from the magazines that represent these goals.

Glue those images into appropriate sections of your paper to provide visual elements to your goals.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What came up for you in the collage?
- How can you take one step today to bring one of your goals to life?



## About Catherine Watson and the idea behind the project

"My name is Catherine, and I am currently a Psychology (Conversion) Msc student at the University of Stirling, undertaking my working placement with Artlink Central. As part of this placement, we are required to take responsibility for a project in our chosen area. This is the project I have come up with to not just fulfil the module requirement, but to explore the passion I have for creative expression for health and wellbeing.

I graduated with my BA (Hons) in Mental Health Nursing from the University of Stirling in 2022, having worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as part of my placement hours. When the pandemic hit, healthcare staff were hailed as heroes and many art installations began to appear in all sorts of areas thanking the NHS for their hard work. One installation at NHS Forth Valley Royal Hospital inspired me to create this project ('Heroes Here and Now: Caring Through Covid' by Karen Strang). It was a series of self-portraits from healthcare workers, some inspiring and hopeful, some jarring and moving in their realism. They gave anyone who saw them a chance to see the complex experiences of working in healthcare during the pandemic. However, one aspect that was missing was that of healthcare students. Not quite a qualified professional, not quite a civilian, as healthcare students we stand in many different circles that can be difficult to explain, sometimes even to ourselves.

This project hoped to include healthcare students in the narrative of staff wellbeing, whilst exploring a different approach.

It's my hope that this toolkit will be accessible to healthcare staff and students of all experiences and aptitudes. The activities range from short (to fit around the rare and chaotic breaks) to long (should you really wish to get stuck in). They are designed in such a way that they can be picked up and put down at your leisure, in a way that suits you.

Because this is for you, you that perhaps feels stressed, a bit lost, a bit overwhelmed. You that may at times find it difficult to separate your profession from who you are. You that just needs a moment to reconnect with yourself. You that wants to try to express yourself creatively but perhaps doesn't know where to start. Or you who just wants to take your mind off things for a little bit, but can't stand the thought of another meditation app."

## About Artlink Central

Artlink Central brings artists together with people experiencing exclusion, disability or disadvantage. Our mission and artistic vision is to explore the creative potential of socially engaged arts practice in public and sited spaces. We aim to:

- Create challenging experimental work with no concessions, bound together with a shared love of cultural exchange.
- Use creativity to break down the barriers between us, forming the perfect environment in which to create work that is as engaging for the (sometimes unsuspecting) audience as it is for the participants.
- Build a model of creation that all people working in the creative arts should pay attention to.
- Honour the unique perspective and voices of our participants and partner artists and boldly present their unique work on a public platform.

Artlink Central's largest programme area is in health. The programme includes work across NHS Forth Valley settings, in our Artspace programme and occasional project specific work with local voluntary sector funding bodies. We deliver a programme of activity - including exhibitions and art commissions - funded through the Endowments Committee at NHS Forth Valley sites on an annual basis. This is to provide arts experiences that improve patients' and staff's experiences and environments in NHS settings. We work across acute and day settings, including with children, elderly and dementia wards, in mental health and learning disability settings.

Find out more: [artlinkcentral.org](http://artlinkcentral.org)

## About Orla Stevens

Orla Stevens is multidisciplinary Scottish artist, illustrator and visual designer, creating playful and atmospheric work led by expressive mark making, vibrant colours and handmade textures. Her work looks to connect people to nature, inspired by the importance of creative play, exploration and positivity that both art and being in the outdoors share.

Find out more: [orlastevens.com](http://orlastevens.com)

# Mental Health Resources and Support

## University Support

Together All – (Resources) The online 24/7 support community, accessible through the University of Stirling [togetherall.com](https://togetherall.com)

One At a Time Counselling – (Support) Offering face-to-face and online appointments, the University of Stirling-based team can offer individual counselling appointments one at a time, to discuss and listen to any concerns you are experiencing at the time that are causing emotional or psychological distress.

(Referral form: <https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/sacs/mental-health-wellbeing-counselling-service-form.docx>)

Student Services Hub – (Resources, referral and support) The University Student Services Hub can direct you to the most appropriate service for your needs at the time, assisting in any referrals or applications necessary.

[www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing)

Chaplaincy – (Resources and support) The onsite chaplaincy is available to offer emotional, spiritual, and practical support and guidance, acting as an independent sounding board, regardless of the topic.

[www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/chaplaincy](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/chaplaincy)

Student Minds – (Resources) Student Minds are a website that offer support and information for students in the UK with their mental health.

[studentminds.org.uk](https://www.studentminds.org.uk)

# Mental Health Resources and Support - continued

## Local support

Hub of Hope – (Resources) The leading UK mental health support database. Bringing local, national, peer, community, charity, private, and NHS mental health support and services together in one place for the first time. Simply search your location and type of help you require from the service, and Hub of Hope will show you the results.

[hubofhope.co.uk](http://hubofhope.co.uk)

NHS Forth Valley Mental Health & Wellbeing – (Resources) NHS Forth Valley provide a database of local resources and services accessible to you [nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/az-of-services/mental-health-wellbeing](http://nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/az-of-services/mental-health-wellbeing)

Stirling Council Guide– (Resources) Stirling Council provide a guide of services within the Stirling area. This guide rounds up information of some local organisations, including contact details. They also provide a phone number if you require more help.

[stirling.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/mental-health/mental-health-support-groups-and-voluntary-organisations](http://stirling.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/mental-health/mental-health-support-groups-and-voluntary-organisations)

## National support

Breathing Space – (Phoneline) An accessible phone line that can provide early support and an empathetic ear to discuss any concerns.

[breathingspace.scot](http://breathingspace.scot)

Samaritans – (Phoneline) 24/7 helpline for those experiencing distressing thoughts and feelings that could lead to the risk of suicide.

[samaritans.org/?nation=scotland](http://samaritans.org/?nation=scotland)

Shout – (Text service) A free, confidential, 24/7 text support service for anyone in the UK who is struggling to cope. To start a conversation, text the word 'FRONTLINE' or 'SHOUT' to 85258 – messages won't appear on your phone bill.

[giveusashout.org](http://giveusashout.org)

## Mental Health Resources and Support - continued

Frontline19 – (Prerecorded phonenumber with supportive messages. Resources)  
A free, independent, confidential and UK based nationwide service delivering psychological support to people working in the NHS and frontline services.  
[frontline19.com](https://frontline19.com)

Nurse Lifeline – (Phonenumber) A service for Nurses, Midwives, Healthcare Assistants, and the friends and family of such staff to offload and chat with someone who gets it. Nurse Lifeline is a listening service that will connect you with another healthcare worker or student so you can offload and decompress with someone who understands. Conversations are entirely confidential.  
[nurselifeline.org.uk](https://nurselifeline.org.uk)

Doctors' Support Network – (Resources) Peer support for Doctors and Medical Students with mental health concerns. A collection of resources available to assist Doctors and Medical Students with their concerns, including telephone support, online forums, and psychotherapy services.  
[dsn.org.uk/support-for-doctors](https://dsn.org.uk/support-for-doctors)

The Laura Hyde Foundation – (Resources) The Laura Hyde Foundation offer resources and signposting to mental health support services for all frontline workers, including advice and guidance if you're worried about someone you know.  
[laurahydefoundation.org/getting-help-1](https://laurahydefoundation.org/getting-help-1)

Cavell Nurses' Trust – (Resources) A support service for Nurses, Midwives, and Healthcare Assistants, both working and retired, for when you're suffering personal or financial hardship. Cavell Nurses' Trust provides signposting for additional emotional or financial support.  
[cavellnursestrust.org](https://cavellnursestrust.org)

Royal College of Nursing (Time and Space) – (Resources) The Royal College of Nursing has created mindfulness based videos for Nursing staff, providing practical techniques which you can put into practice.  
[rcn.org.uk/healthy-workplace/healthy-you/time-and-space](https://rcn.org.uk/healthy-workplace/healthy-you/time-and-space)



We'd love to see what you create!  
Share it with us at:



@artlinkcentral  
#creativehealthcare



info@artlinkcentral.org



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