

# Art of Recovery

This 'toolkit' developed from the Art of Recovery project, is presented as a series of cards offering suggestions for setting up participatory art workshops in the context of recovery with refugees. The toolkit is designed to be used by a range of participatory art groups convened by informal or professional caregivers, community support or self-help groups, or researchers working in conjunction with therapists.

## Instructions

Using the Art of Recovery Cards.

These cards, designed to be recommendations are open to adaptations as appropriate for different group contexts and individual needs. The model followed by the project is a participatory action research feedback loop.

Each workshop has an element of co-design developed from ideas and reflections between convenors and participants that emerged during the previous sessions.

## Preparing the Workshops

### Arranging the workshop space (1)

Given the needs of refugee participants, who may have experienced severe trauma, it is particularly important to provide a supportive space for the workshops in order to allow participants to safely explore their artmaking:

Ensure there is space for small groups and some individual artmaking. Not all participants may be comfortable working in a small group

Where possible set up a text reminder to go out to all participants the day before each workshop session

## Preparing the Workshops

### Arranging the workshop space (2)

Wherever possible arrange for a professional therapist to be present as a co-convenor of the group; this can be very supportive during the artmaking; and if anyone expresses distress.

Participants should be allowed to leave the workshops and the project at any point in time and to be supported in this decision by the therapist and convenors as needed.

Ideally work with language interpreters to ensure good communication between caregivers, researchers and participants.

## Workshop art materials

Provide a wide range of materials for painting, drawing and collage (3D modelling) for example:

- canvas, boards, paper, cardboard
- paint brushes, pallet spatulas
- plates for mixing paint, water containers
- acrylic paint, crayons, pencils, chalk
- felt, wool, textiles, cotton, buttons
- stones, leaves, and feathers
- pipe cleaners (very versatile!)
- wooden sticks for modelling
- sand, clay and plasticine
- scissors, PVA glue
- paper towels

### Starting the workshop

1. Introduce the topic and aim of the workshop as a whole series and at the start of each session.
2. Give a short demonstration of materials and techniques before participants start their artwork and during the workshop if needed.
3. Encourage discussion and reflection about the artwork and the artmaking experience with participants and their interpreters, including suggestions for the next workshop session.
4. Starting the workshops (2) At the start of each workshop ask participants' permission to photograph their artwork in the session (no faces to avoid identifying anyone). This provides a record for participants of their work that they may share outside the group, or in workshop discussions about the art process. The photographs may also be shared in an end of workshop series exhibition.
5. Allow some social time, including some refreshments, at the end of workshop sessions.
6. Make time for a debrief session for group convenors and interpreters

### Workshop 1

Warm-up Start the introductory session by inviting participants to share their experience of art and artwork. To help everyone feel comfortable in the group and to try out using different art materials, do some collaborative art on one large piece of paper in small groups. At the end of the session each person can, if they choose, remove their own work.

During the demonstration of materials and techniques emphasise that individual expression is the principal aim of the workshops, not necessarily to make images that resemble reality. Invite participants to focus on colours, the ways of working with colour, and to explore the various tactile materials and tools.

Set up an introductory topic. During the project, we worked with the idea of “safe place”, which can be a real or imagined landscape or space that represents elements of healing and recovery.

## Workshop 2-9

The workshops in the following sessions (2-9) continue the themes of real or imagined landscapes that represent elements of healing and recovery. Depending on the group reflections and discussion in each session, participants can focus on different materials in the next workshop.

### Proposed Activities

#### Painting, Sandplay and 3D modelling materials

Why: Tactile and painting artwork are found to encourage interaction with materials and group participation.

How: Working with paint, sand or other 3D materials can enable participants to express and share conceptual and embodied ideas and experiences without the need for art skills.

#### Workshop 2-9 Sandplay

Starting the session with sandplay is relaxing and accessible. Helps participants to focus playfully on tactile material Materials: Wet and or dry sand. Small containers and tools to shape sand.A sheet of paper or board.Session Plan:Set up several large handfuls of sand for each participant on sheets of paper or boards. Suggest people start by closing their eyes and just shape and play with sand. Allow around 5-10 minutes then a further 5-10 minutes to shape sand with tools and containers. Give time for everyone to share individually and in groups.

#### 3D Modelling

Tactile materials avoid dominance of visual and linear design. Especially helpful for people with few or no formal art skills. Use of a wide range of materials facilitates expression of embodied experience and ideas.

#### Materials:

- clay,
- sand,
- pebbles,
- wool,
- textiles,
- thread,
- buttons,
- glitter,
- modelling material,
- wood,
- leaves etc.
- sheet of paper or board.

#### Session Plan

Set up participants with sheets of paper or boards. Invite participants to think about the topic and choose whatever materials they like to express ideas or thoughts. Allow around 20 -30 minutes to work. Give time for everyone to share thoughts on their 3D models individually and in groups.

## Painting

### Materials:

- Acrylic paints and mediums.
- Small containers for water.
- Paper towels and plates for mixing colours.
- Brushes and other tools like sponges, rags, spatulas etc.

### Session Plan

Participants are invited to think of a safe place, or somewhere they associate with safety.

Try to broaden their ideas about what places can be depicted beyond a general 'landscape'. For example, a special tree, park, river, boat, mountain etc., or a building such as a home, school, hospital, temple, church, workplace etc.

## Painting

### Materials:

- Acrylic paints and mediums.
- Small containers for water.
- Paper towels and plates for mixing colours.
- Brushes and other tools like sponges, rags, spatulas etc.

### Session Plan:

- Explain that artmaking expertise is not necessary.
- Encourage participants to express how they feel, rather than to aim for accuracy in what is depicted.
- Explore what can be expressed through colour; perhaps certain colours have emotional or cultural associations?
- Explore how different applications of paint on canvas or paper can be expressive, e.g. quick gestural marks, slow methodical brushstrokes, dots, lines, splodges are potentially emotionally evocative.

## Painting

### Materials:

- Acrylic paints and mediums.
- Small containers for water.
- Paper towels and plates for mixing colours.

- Brushes and other tools like sponges, rags, spatulas etc.

#### Session Plan:

Outline basic methods and techniques for representing landscapes, e.g. basic principles about perspective, how to make washes in the sky and then dry sections with paper towels for suggesting clouds, working with layers.

Discuss how gesture can help to depict different elements or materials, explain basic principles about mixing colours, how to use the acrylic medium, etc.

#### Mixed-media

Work with all the materials listed on the 'Instructions' 'Preparing the workshops' card.

#### Session Plan:

Work together with the participants to help them develop their artwork during every session.

If participants seem to need more help discuss and ask questions about ideas they may have brought to the workshop.

Encourage them to describe the images and places they are thinking about and explore why those places are important in terms of feelings and memories.

Invite them to think of developing art collaboratively work between you, using the different materials, images, tools and techniques.

#### Completing the workshop series

In the final session it can be useful to let participants actively choose the topic. For example, the theme of food might encourage participants to try using a range of different materials to portray specific dishes from their homeland, or a favourite food.

The final session is also an opportunity for a reflective session with the group. Participants can be invited to share their artwork and discuss feedback about the workshops.

Participants may choose to take their artworks away with them, as a memento of the project; or they may prefer to have photographic copies of their art.

#### After the Workshops

Build in an opportunity for participants to meet and reflect on the benefits and challenges of taking part in the workshops.

Consider developing further workshops based on these reflections and discussion.

Ensure that all participants have access to support both during and following the workshop series.