



# Calm & Connected:

A Guide to Personalized Grounding  
and Mental Health



**12-SESSION UNITY CIRCLE  
FACILITATOR ACTIVITY GUIDE**

For Ages 11 – 18

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**ONE CIRCLE**  
FOUNDATION

We are all connected.



# Session Seven Theme: SEEING THE INNER WORLD (VISUAL-SPATIAL)

In this session, youth will express their emotions and inner experiences through visual art and symbolic imagery, and discover and practice how these methods can facilitate their emotional awareness, expression, and sense of well-being.

## ACTIVITY

- “Inner Weather” Drawing (individual reflection)
- Emotion Collage (individual reflection)

## MATERIALS

- All Standard Supplies\*
- Inner Weather Drawing – Handout (one per participant)
- Magazines, printed photos, newspapers, printed words & quotes
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Card stock paper
- Audio speaker or technology and calm playlist for background music

## PURPOSE

- To express emotions through color, shape, and imagery
- To explore the “inner world” using collage
- To engage in nonverbal methods for emotional reflection and creative self-expression
- To experience a calming, focused space that supports emotional processing through art

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- 1 Read through the entire session for familiarity with the content and activities.
- 2 \*Refer to Session 1 of activity guide for All Standard Supplies list.
- 3 Choose a Warm-Up Activity from the tabbed section of this guide.
- 4 Ensure that an emoji chart is printed and large enough (e.g. poster size) for participants to place stickers on. Display the emoji chart on a wall where everyone can see it.
- 5 Read through the questions in each Sharing of Activity and prepare to select 2-3 questions that best fit with your Circle and time frame.
- 6 Have all listed materials prepared before the session.
- 7 You might locate magazines and newspapers through neighbors, community centers, libraries, doctor or dentist offices, hair stylists and barber shops, and local stores.



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## OPENING RITUAL

Open with your chosen ritual that marks the beginning of your Circle.



## THEME INTRODUCTION

Introduce the theme for the week. Say:

- The theme of the week is “Seeing the Inner World (Visual-Spatial).”
- Today, we will use drawing, collage, and visualization to explore and express our emotions, inner experiences, and a sense of peace through creative visual art. No art experience or talent is required, whatsoever!



## WARM-UP

Conduct your selected Warm-Up Activity from the tabbed section of this guide.



## CHECK-IN

- 1 Have the talking piece, emoji chart on the wall, and dot stickers. Say:
  - We are going to begin our check-in using the emoji chart (point out the emoji chart on the wall).
  - On the chart, you will find various emojis with different emotions. Here are some circle dot stickers. Please select a sticker and place it on the chart based on how you are feeling in the Circle today. Which emoji shows how you are feeling today?
- 2 Give participants 2-3 dot stickers each and a couple minutes to place their stickers on the emoji chart.
- 3 When everyone is back in the Circle, ask:
  - Can I hear from a couple of volunteers on which emoji you selected?
  - Why did you choose that emoji?  
*(Allow space for volunteers to share more if they want.)*
- 4 Pass the talking piece around the Circle and invite each Circle participant to “check-in” as to what is going on in their life. Invite them to share any thoughts or feelings that came up for them after the last session.
- 5 Thank the group for participating. Remind everyone that all feelings are okay and that it’s typical for our moods to change.



## ACTIVITY 1

### “Inner Weather” Drawing

*Materials: Inner Weather Drawing – Handout (one per participant), pens or pencils, colored pencils, crayons, markers, audio speaker or technology and calm playlist for background music (optional)*

- 1 Ask, by show of hands:
  - How many of you have found that sometimes it’s difficult to put feelings into words, at least for a while?



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- How many of you sometimes draw, doodle, use colors, images, or any other ways of making art to express feelings without words?
  - How many have felt calmer or had more clarity after doing some kind of creative visual activity?
- 2 Say:
    - Today we'll be using a nonverbal activity that requires NO artistic skill but is a way to express our current emotional state using color, shape, and visual imagery – without needing to explain it in words.
    - Sometimes, it's easier to express how we feel using colors, shapes, or symbols instead of words.
  - 3 Provide the Handout: Inner Weather Drawing, colored pencils, markers, crayons, etc.
  - 4 Explain the following activity to the group:
    - Take a look at the box on the handout. Please use the space inside the box to draw your “inner weather.” This can be whatever your emotional world feels like right now, today.
    - Is it stormy, foggy, clear, windy, or sunny? Is there thunder, rain, snow, hail, etc.?
    - There is no right or wrong way to draw the inner weather – you can draw what matches your feelings and mood.
  - 5 Encourage people to work on their handout individually. Let them work at their own pace.
  - 6 Optional: play calming instrumental music during the activity



### SHARING OF ACTIVITY

- 1 Bring the group together for several debriefing questions, selecting the questions that fit best for your Circle and time frame. Invite volunteers to share their drawing and an emotion represented by a color or symbol.
- 2 Next, ask:
  - How was it drawing about your “inner weather” today?
  - What different emotions were expressed in our Circle?
  - How did having different colors, shapes or images help to show feelings?
  - What emotions did you express in your drawing?
  - What surprised you about your own or others' drawings?
  - What does your drawing say about what's going on inside of you today?
  - How can drawing or art help us take care of our mental health?



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## ACTIVITY 2

### Emotion Collage

*Materials: Pens or pencils, magazines, printed photos, newspapers, printed words & quotes, scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils, crayons, markers, and card stock paper*

- 1 Inform the group that in the next activity, they will utilize a creative outlet to explore their emotions, identity, goals, and sense of peace using visual imagery.
- 2 Say:
  - Sometimes pictures can say more than words. Today I invite you to create a collage that reflects how you're feeling, who you are, or what brings you peace.
  - There is no right way to do this – it's about choosing images that feel meaningful to you.
- 3 Provide magazines, printed photos, newspapers, printed words & quotes, scissors, glue sticks, colored pencils, crayons, markers, and card stock paper.
- 4 Encourage everyone to spread out and find their own workspace.
- 5 Ask the youth to browse the media and printed materials. They are free to cut or tear out and arrange images, words, or symbols on their card stock paper that reflect:
  - Their current emotions
  - Things that make them feel safe, calm, or inspired
  - Hopes, goals, or pieces of their identity
- 6 They can add their own drawings, words of affirmation, collage titles, etc.
- 7 Let them know the amount of time they will have for their collage-making.



## SHARING OF ACTIVITY

- 1 Bring the group together for several debriefing questions, selecting the questions that fit best for your Circle and time frame. Invite volunteers to share their collage and/or one thing about it that expresses something about their emotions.
- 2 Next, ask:
  - How was it to create something with your hands that reflects something about your inner self?
  - What emotions did we have in common? How many ways were they expressed, for example, through colors, symbols, or images?
  - What was the theme or feeling behind your collage?



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- What's one image or word you chose to include that really stood out to you? Why?
  - What did you learn about yourself while making your collage?
  - How can using collage or artmaking be a way to care for your mental health?
- 3 Summarize the activities of the day, and the key points that Circle members shared, for example:
- Today we made visual art through drawing, collage, and imagery to explore and express inner emotions and inner experiences.
- 4 Application Question: Pass the talking piece around the Circle, and invite each member to answer the following question:
- **What is one art activity you will use over the next week to explore and express your feelings nonverbally?**

*Note to Facilitator: Record responses from group members and check in with them at the next session.*

- 5 Ask each person to put their initials on their handout. Collect their handouts. Let everyone know that their handout will be returned to them at the last session.



### CLOSING RITUAL

Thank everyone for participating. Bring them together and close with your chosen ritual that marks the end of your Circle.

**Evidence and research** to support visual arts for youth mental health (e.g. Inner Weather Drawing, Emotion Collage): <sup>1,2,3</sup>

- 1 Applewhite, B., Delattre, B., Singh, I. et al. Creative arts-based interventions for the improvement of PTSD symptoms in young people: a meta-analysis with a focus on non-Western populations. *Nat. Mental Health* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-025-00543-y>
- 2 Carley, K. (2023, June 27). Study shows benefits of creativity for youth mental health. Public News Service. <https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2023-06-27/mental-health/study-shows-benefits-of-creativity-for-youth-mental-health/a85097-1>
- 3 Jean-Berluce, D. (2024). Creative expression and mental health. *Journal of Creativity*, 34(2), 100083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joc.2024.100083>



## Session 7 Handout – INNER WEATHER DRAWING

### **Prompt: What does my “inner weather” look like?**

#### **Instructions:**

1. Use this space to draw your “inner weather” - whatever your emotional world feels like today.
2. Is it cloudy, sunny, stormy, foggy, raining, or something else?
3. Let your drawing reflect what’s going on inside you right now.

(Use the space below)

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to draw their 'inner weather'.