



THE ARTEFUL MIND

A Visual Meditation

WHAT IT IS:

This activity connects you to visual arts, produced by local artists in our community. To inspire (self) reflection, it fuses two seemingly separate activities -such as meditation and a simple critical response exercise, into one holistic approach to wellness in ten simple steps.

Meditation at its core, is the process of focusing one's mind or thinking deeply for a period of time. According to Everyday Healthy (May, 2019), "In our modern, hectic world, meditation has gained traction in recent years as a way to manage stress." They go on to note that scientific evidence shows meditation can be a helpful practice in fighting chronic pain and illnesses, depression and heart disease.

The "Artful Mind" activity is intended to help you explore art - focusing your attention on a particular image, while connecting to the benefits of meditation through a mindful breathing exercise.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Focus on one of the images provided. Feel free to enlarge the page while you meditate.
- 2) Find a comfortable place for the five (or more) minutes it will take you to walk through this meditation activity.

The next steps have a suggested length of reflection time. However you are encouraged to set your own pace and go where your thoughts or intentions take you. Release yourself from judgement - there is no right or wrong length of time, thought, or feelings.

3) Begin by taking a deep breath; let it out slowly. As you release the breath, allow your body to fully relax.

- Repeat two additional times (there is magic in threes :)

4) As you begin to focus your intention on the selected image; consider starting in the upper-left corner – working your way (right) across the top of the artwork as if you were reading (15 -30 seconds).

- Repeat this process for both the middle and then the bottom of the image.

5) Inhale deeply; and then on the exhale, notice where your eyes initially rest on the artwork.

- On one of your inhaled breaths, ask yourself each of the following questions (30 second – 1 minute):
- Is there a specific area of the artwork that draws your attention to (or back to)?
- What do you notice about the artwork (color, shapes, specific details that call your attention)?

6) After 30 seconds (to one minute), inhale deeply and then exhale slowly.

- As you refocus, look at the image again in its entirety – how does it make you feel (use descriptive words)?
- Is there a specific location in your body you notice a shift as you focus your intension on the image and question?

7) After 30 seconds (to one minute), inhale deeply and then exhale slowly.

- What does this image remind you of?
- What question(s) does the image raise in your mind (I wonder...)?

8) Allow your vision to rest on the image as a whole again. Inhale deeply and then exhale slowly.

- What does it help you understand/what does it mean to you (your take away)?
- Do you see the artwork differently or the same as you began

9) After 30 seconds (to a minute), inhale deeply and then exhale slowly; Feel your breath as your exhale slowly. And begin to take in the room/space around you.

- Allow yourself to release what you thought about the image before you started; making room to see the image as you do after the exercise.

10) Take a final deep breath and exhale...to continue with your day thoughtfully and relaxed.