



USE WITH:

Individual students



GRADE LEVEL:

Upper elementary, middle school, or high school



CONTEXT:

Remote friendly

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

# Reduce Anxiety Through Art

Help students work through their anxiety with this creative activity.

Created by [Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#)

## Description:

This activity is based on research suggesting that structured coloring activities—such as mandalas and plaid designs—help students get into a focused state, which can then help them work through their anxiety.

Prep time needed:

**5 minutes**

Est. time to complete:

**15 minutes**

## Steps:

1. Before beginning, hold a brief discussion with students about different techniques they use to calm and focus themselves, such as talking to a friend or family member, getting exercise, deep breathing, listening to music, or mindfulness.
2. Tell them that today the class is going to try a new method that scientists have found helps lower stress levels: coloring.
3. Start by having students rate their stress levels on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. Model this by sharing your current level of anxiety with some voice-over about what is causing you to feel this.
4. Give students a choice between a mandala worksheet, a plaid worksheet, or plain paper for free drawing.
5. Using whatever coloring materials are on hand, have students color their worksheet for 10 to 15 minutes.

6. After the activity, invite students to notice how they feel. Invite a discussion. Are they more focused? Do they feel calmer?

### Tips for Educators:

- To find worksheets, Google “printable mandala for kids” or “printable plaid coloring worksheet.”
- Some students may laugh when you communicate that they will be coloring. Remind them that this is just one way to work with stress and invite them to give it a try.
- Consider doing this activity for even 5 minutes when time allows.
- Communicate to students that this activity can be used in many situations that cause anxiety and that this can be considered part of their "toolkit."



### Inspired by:

1. Carsley, D., & Heath, N. L. (2019). Evaluating the effectiveness of a mindfulness coloring activity for test anxiety in children. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 112(2), 143-151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2018.1448749>
2. Carsley, D., & Heath, N. L. (2018). Effectiveness of mindfulness-based colouring for test anxiety in adolescents. *School Psychology International*, 39(3), 251-272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034318773523>