

# THE STRESS LESS PENCIL

ART & MENTAL HEALTH

ISSUE04

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for Happiness

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# Art Prompt

## Sorry for what I said...

**Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, as well as recognise and influence the emotions of those around you. (Harvard Business School)**

Understanding and managing your own emotions... It sounds so simple. They are your emotions, why wouldn't you recognise them?

The truth is, most of the time, it's really hard. Not only to recognise what your emotions are doing, but also controlling how you react to them. Especially when you're in a heightened emotional state, like anger or stress. It's only when we calm down, that we start to regret how we've behaved.

An important first step is getting to know your emotions, and noticing how they show up in your body. Once you realise what is happening when it's happening, you can try to put some space between how you're feeling and how you're reacting. That's what practicing mindfulness is all about.

But no matter how much we practice, there'll be many times we slip up. We get angry, or sad, frustrated or tired, or hungry (a big one for me), and say something we don't mean, or do something we normally wouldn't have. While we'll keep practicing to be mindful, we also need to acknowledge our "suboptimal" reactions, so that we can better avoid them next time.

### **Step 1: The Unwanted Reaction**

Think about a recent moment when you have said or done something you later regretted because you were angry/sad/hungry/tired/anxious/whatever in the moment.

What triggered you at the time? Who was the target of your reaction? How would you have reacted differently without the negative emotion present?

Did you unleash your hanger on a friend, even though they only asked you a simple question? Did you snap at your partner for no reason because work was stressing you out?



## Step 2: The Card

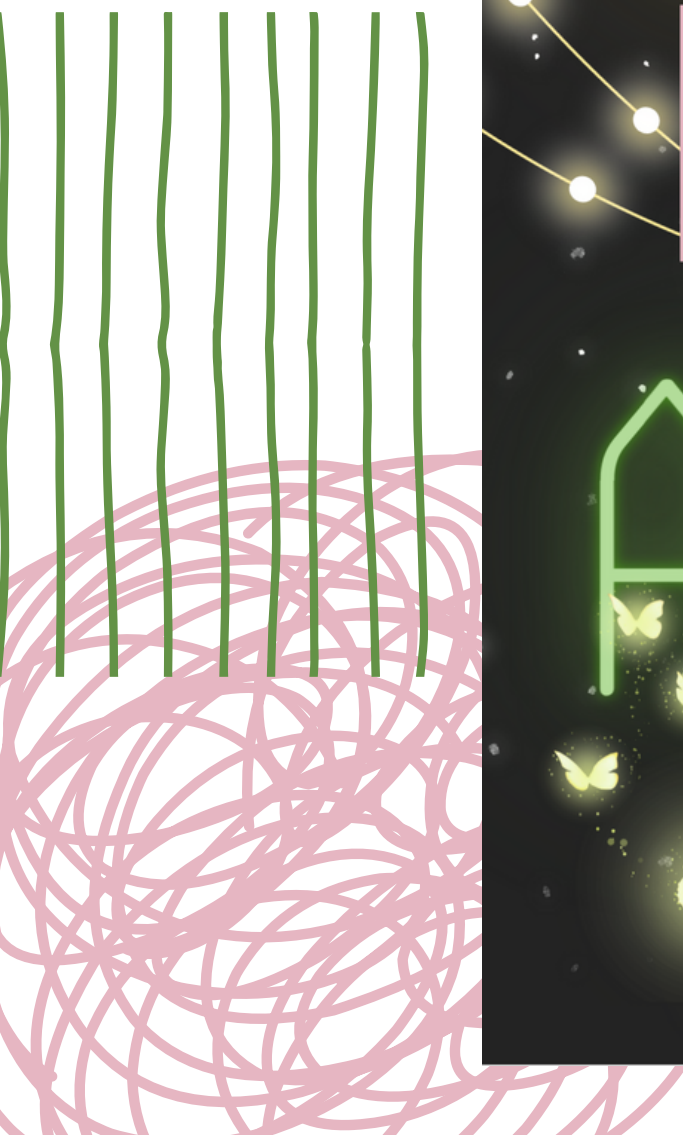
Now that you have zero'd in on a specific incident, create a card to say sorry to the person at the receiving end of your unwanted reaction (n.b. this can also be yourself). You can draw the card, or collage it, or use digital tools.

It doesn't have to be fancy. The important part is that you own up to the moment when you could have reacted differently, if you'd only been able to put some space between your emotions and your reaction

## Step 3 (Optional):

### Send it

Ideally, you'll now hand the card to the person in question. But I'll leave that one up to you.



# ART AND COMMUNITY

Art has the power to bring us together, connect to each other, and help create a sense of community. Whether it's through a community mural project, a group art class, or a collaborative art exhibit, creating art with others can be a lot of fun and help build longlasting connections.

## **Art is shared experience**

Creating art with others can be a great way to share an experience and work towards a common goal. When you create art with others, you're able to collaborate and bounce ideas off each other, which can be a lot of fun and lead to some really cool creations. Plus, it can create a sense of connection and purpose, which is always a good thing.

## **Art breaks down barriers**

Art can also be a powerful tool for breaking down barriers between different groups of people. When you create art with others, you get to know them on a personal level and see them as individuals rather than members of a group. This can help break down stereotypes and prejudices, and create a sense of unity and understanding.




## **Art fosters empathy and understanding**

Creating a piece of art together can also help foster empathy and understanding between different communities. Through art, we are able to express ourselves in unique and creative ways, which can help us see the world from other perspectives. This can be particularly powerful when it comes to social justice issues, as art can be used to raise awareness and promote change.

## **Art celebrates diversity**

Art can also be a way to celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity. When people from different backgrounds come together to create art, they are able to share their unique perspectives and create something that represents their collective experiences. This can help promote a sense of pride in one's own culture, as well as an appreciation for the diversity of others.



So whether you're working on a community art project or just taking a group art class, creating art with others can help you connect on a deeper level and promote a sense of unity and purpose. So why not grab some paint, gather some friends, and start creating today? You never know what kind of community you might build.

# Art Prompt

## I don't know what to draw...

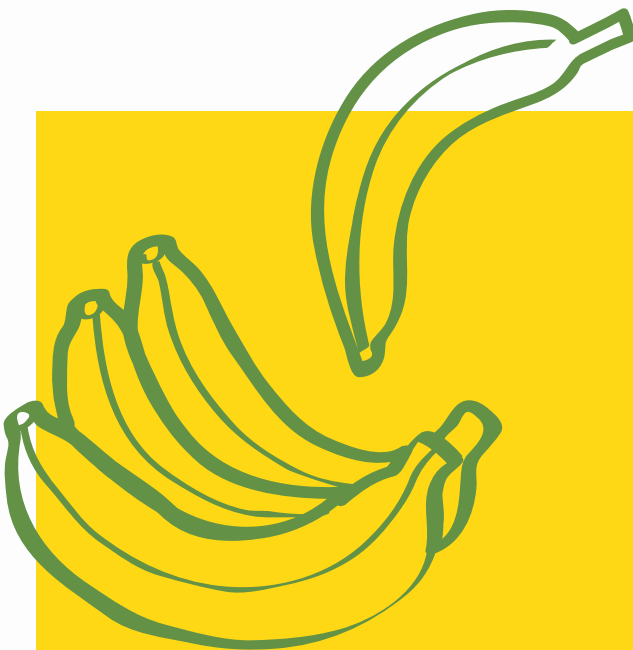
The blank page, an insurmountable obstacle to many of us. I have two main modes when it comes to wanting to draw: 1) I have an idea, but I can't find the time to sit down and put it to paper. 2) I have some time, but have no idea what to draw.

In good news, we don't need to be innovative or extremely creative to enjoy the process of sketching something. We can simply pick something from our surroundings, sit down, get into the moment, turn off the noise, and reduce our world to our pen, paper, and the thing in front of us.

### Step 1 - Set up your scene

Take a look around your house and choose some items you find interesting. This can be anything at all, but of course the simpler the form and shape, the easier it will be to sketch. Fruit, of course, is an all-time favourite object of still life artists over the centuries. But it's not a must. You can also go for a roll of toilet paper, and a bag of Cheese Dorritos.

Place the objects on a table in front of you. Arrange them in a way you find pleasing to the eye. It better be pleasing, because you'll spend a good amount of time staring at it





## Step 2 - Place your objects on the paper

Starting with a pencil, very lightly start sketching the rough shapes of your objects. Do not be precise, it doesn't have to look like the actual thing.

Lines, large circles, squares, squiggles. At this stage, you only want to place the different objects on your page. What's in front of what, how high is your toilet paper in comparison to your book, and so on.

## Step 3 - Refine the outlines

Now that you have your rough shapes on the paper, you can focus on each individual item in more detail. How does the outline look, what are some other main lines you want to include? You get to choose the level of detail you want to include. If you feel motivated to draw each individual button of your TV remote, that's cool. But it's also cool to just draw some circles or squiggles to imply where the buttons would be.



## Step 4 - Add shading and/or colour (optional)

If you're happy with your outlines, you can stop right there. Or you can keep going and turn some of the darker areas darker, while keeping the lighter bits light. Or you can get your crayons or watercolours and go nuts.

Since we're drawing real objects, it's very easy to get frustrated if you start feeling that it doesn't "look right". Try to let go of that. It doesn't matter what it looks like. Nobody will see it, unless you show it to them. Just focus on how good it feels to be in the moment, and to look at something much closer than you have before.



# MEET THE CREATIVE

An interview with Dariane from dada fabrik

dada  
fabrik



**Dariane, creator of dada fabrik, creates beautiful ceramics inspired by nature and travel.**

**Tell us a bit about your background. Who are you, where do you come from, what are you doing today and how did you get here?**

My name is Dariane, but most people call me Dada. I grew up around Paris, in the Yvelines, until I was 21 years old. Then I moved to Lyon to finish my studies in communication. After my master's degree, I decided to stay in Lyon because I fell in love with the city. One of the great things about it is its proximity to the mountains, which allows me to escape the city from time to time.

After working in an advertising agency for 3 years, I decided to start my own business to give myself a chance to develop a growing passion of mine: pottery. I started with pottery out of curiosity. At the time, I was doing a lot of painting and I was often frustrated that I couldn't make something more tangible.

So I tried an evening pottery class, just to see how I'd like it.

I immediately loved it, especially because of the many possibilities that opened up to me. I suddenly had the opportunity to make so many things! At first, you may not realize it, but ceramics is not limited to just making dishes; there's so much you can do with it. You can reinvent everyday objects or even create works of art.



## **What role have creativity and creative hobbies played in your life as you grew up?**

Since I was little, I have always been very tactile. When we had the opportunity at the youth center to choose between making bracelets or playing outside, I gladly chose the hands-on activity. I think it's because I'm naturally an introverted and shy person. These activities allowed me to not necessarily have to interact with others all the time.

As time went by, hands-on activities remained a big part of my lifestyle, especially as a way to disconnect from work, think about other things, and de-stress.

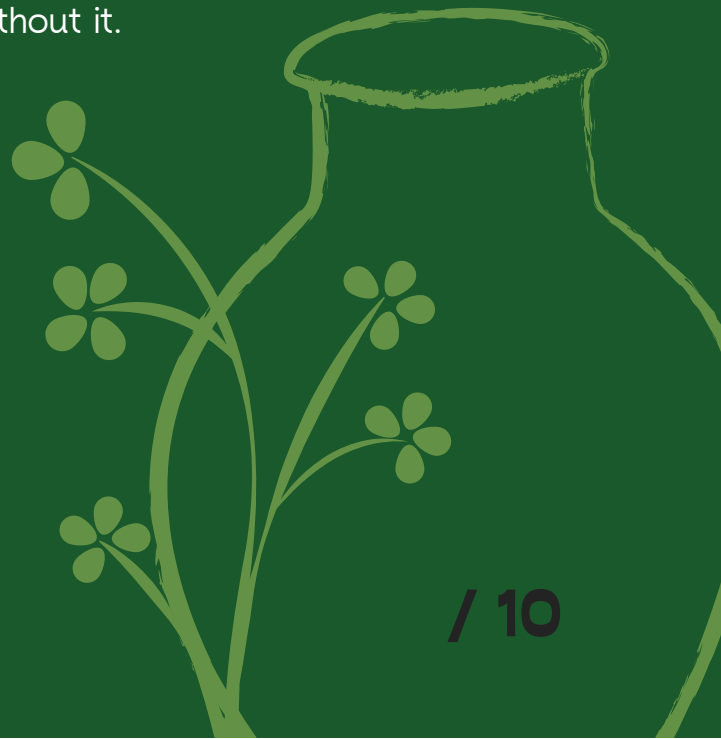
## **How did you get into pottery? What is different about it than the other creative hobbies you've tried before?**

I always wanted to try pottery, it stayed in the back of my mind. When I turned 18, I made a bucket list of all the things I wanted to do in my life. Next to skydiving and traveling to Japan, there was pottery. One day, when I was 25, when I came across that old list to check off the things I was missing, and dare to try out some new things. I felt it was the right time. So, I enrolled in an evening class to try pottery.

## **How has your life changed since you discovered pottery?**

Initially, it was something I did on the side to unwind. When you have your hands in the clay, you're not on your phone, you're truly disconnecting from the outside world, and it feels so good. Pottery was initially my comfort, my activity to disconnect. Then gradually, I started doing it for 3 hours a week, then every weekend, and eventually, I was thinking about it all the time, eagerly waiting for the end of the workday so that I could get my hands dirty.

I felt that pottery was having a significant impact on my emotional state and making me happier. It had a gradual impact on my mental health. When I wasn't doing pottery, I felt like I was missing something. I didn't have my 'me-time' and wasn't fulfilled, so I was less happy. I realized that now it's a genuine passion, and I can't do without it.



**What advice would you give someone who is just starting to explore their creativity?**

My advice would be to dare! Dare to do everything that comes to mind. Try many things without thinking about other people's opinions or limiting yourself. To me, that's the most important thing. It's by doing, trying, and daring that we rediscover ourselves and find our creativity.

**So what's next for you, where do you want to go from here?**

Now I'd love to introduce the world of pottery to other people, to all those who would love to try it! Starting in May, I will be offering pottery courses at the Atelier Folk in Lyon for several weeks. I'm also offering 2.5-hour workshops at my place in a relaxed atmosphere with drinks and a chat. The workshops will be guided on a specific theme like making your own mug, fruit bowl, or salad bowl for the summer, etc. I'm very excited to get started.

**Thank you so much! If people want to find out more about what you do, where can they find you online?**

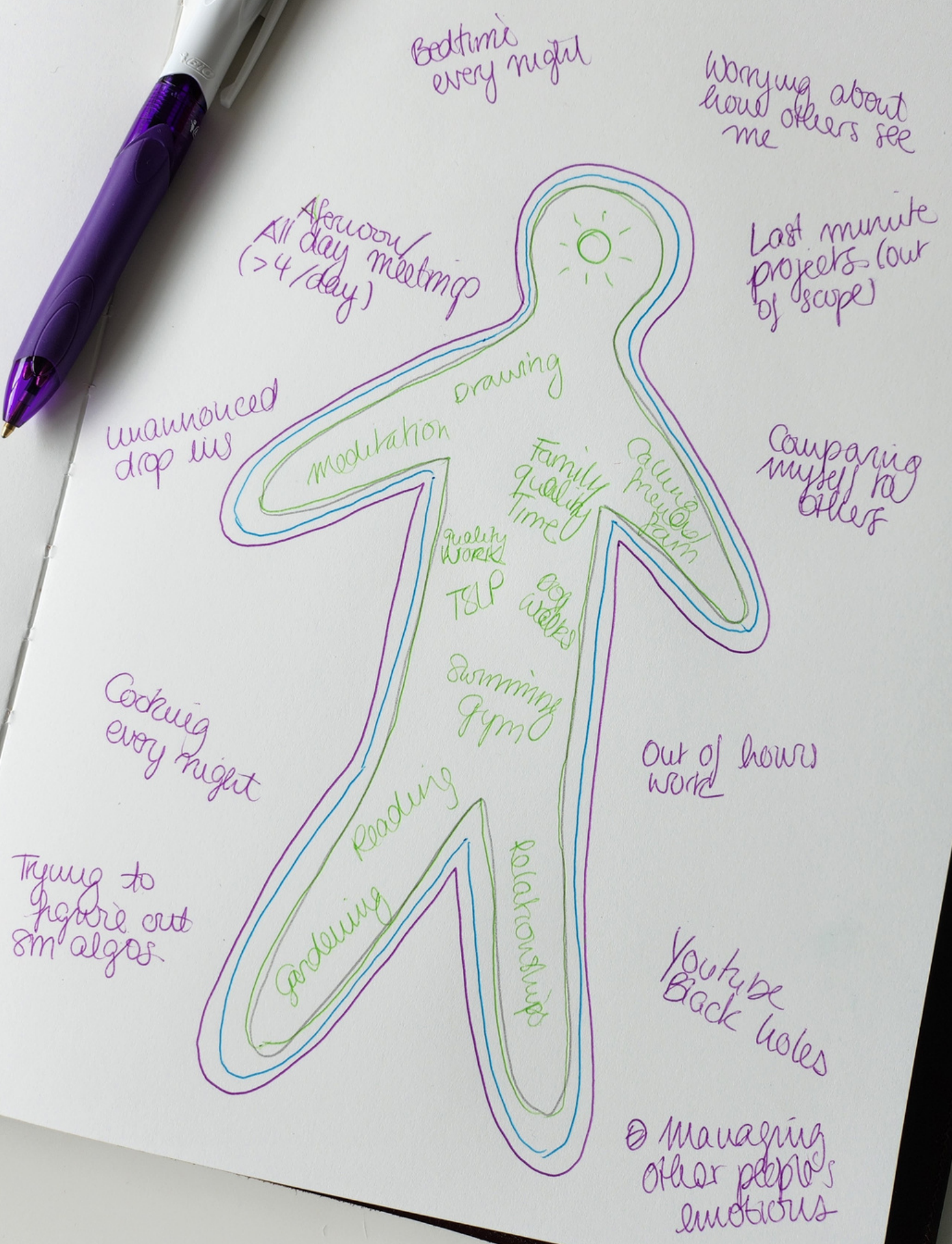
You can follow my adventure on Instagram and Tiktok @dada.fabrik and my pieces, as well as upcoming workshop dates, on [dada-fabrik.fr](http://dada-fabrik.fr).





# Art Prompt

Draw your boundaries



Saying no to people is extremely difficult for me. Especially when they are asking for help. But unfortunately, I only have limited amounts of energy to go around. So no matter how much of a people pleaser I am, it's important to set boundaries.

If we spread ourselves too thinly by saying yes to everything, then we end up doing nothing with the full dedication it deserves.

### **Step 1 - Your borders**

Draw the outline of a person on a page, so that there is some space to write inside the line and outside. This doesn't have to be very precise, the shape of a pedestrian light person or a gingerbread man will do.

### **Step 2 - The Hell-No-Zone**

On the outside of the line write down the things you want to start saying no to in the future. Things that take up all your energy, that take a toll on your mental health, that are just not what you need in your life anymore. Some examples: working on the weekends, your neighbour dropping by unannounced all the time, that one friend who only ever calls you to complain.

### **Step 3 - The F\*\*\* Yah Zone**

Saying no to the above, will allow you to say yes more often to other things. On the inside of the line write down the things you want to spend more time and energy on.

Examples: more date nights with your spouse, more alone time, going for walks, a professional project you want to dedicate yourself to.

There is a lot we want to say yes to, so focus on what's most important for you.

Now that you know what is in- and outside of your boundaries, you'll recognise more opportunities to say no in the future. Even though this might seem difficult at first, and you might feel that you're letting people down, in the end it is better for everyone because you can give your all to the people and the actions you do say yes to.



# WHY THE ARTS ARE IMPORTANT (ESPECIALLY) IN A RECESSION

**Times are tough. Everything seems to be getting more expensive, people are being let go from their jobs, budgets are being cut, belts are being tightened. Unfortunately, some of the things that often get cut or neglected first are the arts.**

But art is an essential part of our culture and history. It can help to build community, stimulate economic growth, and promote mental and emotional well-being. Especially during a recession, when the economy is struggling and resources are limited, investing in the arts becomes even more important.

## **Art can be a driver of economic growth.**

The arts industry creates jobs and generates revenue for local communities. By investing in the arts during a recession, we can help to create jobs and stimulate economic activity. Plus, the arts industry can also attract tourists and visitors, bringing even more economic benefits to a community.

## **Art can be a source of comfort and healing.**

During a recession, when people may be experiencing financial stress and uncertainty, engaging in the arts can provide a source of mental and emotional support. Art can help us to process our emotions, find beauty in the world, and feel connected to something greater than ourselves.

Art can help to build community and promote social cohesion.

By bringing people together to engage in artistic activities and experiences, the arts can help to foster a sense of connection and belonging. This is especially important during a recession, when people may feel isolated or disconnected from their community.





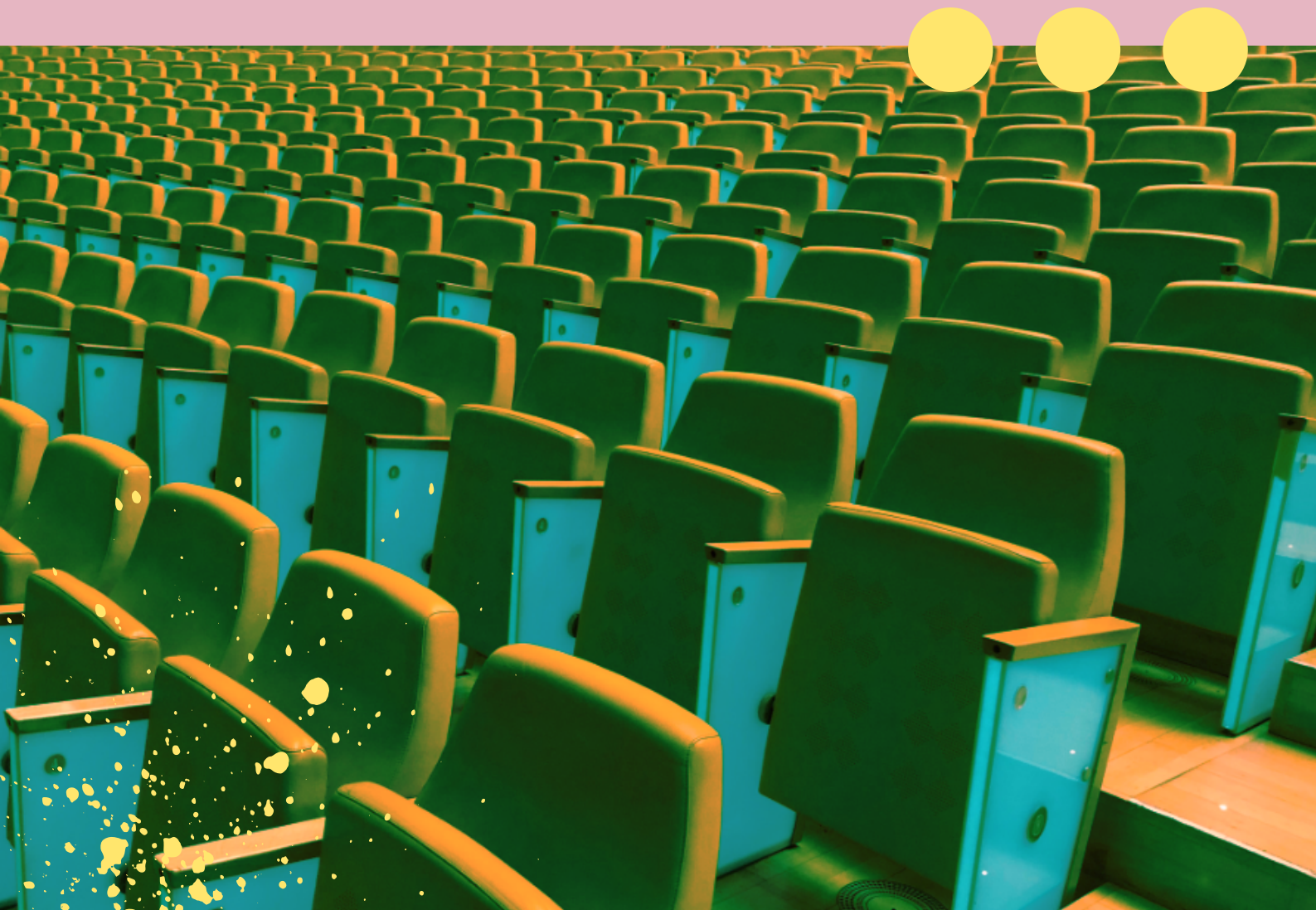
**Art can provide educational opportunities.**

The arts are an important part of a well-rounded education, and can provide students with opportunities for learning and personal growth. By investing in the arts during a recession, we can help to ensure that students have access to high-quality arts education and experiences.

**Art can help to preserve and celebrate our cultural heritage.**

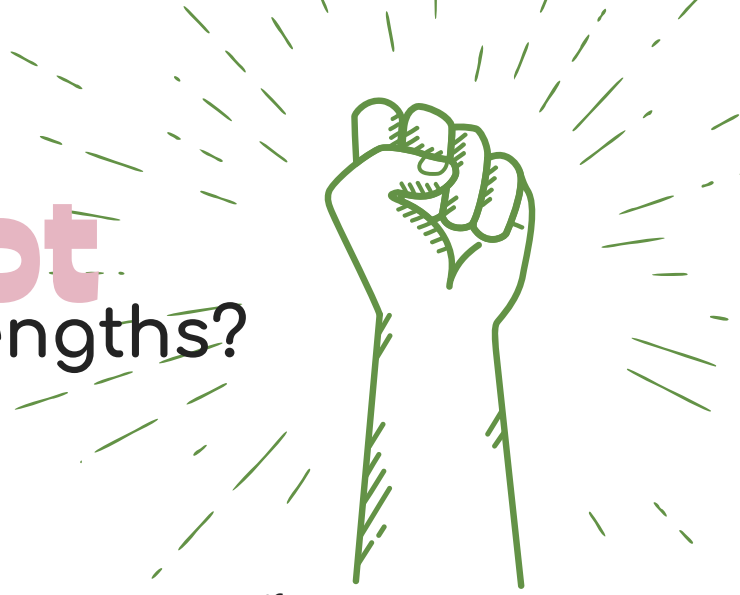
The arts are an important part of our cultural history, and can help to preserve and celebrate our shared traditions and values. By investing in the arts during a recession, we can ensure that our cultural heritage is not lost or forgotten.

Promoting the arts during a recession is important for economic, mental health, community building, educational, and cultural preservation reasons. By investing in the arts, we can create a stronger, more resilient society that is better equipped to weather economic challenges and support the well-being of its members. So let's keep promoting the arts, even during tough times!



# Art Prompt

## You know your strengths? Use them!



If I asked you to describe your best friend's best qualities, would you find it hard to list them? Of course not. How about your spouse? Pretty easy. What about your colleagues? Still relatively straightforward.

Now what about yourself? What are your main character strengths? Most people find this question much harder than the previous ones. Our minds are so busy pointing out what we need to improve, that we overlook what we're good at.

We try to find happiness by fixing and optimising ourselves. "I'll be so much happier when... I finally manage to keep my house cleaner / I get fitter / I stop making so many mistakes / I'm less socially awkward." But we're going about it all wrong.

There is plenty of research that shows that knowing and using your core strengths makes you happier and generally more satisfied with life.

### Step 1 - Identify your Strengths

I've mentioned this test before, so if you haven't already taken it, please take a few minutes to fill out the VIA Strengths Survey here:

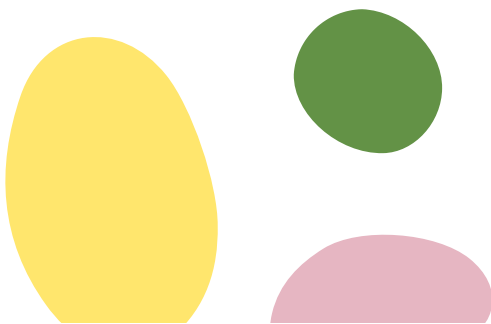
<https://www.viacharacter.org/>

It's straight from the scientific cradle of Positive Psychology, it's free, and I felt like it really managed to "get me" when reading through my answers. So go ahead.

You will receive a list of 24 character strengths, ranked in order from strongest to weakest. The top 5 represent your core character strengths. Your own super special sauce.

### Step 2 - Apply Daily

Now that you know what your strengths are, see how you can use them more often in your daily life. Especially when facing high-stress situations or problems, try figuring out how using your strengths could help you turn things around.



	Cu	Hu	Lo	Ho	To
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

- Cu Curiosity
- Hu Humour
- Lo Love of Learning
- Ho Hope
- To Forgiveness

For example, let's say you're nervous before a big meeting. Your mind is going on about all the things that could possibly go wrong. But instead of going down that rabbit hole of anxiety, you use your strength of curiosity to wonder and find out who the people are that you're meeting. What are their challenges and concerns. How can you help them out. And there, you're already a lot more relaxed.

Try to find small ways to apply a healthy dose of your strengths whenever you can.

**Step 3 - Track it**

In your journal or a piece of paper, create a table with 5 columns and 30/31 rows (depending how many days are in the month). Number your rows, and write your core strengths as the headings of each column. At the end of each day, fill in the strengths that you have used that day.

Tracking it this way will allow you to realise if and how you can use your strengths more often, and maybe even find correlations between using them and how you are feeling.

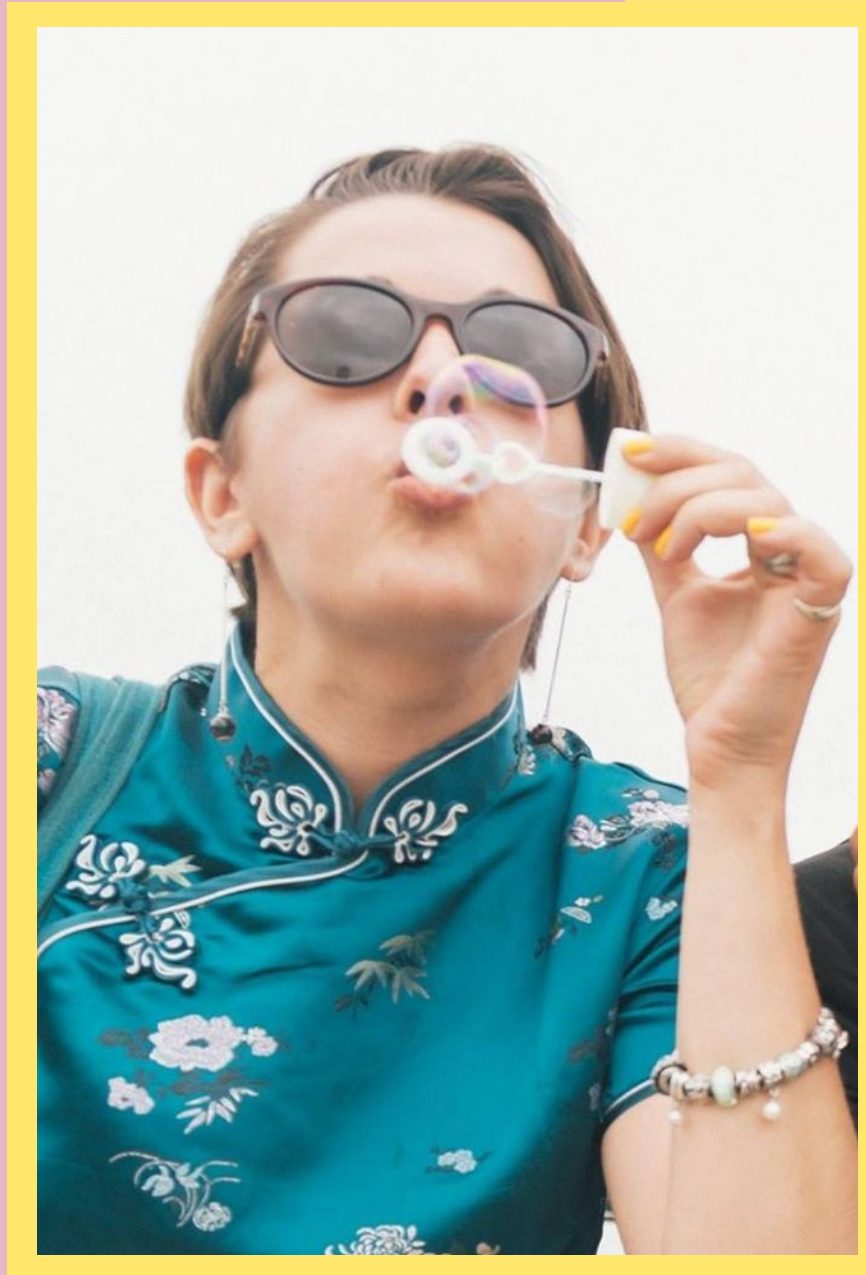
Bonus: If you've caught the tracking bug, why not add a Mood Tracker column as well to note how you felt that day?

**Inspired?**

**Draw something here.**



# ABOUT ●



**Hi, I'm Lorena and I believe everyone deserves to know the tools to positively impact their well-being.**

On [thestresslesspencil.com](http://thestresslesspencil.com) you can sign up to receive this monthly magazine by email, you can also find out more about our creative Stress Less Workshops, sign up for weekly art prompts designed for happiness, and more.



**“IF I COULD SAY IT IN WORDS  
THERE WOULD BE NO REASON TO  
PAINT.”**

Edward Hopper

At The Stress Less Pencil we give you the creative tools  
to improve your mental well-being, at work and at home.

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