

About Drawing And Creative Media

Art can be a powerful tool to help people discover their ultimate concerns. We use art forms to help express what we know, but cannot easily express verbally. As a creative form, drawing helps us communicate on a different level, enabling us to view things from a different perspective, instead of just naming things. Drawing are information rich, and they enable us to objectify our deeper thoughts that rarely surface because ordinary words cannot express their complexity.

Our basic language is that of images and pictures. Understanding this, Jesus of Nazareth chose to communicate many of his teachings through word pictures—parables, metaphors and symbols. Picture language is often the easiest way for us to grasp spiritual truths.

The process of drawing allows us to externalize previously internalized mental imagery, activating feelings that express our emotional life, show how we react to conflict, and reveal how we feel about our important relationships. Drawings can also help us externalize our fears. Webb (1999) notes that “by putting them on paper, we are given a sense of cathartic relief, while also relocating the frightening images outside of ourselves” (p. 70).

Drawing enables the wounds inside to be brought safely out into the open, so they can be talked about and brought to the “Ultimate Source of All Healing.” Drawing allows clinicians to glimpse the interior world of the people in their care, such as their conflicts, aspirations, world view, and their search for meaning.

In her book, *Spiritual Art Therapy*, Horowitz (2002) describes a diagnostic tool she designed to assess the particulars of a person’s spirituality. She asks people in her care to draw, paint or sculpt what God means to them.

How drawing can help us

1. Enable us to express ideas or feelings too complicated to describe in words.
2. Enables us to give visual form to insights and experiences.
3. Helps us to stop looking at things without really see them.
4. Helps us view the whole picture—simultaneously see both forest and trees.
5. Show relationships that are immediately grasped as a single image, whereas words are necessarily locked into sequential order.
6. Delineate differences and also point up similarities.
7. Enhance perceptual skills. There is much more to observe; things could appear very differently; our thinking could radically change if we see better.
8. Reveal conflicts and desires in our deep heart, i.e., the unconscious.
9. Help unblock trapped energy, offering a sense of cathartic relief.

To process drawing

Ponder the following thoughts about your drawing:

1. What I didn’t realize is...
2. I see now that I’m surprised by...
3. I didn’t really understand before that...

4. I found myself drawing...
5. Write on the back of your picture what you feel and think about what you have just drawn.
6. Title the drawing.

Drawing Exercises

➤ Draw a picture of what God means to you

“Many people have a belief in God; if you also have a belief in God, would you draw or paint what God means to you” (Horowitz, 2002, p. 178).

➤ Process questions for drawings about God (Horowitz, 2002, p. 178)

1. Could you explain what you have made and what that means to you?
2. Have you ever witnessed or seen God as you have delineated your artwork?
3. How do you feel about what you have just made?

(For more help in assessing the artwork, see Horowitz, E. 2002, *Spiritual Art Therapy*. p. 32-34.)

➤ Draw a picture of your earliest impressions of God

Children are both spiritually aware and are enthusiastic artists: Draw a picture of your earliest impressions of God. Put yourself somewhere in the picture.

➤ Draw a picture of a stories from sacred writings

From the Holy Scriptures

1. Draw the Christmas Story.
2. Draw the Easter Story—Cross, Tomb. Where are you in the picture?
3. Draw "Sea Of Life" picture: The sea, boat, Jesus, where you are, weather, water.
4. Draw picture of banquet table.
5. Draw the City Of God; Where are you in the picture?
6. Draw the Kingdom Of God. Where are you in the picture?
7. Draw the O.T. tabernacle. Where are you in the picture?
8. Draw Jesus healing the daughter Of Jairus. Where are you in the story?

➤ Draw a musical instrument

Draw a musical instrument to represent you. Around it write words for the many melodies that God has played in your life in the past ten years. These words might include events, people whose lives you have influenced, gifts or talents you have developed, ideas and insights that have changed your approach to life, and so on.

➤ Draw a prayer

1. Ask God for a picture of something He wants to show you: your current problem or situation. Then ask God for the solution to it and draw it.
2. Ask God for a picture or image to complete this sentence:
I am like... Draw out this picture or image.
3. Draw an image of how God wants you to see yourself in life.
4. Draw pictures to present three longings or heart's desires that you often wish for.

➤ Draw a harvest basket

Draw a basket, and inside of it write your harvest of blessings from the year, or write your blessings on pieces of paper and put them in a real basket. Then in November, draw one out each day as you approach Thanksgiving Day.

➤ Draw the Christmas crib scene

1. Close your eyes and breathe deeply, breathing in the healing love of God, as you understand God.
2. Now image that you are creating a Christmas crib scene. You have all the materials you need to create it in any way you wish. How would you design it? What surroundings, animals or other creatures would you include? Who would be there?
(If you are not a Christian, image creating the most welcoming birthplace you could wish for. How would you design it; what surroundings, animals, or other creatures would you include?)
3. Now image yourself in the scene you have created. Breathe deeply, breathing in love from the people you have placed there, from the animals or other creatures you have included, and from God.
4. Draw what you have imagined.

Symbolic or metaphoric drawings

The Holy Scriptures often use a metaphoric language to describe our condition; e.g., *like a watered garden* (Isaiah 58); *like a tree* (Psalm 1); *like a house built on rock* (Matthew 7). You can draw using metaphors to describe yourself, your condition, and your problems. Several books on symbols are listed in the Notes to help you process these drawings.

➤ Exercise: symbolic or metaphoric drawings

1. Draw a house to represent your inner life.
2. Draw a tree to represent your inner life (Psalm 1).

3. Draw weather to represent your emotional life at the moment.
4. Draw a picture of your childhood family in symbols.
5. Draw a rose. (See also “Draw A Rose Exercise”)
6. Draw a flower to represent your soul.
7. Draw a garden to represent your inner life or outer life.
8. Draw a home and label it "My true self". Within the home, draw symbols or words that describe your discoveries about your true self thus far in your life.
9. Draw a castle or temple to represent your inner life.
10. Draw a picture to symbolize how you see yourself.
11. Draw a picture to symbolize how you see your life at the moment.
12. Draw a star to symbolize your place in the world.
13. Draw a candle to symbolize your spiritual life.
14. Draw a light to symbolize you. What kind of light are you?
15. Draw a picture of the light that is within you. John 1:4-9: *In Him was life and the life was the light of men.* What kind of light are you?
16. Draw a picture of a dead person in a tomb. How far out of the tomb are you?
17. Draw a heart, sketch symbols of the ways that your heart thirsts or yearns for God, or would look like if it did.

➤ Draw a star

You appear as lights in the world (luminaries or stars) (Philippians 2:15).

Draw a picture of a star to symbolize yourself. Symbolic meanings of the star include: a) a light shining in the darkness; the star is a symbol of the spirit—forces of the spirit struggling against the forces of darkness; b) as lights in the dark night sky; a star signifies spiritual light penetrating the darkness; c) symbol of deity; d) destiny; e) morning star heralds the dawn, it symbolizes the Christ.

➤ Draw a dream

➤ Draw your view of the world and your place in it: earliest memory.

According to M. Scott Peck (1978), the essence of your world view is often captured in your earliest memory. He says that we choose the memory because it captures for us the essence of how we see the world and our place in it.

What is the very first thing you can remember? Think back through the years, back to when you were a little child. Linger there until a memory rises to consciousness. Choose the one that you think was the earliest, recalling as many details as you can. Draw a picture of this earliest memory. Later, write the memories down, using the first person, and describe how you felt about the world and your existence in it.

➤ Drawing as a tool to search for truth about your family

1. Draw your mother in symbolic form—as you saw her as a child.
2. Draw your father in symbolic form—as you saw him as a child.

3. Draw your siblings in symbolic form—as you saw them as a child.
4. Sketch your childhood room. Describe it. What was your favorite thing about it? What is your favorite thing about your room right now?
5. Draw your family members.
6. Draw a picture to represent your childhood home. Use colors to represent each room (review symbols for house in dreams).
7. Draw a picture of your childhood family in symbols.

➤ Draw yourself

1. Draw a self-portrait.
2. Draw the way your soul looks in the world and then describe in words the meaning of what you have drawn.
3. Try to crystallize your image of yourself as a pilgrim by drawing a picture, abstract or realistic.
4. Draw a picture of how you think God sees you.
5. Draw a picture of the condition of your heart.
6. Draw a picture of how you see yourself.
7. Draw a picture of your heart. How much light is in it? Write on the heart some of the lies you believe.

➤ Draw an emotion

Draw a large box to serve as a frame for your picture. Using only lines and colors, draw a picture of what the *emotion* looks or feels like. For example, anger looks like this... Anger: think back to the last time you were really angry. Feel within yourself what that anger was like. Imagine you are feeling the emotion again, that it flows first from deep inside, then into your arm, down into your hand, and into the pencil, where it emerges from the point of the pencil to record itself in marks that are equivalent to the feeling—marks that look like the felt emotion. Share the drawings—have everyone hold up drawings so the whole group can see.

Examples of emotions to draw: fear, hope, hopelessness, joy, peacefulness, depression, human energy, femininity, illness, masculinity, loneliness, jealousy, anxiety, hysteria, hopefulness, guilt, ecstasy, trust, love, hatred, adoration.

➤ Draw a spiritual concept

1. Hope
2. Trust
3. Church
4. Faith
5. Love
6. Morality
7. Patience

➤ Draw a mandala

In Oriental art and religion, a mandala, usually symmetrical and circular, is a picture that represents the universe (Furth, 2002, p. 82). Jung found that mandalas often appeared in dreams as images of wholeness or as an ordering principle of the person's psyche (Clift, & Clift, 1984, p. 141-142). Following are some suggestions to spontaneously draw your own mandala.

1. Draw an image of God's shelter or refuge. You might choose the arms of God, the lap of God, the heart of God or another image. Remember the times when you have leaned on God and how those experiences were for you.
2. Draw a temple to represent your inner self.
3. Draw a picture of how God has created music through your life.
4. Draw a mandala to represent the pattern of your life. Begin by quieting the mind and body. Go within yourself and wait patiently for an image or a color or a word to make itself known. Place this in the center of the circle. Continue to add to the circle until it feels completed. Draw spontaneously. Use brightly colored words within the pictures. Bits from the conscious and other bits from the unconscious can possibly lead to new insights. Title and date picture. Jot down any insights or connections that may come as you ponder the mandala.

➤ Draw a problem in analog form

1. In your mind's eye, scan various aspects of your current situation, and select one that seems to be causing a problem—something that doesn't fit, or that you don't quite understand. The purpose is to see the situation in a new light, to put it into a new perspective, to view the picture.
2. Use a pencil for the drawing, and keep an eraser handy.
3. Draw a boundary line as the first step. This provides a format for the problem. The format can be any size or shape you wish, and can be roughly drawn, carefully hand-drawn, or carefully measured & drawn with a ruler. This boundary will serve to separate the problem from its immeasurable surrounding, and will allow it to be apprehended as one thing, a unified whole.
4. Then make the drawing, using only lines and marks on the paper, the evidence of visual thought.
5. Title it.

➤ Draw a picture of a trauma

Trauma therapy is making use of art and drawings as an intervention to help people who have experienced traumas. You may want to read more about how to use this intervention as a healing tool with trauma victims.

➤ Exercise: healing birth traumas

Draw a picture of an ideal welcoming scene to welcome you when you were born.

➤ Exercise: make a mask

Give each person a sheet of construction paper and crayons. For five minutes create a face mask on one side of the paper. Using images and words, write *how you want to appear* to other people. Turn the paper over and for 5 minutes write and draw on the inside of the mask *how you actually appear* to yourself. Be ruthlessly honest.

Mill around, holding masks in front of your face so others can read them. Choose partners and share feeling aroused during exercise. Share whatever you want about what you wrote on the inside of your mask representing how you actually see yourself.

Processing. What feelings does this arouse? What determines how much you will withhold or reveal? Where are the discrepancies between how you want others to perceive you and how you perceive yourself? Would you like to be totally open about yourself with someone else?

Questions to ponder:

1. Do I feel one way inside, but act another?
2. Do I really believe what others profess or say?
3. Do I disguise my emotions to protect feelings of others?
4. Do I mold my behavior to conform to others expectations?
5. How much of me is the one I perform for others?
6. How much of me have I borrowed from others?
7. How much have I tailored my ideas to get acclaim from others?
8. How much have I tried to please others for acceptance?
9. How much have I tried to be who others wanted me to be for sake of tranquility?

Draw A House To Symbolize You

Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-48).

Here Jesus compares those who hear his word and acts upon them to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The image of the house is an important one in Jesus' sayings, and in our dreams. Generally, the house typically *symbolizes our conscious framework, our ego standpoint*. The house stands amid the storm because it was founded upon rock and not sand.

➤ Exercise: draw a house to represent you

Draw a picture of a house, and the foundation it is built on, as a way to symbolize your interior life or inner self. Process the drawing using symbol books and symbolic thought processing. In particular, see Tony Crisp's book, *Dream Dictionary*, (1990), pp. 204-214.

In working with symbols, we need to understand that often there are many possible meanings to each symbol. However, we can develop an understanding of how the language of symbolism works and learn to apply those principles. (For more information, see article on symbols in Dreams section of this manual).

In symbol work the house nearly always represents our conscious framework, our ego standpoint—how the person sees the world. However it could also depict our body or attributes of our personality.

Every aspect of the house can depict some part of ourselves: e.g., the attic, our treasured memories; the cellar, areas we do not want to go to. A house with no windows and no doors could represent a person who does not have any outlook on life and which keeps him shut in. The front may be how we want the world to see us, and the roof, our philosophy, beliefs or coping mechanisms we use to protect ourselves from stress.

Draw A Rose Exercise

Characteristics of the rose

1. Known as the queen of flowers.
2. A wonderful life form of loveliness, beauty, fragrance, charm—even with its thorns.
3. Has different stages of development: opens in response to the sunlight, water, and environment.
4. Rounded in shape: corresponds to mandala

Use of rose in fairytales, folklore, churches, etc.

- Sleeping Beauty, Briar Rose
- Rose windows: a circle, wheel, Christ symbol
- Rosy cross
- Rose of Sharon

➤ Drawing Exercise

1. Draw a rose to represent your inner growth, your inner development, your blossoming as an individual.
2. Draw a rose to represent your wholeness, your fulfillment.

Symbolic meaning of the rose

1. Single rose is in essence the symbol of completion, of consummate achievement & perfection.
2. Mystic center, the heart, the cross.
3. Opened blossom represents creation, mystic rebirth.
4. Blossoming of the individual: our wholeness & growth; our inner development; our growth in conscious life.
5. Flowering of the feeling quality or ability.
6. Simplicity, feminine beauty.
7. Love & affection.
8. Attribute of virgins.
9. In early Christianity, the rose was a symbol of secrecy and discretion, often in connection with the cross.
10. 7-petalled rose alludes to the septenary pattern.
11. 8-petalled rose symbolizes regeneration.

Colors of roses

- Red rose: divine love
- Red rose: shed blood, wounds of Christ
- White rose: purity/spiritual love
- Yellow rose: decrease of love & infidelity
- Blue rose: the impossible.
- Golden rose: absolute achievement.

Drawing A Garden

Meditation: You will be like a watered garden

“Your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. The Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your soul in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, like a flowing spring whose waters never run dry” (Isaiah 58: 9-11)

Analogy: the human spirit is much like a spring garden.

A garden generally refers to our inner life; the area of growth or change in our life; what we are trying to cultivate in ourselves; fruitfulness spiritually or socially.

➤ Draw a picture of a garden to represent your inner life or your outer life.

Working with the symbols

Garden: generally the inner life of the dreamer with its flowers and fruits.

- a) Various qualities of the dreamer’s mind may be represented; also may indicate what is being neglected.
- b) Area of growth or change in your life; what you are trying to cultivate in yourself; feelings of peace; being near to one’s natural self; meditative attitude.
- c) Place where nature is subdued, ordered, selected and enclosed.
- d) Symbol of consciousness, as opposed to the forest, which is the unconscious.
- e) Fertility and fruitfulness of body as well as of mind, therefore the Mother.

Various conditions of garden

1. Beautiful—suggests satisfaction.
2. Overgrown with brambles, choked with weeds—awareness of particular parts of your personality which need working on. Certain features of our character are not likely to thrive in such environment. Negative habits, etc.
3. Unkempt—may reflect our former disappointments and fear of disappointment.
4. Square, circular garden—hold a lot of your gathered wisdom and insights that would be useful if made conscious.
5. Garden pool—childhood, or early stage in the evolution of one’s self consciousness, during which there was a sense of communal awareness; sense of unity with life.
6. Orderly or disorderly—conditions of the mind.

Other objects or aspects of the garden

1. Gardener: the down to earth, but wise, aspect of self; the wisdom or insights gathered through life, from which we can direct our own growth and life to integrate the many parts of our nature; the process in each of us—the Christ—which synthesizes our life experience and considers what love, what resonance with all life there is in it.
2. Gate: a threshold, like that between conscious self awareness and our total experience. Such a gate needs to open and close; the passage from one period of life, or level of maturity, to another.

Plants

- a) areas of progressive change in our lives; emerging personal qualities
- b) growth
- c) inner development
- d) an image of life, expressive of the manifestation of the cosmos; the unity of all living things
- e) a symbol for cyclical renewal
- f) essence of mother earth.

Various conditions of plants

1. Neglected roots—the rest will wither.
2. Dead, dying plants—loss of vital enthusiasm; dying pleasure.

Flowers

a) vitality, beauty; b) the blossoming of the individual, often through some new relationship involving love and tenderness; c) flowering of the feeling quality or ability; d) feelings of pleasure; e) youthfulness, time of flowering.

- Crushed flowers—defoliation, loss of virginity.
- Blue flowers—the flower of the soul, the mystical, romantic or lyrical.
- Dried flowers—preserving one's love and sex for inspection rather than living it.
- Dead flowers—death or old age; dying love or abilities.
- Giving flowers—giving love and tenderness.
- Many flowers growing—feelings of well-being and relaxation.
- In a man's dream—the qualities of fantasy and feeling associated with the feminine side of his nature.

Colors of Flowers

Red flowers: emphasize the relationship with animal life, blood and passion.

Blue flowers: legendary symbol of the impossible, an allusion to the mystic Center as represented by the Grail.

Color as symbols for the 4 functions.

1. Blue—the color of the rarefied atmosphere, of the clear sky, stands for *thinking*.
2. Yellow—the color of the far-reaching sun, which appears bringing light of an inscrutable brightness only to disappear again into darkness; for *intuition*, the function which grasps as in a flash of illumination the origins and tendencies of happenings.
3. Red—the color of the pulsing blood and of fire, for the surging and tearing *emotions*.
4. Green—the color of earthly, tangible, immediately perceptible growing things, represents the function of *sensation*.

Symbolic Associations of Color

1. Red is associated with blood, wounds, death-throes and sublimation
2. Orange with fire and flames
3. Yellow with the light of the sun, illumination, dissemination and comprehensive generalization
4. Green with vegetation, but also with death and lividness (green is therefore the connecting-link between black—mineral life—and red—blood and animal life—as well as between animal life and decomposition and death.
5. Light blue with the sky, and the day, and with the calm sea
6. Dark blue with sky and the night and with the stormy sea
7. Brown and ochre with the earth
8. Black with the fertilized land.
9. Gold corresponds to the mystic aspect of the sun
10. Silver to that of the moon.

Blue—religious feeling, devotion, and innocence

Green—the fertility of the fields, sympathy and adaptability

Violet—nostalgia and memories

Yellow—magnanimity, intuition and intellect

Orange—pride and ambition

Red—passion, sentiment and the life-giving principle

Grey—neutralization, egoism, depression, inertia and indifference.

Purple—power, spirituality and sublimation

Pink—sensuality and the emotions

Weeds

Things you developed in your life that are not contributing much, or might even be stopping more positive personal growth; misplaced endeavor or energy.

Soil

The things we take for granted that act as supportive background to our lives and activities, such as parental love, our own reality as a person, social order, etc. Also the ground we stand on; attitudes and relationships we have taken for granted; everyday life, the past.

Soft earth: mother, the fundamental processes of life out of which we have our being and which continually nurture us.

Sand—lack of emotion or nourishment.

Fruit

Work, etc., which is bearing fruit; a fruitful period of development. After the flower—the blossoming of the individual—comes the fruit, that is, a later and more mature phase of the individual's life.

Thoughts On A Watered Garden

In making a garden, the first step is soil preparation in the garden. The ground must be opened up properly to ensure good drainage. Sometimes it's a lot of hard work. After a long, hard winter, heavy snows and rains may have packed the soil tightly. The soil can be difficult to turn over, resisting the garden rototiller or hoe. Many hours of work may be involved in making the earth soft and porous, ready to receive the plants and the moisture from spring rains. Water will run off hard packed soil and fail to water the garden adequately. Proper watering of a garden requires that the soil is turned over correctly.

Similarly for us, if inner growth is to happen, the soil of our hearts must be adequately prepared. It must be opened up in order for God's goodness to grow in it.

Draw A Road

➤ Draw a road to represent your life journey as a whole.

a. Name the many branches of this road.

b. Jot down key events & experiences on the path such as:

Encounters

Turning points

Crossings

Impassable barriers

Reaching destinations

c. What markers did you encounter on this road?

Dead end

Dangerous curve ahead

Construction underway

Strong crosswinds

Scenic view

Slow

One way

Bridge out

Yield

Do not pass

Detour

d. Give this path a name

➤ Draw a road to represent the path of your life

a. Jot down key events and experiences on the path:

Encounters

Turning points

Crossings

Impassable barriers

Reaching destinations

b. Give this path a name.

➤ Draw a road to represent the journey in front of you.

a. Write your feelings as you enter this road. Give your new road a name.

➤ What kinds of roads have you traveled on your inner journey in past year?

a. Make a list of these roads or draw a road map, indicating:

Hills and valleys; Empty stretches; Busy freeways

b. Where did you find filling stations? Rest areas?

b. As you traveled on this road, jot down key events:

c. d. Did you

Encounter any roadblocks?

Get stuck?

Find an unusual treasure on the roadway?

Risk a “road less traveled”?

Meet someone who helped you find direction?

Search for your way back home?

Cross over a bridge to new freedom?

Fall into a ditch and work your way out?

Spend time in a serene place of beauty?

References & Notes

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Books to help you understand the meaning of symbols and images

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