



The Blue Dove
FOUNDATION

MENTAL

HEALTH

AWARENESS

MONTH

WORKBOOK

May 2021



ABOUT THE WORKBOOK

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Mental Health Awareness Month (“Mental Health Month”) has been observed every May in the United States since 1949, raising awareness and educating millions of people each year about the dangers and experience of living with mental illness. *As of 2019, it was estimated that more than 26 percent of American adults — about one in five — live with a mental illness* (National Institute of Mental Health), and many of them often face that reality alone. That is why, every May, the Blue Dove Foundation and hundreds of other organizations join the national movement to shine a spotlight on the issue and, ultimately, #QuietTheSilence.

A JEWISH APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

Judaism isn't just a religion of laws; rather, it is a religion of ideas and experiences, all aimed at cultivating a healthy and sound mind, body, and soul for all of its practitioners. Our goal is to explore them, reveal the deep messages hidden within, and shed some light on how one can utilize them to live a healthier and happier life with this four-week Jewish guide through Mental Health Awareness Month. Each week, we will focus on a Jewish approach to a different aspect of mental wellness and then engage in activities to help make mental health a bigger part of your life.



**GUARD YOURSELF AND GUARD YOUR SOUL
VERY CAREFULLY (DEUTERONOMY 4:19)**

JEWISH MENTAL WELLNESS VALUES

Jewish values, or **middot**, help build the foundation on which the Jewish community stands. We believe middot empower us to connect Jewish thought to mental wellness. Jewish literature and discussion have focused on healing, wellness, and community for years, yet we often shroud mental health in a cone of silence. To emphasize the role the Jewish community plays in promoting mental wellness, the Blue Dove Foundation focuses on the following eight middot:

בצלם אלוהים – B'tzelem Elohim – Created “in God’s image”

כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה – Kol Yisrael arevim zeh la zeh – All Jews are responsible for one another

רפואה שלימה – Refuah shleimah – Healing and wholeness

חסד וגבורה – Chesed u'gevurah – Balancing loving-kindness and discernment

פיקוח נפש – Pikuach nefesh – Saving a life

נושא בעול עם חברו – Nosei b'ol im chaveiro – Sharing a burden with one's friend

לפני עיוור – Lifnei iver – Before the blind (inclusivity)

תיקון עולם – Tikkun olam – Repairing the world

Learn more by visiting

<https://thebluedovefoundation.org/jewish-mental-health-values/>

WEEK ONE - CLEANSING - נִיקּוּי

Judaism asks us to **cleans**e ourselves of negativity.

Before the holiday of Passover, Jews are tasked with cleansing their homes of chametz, or leavened bread, which they are prohibited from eating on the holiday. Chametz is also symbolic of other things like the yetzer harah (the ego, the self, mental clutter, negativity) that lives within us and distracts us from our true goals. We are tasked with cleansing ourselves of that kind of chametz as well, which allows us to focus.

We must cleanse ourselves of any residual chametz and use that mental clarity to focus on the goals of Mental Health Awareness Month. This is why for the first week of MHAM, we would like to encourage you to do a mental cleanse.

Much like chametz, a mental cleanse involves taking a critical look at your mental space, determining which feelings are serving your larger goals and which are holding you down. You can also take a look at your physical space to identify relationships or behaviors that are functioning as triggers for negative thoughts and create boundaries between those people and things.

By creating boundaries and ridding yourself of negative thoughts and triggers, you can excise the mental clutter from your mind and focus on what truly matters to you.



**DO NOT GIVE YOURSELF OVER TO
SORROW OR DISTRESS YOURSELF
DELIBERATELY. A MERRY HEART KEEPS A
PERSON ALIVE, AND JOY LENGTHENS
ONE'S DAYS. - YESHUA BEN SIRA**

WEEK ONE - ACTIVITY

In order to truly cleanse yourself of negative thoughts and feelings, you need to identify them.

DIRECTIONS - ACTIVITY ONE

- Identify the thoughts and feelings that weigh heavily on your mind, and write them down on a piece of paper. Then take the paper, rip it up, and throw it away, symbolically ridding yourself of the mental clutter that had been holding you back.
- Now, write a list of things you want to bring into the next year with you.

DIRECTIONS - ACTIVITY TWO

- Identify the people and things in your life that are triggering you, and create an action plan for setting boundaries with them.
- This can mean unfollowing people who hurt you on social media or asking a certain friend for some space, even if it may be hard. Sometimes you need to take time to heal for the sake of your mental health and even the relationship itself.

Once you have your list of goals for the next year and your plans for achieving the mental clarity to accomplish them, read each item out loud and proclaim:

NEXT YEAR IN CLARITY - לשנה הבאה בְּהִירוּת



WEEK TWO - RITUAL - פולחן

Judaism asks us to establish healthy routines.

It is no secret that rituals are a basic component of Judaism. But people often fail to recognize the benefits of them.

Rituals keep us grounded and help us keep track of different parts of our lives that could otherwise fall apart. Take your week for example. Amidst the hustle and bustle of busy life, whether you are a young entrepreneur working at a busy start-up, a student in college trying to keep up with your studies, or a parent trying to keep track of your kid's schedule, life pulls you in too many directions to count. **It is helpful to have a routine or ritual — like Shabbat — to give you a moment each week to pause and reflect.** The ritual of lighting the candles can provide clarity and help you reorient yourself for the coming week.

Of course, rituals don't need to be religious. They can be anything from a weekly journaling practice to a daily mediation routine. The key is to find something that grounds and centers you.

Ultimately, practicing any ritual keeps you on a rhythm, which is vital to mental wellness — especially when your life feels out of control.

This week, consider some rituals — religious or secular — you can incorporate into your life to give you that sense of routine, regularity, and control.

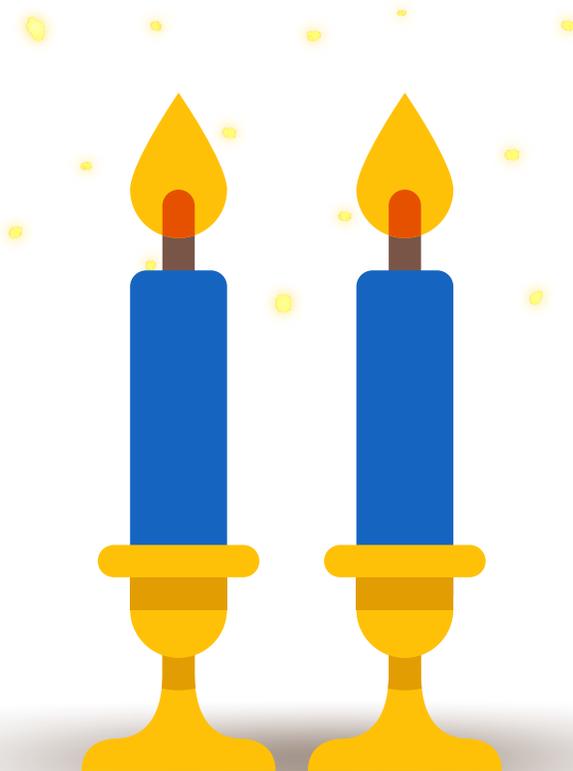


WHEN WE ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO CHANGE A SITUATION, WE ARE CHALLENGED TO CHANGE OURSELVES. – VIKTOR FRANKL

WEEK TWO - ACTIVITY

Creating a ritual requires focus and concentration. Follow these directions to help you craft your perfect ritual.

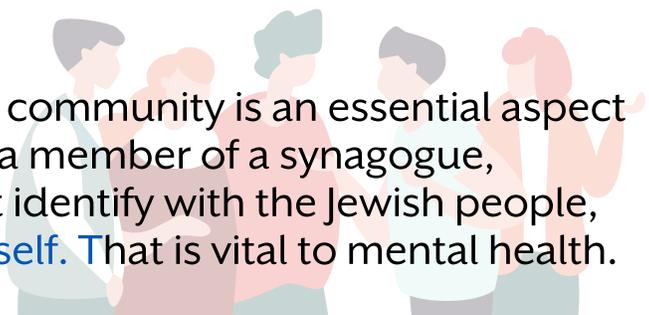
- Ask yourself what parts of your life need more attention. Do you need more space to take a break, time for exercise, or just time with friends?
- Then, determine which parts of your day would be best to incorporate some kind of ritual or routine.
- Plan a ritual you want to implement in your life, practice it, and make a plan to follow it for one week.



WEEK THREE - COMMUNITY - קהילה

Judaism asks us to make connections.

In Judaism, living within, or identifying with, a community is an essential aspect of the religious experience. Whether you are a member of a synagogue, regularly participate in Shabbat meals, or just identify with the Jewish people, you are a part of something bigger than yourself. That is vital to mental health.



A key component to mental wellness is a sense of belonging and community. But until this past year, many of us had taken that for granted. Luckily, over the course of the pandemic, we had digital communities to fill that need when we were disconnected from our regular communities.

Now, as vaccine rollouts allow us to reconnect and gather again, forming the communities we have so longed for, it is only appropriate that we ensure we never take community for granted again.

This week, we encourage everyone to reflect on what it is that makes a community and what they can do to play a larger role in their own. This can mean anything from volunteering at a local community center or vaccine location to connecting with a friend or loved one who needs you.

“
IF ONE...SAYS, “WHY SHOULD I TROUBLE MYSELF FOR
THE COMMUNITY? WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME TO TAKE PART
IN THEIR DISPUTES? WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO THEIR
VOICES? I’M FINE [WITHOUT THIS],” THIS PERSON
DESTROYS THE WORLD. — MIDRASH TANHUMA,
PARSHAT MISHPATIM

WEEK THREE - ACTIVITY

We must never take community for granted again.

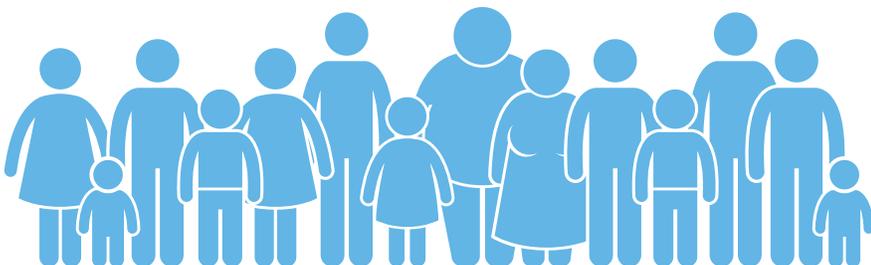
DIRECTIONS - ACTIVITY ONE

- Identify three things you think are vital to cultivating a sense of community.

- Think of one actionable item you can do to contribute to one or all of those aspects of community.

DIRECTIONS - ACTIVITY TWO

- Take a moment to appreciate a member of your community who helped you during the pandemic, and write a 'thank you' note to them.

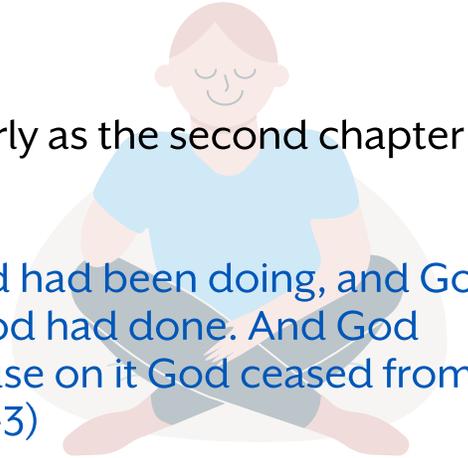


WEEK FOUR - REST - מנוחה

Judaism asks us to rest.

Rest is a deeply Jewish ideal and can be found as early as the second chapter in the Torah.

On the seventh day, God finished the work that God had been doing, and God ceased on the seventh day from all the work that God had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation God had done. (Genesis 2:2-3)



After completing the task of creating the world, the Torah tells us God took an entire day to rest when the work was complete. A core principle of Jewish tradition is to emulate God's ways, and this text teaches that recovery, rest, and self-care are not only good; they are godly.

Rest is not always defined as sleep. As important as a good sleeping schedule is, this week's theme is not about getting eight to 10 hours of sleep a night. Rather, it is about achieving true rest by doing things that massage your brain. **Sleeping just turns the brain off; true rest – taking a step back from your daily routine and prioritizing your wellbeing – actually helps your brain recover.** Whether you're reading, exercising, gardening, or cooking, true rest means doing something that heals you. This kind of rest is key to avoiding things like burnout.

For the final week of Mental Health Awareness Month, **take a break by (ironically) staying active doing whatever makes you feel best.**



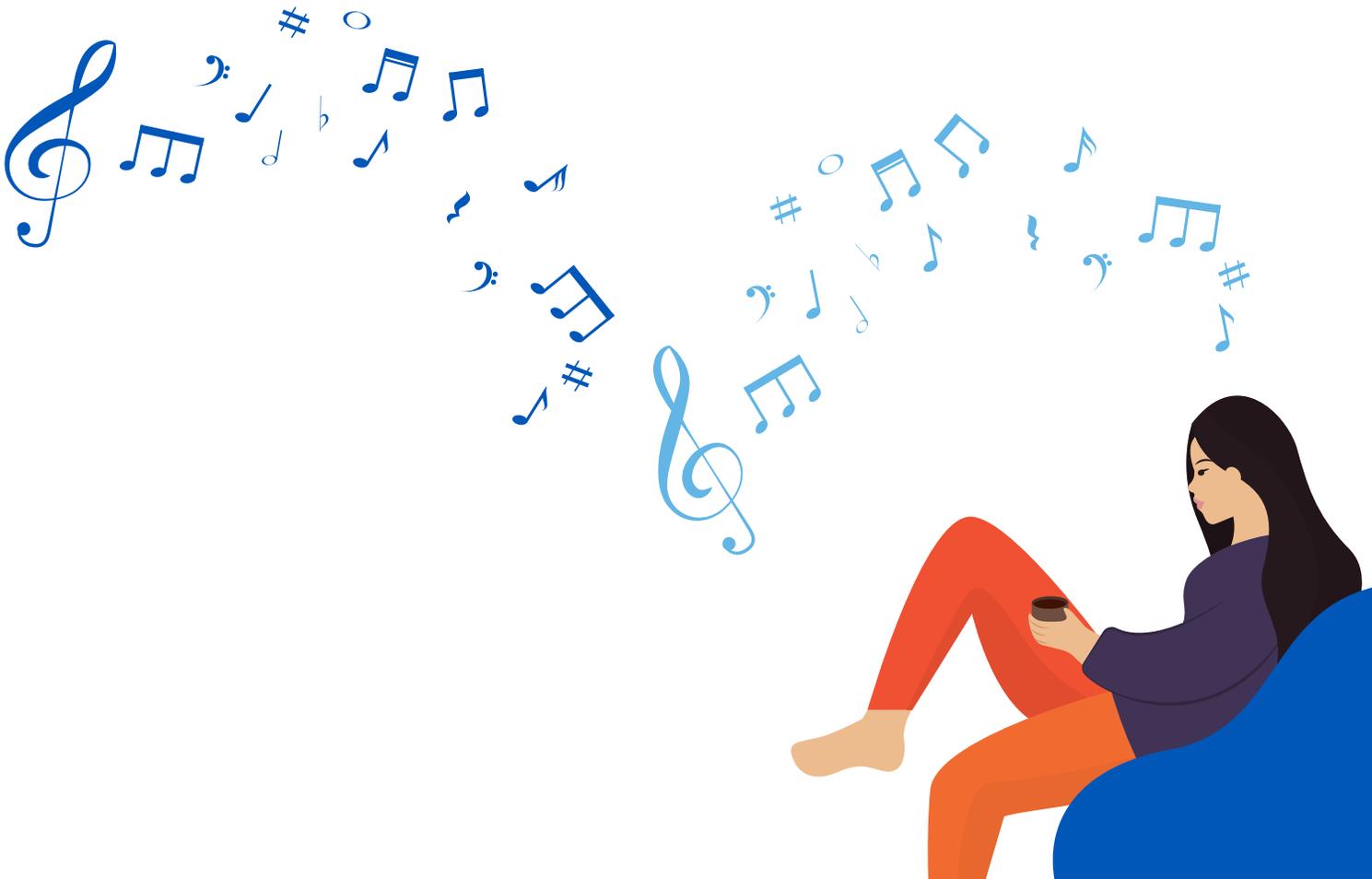
**RESTING IS NOT SLEEPING BUT LETTING THE
MIND AND HEART BE CLEAR. – CANTOR
SUSAN CARO**

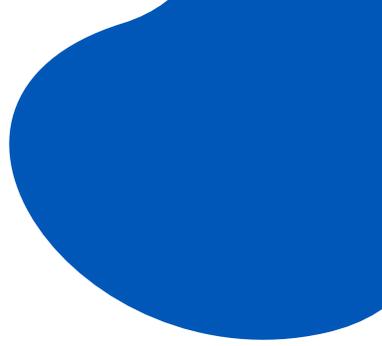
WEEK FOUR - ACTIVITY

How do we determine what our true rest is?

DIRECTIONS - ACTIVITY ONE

- Reflect on what activities help you experience the most relaxation and rejuvenation.
- Schedule three rest periods this week, specifically on days that are generally busier for you, and commit to resting during those periods.
- Record how it felt to take those restful moments on a sheet of paper.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



MENTAL HEALTH MOOD TRACKER

THIS MONTH, PAY MORE ATTENTION TO YOUR EMOTIONS AND HOW YOU ARE FEELING BY COLORING IN THE DOTS ACCORDING TO YOUR MOOD AT THE END OF EACH DAY.

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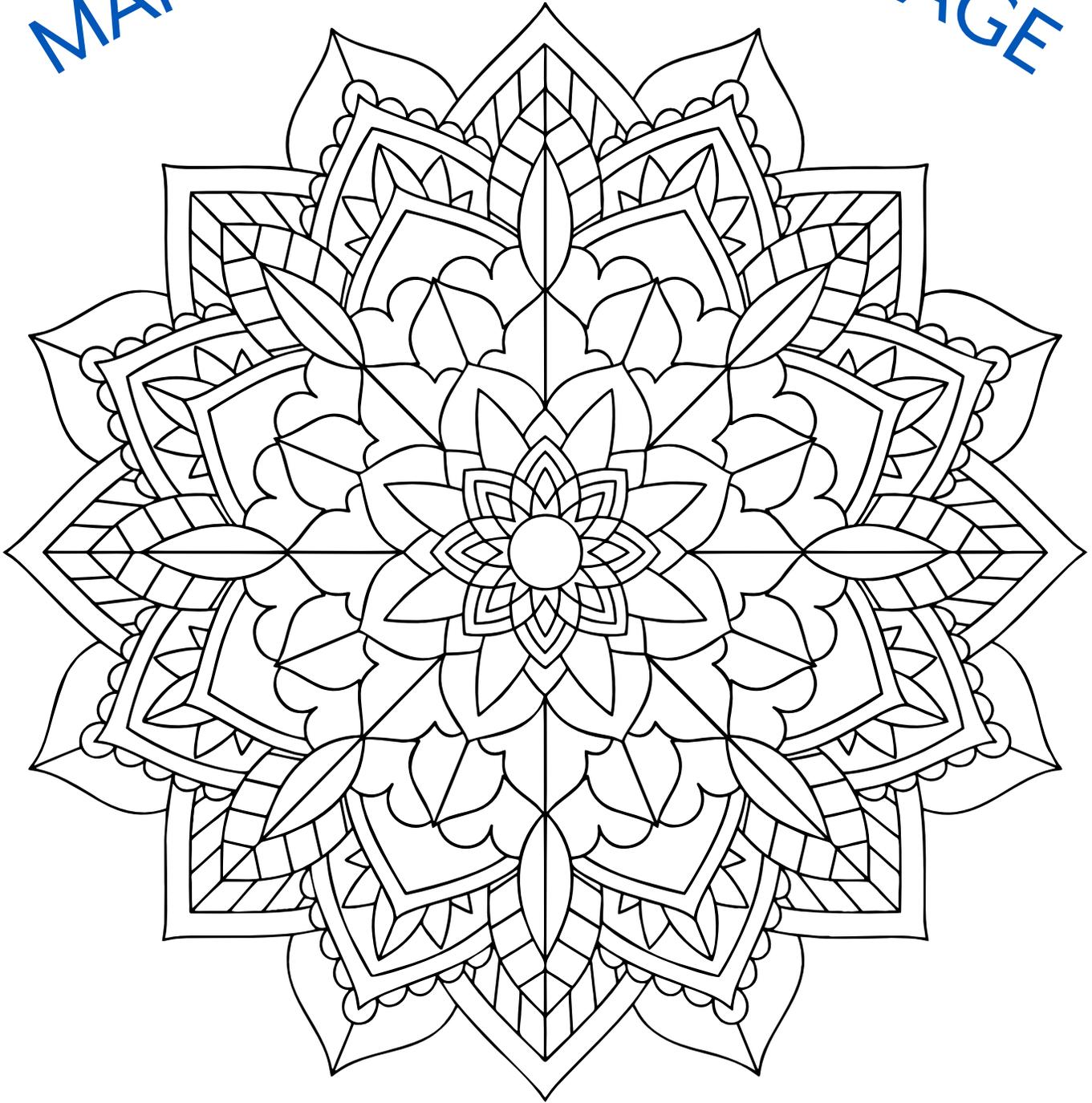
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CREATE YOUR OWN EMOTIONAL KEY

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MANDALA COLORING PAGE



ACTIVITIES LIKE COLORING HAVE BEEN PROVEN TO BE A USEFUL TOOL IN CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS AND REDUCING STRESS.