



Behavioral Health Department

March, 2024 NEWSLETTER



March is Color Therapy Month

Color therapy or chromotherapy relies on color to play a part in the treatment process, whether it be through using colored lights, making color choices on the daily (i.e., clothing, environment person surrounds oneself with, etc.), or creating colored imagery.

There are several mental health conditions that can benefit from color therapy treatment, such as:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- Sleep oriented disorders
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Postpartum depression

What is Color Therapy?

You don't have to do anything complicated to include color therapy in your life. Everyday, we are surrounded by colors that we are often nonobservant of and take for granted. However, colors are important, as they have the ability to influence a person's mood and disposition that they are feeling throughout their entire day. In color therapy, each color can bring about particular changes in attitude, as a result, exposure to different colors can cause different emotions to come to the surface.

The emotions particular colors can elicit include the following:

- **Red:** Being in the presence of this powerful color helps to increase energy and can stimulate the lymphatic system. However, the color red also has the ability to trigger the stress response, as it's the color often used to signal the end of something or to alert towards danger.
- **Orange:** This is the color that represents the mind-body connection. In color therapy, this color is sometimes shown to people who have troubled relationships with food.
- **Yellow:** Yellow is the color of warmth, often being associated with the feeling of happiness. Exposure to the color yellow helps a person to feel things like safe and secure.
- **Green:** Green is a naturally occurring color that's typically seen outdoors, it's the color of grass, trees, and other vegetation. Thinking about nature can help a person to calm down and feel much more relaxed.
- **Blue:** Due to how short blue light wavelengths are, exposure to them can raise a person's sense of alertness. Blue light therapy has been found to help people improve their ability to focus more.

What Are the Benefits of Color Therapy?

A benefit of color therapy is that it can help to reduce the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. Once we begin to lighten up and feel less sad, this will allow for more opportunities to open up for us, helping to build the confidence we need to try improving other aspects of our lives.

Six possible benefits that can come from color therapy include the following:

- 1) **Stronger Sense of Stress Management**—Stress Management can be difficult to control, especially since life struggles can occur at anytime and interfere with one's ability to effectively take care of both the mind and body. Color therapy is a treatment that aims to boost people's moods and reduce the strain felt from stress. A simple color therapy practice you can utilize for stress management is to change the colors in your immediate surroundings.
- 2) **Less Extreme Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Symptoms**—To address the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder, color therapy tries to elevate dopamine levels using color due to the fact that the winter season can significantly deplete dopamine in people, as the days during this period tend to be shorter and darker. Changing the colors you surround yourself with, whether this be by wearing outfits with brighter colors or incorporating colored lights into your environment, can help a person maintain a sense of comfort with themselves despite what the weather outside may be.
- 3) **Improved Ability to Sleep**—Insomnia is a challenging behavior that can greatly impact how a person functions. However, chromotherapy is one solution people can turn to for help, as it can be used to identify what colors will relax someone at night, thus having a positive impact on sleep patterns and leading to less disruptive sleep. One thing you could do to try improving sleep is limiting the amount of blue light you see before you go to bed.
- 4) **Rejuvenates Your Body's Energy**—Being in the presence of happy, bright colors does have a rejuvenating effect and helps to stimulate mental brain activity, often resulting in individuals who feel energized and are ready to take on the day ahead of them. This is particularly effective when it comes to helping out people known to have low-energy levels, like those with depression.
- 5) **Feeling Less Angry**—Color therapy promotes calmness and feelings of happiness compared to aggression, resulting in reduced levels of anger. Consider making an effort to include bright pops of color to your home or daily attire, like yellow or orange, for example.
- 6) **Strengthen Your Relationships**—Being overwhelmed by excessive stress or sadness doesn't result in the best communication when trying to connect with others. However, since color therapy focuses on helping to improve a person's emotions and replacing those previous emotions with ones that help the individual to feel much more positive about themselves, it's possible they could be more open to socialization opportunities. This could lead to the person further developing their current relationships or starting new ones.

[Source](#)

CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALIST SERVICES

A Peer Specialist is an individual with lived recovery experience who has been trained and certified to help their peers gain hope and move forward in their own recovery. By sharing experiences, peers bring hope to people in recovery and promote a sense of belonging within the community (SAMSHA)

PEER SUPPORT IS..

- Delivered by individuals who have common lived experiences.
- People with mental health and/or substance use disorders have a unique power to help one another based on shared connection and deep understanding of this experience.
- Peer Specialists offer support, strength, and hope to their peers, which allows for personal growth, wellness, and recovery. (SAMSHA)
- Peer support is ongoing, available, and flexible.
- Peer support enhances other health care services by creating emotional, social and practical assistance necessary for staying healthy and managing. (Peers for Progress)

WHAT SERVICES DO PEER SPECIALISTS PROVIDE?

Peer specialists support their peers both individually and in small groups.

- Help peers create individual service plans based on recovery goals and steps to achieve those goals
- Use recovery-oriented tools to help their peers address challenges
- Assist others to build their own self-directed wellness plans
- Support peers in their decision-making
- Offer a sounding board and a shoulder to lean on...and more!

PROVIDING HOPE

Modeling recovery, engaging, and connecting are just some of the ways peers make a difference in the lives of others. The bond that is essential in peer support means that both the person giving support and the person receiving support benefit from the relationship. (MHA)

SERVICES INCLUDE:

Education and skill- building

- ⇒ Wellness planning
- ⇒ Crisis planning
- ⇒ Self- advocacy skills
- ⇒ Budgeting

Services that help

- ⇒ Identify strengths and use the strengths to reach goals
- ⇒ Identify and overcome barriers to participate in community resources

Connect with resources

- ⇒ Visiting community resources to familiarize
- ⇒ Teaching and modeling skills needed to utilize resources
- ⇒ Wrap around services
- ⇒ Cultural wellness and healing

Building relationships and encouraging community based activities

- ⇒ Employment
- ⇒ Relationships
- ⇒ Physical activity
- ⇒ Self- directed hobbies

Using SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness to guide a holistic approach to recovery, a Certified Peer Specialist will work with you to discuss meaningful goals in one or more of these important dimensions; financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, and emotional. Each of the dimensions contribute to your overall wellness and individual recovery.

The Importance of Solitude

We as people tend to be social creatures due to how vital of a role social connections play in our lives, helping to shape aspects like emotional and physical wellbeing. However, alone time or the act of spending time by yourself, can be good for you.

While spending time with other people can be rewarding, it can also be stressful. You may find yourself concerned about what others think or change your behavior to fit in with everyone else, in an effort to avoid rejection. These factors are an example of the cost that comes with social interaction, while the difficulty of these challenges are why it's important to set aside time for yourself.

In celebration of Solitude Day on March 26th, here's a look into solitude and some ideas of solitude practices to try out for yourself; the information below comes from verywellmind (<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-important-is-alone-time-for-mental-health-5184607>).



There Are Benefits of Alone Time

Having some spare time on your hands will allow you the opportunity to momentarily step back from social pressures and examine what thoughts, feelings, and experiences you are preoccupied with. The benefits of finding time for yourself can include:

- Improved personal exploration
- Increased bouts of creativity
- More energy to be social with others

Challenges of Alone Time

There are people who can find it challenging to be alone and here's some reasons why:

- **Lacks much experience being alone:** Some people are so accustomed to being around other people, they find it weird when they are alone, as it's something they aren't used to. When these kind of people do experience a loss in social stimulation, they are often left feeling detached or disconnected.

- **Oppressive thoughts and feelings:** For others, the prospect of being alone to reflect on their own thoughts can be a difficult or even painful thing to imagine. Introspection into one's own mind can be distressing, as they can find themselves preoccupied with rumination and worry.

- **Social stigma:** The stigma attached to a person being alone can influence viewpoints on solitude. For people who have encountered negative attitudes directed towards individuals who are alone or if they personally see being alone as anti-social behavior or a sign of social rejection, they may come to view solitude as being a painful punishment.

Signs You Need Some Time to Yourself

It can be easy to overlook the signs that you need some alone time, away from others. A few signs to indicate that taking a short break and spending time with just yourself would do you some good, include:

- Frequently feeling short-tempered
- Easily being set off by minor things
- Losing interest in doing activities that involve other people
- Feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling anxious at the thought of having to spend time with other people

If you have any of these signs, the good news is that setting aside even a short period of time for yourself can have a restorative effect.

How to Get Alone Time

If you are interested in seeking out time to spend alone, it's important you go about doing so in ways that take your mental well-being into consideration. In order to fully experience the benefits that come with being alone, it has to be something that's done voluntarily. Additionally, you shouldn't feel restricted by your alone time, as you should have the ability to re-enter your social world whenever you choose.

- **Decide on a time:** Think over when would be the best time for you to spend time alone. Create a space in your schedule for that time and let other people know about this alone time, so no one interrupts you.

- **Take a break from your social media:** Eliminate distractions, particularly ones like social media that present opportunities for you to make social comparisons. Keep your mind set on your own thoughts and interest, and try to ignore what other people are doing.

- **Plan something beforehand:** Not everyone looks forward to the idea of having to spend time alone; however, by planning out how you want to utilize your time, this will help you to feel much better. Of the things you could choose to do, some options to consider include devoting some time towards relaxation, spending time on a hobby, or reading a book.

- **Go on a walk:** Too much social interaction can be suffocating and lead to people feeling cooped up. Taking a walk outside and getting a change in scenery can help clear your mind.

Start to think up some things you might like to do on your own, then do them when you are alone.

How Much Alone Time Does a Person Need?

Everybody differs when it comes to needs connected to solitude and social time. There are some people who might only need a few minutes, in order to feel better after being in a bad mood, while others might need to be alone for longer stretches of time. To find out what works best for you, try finding a balance between these two differing recuperating times.

Why Are Arts and Crafts Good for Mental Health?

Arts and crafts have played a crucial role in society for thousands of years. There are numerous benefits that arts and crafts can have on mental health. To explore your creativity, this can range from buying a few basic supplies for simple projects you could do on your own to joining a workshop, where you and a group of people participating in an art activity together.

The best thing about arts and crafts is there's no special skills required, and it's a great medium to express yourself in whatever way feels right to you. In celebration of March being National Craft Month, included in this article is an explanation of how arts and crafts can positively influence a person's mental health, and some ideas of art projects to try out yourself; the information below comes from the website, PsychCentral (<https://psychcentral.com/blog/arts-crafts-in-psychiatric-occupational-therapy>).

Mental Health Benefits of Arts and Crafts

One of our natural desires is the ability to express emotion creatively and a byproduct of this outcome is arts and crafts. With how freeing arts and crafts can be, this activity can help relieve a person of stress. This is important as chronic stress not only can become a gateway to many illnesses, but it can also lead to an increase of feelings like anger, anxiety, and irritability.

Arts and crafts is an outlet that can be used to work through challenging emotions like stress, allowing an individual to feel free to release some of their personal feelings they've been holding onto and being able to do so in an expressive manner.

Social connectedness is a key component of mental health and that's why it can be beneficial to perform arts and crafts in a group. As being in the company of other people, can lead to the sharing of ideas and perspectives with one another, this in turn helps to strengthen your wellbeing due to the connections and relationships you can end up developing with others.

Art and Craft Projects to Consider Trying Out

Fabric Crafting

A number of creative projects can be crafted from fabric, such as:

- Stuffed animal figurines
- Decorative fans
- Iron-on patches

Fabric crafting projects can vary in difficulty, so here's some beginner ideas you might want to try first:

- Bow tie
- Hair bow
- Bookmark
- Eye mask

Painting and Drawing

Since no special skills are required, painting and drawing is a great option for beginners. For this medium, you could experiment with colors, shapes, patterns, or you could go ahead and create whatever ends up popping into your mind.

Painting and drawing allows a person to be more expressive, allowing for more openness when it comes to perspectives, which can be beneficial for a number of mental health conditions, such as the following:

- Depression - Anxiety - Dementia - Alzheimer's disease - Schizophrenia - Autism

Clay

Clay crafts are a fun activity, but since the clay is typically shaped using your bare hands, this can get a little messy after a while.

Creating clay art can help with emotional regulation and lead to a person feeling happier much more often. It can especially be useful for anyone who's living with major depression or anxiety; otherwise, playing with clay is a great option for anyone who's looking to boost their mood.

Calligraphy

Calligraphy has a history as far back as 4,000 B.C., and it plays an important role in many cultures.

Calligraphy is a type of decorative handwriting that has a couple mental health benefits like improving brain function and reducing the intensity of symptoms seen in mental health conditions like anxiety and depression.

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•FEAR• *Name it to Tame it*



If you have ever seen the movie, "A Bug's Life" you probably know what "fear" is. The characters this movie focuses on is a colony of ants and they are the ones who exhibit fear. They are afraid of grasshoppers who use their size and strength to intimidate the ants, so to avoid violence the ants follow their demands without any resistance. Because the grasshoppers know of this fear that the ants have of them, they have the ants labor every Summer and pick food for them, in order to benefit from their hard work.

However, the main character of this story, Flik accidentally causes all the food that the ants had picked for the grasshoppers to fall over the side of a cliff. When the grasshoppers arrive to see no food, they misunderstand the situation and think the ants didn't do as they were told. Despite the ants reassuring the grasshoppers that this won't happen again and they'll work harder next year, the leader of the grasshoppers, Hopper shows no sympathy. Hopper instead instructs the ants to double the amount of food they pick and he moves up the date of this demand to much sooner, wanting the ants to get this done when the last leaf falls from the tree above their ant hill. Then the grasshoppers leave, reminding the ants before they go that they'll be back in the Fall and if this command isn't followed, the grasshoppers will use violent measures to punish the ants for not doing as they were told.

In response to the fear the ants have of the grasshoppers, many went along with Hopper's wish of working to replace the food they had originally gathered, with hopes that this would appease the grasshoppers, so no harm would come to the colony. Despite the fear that Flik also has of Hopper and his crew, he chooses a different route and that's to find bigger bugs to protect the ant colony from the grasshoppers. Will the grasshoppers oppression continue to reign? Does Flik find bigger bugs to help protect the ants? If you haven't watched "A Bug's Life" yet, consider checking it out to see how fear influences the ants and also to find out if the ants successfully overcome their fear.

To learn more about fear, including common symptoms of fear and coping strategies that can help provide some relief, visit the links below:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/the-psychology-of-fear-2671696>

And

<https://psychcentral.com/health/how-to-face-your-fears>