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LET'S MAKE A PATTERN

ART-MAKING RESOURCE TO SUPPORT AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Produced in collaboration with the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre,
La Trobe University

OVERVIEW

This resource is designed to introduce autistic children to art-making activities to encourage mindfulness as a strategy for managing and moderating emotions. Previous art-making experience is not required. This resource is suitable for use by children aged 5 to 12 years with the support of a parent, teacher or guardian.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- Identify different patterns;
- Describe how repetition of different objects or elements such as colour creates patterns;
- Recognise and discuss pattern use in the work of contemporary textile artist Tammy Kanat;
- Create two patterns using found objects and drawing materials.

This resource is aimed at children who can identify simple emotions, such as angry, happy and sad, and are learning ways to manage their emotions. The level of support given should be adjusted based on the child's age and abilities. Observe the child's engagement level to indicate how far to progress with the activity.

INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITIES

- Introduce the activity when the child is feeling calm and at ease.
- Explain to the child that they can do these activities to help them feel calm when they are feeling anxious, frustrated or upset. You could use emotion flash cards or a social story to demonstrate this concept further if required.
- You may choose to introduce the activity for the first time by reading through the activity sheet and looking at the illustrations like you would with a social story. Alternatively, use the activity sheet for your own reference, then model the activities to the child.
- Use the child's interests to support their engagement by encouraging them to look for patterns on their toys, books or other items of special interest. You might like to begin by encouraging the child to use their favourite objects to make a simple pattern. For example, blue train, red train, blue train.

ART- MAKING

The resource includes two art-making activities, which have been designed to be adapted to the individual interests and sensory profiles of the child. These activities use simple materials found around the home, school or garden. Some suggestions are:

- A collection of recycled materials
- Toys and building blocks
- Natural materials, such as sticks, leaves, sand and stones
- Coloured plasticine or playdough
- Scraps of coloured paper

If available, some possible art-making materials include:

- Pencils
- Coloured markers
- Pens or fine tip markers
- Paints

Children often benefit from adult role modelling; you may like to encourage the child's efforts by trying the activity with them or doing it simultaneously.

This activity focuses on slowing down the art-making process to create a sense of mindfulness, rather than to create a perfect product. There is not one correct way of completing the activities. Let the child know that they can come back and finish their artwork later if needed or revisit the activity again.

These art-making activities can be used for moments of mindfulness throughout different times of the day, such as during a break from schoolwork or before eating or sleeping, as a way of winding down or as a self-regulation tool.

For information on accessible programs, services and facilities at the NGV, including a section with information for people with autism, see [ngv.melbourne/access](https://www.ngv.melbourne/access)