

# ART THERAPY RESOURCES



## ART THERAPY CASE STUDY BACKGROUND: DEPRESSION

This exercise is designed to help your client understand their emotional response to the event/s or circumstance/s that preceded the depressive state. It is important your client understands their reaction to a situation did not cause their depressive state. All exploration and subsequent discussion involves your client developing insight into their perceptions, reactions and coping mechanisms to gain a broader view of how depression impacts their lives. This exercise will help your client explore how they give meaning to specific events and feelings in their life. This exercise will also help your client explore their emotions as depression is often associated with the numbing of emotions.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Discuss with your client the type of art supplies they may like to work with in this session. This exercise focuses around exploring your client's emotional response to events. This exercise could involve the use of pens, paints, and collage images or words to express core emotions. Your client may wish to use collage techniques and collect images from magazines or free clip art from online sources (eg. <http://www.freepik.com/>). Alternatively your client can use their own drawing skills or create a collage based on powerful words. These words can also be cut out from other sources or hand drawn.
- Ask your client to reflect on a period of time or a specific event that they perceive may have been a precedence to their depression. This could refer to a general period of time such as childhood or to a specific incidence such as personal loss or trauma event. This exercise is not to seek causes to problems, but instead, to ignite your client's ability to explore their emotional response to situations.
- Once your client has identified their specific event or generalised time period, ask them to reflect on the emotions associated with that event. This may be the emotions felt at the time of the event/time period or the emotions they are feeling while recalling the event/time period.
- Ask your client to label these emotions and express them in their art activity. This may involve the use of colours, shapes, words, or specific images that translate to the emotions. This art activity may be the first time your client acknowledges the emotions associated with this event or time period that preceded their depression.

### EXAMPLE EXERCISE:

Simon client stated that the choice of grey represented the general depressive mood he was experiencing at the time. Simon drew a series of large rocks that represented the feeling that every part of his life felt problematic and unmoveable. Simon also felt that each problem compounded through layers on top of each other. Simon drew himself as a smaller shape compared to the rocks as the problems felt overwhelming. The basic emotion expressed was sadness, along with more complex emotions of overwhelm and confusion. Simon was able to understand that emotions can be linked back to events and circumstances. While the emotions feel unmoveable, Simon could see by giving shape to the events that they were objects that could be contained and shifted within his mind.



NOTE: more details can be found at [www.arttherapyresources.com.au/case-study-depression](http://www.arttherapyresources.com.au/case-study-depression)