

# ART THERAPY RESOURCES



## ART THERAPY CASE STUDY BACKGROUND: PANIC ATTACKS

Alice had recently started attending art therapy as part of her treatment. She discussed with her therapist her desire to manage her general daily anxiety and her increasing worry about having another panic attack. Alice has been diagnosed with anxiety (GAD) approximately 3 years ago. Recently she had two panic attacks within the same month. Alice felt her anxiety was getting worse and she was increasingly worried that she would have a panic attack at any time. Alice mentioned she started to feel her mind was in a constant state of worry and she was not unable to relax no matter how much deep breathing and exercise she tried.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Ask your client to recall memories of a time or place when they felt at ease, calm, and safe. These memories might include specific people, or a place, sound, smell etc. If your client doesn't have specific memories from their past that provide this feeling, ask them to imagine a place that might provide this space for them.
- Ask your client to select images from magazines, old photos, or any source of visual imagery to develop an image of a place of refuge. Encourage your client to source images that may provide an instant connection to a feeling of relaxation.
- Once your client has collected their images, ask them to start to create an artwork that represents their refuge and place of relaxation. Once your client has completed the artwork of refuge image discuss with them how this image can help your client seek refuge at for a sense of calmness and safety.
- Discuss with your client how they may use this image in the future and how they can use the art activity as a method of disrupting ruminating thoughts in the future. Discuss with your client how they would feel physically and emotionally by visiting this place. Ask them to notice any changing physical sensations they may experience as they think about visiting this place.

### EXAMPLE EXERCISE:

Alice recalled going to the beach to visit her grandparents as a child. Alice has always felt relaxed around water and has often noticed she likes to look at photos of beaches and notice the different colours of blue you can see in water.

Alice enjoyed creating her blue ocean with water colours. Alice liked the looseness of the water mixing and spilling with her colours and liked making calming strokes with her brush.

Alice felt calm after creating the artwork. Alice also felt like she had done something useful towards creating a sense of calm and felt she had some control over how she felt.



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