

# 7 Reasons Adult Coloring Books Are Great for Your Mental, Emotional and Intellectual Health

Adapted from:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-nikki-martinez-psyd-lcpc/7-reasons-adult-coloring-books-are-great-for-your-mental-emotional-and-intellectual-health\\_b\\_8626136.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-nikki-martinez-psyd-lcpc/7-reasons-adult-coloring-books-are-great-for-your-mental-emotional-and-intellectual-health_b_8626136.html)

There are many times when I suggest adult coloring books to patients, and they look at me like perhaps we should be switching seats. However, time and again, they come back to me and tell me how beneficial they find them to be. Many psychologists and therapists “prescribe” these to patients for various reasons, and many occupational therapists prescribe them as well! I will also let you know that I practice what I preach, when I was laid up in bed for eight weeks after major surgery, I devoured adult coloring books. When I need to shift my focus or practice my own stress reduction, I break these books out. They have so many uses and purposes that many are not aware of, beyond the obvious outcomes of beauty and enjoyment. Let’s look at their uses a little closer.



1. Did you have any idea that the “prescription” of adult coloring stems all the way back to the late and great psychologist Carl Jung? Well it did. He was always ahead of his time. Jung used it thinking it would help his patient’s access their subconscious and new self-knowledge.

We now know that many psychologists suggest this to patients as an alternative to meditation, as a means of relaxation, and as a calming tool. It can help the individual focus on the act of coloring intricate pictures for hours on end, vs. focusing on intrusive and troubling thoughts.

2. Adult coloring books can help with a number of emotional and mental health issues. For many, boredom, lack of structure, and stress are the greatest triggers they have. This applies to individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorders, anxiety disorders, stress disorders, depressive disorders, eating and binge eating disorders, anger management issues, and substance abuse issues. The time and focus that adult coloring takes helps the individual remove the focus from the negative issues and habits, and focus them in a safe and productive way.

3. These activities can help tremendously with individuals with PTSD, anxiety, and stress issues, as they calm down our amygdala. This is the part of the brain that controls our fight or flight response, and keeps individuals in a heightened state of worry, panic, and hyper-vigilance, when it is active. Coloring and focusing on this harmless and calming activity can actually turn that response down, and let your brain have some much needed rest and relaxation. This can be an exceptionally productive and welcome outlet for these individuals.

4. Coloring also brings us back to a simpler time. An activity that can invoke the easier and happier times of childhood. A time when we did not have as many responsibilities, and could

just do something because we wanted to, for the pure joy of it. To be able to tap into this time and these emotions is very cathartic and enjoyable. It can take you out of your present stresses and worries for even a few hours at a time, which can have an exceptionally recuperative effect.

5. Believe it or not, coloring has intellectual benefits as well. It utilizes areas of the brain that enhance focus and concentration. It also helps with problem solving and organizational skills. This may sound strange, and like perhaps the usefulness is being stretched, but it is all true. Our frontal lobes are responsible for these higher-level activities and functions of the brain, and coloring detailed pictures activates all those properties. Think of considering complex color schemes, and using the brain to balance and make the picture aesthetically pleasing.

6. Coloring utilizes both hemispheres of the brain, right and left. When we are thinking about balance, color choices, applying colored pencil to paper, we are working on problem solving and fine motor skills. We have talked a great deal about where they would be suggested by psychologists, but this is where they can be very useful for occupational therapy as well. Imagine all the areas of retraining of the brain and skills training that can be accomplished with coloring increasingly difficult designs. The individual can start on easier items, and work their way up.

7. This is another method of practicing mindfulness, which has therapeutic and health benefits. This can help us replace negative thoughts with positive and pleasant ones. Doing therapeutic artwork can help reduce feelings of anxiety and unpleasantness associated with lengthy medical treatments. The focus we place on the project at hand, and on an object can replace negative and unhelpful thoughts from entering our minds. The step of acting and doing vs. observing is a powerful deterrent to focusing on physical or emotional pain.

Adult coloring books clearly help serve many purposes that are beneficial. They can be so much more than the color by number that people might be thinking they are. They can be focused, therapeutic, relaxing, calming, problem solving, and organizational. As you can see, they are highly effective for many reasons, and the ideas behind them have stood the test of time, even if they feel like they are only the latest fad. Try one out and you may just surprise yourself. If not, at least you have something pretty to hang on your fridge!

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