

Letting Go of Judgement + Hidden Contour Drawing

Hello and welcome to ArtPause. My name is Quinn Rivenburgh and I'm an art therapist and yoga teacher. I will now invite you into a brief mindfulness and drawing practice. As you begin, please remember that we will be focusing on the process--your lived experience in the moment--rather than the product of what you create. And as we enter this time together, please always take care of your body and your mind, and know that you can pause or leave whenever you need to. This recording does not replace mental health treatment.

Find a comfortable seat and have your art supplies ready. As you settle in, check in with your breath. Notice the flow of your inhales and exhales.

After a few breaths, our attention usually wanders away. That's very common. As soon as you've noticed your attention wandering, gently bring it back to your breath. Try not to judge yourself for your wandering thoughts--the practice is in noticing and bringing back. And try not to judge yourself for judging yourself. Just let the experience be what it is today.

Now, let's bring our attention outward. If your eyes are closed, please gently open them. Invite your attention to rove around the room, letting your eyes move where they want to, following the flow of your gaze. Now, let your eyes settle on some object in the room. As you contemplate this object, try to stay away from the story of the object--instead, focus on its shape, its color, its texture, how light and shadow falls across the object. As you study the object, pick up your pencil. We are going to draw the object, without looking at the paper, and without picking up our pencil. Start at one edge of the object, and let your eyes move across the object's edges at the same pace as your pencil moves across the page. Don't let your pencil leave the page, and don't let your eyes leave the object. Continue, with awareness of your breath--noticing if you are gripping or breathing shallowly--until you have completed your drawing.

Now, look and see what you've created. Notice what emotions and urges come up--is it surprise? Criticism? A desire to erase or modify? Perhaps there's a pleasure at the line quality, or a satisfaction with the form that has emerged. See if you can celebrate the marks you've created on the paper. Now, pick up the paper, and see what happens if you rotate your image 90 degrees or 180 degrees. Do your feelings about the image change with this new perspective?

Now, set the pencil aside and return to your mindfulness of breath practice. Inhale fully, exhale completely. As you focus on your inhales and exhales, see if there is a bit more spaciousness to let go of the story you are creating about your practice--I'm good at this, I'm bad at this, this is a waste of time, etc--and focus on the experience of cultivating attention to your breath. Inhale fully, exhale completely.

On your own time, I invite you to come back to the room, taking a moment to stretch or move in any way that feels good to your body.

Thank you for taking an Art Pause.