**Group Activities**

Here is a list of ideas that I have employed at various times in a mental health setting for groups of adults, children, and teens.

1. Lighthouse

Visualization: You are lost at sea on a stormy night. You see a glimmer of light leading you to land. If you row hard, you can make it. Someone waits for you with a warm meal, dry clothes, and a place to rest.

Draw, color, or paint an image of a lighthouse as a source of guidance in your life. Depict yourself somewhere in the image, either in a boat on the water, in the lighthouse, etc. Add words to represent your sources of guidance in life, i.e. faith, family, hope.

2. Joyful Memory

Everyone shares the most joyful memory that comes to mind. Each person directs the scene, casting group members in the various roles, including him or herself. Participant watches the scene and comments on the feelings and memories that come up.

3. Good and Evil (This one seems complex at first but once everyone gets it, it's a very fun and powerful activity.)

Clients take six strips of paper each. Write three Negative Messages or beliefs on three of the paper strips; i.e. You're dumb, you're ugly, etc. Write three Powerful, Positive Responses to the messages on the other three paper strips; i.e. I have confidence in my abilities. I'm proud of the way I look.

Form two rows of three standing opposite each other. Let participants choose if they want to be in the "Good" row or the "Evil" row. A participant gives one of his Negative Messages to each person in the "Evil" row. He gives the corresponding Powerful, Positive Response paper to the person in the "Good" row that is facing the "Evil" side. The participant stands between the first pair as they read the messages on the sheets and try to influence the participant using ad lib sentences. The "Evil" person extends her arm out to block the participant from passing.

e.g. Evil: "You're really dumb. You are always so slow. Why don't you ever understand anything?" Good: "I'm proud of my abilities. I may not be perfect, but I'm exactly who I need to be." Participant listens to the two sides and finally chooses the "Good" side by repeating the Powerful Positive Response and pushing past the "Evil" person's arm block. Participant repeats process with next pair until finished with all three pairs. Repeat for each person.

4. Friendship Mural

Big banner: "A true friend is someone who..."

Clients fill the mural with images and words that complete this sentence.

5. Resilience

Draw, color, or paint an image of a being in nature that survives in a harsh environment: a flower in a sidewalk; a fish at the bottom of the ocean; a creature in the desert.

6. Violence

Discuss quote from Elie Wiesel: "Violence is a form of communication for a person who fails to find words" (paraphrased). Participants complete the following sentences for a journaling activity:

Violence happens because...

Someone who is violent toward others is trying to...

Someone who is violent toward himself is trying to...

Someone I have trouble communicating with is...

What I really need is....

What I wish people would understand about me is...

7. Powerful Ally

Think of a person or character, real or imaginary, who is powerful, strong, or wise. Remember a time you felt alone, scared, out of control, or helpless. Imagine that the Powerful Person is there with you during the experience, either offering help or just being with you. Participants enact the memories with the Powerful Person present in the scene. Each participant casts the needed players in the scene and instruct the players how to enact the various characters' actions. Client plays herself in the scene.

8. Inner Child

Draw yourself as a child on your paper. Add images and words to give this child everything that it needs, including a supportive nurturing parent.

9. Purpose in Life (adapted from an activity used in the Awakening the Dreamer Symposium)

Fold paper into three sections. In the first section, list your gifts, strengths, talents, including abilities and personal qualities. In the third section, list problems in the world that are concerning to you, such as child abuse, animal abuse, unemployment, etc. In the middle section, use creativity to devise at least three ways to use your gifts in the first section to solve problems in the third section. Draw and color an image of one of these ideas as if it has already happened and succeeded in solving the problem.

10. My Relationship with \_\_\_\_\_

Select a magazine image for yourself and another person with whom you have conflict or difficulty. Glue each image on opposite sides of the paper. Draw arrows from the other person to yourself and write words above each arrow to indicate the disagreeable actions of the other person. Draw a protective wall between you and that person using bricks, laser shields, or any kind of imaginary protective device that believably prevents the disagreeable actions from harming you. Now safe from harm, add images, words, and colors around the picture of the other person to depict your wish for their healing, growth, and peace. Write your prayers or hopes that they will receive what they need to be happy. Add images, words, and colors around the picture of yourself to describe what goals and values you will pursue once you are healed from the negative impacts of this relationship.

11. Lifeline (adapted from a standard Expressive Therapies activity I learned at Lesley University)

On a piece of paper, make two points on the opposite ends of the paper, one labeled "birth" and the other labeled "now." Draw a line between the two points. Identify at least three high points and three low points in your life and graph them according to your age (horizontally) and according to the feelings in the experience (vertically). Low points will be below your lifeline and high points will be above your lifeline. Connect the points with lines making a zig-zag line. Share the events with the group and the group responds with cheers, applause, and praise on the high points and boos and words of encouragement at the low points. If participant doesn't feel comfortable sharing details of their lives, they can simply say, "Age 6, high point."

12. Inside - Outside Bags/ Boxes. (standard Expressive Therapies activity used at Lesley University)

Decorate a bag or box with images and words on the outside to represent the qualities you show to the world. Decorate the inside of the bag or box with images and words that represent the inner qualities that are hidden to most people.

13. Feeling Code Collage (learned from my art therapy supervisor, Susan LaMantia)

Take one sheet of paper and draw and color an image to represent various feelings, such as happy, sad, mad, scared, embarrassment, love, peace, crazy, bored, etc. Label each image with the feeling. Participants can also choose feelings to add to the list. Encourage participants to use creativity; i.e. "happy" might first make you think of a smiley face, but it could also be like a purple and green spiral or a puppy. On a second sheet of paper, use the feeling code to make another drawing in which the images can be made bigger, smaller, repeated, overlapped, or arranged in a unique relationship to other images. Title the new drawing and discuss.

14. Cooling My Hot Spots

Using a pre-printed picture of a human silhouette, use color and image to represent feelings of anger or emotional pain on the place of the body associated with the feelings, i.e. black pit in the stomach, red squiggles on the fists wanting to punch, etc. Draw a cooling image and phrase beside each of the hot spots, i.e. a waterfall with the words, "Let go," or music notes with the words, "Don't let other people get you down."

15. Three Animals (adapted from a game I used to play with friends - I have no idea where we learned it from.)

On a sheet of paper, write the name of your favorite animal and three qualities you like about that animal; i.e. cheetah: sad, caring, and shy. Next, write the name of your second favorite animals with three qualities, and finally, your third favorite and its three qualities. Consider the possibility that the first animal represents how you want others to see you, the second animal represents how people actually see you, and the third animal represents who you really are. (Reading them aloud with their meanings with the group can be quite humorous.) Next, draw, color, or paint a mixed breed animal with the three animals you chose, such as a creature with a cheetah head, a mouse body, and a fish tail. Add a habitat, food, family and friends for this animal.

16. Relationship Needs

Select a magazine picture to represent you and glue it to the middle of a large piece of paper. Select magazine pictures to represent the six most important people in your life and glue them in a circle around you. Draw a line connecting each of the people to the picture of you. On the top of each line, write a word or phrase about what you need from that person. Under each line, write a word or phrase about what that person needs from you.

17. Wise Puppet

Using craft materials, create a puppet of a real or imagined character that represents wisdom, such as a grandfather or Yoda. Each person enacts a skit with their puppet in which the participant asks the puppet for advice about something in life. Participants should use a special voice for their puppet characters and keep the conversation with their puppet going as long as possible.

18. Good and Bad Mandalas

Discussion: The world has happy and sad aspects, but sometimes negative events can lead to positive events. Consider the possibility that the negative and positive events are in some kind of harmony and that there is a larger order of goodness. Draw, color, or paint a mandala that includes both happy and sad things in life, intertwined with each other, in a balanced and colorful harmony; i.e. gravestones next to blossoming trees, broken hearts next to rainbows, thief next to a policeman, etc.

19. Treasure Map

On a piece of paper, label one corner, "The beginning" and another corner, "Success." Draw a windy path between the two points. Using collage materials, create stations along the path with creative titles, such as "Crossing the desert of loneliness," "Forgiveness and letting go," "Climbing the mountain of determination," "Resting in the shade of a caring friend," etc.

20. Affirmation Poster

Think of a sentence or expression that makes you feel better when you are depressed/ angry/ anxious. Make a large poster of the saying using glitter, favorite colors, and/or images to put on your wall; i.e. "This will pass." or "You're worth whatever it takes."

21. Inspired Poem

Think of a quote that is meaningful to you and write it at the top of a piece of paper. (A list can be found at http://www.goodreads.com/quotes) Add your own lines below it that expand on the quote in the way you understand it - continue for the rest of the page. Find someone in the group to read your poem for you as you use movement or gesture to express the meaning of your poem.

22. Heroes, Allies, and Companions

Divide paper into three parts, titling each section, "Heroes," "Allies," and "Worthy Companions." Identify and draw artistic representations of people for each box. Heroes are people that you look up to and admire for their achievements or way of being. Allies are those who have more power than you that you trust or can enlist to help you move toward your goals. Worthy Companions are peers who are on a similar journey or could be a good support to you in your journey.

23. Predator vs. Hero

Divide paper in half. On one side, draw an artistic representation of the part of you that sabatoges your success in life. On the other side, draw an artistic representation of the part of you that is working hard to be successful. On the back of your paper, draw an image representing your Hero gaining control of your Predator, either by putting the predator on an island, in jail, or by negotiating some kind of agreement. Alternatively, place two chairs facing each other in a "stage area" of the room. Each person enacts a dialogue between the two characters on the stage, moving back and forth between the two chairs. As a facilitator, decide if you will require the hero to win or not.

24. Law Books

Discuss Kohlberg's six stages of morality. Do you do the right thing to 1) avoid punishment, 2) gain reward, 3) be regarded as a good boy or girl, 4) because you believe in the law, 5) because you believe in a social contract, or 6) because you feel what is right and wrong in your own heart? Make a book of laws as you would like them to be, including one page each for the following topics: World Laws, Society Laws, School Laws, Friendship Laws, Romantic Relationship Laws, Family Laws, and Self Laws.

25. Butterfly Initiation

Discuss initiation rites of indigenous cultures that enacted a death/ rebirth cycle for youth. Compare that process to the death and rebirth of a butterfly larvae entering a cocoon phase in which its body disintegrates before forming the adult butterfly. Divide paper into four segments and label each one, Child, Preparation, Death, and Rebirth. Draw, color, or paint an artistic representation in each box, such as caterpillar, cocoon weaving, disintegration in the cocoon, and the butterfly.

26. My Perfect Healing Hospital

Discussion: What are some treatments for physical illnesses, such as a wound, a cold, or a disease? (i.e. rest, bandages, surgery, etc.) How are these symbolic of the same treatments we use for emotional or mental problems? (i.e. talking to friends and family, talking to a therapist, hiding or protecting our hurt places, changing destructive patterns, etc.) Design your perfect healing hospital or retreat center that would help you to heal your heart and mind whenever you are having problems. Include animals, food, recreation, support, mediation, and anything you think would be helpful.

27. Pride Collage

On one side of your paper, list the following: age, race, body type, speech/ language, fashion/ style, mental ability, physical ability, sexual orientation, social style, income/ financial. Make two columns entitled, Advantage and Disadvantage. Place a check in one or both of the columns for each word depending on whether that characteristic has been an advantage or disadvantage in your life. For example, a teen might say his age is both a disadvantage and an advantage because people treat him like a child and he's not allowed to drive, but he also isn't responsible for bills or working and can still have fun. Share with the group, and then draw, paint, or color a "pride" collage of various images and words that represent qualities about yourself, including any aspects that have been a disadvantage in your life.

28. My Perfect Life

Draw an image of your perfect life, including your home, relationships, clothing, job, and achievements. Turn your paper over and write three steps that will help you make your dream come true.

29. Perfect Imperfections

Discussion: If someone makes mistakes in life, does that make them a bad person? Can someone admit to being imperfect and still be proud of himself or herself?

On a sheet of paper, write six sentences in the following form, "I may be [something negative], but [something positive]. For example, "I may smoke, but I'm trying to quit." "I may be mean sometimes, but I can be caring too." "I may have problems, but I'm still a good person." Either sitting in a circle or in partners, take turns saying a statement while looking into a peer's eyes. After saying the statement, keep looking in their eyes for a count of ten seconds without laughing. If the speaker laughs, then the count has to start the count over. Each time around the circle, go to the next statement and make it harder for the speaker to keep a straight face, such as allowing others to make faces, noises, or comments. The speaker must have strong commitment to him or herself to make the statement seriously without being distracted.

30. Layers of Feelings (adapted from a lecture by WIlbert Alix, Trancedance Trainer)

Discuss layers of feelings: Our first response to difficulty is often anger, to protect ourselves. Under anger is fear of being hurt. Under the fear is sadness or pain about the situation that we don't want to feel. Under the sadness is our deep need for love or respect.

Draw four circles inside each other, like a bullseye. Label the circles, starting from the outer circle, anger, fear, sadness, and love. Fill in each circle with the different layers of feelings for the same situation. For example, I was mad when my teacher yelled at me in class. (Anger) I was afraid of being sent to the office and getting in trouble. (Fear) I'm sad that things don't always go the way I want them to in my life, and that my teacher seems to hate me. (Sadness) I wish I was more appreciated and valued by people in my life. (Love) Add colors and images to express your associations with the feelings in each layer.

31. Fill in the Story

Find and print pictures of scenes from plays, movies or tv shows in which there are several characters pictured together in the middle of the story (not posing for the camera and smiling). Each participant chooses a picture and writes the following:

Names and ages for everyone in the picture.

Name of the main character

Main character' greatest wish, greatest fear, best quality and worst quality

Setting of the scene

Background to the scene: what has happened before the moment pictured?

Write the conclusion of the story and draw, color, or paint the final scene of the story.

32. Ants and Tigers

Discussion: What are the qualities of ants? (i.e. small, teamwork, defined roles, coordination) What are the qualities of tigers? (i.e. solitary, acts on its own impulse, big and powerful) Are there times it is better to be like an ant? A tiger? Are there times it is worse to be like an ant? A tiger? Divide your paper in half, and label one side "Ants" and one side "Tiger." On the ant side, draw yourself as an ant in a situation in which you remember that you behaved like an ant. On the tiger side, draw yourself as a tiger in a situation in which you remember that you behaved like a tiger. (Few people feel confident in their ability to draw tigers. Encourage participants to take risks, use their erasers, and be nonjudgmental of their work.)

33. Four Elements Of You

Discussion: Passion gives us the will to live and gives shape to our lives.

Fold your paper into four sections. Label each section, The Earth of Me, The Air of Me, The Fire of Me, and The Water of Me. Use image and color to express your passion in life as symbolized by the four elements.

34. Tank of Gas

Discussion: Even with great talents, someone with low self-esteem can't get very far. It would be like having a nice car without any gas. On the other hand, some people who have physical limitations have achieved great things due to their self-confidence.

Make two columns on a piece of paper. On one column, list the areas of your life that you feel confident about, and on the other column, list the areas of life that you feel insecure about; i.e. academics, work, appearance, creativity, making friends, etc. Count the number of items listed in each column and write the total at the bottom of each list. Subtract the Insecure total from the Confident total: that is how much gas you have left in your tank. On another piece of paper, make a visual affirmation of your ability to improve your confidence and self-acceptance in areas of your life that you are currently insecure about.

35. Serenity Prayer

Discuss the quote, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I can't change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Make two lists, "The things I can change" and "The things I can't change." On each side, list the things you can and can't change in your life. On another sheet of paper, draw how your life would look after you successfuly changed the things on your list, "The things I can change."

36. Gratitude and Wishes

Draw, paint, or color a tree, including its roots and branches, by creating intricate patterns that become more complex as they get farther from the tree's trunk. Add words or glue pieces of paper shaped like rocks in the soil at the roots to represent things you are grateful for in your life. Add words or glue pieces of paper shaped like leaves in the branches to represent things you wish for in life. Discussion: Why is gratitude at our roots and our wishes in our branches?

37. Holistic Health

Discussion: What is a healthy mind? A healthy heart? A healthy body? A healthy spirit?

Divide your paper diagonally into four triangles. Fill each triangle with color, words, and images that represent what a healthy mind, heart, body, and spirit is for you.

38. How Does This Serve Me?

Write down a common emotional difficulty you have in life, such as depression or anger. Make a list of ways that feeling is serving you in your life. For example "Depression serves to express my grief, protect me from failure, gets me attention, and makes people leave me alone." "Anger allows me to feel powerful and in control." Make another list of some alternative ways of getting those needs met.

Fold a large paper into three sections. Using magazine images, make a collage for each section, entitled, "My feeling," "How it serves me," and "Alternatives."

39. Daily Schedule

Make a schedule of your daily routine. Add into your schedule one activity to improve each of the following: mental health, emotional health, physical health, and spiritual health. For example, "On my walk to school, I will try to think positive about my day." "I will spend a few moments in prayer or meditation before I go to sleep." "I will do some yoga while I watch tv at night." Decorate your schedule with markers, designs, and glitter so it looks attractive to you. Take it home and tape it someplace you will see it daily.

40. Spirit

Identify a spiritual power that you believe in, and write it in the middle of your paper using special lettering, i.e. God, Spirit, Nature, Love, etc. Using color and image, depict six qualities of the spiritual power in a circle around the word, such as "All-knowing," "Healing," or "Unconditional Love." Add a border and background color to tie the images together.

41. How Animals Heal

Read source material from wikipedia or websites about animals' natural ability to identify plants that they need to heal when they are sick (i.e. http://www.natural-wonder-pets.com/do-wild-animals-heal-themselves.html). Discuss what else animals do when they are sick, i.e. whine, rest, lick themselves, etc. Draw, color, or paint a picture of yourself as an animal in your natural habitat. Depict your animal as injured in some way, i.e. twisted ankle, cut on the paw, has a cold, etc. Add to your image three natural remedies you will use to heal yourself; i.e. a shady resting place away from predators, a healing plant, an animal ally who can bring you food while you rest.

42. My Wise Self (adapted from an exercise from The Progoff Intensive Journal Program)

Discussion: Everyone has a unique kind of wisdom that allows them to see and understand things about life that no one else can.

Divide your paper in half. On one side, draw yourself surrounded by any problems you currently have, including words, colors and images. On the other side, draw your Wise Self, either as a god or goddess, an old man or woman, an animal, a mountain, or any image that fits for you. Imagine that your Wise Self is looking across the paper and seeing you in your difficult situation. On another piece of paper, let your wise self speak using your non-dominant hand to write his or her words. Using your dominant hand, write questions to your Wise Self to keep the conversation going as long as possible.

43. Rewrite History

Pick a negative memory you feel comfortable to process in the group. Draw, paint or color the scene as vividly as possible. Add whatever you needed in that moment to prevent, tolerate, or respond to the situation in a way that would have been better than what actually happened. Afterwards, journal or freewrite about your experience. If it feels right, make a promise to yourself to learn from the experience and strive to get the help you need to prevent or overcome difficult experiences.

44. The Eye of the Hurricane

Draw, color or paint an image of anything that has a still, calm, powerful presence that is unaffected by disturbances in its environment: i.e. the eye of a hurricane, a mountain undisturbed by the birds squaking above, a tree undisturbed by the squirrels, etc.

45. Shadow (another seemingly complex activity but very worthwhile)

Each participant gets nine small squares of paper, arranged in three columns. Using a different-colored marker for each column, number the pieces of paper in each column, 1, 2, 3. In the middle column, draw yourself. Draw your head in the top square, your torso and arms in the middle square, and your legs and feet in the bottom square. Write a word or phrase next to your head in the top square that expresses "How I look to others." Write a word or phrase next to your torso in the middle square that expresses "How I usually feel." Write a word or phrase next to your feet in the bottom square that expresses "How I usually act." Use words like, beautiful/ handsome, tough, calm, shy, anxious, silly, cool, crazy, ect. On the left column, draw someone you really dislike or hate. Again, draw the head in the top square, torso in the middle square, legs in the bottom square. Add words to each box like before, "How do I look to others," "How do I feel," and "How do I act." On the right column, draw someone you really admire or are jealous of. Add words for each square as before.

In the next step, mix and match the different qualities to make your ideal personality. Try to take at least one quality from the person you hated and one from the person you admired. Imagine how your life would be different if you had this new personality. Write a story about an event from your regular life, such as riding the bus or going to work that turned out differently because of your new personality.

46. Missing Pieces (adapted from the concept of soul hunting)

Think of a bad experience from your life that still affects you now. Imagine that some part of you ran away because of the pain of that experience. Identify what part of you ran away: strength, joy, confidence, peacefulness, power, pride, courage, trust in others, self-esteem, etc. Draw, color, or paint a picture of how that part of you looks or feels when it is in its full and healthy state. Write a letter to that part of you, asking it to return. Make your own letter or use the following form:

"Dear \_\_\_\_, I know you left because of \_\_\_\_. It is now safe for you to return because \_\_\_\_. I promise to make sure it stays safe by \_\_\_\_\_. I miss you and I need you in my life because \_\_\_\_\_. Please return so I can be whole. Love, \_\_\_\_"

If desired, write a response letter from the missing part.

47. Tolerance Pledge Ceremony

Make a list of all the names that humiliate someone for being different. Write your pledge to disavow the words. Make your own pledge or use the following form: "No one has the right to call me these names and I don't have the right to call anyone else these names. I pledge that I will accept others the way they are and try to appreciate people who are different from me. If I really don't like someone, I will give them space to be who they are, and I will defend my right to be who I am. (Add your own words) Signed, \_\_\_" One at a time, read your list of derogatory names to the group, rip up the paper, and throw it in the garbage. Read your pledge aloud with conviction to the group. Group applauds for each person.

48. Tough Guy and Drama Queen

Discussion: What are the stereotypical ways for males and females to respond to emotional pain? Which one is more socially acceptable? Are there "tough guy" women and "drama queen" men?

On a pre-printed silhouette of a human figure, use color and image to express a balance of good qualities from the Tough Guy persona, i.e. strong, self-controlled, and protective; and the Drama Queen, i.e. expresses feelings, interdependent with other people, caring and sensitive.

49. Inner Sanctuary

Discussion: What are some benefits/ purposes of meditation?

On a pre-printed silhouette of a human figure, use color and image to depict a place you can journey to during meditation, such as a natural scene, your religious faith or practice, a repeated phrase, a color or song, or a safe place. You can depict the sanctuary as being inside the body (preferred), or you can also depict the sanctuary around the figure. Title the page, "My inner sanctuary" and discuss times in your life you might need to retreat to your sanctuary.

50. Dear Society

Draw three circles inside each other on a piece of paper, like a bullseye. On the inner circle, write something that you feel insecure about, such as "my appearance," "my intelligence," or "being weak." On the next circle, list phrases or words that have reinforced that insecurity, such as "You're ugly," or "You're slow." Make sure to include any messages about the consequences of having this deficit, such as "If you are ugly, no one will like you and you'll be alone forever," or "If you are dumb, you'll be a failure and be starving and poor forever." On the next circle, write the names of people who have said those words or phrases to you, such as, "myself," "my mom," or "people at school." In the four corners of the page, write where you think those people learned those judgments, such as society's expectations for people to look a certain way or to fit into a narrow definition of intelligence. Next, write a letter to society about how its expectations have negatively affected your self-esteem, and express your commitment to feeling confident about yourself. Make your own letter or use the following form:

"Dear Society, you expect everyone to be \_\_\_. If someone doesn't meet your expectations, then you \_\_\_. This is not fair because \_\_\_. My self esteem is low because I've been told that \_\_\_. I can try to work hard on improving \_\_\_ [i.e. grades, health, abilities, emotions, etc.] but I refuse to feel less than other people. I value myself because I [three things I like about myself]. Please stop trying to make me feel bad about myself. [Add your own final sentence]. Signed, \_\_\_."

51. Stuck and Unstuck (adapted from an exercise in The Moving Center by Gay and Kathleen Hendricks)

With selected music in the background, participants stand in a circle and warm up by moving each part of the body in creative movements, starting with the head and moving down through the arms, torso, legs, and feet. One at a time, participants go to the center of the circle and start by moving freely. The participant then slows down until he is stuck in one body position, which can represent a way that he feels "stuck," such as stuck in self-doubt, hopelessness, stress, or neediness. He stays in the stuck position until he can devise a way to "unstick" himself, either by making certain vocal sounds, saying a powerful phrase, shaking free, or breathing deeply into the position until it releases. Repeat for each person and discuss.

52. Poetry Grid

Each person in the group comes up with five to ten words that everyone writes down on a blank piece of paper. On lined paper, participants write 5 to 10 sentences using the words that were spoken, adding filler words if needed. Share the sentences and take the best line from each participant and arrange them on one piece of paper to make a group poem. (This activity often produces astounding creativity and provocative lines of poetry.)

53. I Feel \_\_\_ Like A \_\_\_\_\_\_.

Each person writes "I feel \_\_\_\_ like a \_\_\_\_," filling in the blanks; for example, "I feel grumpy like a turtle that fell into a sewer." Draw, color, or paint the images associated with the feeling below the sentence, using as much color and detail as possible.

54. Chariots of Fire Ritual

Each person gets four pieces of paper. On one paper, each person writes their goal for their lives, such as "success," "sobriety," or "happiness." On the three other pieces of paper, each person writes an obstacle to reaching their goal, such as "Conflicts with my children," "boredom," or "negative thinking." Create an obstacle course in the room with chairs and tables. The "obstacle" sheets are placed on the chairs and tables on the obstacle course, and the "goal" sheet is placed at the finish line. The participant can read aloud what has been written on each sheet as they are being placed. As participants go through the obstacle course, they can either rip up each of the obstacles on the pieces of paper, push aside the chairs on which they are placed, or crawl around or under the obstacles to reach the finish line. The group stands behind the finish line shouting encouragement and cheering for each person when they reach the finish. The process is repeated for each person. Play "The Chariots of Fire" in the background for a dramatic effect!

55. Bardic Circle

Sitting in a circle, everyone takes turn sharing something with the group, such as performing a song, a dance, a poem, a joke, or an interesting fact, or teaching a new skill. Everyone is encouraged to be supportive and attentive when others share.

56. Drum Your Family

Percussion instruments are placed in the center of the room (which can also include "homemade" instruments like a pen with a plastic cup or rattling keys!) Each participant describes the people that live in the home with them, such as family members or roommates, and selects an instrument to represent that person. The participant plays the instrument in a way that represents that family member's qualities, such as loud, soft, fast, slow, easy-going or rigid. The participant selects someone in the group to play that instrument according to the participant's specifications. The participant continues to assign instruments to group members to represent each family member in their home. When all the parts have been assigned, the group members play their instruments together in the way that the participant has demonstrated, and the participant listens until she directs them to stop playing. Discuss how the family sounded - were some family members more aligned and others more dissonant? Repeat for each participant.

57. Personal Mythology

Create a story using the following form: "Once upon a time there was a \_\_\_\_\_ named \_\_\_\_\_. It was very \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. It lived in \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_\_. Every day it would \_\_\_\_\_. It's favorite thing about its life was \_\_\_\_\_. It's least favorite thing was \_\_\_\_\_. More than anything, it wanted \_\_\_\_\_. The only problem was that \_\_\_\_\_. One day, it was \_\_\_\_\_, when suddenly \_\_\_\_\_." Continue the story to completion and write, "The End." Discuss if and how the main character solved its problem.

58. Yes, No, I Don't Know (adapted from an exercise from Gabrielle Roth)

Participants partner in pairs facing each other, and decide which partner will be A or B. Partner A starts by saying "Yes" and Partner B says "No." When the facilitator says "Go," each pair will have about 30 seconds to say "Yes" and "No" to each other in a dialogue with varying moods, attitudes and intensity. Repeat with Partner A saying "No" and Partner B saying "Yes" for thirty seconds. Notice if it was easier to say "Yes" or "No" in the dialogues. Next, Partner A will ask five questions to Partner B, to which Partner B can only answer "Yes." The questions can be silly or serious. Repeat with Partner B asking Partner A five questions, to which Partner A can only answer "Yes." What was it like to accept everything someone asks? Next, Partner A will ask five questions to Partner B, but Partner B can only answer "No." Repeat with Partner B asking Partner A. What was it like to reject everything someone asks? Finally, Partner A will ask five questions to Partner B, but Partner B can only answer "I don't know." Repeat with Partner B asking Partner A. What was it like to be in a state of unknowing?

59. Coloring Meditation

Trace objects in the room onto a piece of paper with a pencil, such as tissue boxes, cups, or plastic containers. Make an interesting design with the overlapping shapes. Alternatively, make designs by scribbling on a piece of paper in varying shapes and patterns. Color with markers, colored pencils, or crayons. Facilitator can play relaxing music in the background as participants are coloring. Discussion: How did this activity affect your mood?

60. Empty the Jug

Discussion: If feelings are kept bottled up, they build up and overflow.

Activity: Draw a large bottle or jug on your paper. Draw two lines across its center to make three layers in the jug. In the top layer, write three lines describing feelings you feel right now and the reason, such as "Tired because I didn't sleep well last night," or "Nervous because I'm with people I don't know." In the middle layer, write three lines describing feelings you had in the past and the reason, such as "Sad when my dog died," or "Mad when my mother kicked me out of the house." In the bottom layer, imagine you are peering into the depths of your heart without really knowing what is there, so you will try to guess by writing three lines like "Maybe I feel mad because I have no friends" or "Maybe I feel scared because I'm getting old." Try to surprise yourself and write something you didn't expect. Participants are not required to share their bottom layer if it will help them to take more risks in their writing.

61. Balanced Ecosystem

Discussion: A balanced system is one in which each part plays a role by contributing and taking something so the system can sustain itself. The same is true within one person, within a family, or within a society.

Activity: Draw an ecosystem that is familiar to you, such as a beach, forest, ocean, or jungle. Depict parts of the ecosystem that give and take from each other, such as the water that nourishes animals, and replenishes itself with the rain. Animals eat plants and also fertilize soil. Soil receives nutrients from fallen leaves and generates new plant growth. How does it feel when a system is in balance? How can other systems keep their balance?

62. I Will Survive!

Discussion: Read the lyrics to the song, "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor. What is a part of your life that you would like to say good-bye to? In what way are you a Survivor?

Activity: Play the song while participants stand in a circle. Sing the song aloud together, adding gestures and movements to send those negative aspects of your life "out the door!"

63. Call Waiting (adapted from theatre game we played at the West Virginia University Theatre Department)

Pick three contrasting people in your lives that bring out different sides of your personality, such as a romantic interest, a parent, a best friend, a sibling, a teacher or supervisor, or an ex-partner. Pretend you get a phone call from the first person on your list and begin talking with them about imaginary or real subject matter. Imagine that you get a phone call from the second person on your list that "beeps in" while you are talking, and you place the first person on hold while you answer the second person's call. Talk with the second person briefly, then end the conversation and return to the call with the first person. Then imagine the third person "beeps in" and you again talk to them briefly before ending that conversation and returning to the first person. End the call with the first person and hang up. Discuss how the person's body language, voice, attitude, and demeanor changed as they spoke with the different people in their lives.

64. Group Journey

Facilitator plays relaxing music, such as Native American flute or harp music. Participants sit comfortably in their chairs with their eyes closed or gazing downward at the floor. Participants are encouraged to imagine a scene that is relaxing, safe, comforting, and beautiful. After several minutes, one at a time, each person invites the group to their scene by describing it in second person; for example, "You are lying on soft sand under a warm sun with the sound of waves in the background. A group of dolphins swim by and you can hear sea gulls passing overhead." When the first person is finished sharing their scene in as much detail as possible, the next person shares their scene; for example, "You are climbing up a mountain at night under the moon. The sound of leaves crunches under your feet. Your heart beats with the feeling of excitement and beauty. A wolf passes by and looks you in the eye before continuing walking across your path." When everyone has shared, the facilitator invites anyone to share any feelings that have come up before closing the meditation. The facilitator encourages everyone to slowly come "back into the room," wiggle fingers and toes, and slowly open their eyes. Discuss favorite images or scenes that peers described in the group.

65. Mirroring Sequence

Sitting in a circle, the group will mirror the exact movements of each person in the group for 60 seconds. When it is someone's turn, that person can lead various movements, such as facial expressions, clapping, or standing up, or they can simply sit normally, but the group will attempt to mimic exactly the way the person is sitting or moving, including small movements of feet, fingers, or facial expressions. When everyone has had a turn to lead, the group divides into pairs sitting facing each other, selecting Partner A and Partner B. Partner A will lead slow movements with the hands and Partner B will mirror the movements as closely as possible. Next, Partner B will lead and Partner A will follow. Notice that the leader has to move slowly so that their partner will be able to follow closely. If there is time, members can try also limit movements to the legs and feet or to the face. (Mimicking funny faces in slow motion is truly hysterical.) Each person can also rate their partner as a leader and as a follower on a score of one to ten. Finally, each partnership will perform for the group without telling the group who is leading or following, and the group will try to guess who was leading or following. Discussion: Is it easier for you to lead or follow? Why?

66. Protect Your Treasures

On a blank piece of paper, draw a treasure box that is filled with aspects of your being that are precious, including your Love, your Beauty, your Beliefs, your Dignity or Pride, and your Sexuality. Draw a boundary around your treasures with various characters outside the boundary who can determine who is trustworthy for you to share your treasures with. Pick protective characters who are strong, wise, and discerning to help ward off anyone who may try to steal your treasures.

67. The Red Shoes (from the book, Women Who Run With The Wolves by Clarissa Pinkola Estes)

Copy and read together with the group the story of "The Red Shoes." (A reading can be found on Valentine Studios on Youtube.) Why did the girl become so obsessed with the red shoes? What was she really longing for? What could she have done differently at any point in the story to avoid the tragedy at the end? For example, could she have told the old woman at the start of the story, "Thanks but no thanks, I'm fine on my own!"? Or could she have made another pair of red shoes for herself that brought you the same joy as the ones she lost in the beginning of the story? Or could she have run away from the old woman and gone back to the forest? Depict how you would have avoided the bad ending of the story through artwork and share with the group.

68. Labyrinth Meditation

Print different labyrinth designs for each person in the group (A google image search will have hundreds of them.) Each person gets one of the sheets to trace with their finger or the back of a pen or pencil. Participants are encouraged go as slowly as possible, to sit erect in their chairs, and to breathe deeply in and out, since the labyrinth is a way to practice staying calm and focused through the twists and turns that life brings. When you reach the center of the labyrinth, trace your path back to the entrance of the labyrinth and repeat until the time is up. The facilitator can allow five minutes for each labyrinth. After five minutes, group members can write on a separate piece of paper any thoughts or feelings that came up with that design, including feelings of impatience or relaxation. Participants pass their papers to the right and repeat the same process with the next design for five minutes, again recording thoughts and feelings between each one. Finish and discuss. What was challenging about this activity? What was enjoyable about it? Did you prefer the more complex or simple designs?

69. Stars in the Night

Discuss quote by Stephenie Meyer, "Without the dark, we'd never see the stars." What are some of the gifts of the dark times in your life? Paint, color, or draw a night scene with brilliant stars and use words and images in the picture to represent what gifts you have found in the darkness.

70. Covered and Uncovered

Using large pieces of cloth or extra clothing, such as a sweater or jacket, participants are invited to cover parts of their body in a way that increases a feeling of safety, protection, or containment, such as wrapping it around their shoulders, around their waist or hips, or over their heads or face. Notice how it feels to be hidden or covered from others. Without bumping into anyone, try walking around the room with your covering, while experimenting with covering different parts of your body. What felt the most comfortable to you? What did it feel like? Next, try uncovering yourself with the cloth in your own timing, such as "flashing" little glimpses of the hidden parts, opening and closing the fabric like wings, or completely discarding the cloth and walking around the room without the covering. What did it feel like to reveal yourself? When do you feel safe to reveal yourself to others? What is the hardest thing for you to reveal to others?

71. Dream Circle

Discussion: Imagery and symbols are a language that can help us to explore feelings in a different way. When we think about about dream images, we can create meaning that is useful to the dreamer.

Activity: One person from the group shares a dream that they had recently or a dream that has a recurring theme. The person shares as much detail as possible without making any self-deprecating comments about it or leaving out any embarrassing parts. (If the dreamer does not feel comfortable sharing a dream in its entirety, they are encouraged to select a different dream.) One at a time, each person in the group asks refining questions about the dream, such as, "What were you feeling when that happened?" or "Did anything in your dream remind you of something from real life?" or "Who else was with you in the scene?" After collecting as much information as possible, group members and the facilitator can offer interpretations of the dream, such as "I think your dream is trying to tell you that you are afraid of losing your relationship," or "I think your dream is warning you about what will happen if you relapse." After everyone has had a chance to share their interpretations, the dreamer is given the final word on what the dream means to her by sharing her interpretation of her own dream. Repeat for anyone else who has had a dream they would like to share in the group.

72. The Guest House

Read the poem, The Guest House by Rumi. Draw, color, or paint a Guest House on a piece of paper, inviting six feelings to enter and stay. Depict words or objects in each room to care for each of the feelings, such as a tissue box in the room for Sadness, a punching bag in the room for Anger, or a cross in the room for Fear.

73. Body Talk

Cut a large paper roll into long pieces for each person to lay on. Group members assist each other with tracing the silhouette of each person laying on their paper. Each person draws or paints words or glues magazine images on or around their silhouette that include positive messages or qualities for each of their body parts, such as "Good Listener" next to the ears or "Energetic" next to the feet. Participants are encouraged to also include messages that the body parts may want to communicate back to the person; for example, the lungs may say, "Stop smoking" or the stomach may communicate words or images about wanting to be more calm and relaxed or confident.

74. Dance Prayers

Facilitator plays slow, rhythmic music and leads a warm up for participants to move different parts of the body, starting with the head and moving downward to the shoulders, arms, hands, torso, legs and feet. Going around the circle one at at time, each participant will lead the group in a gesture or movement that expresses a positive affirmation. Each person will share a unique expression for the same phrase until everyone has had a turn leading. The group will follow the leader's movement, repeating the gesture several times if it seems appropriate to fully appreciate the feeling in the movement. Then each person will lead a movement or gesture for the next phrase. The facilitator can provide the positive affirmations, such as "I believe in myself," "I can handle this," "I am loved," and "Everything will be alright," or group members can create their own phrases to express.

75. The Joy of Giving

Take three sheets of paper and think about what gifts you would like to give to yourself, to someone you love, and to a stranger. Draw or color your perfect gift for each person on one of the sheets of paper. When you are finished coloring the gifts with as much detail as possible, fold up the papers and draw wrapping paper, ribbons, and a bow on the paper as if it is a wrapped gift. Open and share with the group.

When art and psychotherapy are joined, the scope and depth of each can be expanded, and when working together, they are tied to the continuities of humanity's history of healing.