

# creative exercises

## Writing

- Set a timer for 5-15 minutes, and free write about an aspect of your illness that is hardest for you emotionally. The only rule is to not stop writing. Don't edit. Don't stop to check your spelling. Don't read over what you've written until you hear the buzzer.
- Think back to the first time you were diagnosed with your illness or first started to deal with symptoms. Really get into that space—remember how you were feeling, what you were doing, who you were with, what you were thinking. Write from that person's point of view about that first experience with your illness.
- Write a letter to an inanimate object: maybe a part of your body, a medicine you take, a building, etc. Tell it why it's important to you, ask it for something, whatever is meaningful to you. Example: Heart transplant recipient Stephanie Paseornek wrote a letter to her new heart.
- Think of someone from your own life and describe him or her in a paragraph or two. It could be a person you barely know but who did something strange or fascinating, a native from a country where you were deployed, a close friend, someone you found unbearable, or a loved one. (If no one comes to mind, write about yourself.) Whomever you choose, be as specific as possible in relating why this individual is so memorable. (adapted from Operation Homecoming, a project of the National Endowment for the Arts)
- Write about a humorous experience you observed or initiated yourself. It could be a comment, prank, or incident, or something that led to a funny nickname. The story doesn't have to be hysterical; it can simply be a lighter moment you recall fondly. (adapted from Operation Homecoming, a project of the National Endowment for the Arts)

## Photography

- Take a photo that reflects how you are feeling emotionally at the moment. Don't be literal (taking a picture of your smiling face to show that you're happy would be very literal).
- Take a photo of something you've seen before, but never taken the time to notice.
- Take a photo that symbolizes your illness to you.
- Take five minutes and write down anything that comes to mind when you read the words: "What's your dream?" Don't edit yourself. Nothing is too silly. Then go out and photograph things that represent your dreams. Don't feel like you have to be literal.

## Drawing

- Next time you are angry or frustrated, draw a picture of a scream. As artist Helen Myerowitz says, "no one knows what a scream looks like," so don't worry about drawing skill or expectations. Just put pen (or pencil, or crayon) to paper.
- Get out your drawing supplies, and set a timer for 15 minutes. Draw a picture of a nearby object—a glass, a vase, your couch, your dog, whatever— with absolutely no attachment to the outcome. Don't worry if it's awful. Just draw. Don't stop to think. Just draw. And don't stop drawing until the timer goes off.

## Movement

- The next time you are feeling sad, create a movement that encompasses that feeling. Repeat that movement, altering the speed at which you perform it.
- Do the same thing the next time you're having an excited, happy, or ecstatic feeling. Repeat that movement, altering the speed at which you perform it.
- Try to get someone to understand how you're feeling without using

words, or even facial expressions. Just use body movements.

## Mindfulness/Movement

- Find a quiet place, sit comfortably, and just breathe. Focus only on your breath – in and out. Let it fill your entire body. Picture the breath washing over all the parts of you that hurt/are diseased. Let the breath make space for the "good" in your body.

## Mixed Media

- Think for a moment about how you are feeling. Write down whatever emotions come to mind. Then get some magazines and cut out images that remind you of that/those emotion(s). Glue them to a paper with the emotion written somewhere on the page.

## Music

- Get out a drum (a pot or pan will do) and create a beat that represents "happy" to you. Play that beat for a few moments. Stop, and then try for a beat that represents "angry".
- Find instruments around your house. For example, you can make a shaker by putting rice into a plastic measuring cup, covering the cup with plastic wrap or foil, and putting a rubber band around the top. What else can you come up with? And what kind of music can you make with your family or friends with these instruments? Children can be great collaborators on this exercise.
- Utilizing your music collection – digital or otherwise – create a "play list" that represents "healing" to you. Whether that is fast, upbeat songs to give you energy, or calming, quiet songs to provide relief, let the music take you to the place you want to go.

FOUNDATION FOR  
**ART &**  
**HEALING**