

## Working on Your Own

Finally, there are some simple questions that you can ask yourself about your work and art activities to continue your exploration and to deepen your experience, in lieu of working with a therapist. While this is not a substitute for the therapeutic interaction that is part of art therapy, it will help you begin to understand your own images.

### *What Feeling Does the Image Communicate?*

When you look at the drawing, painting, or other art expression, a feeling is always conveyed. Rather than determining or assigning a meaning, try to look at the image for its emotional quality. What are your initial impressions? Is the image happy, angry, sad, anxious, and so on? Or does it have many different feelings expressed through color, line, and form? How do you use color, line, and form to express emotion?

### *If the Image Could Talk to You, What Would It Say?*

Pretend that you can animate the image you have created. Look at various parts of your image and give each a voice. For example, if there is a blue square in the image, what would that blue square say? Or if you selected an image of a tree from a magazine for a collage, what would that tree say? Try answering these questions in the first person ("I am a tree and I feel . . ."), spontaneously writing down whatever comes to mind.

### *Amplify a Part of the Image*

Look at the image you have created, and select a section of it that interests you or perhaps one that you dislike. Try making another drawing or painting of that section only, enlarging it and adding new details or images that come to mind. Continue this process as long as you wish.

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## *Explore Images with Images*

You may also want to try using art as a way to understand and become more aware of your process and images. Try making another image in response to the original one. Continue this process as long as you wish or with as many images as necessary.

What do you do if nothing comes to mind? First, don't worry. It is not necessary to have a meaning for each image right after you create it. I find that some ideas appear soon after the image is completed and many others emerge with time. Don't expect to be able to immediately freely associate, amplify, or understand everything you draw, paint, or construct.

Also, your images will have different meanings as days and weeks pass. Don't think that your task is over once you have defined what an image means in a particular painting or drawing. That meaning may change, or it may provide clues to other works you have created. Keep an open mind, stay free of conclusions, and continue your exploration.

Remember, too, that the processes of drawing, painting, constructing, or building are just as important as finding meaning for your work. You will usually discover that the creative process itself is truly the most healing part of any art therapy experience.

If you are still hungry for information or you want to work with an art therapist, explore an art therapy group, attend a workshop, or deepen your understanding through additional reading, turn to the final section. The resources listed there will increase your knowledge and broaden your experience with art therapy.