

Art project

Feeling the Love

Target participants

Part one : For elementary school students

Part two : High school students or teens, and for teachers and youth workers)

Art activity, part one

Feeling the love ... for others (postcards)



In this February week of eating disorders awareness, with St. Valentine's day around the corner, we suggest a painting/drawing and writing activity to celebrate the two events. In these more difficult times, it is important to remember to offer kindness and caring whenever we can. We forget that sometimes it doesn't take much to bring a little joy and love to others, and to ourselves. Eating Disorders Awareness Week is an opportunity to underline the importance of loving our neighbours and ourselves. Here's an opportunity to encourage kindness and caring in your classroom.

The purpose of the activity is to demonstrate to students the importance of recognizing our own worth and good qualities, and those of our neighbours, learning to see the beauty in each and every one of us. A person with an eating disorder can forget their own worth, their strengths and qualities. This activity provides an opportunity to appreciate oneself and others and to build a better self-image.



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Materials

- Names of students written on strips of paper and placed in a bowl, hat, box or other container
- Cardstock or watercolour paper cut to postcard size, 4 x 6 in
- Pencils
- Paint (water colours or gouache), brushes, bowls of water **OR** Coloured pencils and markers **OR** Mixed media (water colours and coloured pencils)

HOW IT WORKS

Duration of activity: approximately 1h30

1. Begin by introducing the Eating Disorders Awareness Week and the theme for this year. You can talk a little about what an eating disorder is (check websites such as that of ANEB Québec for definitions). What's important is to increase student awareness of eating disorders, focusing on the fact that people with eating disorders have difficulty loving themselves and being loved. People with eating disorders experience much sadness and suffering, and it is important to give them the help they need.
2. Briefly introduce the creative project before starting the brainstorming session, so the students will understand the connection between Eating Disorders Awareness Week and the Feeling the love project.
3. The next step is a brainstorming session, students and teacher together. The goal is to discover all the qualities and strengths of the students in the class, or that people in general may have. Some examples are thoughtfulness, kindness, resourcefulness, perseverance, courage, a good sense of humour, creativity, generosity, patience, strength of character, etc.



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How it works

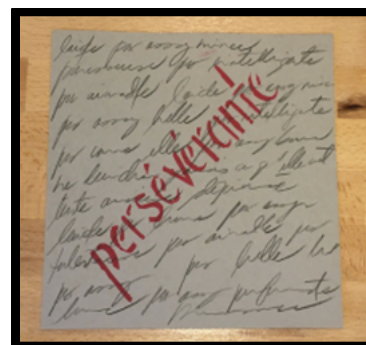
4. The teacher randomly pairs up the students, with one group of three if there is an odd number of students (this can be done by choosing names from a hat or a bowl).

5. The students then each create a friendship/happiness card for the partner they have been assigned. Taking time to select a quality they see in their partner, they use this quality as the basis for a drawing or painting on a postcard that they will then share with their partner. Students have a number of ways they can share their postcard with their partner: virtually, by mail, by delivering it in the classroom if possible or by posting it on a classroom wall designated for this purpose.

High school: Feeling the love ... for myself (A writing and painting workshop)

It's important, during Eating Disorders Awareness Week, to take some time to think about self-love. Are we hard on ourselves? Do we really love ourselves? What are the internal messages we tell ourselves? Are they positive or negative?

People with eating disorders are very critical of themselves. The images they have of themselves are distorted, and it is often hard for them to see their qualities and their strengths.



Art project

Feeling the Love

Feeling the love... for myself

To tune in to our internal messages. To learn to let go in writing of the harmful, negative messages we tell ourselves and see them more objectively. To choose a positive word to describe ourselves that highlights our worth, our strength and what makes us beautiful and that sends us a little love.

Materials

- A square piece of white, beige, black or grey cardstock, 8 x 8 in. or 10 x 10 in. is recommended
- A black pencil or a white one
- A second piece of cardstock (smaller than the first piece) to create a stencil
- A scissors for the stencil, possibly an exacto knife and cutting mat
- Masking tape to hold the stencil in place
- Acrylic paint or gouache (varied colours including golds if possible)
- Brushes, preferably foam brushes, for the stencil
- If possible, letter templates of various styles

HOW IT WORKS

Duration of activity: approximately 2h00

1. Begin by introducing the Eating Disorders Awareness Week and the theme for this year. You can talk a little about what an eating disorder is (check websites such as that of ANEB Québec for definitions). What's important is to increase student awareness of eating disorders, focusing on the fact that people with eating disorders have difficulty loving themselves and being loved. People with eating disorders experience much sadness and suffering, and it is important to give them the help they need.



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How it works

2. Next, start a discussion about what might make someone develop an eating disorder. There are four types of predisposing factors that can lead people to develop an eating disorder : personal factors, genetic factors, family factors and cultural factors. In this activity, we focus on personal factors.

Personal factors that contribute to the development of an eating disorder include the following:

- A negative body image,
- Low self-esteem,
- Mood intolerance or overcontrol of emotions,
- Poor control of compulsive behaviours,
- A tendency to dramatize,
- Difficulty forging an identity (wanting to please others, meet their expectations),
- Denial of aging,
- Perfectionism, a need to perform.

3. Each student chooses one of the personal factors listed above: low self-esteem, for example.

4. The students then each work individually on their creative project.



ACTIVITY ONE

Instructions for elementary school activity

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose the quality in your partner you want to highlight (e.g. thoughtfulness).*
2. On one side of the card, write your partner's name, the quality you have selected and your own name (see example).
3. Turn the card over and begin working on the visual side of the card.
4. Select your medium (from among those the teacher suggests), either paint or coloured pencils and markers.
5. Make a figurative or abstract drawing or painting inspired by the quality you see in your partner.
6. Share the card with your partner, either virtually with photos taken of both sides, by mailing it to him or her, by personally giving it to him or her, if possible, or by posting it on a wall in the classroom set aside for this purpose (check with your teacher).

How do you create a visual image, abstract or figurative, that depicts a quality?

Once you've decided on the quality you want to depict in a painting or drawing, the first thing to do is to select the colours, lines and shapes that suggest the quality you have in mind. For example, if you've selected thoughtfulness, you will probably want to use pastel or pale colours, fine lines and rounded shapes (a thoughtful person is gentle, soft and careful in how they approach people). If you want to depict a quality such as strength, on the other hand, bright colours, a warm palette and thick, bold lines would probably be more suitable. How fast you work can also be a factor. For example, if you're depicting thoughtfulness, you will probably work more slowly and calmly than if you're trying to depict strength.



ACTIVITY TWO

Instructions for high school activity

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Externalize negative thoughts** : Spontaneously and without thinking, write down the negative words you tell yourself or you've heard said about you and that fit one of the selected themes— low self-esteem, for example. It's important not to think too much at this stage and to just write spontaneously, filling up your card (use a black pencil on white and a white one on black).* **You can keep repeating the same words if you need to.**
2. After you've finished writing, take some time to look at what you've written.
3. Send yourself a little love: think of one of your qualities or strengths (courageous, for example). Write this word on the second piece of cardstock, from which you will make your stencil. Write it out in large letters, print or cursive. You can check out different fonts if you like to help you decide how you want to write it.
4. Using your scissors, cut out the letters of your word. Don't forget, you want the negative part of the stencil to remain intact (see image).
5. Next, place the stencil on the piece of cardstock with your spontaneous writing on it. If needed, use masking tape to hold it in place.
6. Pick a bright colour that you like (fuchsia is good on white, for example, or bright yellow on black). Using your foam brush, apply paint in the negative space of the stencil, to paint your word on top of your spontaneous writing.
7. Take a moment alone to look at your creation.
8. You can now share what you've made with the class, or put it up on a wall in the classroom with the work of the other students, and talk about the project. To end the activity, each student can read out loud, one after the other, the quality or strength they have highlighted in themselves.

