

# Zentangles for Mental Health Awareness

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Rachel Immel  
Honors Project 2020  
HNRS 4980



# From the start...

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- I was inspired by the concept of art as social practice, or bringing creative ideas and processes into a community setting to create political or social change, with more focus on the healing aspects of creating art as a community.
- It immediately connected to one of my passions: Zentangle.
- I became a Certified Zentangle Teacher in July 2018, where I learned to teach the Zentangle Method and create a space of unrestricted creativity and relaxation.

# Initial Plan and Concept

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- Physical Zentangle classes that encouraged the gathering of students from all over the BGSU campus to learn about and practice Zentangle.
- An open environment for participants, who may not deem themselves artists, to consider using art as a method of stress relief.
- A brief survey would be given only to those who had not taken the class before to gain feedback on their Zentangle experience and whether or not they connected with anyone in the class.
- I was going to take the tiles made by students and create a mosaic/poster that could be shared to further spread mental health awareness.

# Research Questions

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## Initial Project Proposal

- What exactly is causing so much stress in young adults?
- How effective is art therapy in treating stress specifically?
- How do you go about measuring the success of a method like art therapy that is based more around feedback as opposed to numerical data?

## Post-Quarantine Revisions

- How effective is art at treating stress in an open community setting?
- How important do people feel their mental health is to their overall well-being compared to how much time they actually designate to taking care of their mental health?
- Can Zentangle be an effective method to combat anxiety and depression that originates from stressful global events?

# Advertising

## Facebook

 Rachel Immel  
April 21 at 12:27 PM · 🌐

This upcoming Saturday is the last Zentangle class I will be hosting for my Honors Project and what a journey it has been! The third and most recent tile has definitely been my favorite! It's been so nice to have some time to sit and create something unique each week!

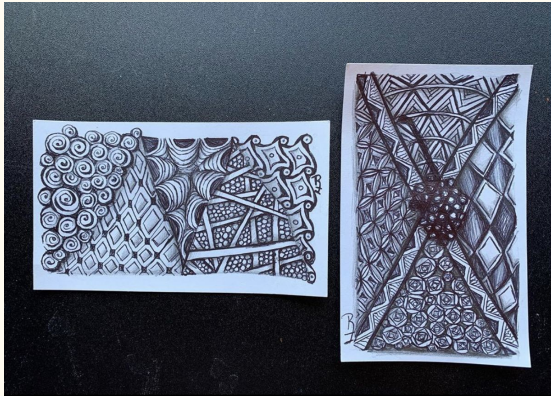
My hope is that this final class will be the biggest one yet so if you can, please spread the word! Feel free to save the poster and share it! Come relax this Saturday from 2-4pm! Feel free to email of message me with any questions and for the link to the class!!


Thank you all and stay well!!!❤️




Paige Livesay, Mitch Taylor and 3 others · 2 Comments 9 Shares


## Instagram



 raeimmel · ...

 raeimmel Wanted to share the results of my past two hosted Zentangle classes! Want to know how you can make pieces like this or just want to try something new? Stop by one of my classes this Saturday from 2-4pm! You don't have to stay the whole time and all you need is an index card, a pencil, and a pen!  
Come relax and let's tangle together! Would love to see some new faces!:) Email me at reimmel@bgsu.edu for

👍 🗨️ 📌

 Liked by mariskreinhil and 14 others

1 DAY AGO

Add a comment... [Post](#)

## Campus Updates

### BGSU. CAMPUSUPDATE

Thursday, April 16, 2020

#### All

1. **ITS advises Zoom users to change passwords**
2. **Ohio voting - Time is running out!**
3. **Take a virtual tour of the Louvre!**
4. **Jeu de vocabulaire: friends, fun & french!**
5. **Netflix Party tonight!**
6. **Zentangle Livestream Series for Stress Relief**
7. **BGSU Votes virtual meeting Monday**
8. **Leadership through Netflix**
9. **VIRTUAL Leadership Book Discussions**
10. **CWGE Netflix Party!**
11. **Support group - LGBTQ+ and questioning students**
12. **Join a discussion of Covey's Seven Habits**
13. **Culture from your Couch! Study Germany or France!**

#### Students

#### 6. Zentangle Livestream Series for Stress Relief

Feeling stressed and need a break? Want a chance to meet new people and try something different while still maintaining social distancing? Join:

Let's Tangle Together: A Zentangle Livestream

Zentangle is a meditative art form that promotes focus and relaxation. It is easy to learn and is designed for all levels of artistic experience! This series of livestreamed gatherings provides an opportunity to expand your imagination, create artwork that is entirely unique and join a world-wide community!

Meetings will be held through Zoom every Saturday from 2:00-4:00 p.m. from April 4-25.

All you will need is a blank index card or paper of a similar size, a pencil and a pen!

[Link to the meeting space is here.](#)

Please email reimmel@bgsu.edu [Rachel] if you have any questions! Please note this class is also being hosted as part of an Honors project and you may be asked a few questions for feedback.

Hope to meet you there!

[Top](#)

# Online Poster

Feeling stressed and need a break?  
Want to try something new?

## Let's Tangle Together!

A Zentangle Livestream

### What is Zentangle?

Zentangle is a meditative art form that promotes focus and relaxation. It is easy to learn and is designed for all levels of artistic experience!

Every Saturday  
April 4th - April 25th  
2:00pm - 4:00pm

*Note:* All you will need is a blank index card, a pencil, and a pen.

Email [reimmel@bgsu.edu](mailto:reimmel@bgsu.edu) for the Zoom link to participate!



# Honors Online Participation Page

## Saturday

### Let's Tangle Together: A Zentangle Livestream

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# Discord (Computer Art Club Server)

# general

Rachel Immel | President 04/18/2020

There's another Zentangle Class for my Honors project today!!! Please spread the word and feel free to share the poster!!! It's been so nice to have some time to be creative outside of schoolwork so stop by if you're available even if it's only for a little while!

Thanks all! Stay well!! 🖍️ 😊 (edited)

Feeling stressed and need a break?  
Want to try something new?

## Let's Tangle Together!

A Zentangle Livestream

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# The Zentangle Methodology

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Zentangle promotes focus, creativity, and stress relief through drawing simple shapes and designs.

Designed to remove blocks in creativity:

- Self criticism, expensive materials, lengthy training and more!

## The Rules

- “Elegance of Limits” = gentle guidelines
- No mistakes!!! = big one!!!
- Are meant to be broken = Variation is always welcome!



# Class Structure - Post Quarantine

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- To adapt to the unexpected quarantine restrictions, I created a Zentangle class livestream that took place online through Zoom every Saturday from 2-4pm during the month of April (4 total classes).
- The class was advertised to and built for people of all ages and backgrounds to provide a way to relieve stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- I walked through the Zentangle methodology step by step using a different series of tangles each week.



# Class Structure - Post Quarantine (cont.)

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- I would provide occasional commentary, tips, and small talk throughout class.
- A ten minute break at the halfway point (3pm) in the class was offered and in that time, participants were encouraged to stand up, stretch, breathe, drink water, etc. This is to give the brain and body time to rest.
- Everyone held up their work at the end of class to share their creations and admire the individuality of each piece.
- A brief online survey was administered to gain feedback on their personal Zentangle experience, their average stress levels on a daily basis, their opinion on current events, and whether they felt that they connected with anyone in the class.

# Methodology: Overview

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- I wanted to create a class in order to not only provide a designated space and period of time to be creative, but to also teach a skill that participants can use in the future to relieve stress and connect with a broader community.
- The heart of the Zentangle methodology is the “worldwide mosaic” it creates. Each individual has something unique to offer even when following the same instructions. The sharing and admiration of accomplishments.

# “Therapeutic Factors” to Group Art Therapy

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Therapeutic Factor - “a finite number of elements distinguishable from one another by virtue of their highly specific effects in the group member,” (Gabel and Robb 128).



Symbolic expression - Refers to the participant’s abilities to use symbols to represent abstract thoughts and feelings.

Relational aesthetics - Social relationships that form between group members, the instructor, and the artwork itself.

Embodiment - Putting personal thoughts and feelings into the artwork.

Pleasure and play - The physical enjoyment of making art.

Ritual - Establishment of structure through methodology, routine, or meeting at the same place and time consistently.

(Gabel and Robb 129)

# Results: Summary

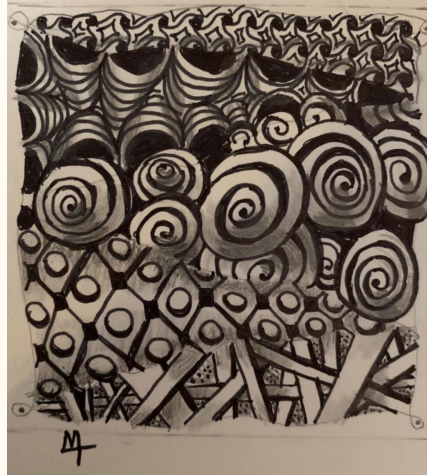
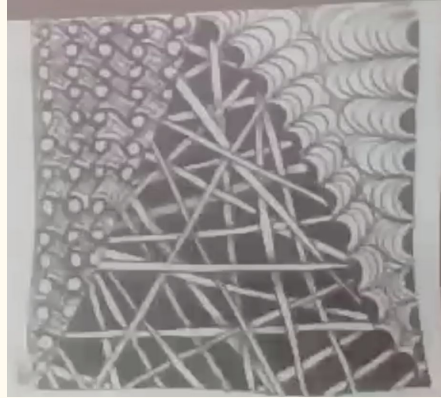
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- Despite somewhat low turnout, feedback was incredibly positive.
- 9 total participants
  - 2 participants came to all 4 classes
  - 1 participant came to 2 classes
  - All others came to one class
- Participants were especially responsive to the sharing of the artwork at the end of the classes, the overall relaxed atmosphere, and the “no mistakes” rule of Zentangle.
- The exact impact of community was hard to gauge due to most of the participants being close with one another prior to the class and the online format.

# Mini Mosaics (Week 1)

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My Tile





# Mini Mosaics (Week 2)



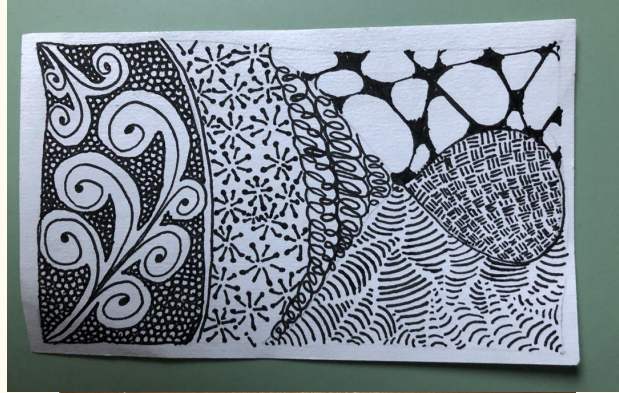
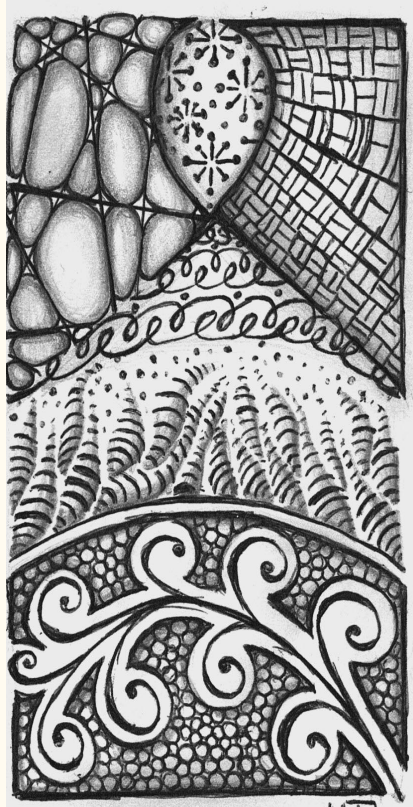
My Tile





# Mini Mosaics (Week 3)

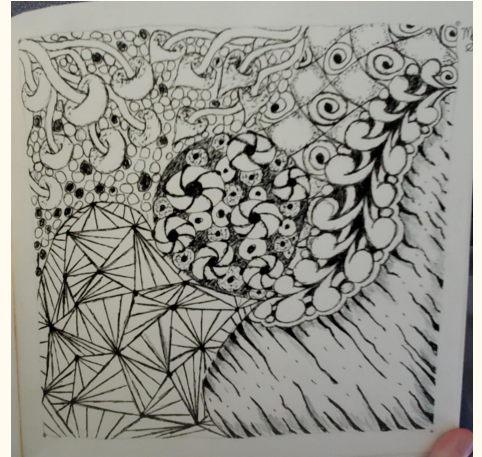
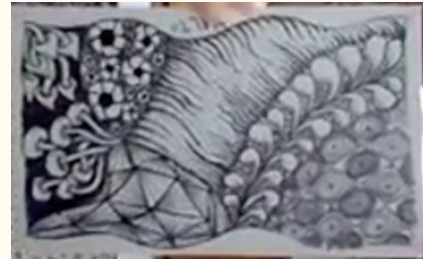
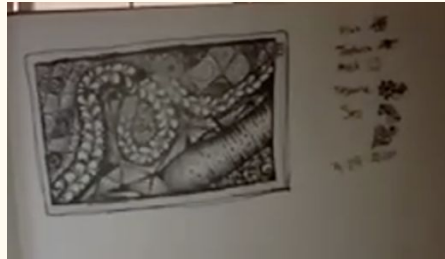
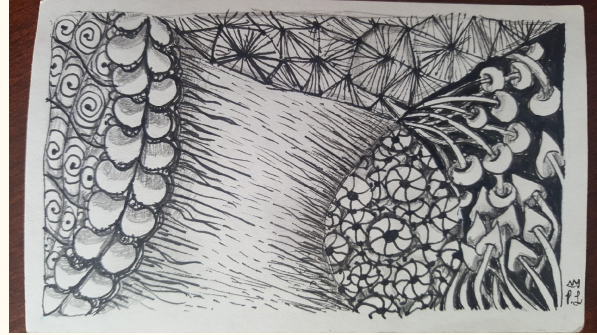
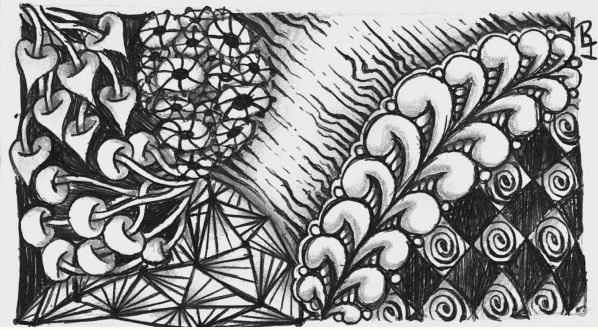
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# Mini Mosaics (Week 4)

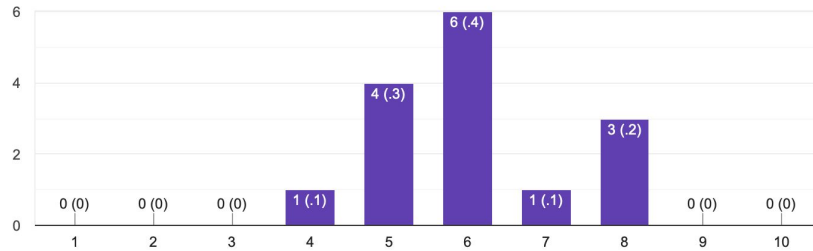
My Tile



# Results: Stress Relief

On a scale of 1-10, how stressed do you normally feel on a daily basis?

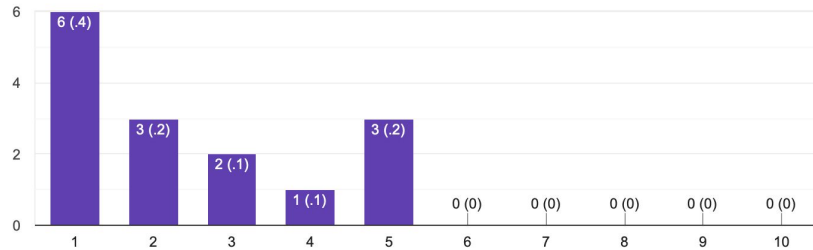
15 responses



After participating in this Zentangle experience, how would you rate your stress?



15 responses

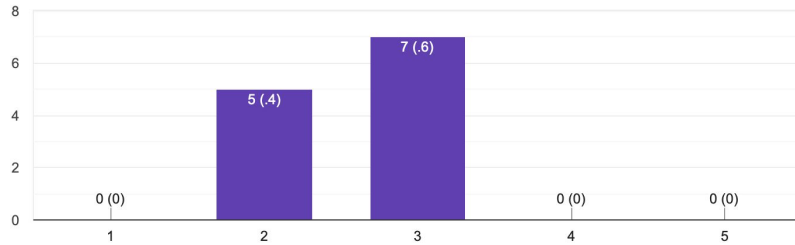


- Compared to daily stress levels, participants felt significantly less stress after completing the Zentangle experience.
- An average individual decrease of 3.6 points.
- The overall average stress level decreased from 6.07 to 2.47 points.

# Results: Mental Health Awareness

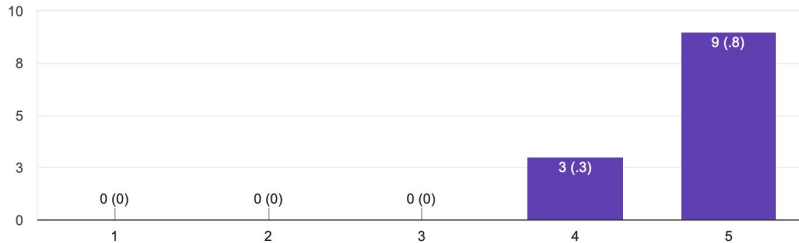
How often do you allow yourself time to focus on your mental health?

12 responses



How important do you feel mental health is to your wellbeing?

12 responses



- On a scale of 1 (Not Very Often) to 5 (Very Often), the majority of participants put a 3, indicating a moderate amount of time dedicated to maintaining stress and other mental health issues.
- On a scale of 1 (Not Very Important) to 5 (Very Important), all except for 3 participants chose the highest option, showing that mental health is very important to their well-being.

# Response to Stress vs Zentangle

When you read the news or learn about current events going on in today's world (even beyond the pandemic), how do you feel?

12 responses

Powerless. Sometimes skeptical-- is it really that bad or is it sensationalism? (Or maybe I'm in denial?)

It's a mix of stressed and hopeful.

Anxious

Numb

Hopeless and frustrated

constantly stressed, scared, and often angry

I know I really can't control many things.

Sad and frustrated

Tired

I feel concerned to say the least. When the news seems to only highlight the negatives going on in the world with few signs of good things, I feel stressed and concerned that things aren't getting better.

Stressed!!!

- Zentangle temporarily draws focus away from common stressors including the news, deadlines, fear of failure, etc.
- It leaves the participant with a tangible reminder of their accomplishments.

One memorable experience I had this time around was hearing how the participants replied positively to a section of my zentangle that I felt I slightly messed up on. As I was doing one of the zentangles, I felt I slipped up and decided to keep rolling with it. Instead of it being an eye sore, the participants actually were drawn to it. They said how it still worked, and honestly was one of the more interesting parts of my pattern. It made me feel really good in all honesty. Just hearing people seeing the positives in what I felt was me slipping up made me feel good.

This class has been a wonderful experience to be a part of this past month! It was nice to have something to look forward to every week in very uncertain times. The instructor has a great sense of skill with the subject, and has a radiant energy that uplifts the experience. I would love to participate in another class like this if the instructor kept going with this. I hope the instructor gives herself a hand after doing such an awesome job, and being able to adapt to such an unprecedented event!

This class was a welcomed change of pace in my life, especially with the current events going on in the world. It allowed me to realize how lucky I am with the ability to create, and spend time creating with others. I also thought the instructor did an excellent job matching the mood of this course, and was very hospitable yet informative. I hope to do more works or sessions like this in the future!

# Acknowledgement of Limitations

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- In order to protect the meeting room, I only distributed the link to those who reached out to me for it or through more secure Listserv chains. This could have heavily affected attendance.
- Needed more advertising.
- Zentangle is intended to eliminate the need for technology.
- I should have more clearly defined this experience as a creative project or a research project.



# Conclusions

- The physical act of making art, being surrounded by a supportive group of people, and the individual attention are the most effective combination.
- Zentangle was able to touch on all of the “therapeutic factors” defined by the group art therapy synthesis.
- My ultimate goal was to teach something that could be shared to all who need it.

What did you like about the class the most?

15 responses

It's a good opportunity to take your mind off of things.

The descriptions of the history of zentangle. Super interesting!

How low pressure it was

Your instruction! Great job of breaking the information into a step by step product. It was very easy to understand and know that my next zentangle will follow your format! Your delivery of content was super relaxed and clearly you were passionate about the subject.

Perfect pace. I was able to keep up and stay relaxed the whole time.

I love the laid back atmosphere that encourages all the artists participating to push themselves, and enjoy the process. The instructor always encouraged the relaxing part by reminding us to breathe, and she always encouraged creators that there are no mistakes. This carried on through all the classes, and I feel the consistency showed how important this is to the Zentangle process.

Instructor's knowledge of the project and how easily she explained the process.

Rachel is such a positive, passionate person. You can tell she has genuine enthusiasm for the subject.

"There are no wrong answers"

It's the relaxed atmosphere of the course. Considering I've joined two sessions, I've found the laid back yet encouraging environment welcoming. Being an artist who constantly struggles with doubt and pressure, this course is reassuring in the creative process and emphasizes there are no mistakes. I like that each answer provided in the artwork is encouraged, and that we should feel no pressure doing this art. That the only pressure we should feel is to simply create along.

The relaxed no mistakes approach

As always, I enjoy the laid back guide of creating, and I also enjoy how this is an art form that emphasizes no mistakes. There's no pressure in creating zentangles, and the instructor always encourages working with what you have as you create.

I liked spending time doing something just for myself. It was meditative to repeat the same shapes and lines over and over.

The open environment. The class feels low pressure, but welcoming to push your limits in creating something amazing. The instructor encourages the participants to embrace their work, and to be proud of what they make. The instructor also encouraged the meditative state of the art form by encouraging breathing throughout, and also reminding us to remember the important things in our lives.

Rachel is such a positive, passionate person. You can tell she has genuine enthusiasm for the subject.

"There are no wrong answers"

# References

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Gabel, Alison and Megan Robb. “(Re)considering Psychological Constructs: A Thematic Synthesis Defining Five Therapeutic Factors in Group Art Therapy.” *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, vol. 55, September 2017, pp. 126-135, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2017.05.005>. Accessed 6 May 2020.