

invisible
DrawingOut
diseases

COMMUNICATING YOUR EXPERIENCE OF
AN INVISIBLE HEALTH CONDITION

Activity Booklet

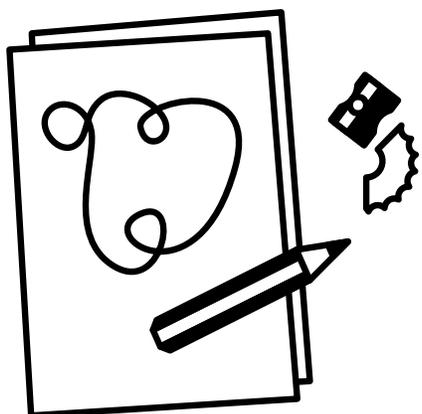
Invisible health conditions and visual metaphor

The symptoms and effects of many health conditions (e.g. M.E., pancreatitis, endometriosis) are not immediately apparent to others, and so it can be difficult to communicate the experience and have your needs met.

One good way to do this is to draw a **visual metaphor**. A visual metaphor is when you **use something visible** (e.g., a creature, animal, place) **to show something invisible** (e.g., thought, feelings, pain).

These drawings can help your friends, family members, doctors and other healthcare professionals to understand what you are going through.

Everyone can draw!



Many people feel they are ‘bad’ at art, but we would like to help you rediscover the pleasure of drawing that most of us experience as young children.

Drawings don’t need to be complicated or realistic. Very simple lines, shapes and colours can express who you are and how you see the world (a bit like your personal signature).

The exercises in this booklet are very simple. They build up your skills so gradually that anyone can do them. All you need is a pen, pencil or crayon, and the will to try something new!

The exercises start with some general warm-up tasks (1. Warming up) and gradually build up your confidence and skills (2. Drawing facial expressions; 3. Drawing people; 4. Adding words; 5. Drawing objects and creatures), so that by the end you will be able to draw things that are more directly related to your disease experience (6. Drawing visual metaphors; 7. Drawing a final piece).

If you are already a confident artist, you might like to skip some of the earlier exercises and go straight to sections 6 and 7.

Please visit www.drawingout.org for more exercises and examples, as well as animated instruction videos. You can also browse the online galleries of other people’s drawings and submit your own, if you wish.

1. Warming up

Doodle monster: Draw several doodles without lifting the pencil off the page. Include several loops, and make sure you create a closed shape by joining up the two ends. Now transform the shapes into monsters! If there is anyone else around, you could take it in turns to draw a doodle and transform it into a monster.

Imagine that each of the monsters represents a different aspect of your experience of living with an invisible condition. Label each monster accordingly.

Five little friends:

Trace around your hand. Now transform each finger into a person or animal with a different character.

If you wish, add some words to your drawing about how you are feeling today. For example, you could write along the outline of your hand, between the fingers, or on the palm of your drawn hand.

The wrong hand!

Draw anything you can see (e.g., your phone, a coffee cup) with the hand you don't usually use to write or draw with.

Drawing by touch:

Choose an object with an interesting shape or texture (e.g., a hairbrush or a key). Close your eyes. With one hand feel the shape and texture of the object, and draw what you feel at the same time with your other hand. Try not to lift the pen off the page.

No peeking!

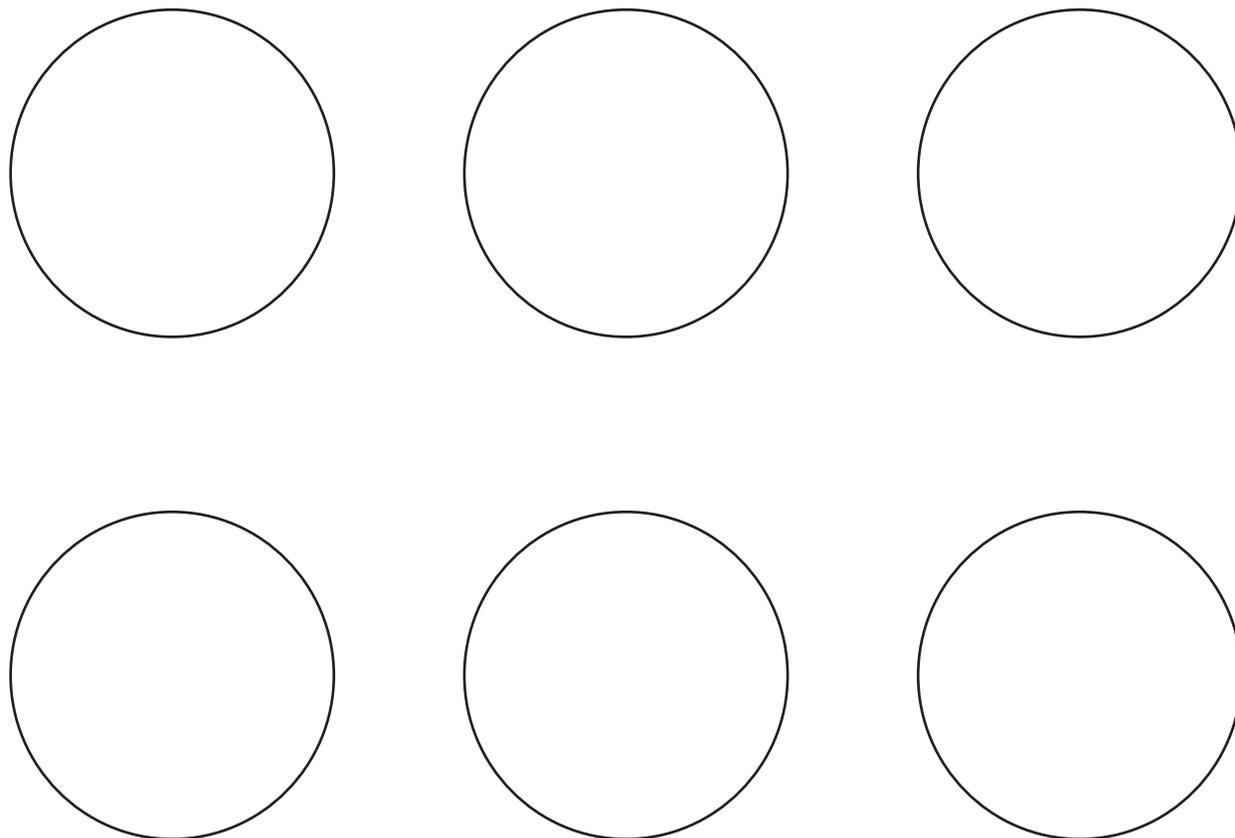
Draw anything you can see without looking at the paper and without lifting your pen off the page. You can also try balancing your drawing pad on your head while drawing!

If you wish, add some words to any of your drawings above. For example, you could write about what the objects mean to you, how you feel about them, or what thoughts or memories they trigger in you.

You might like to show your warming-up drawings to someone else to let them know how you are feeling.

2. Drawing facial expressions

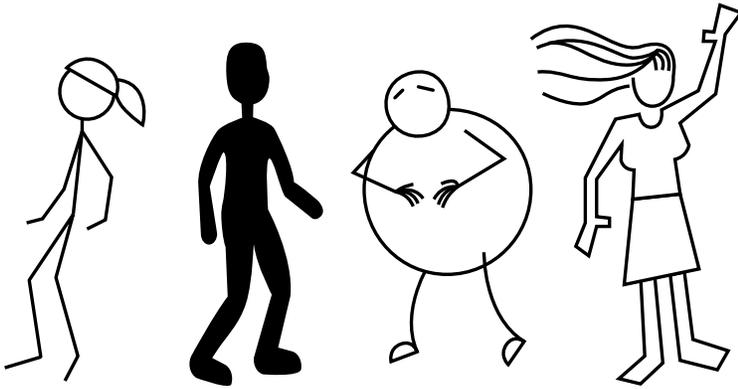
Faces: Draw different facial expressions for different emotions in the circles below, by adding a mouth, eyes and eyebrows. You may also add colours, if you wish.



Of the six facial expressions, choose the one that best represents yourself at this moment. Add a simple element or two (for example, hair, nose, glasses, scarf, hat) to make it look like you. Add some words if you wish.

You might like to show this drawing to someone else to let them know how you are feeling today.

3. Drawing People



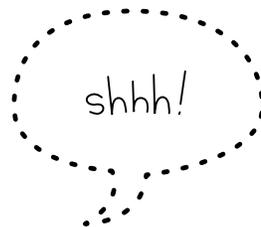
There are many different styles to draw human figures, including stick figures, silhouettes, balloon people and outline figures. Body language can tell us a lot about how people are feeling.

Drawing others: Choose at least two styles and draw a few people. If there are any other people around, you could perhaps ask them to model for you. Ask them to act out being happy, sad or surprised, for example.

Self-portrait: Now draw yourself in whichever style you prefer and in a pose that best represents how you are feeling. Remember that you can also use facial expression and colour to show your feelings.

4. Adding words

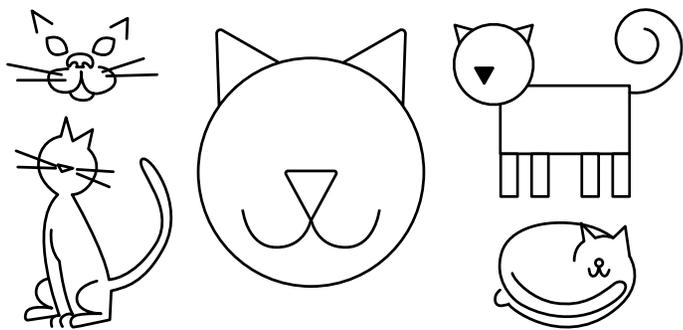
In cartoons and comics, speech and thoughts are often represented using balloons. The shape, colour and position of the balloon, and the style of the letters, can add mood and intensity to the verbal message.



Add a speech or thought balloon to your self-portrait to express what you think or feel about your invisible health condition.

You might like to show this drawing to someone else to let them know how you are feeling today.

5. Drawing objects and creatures

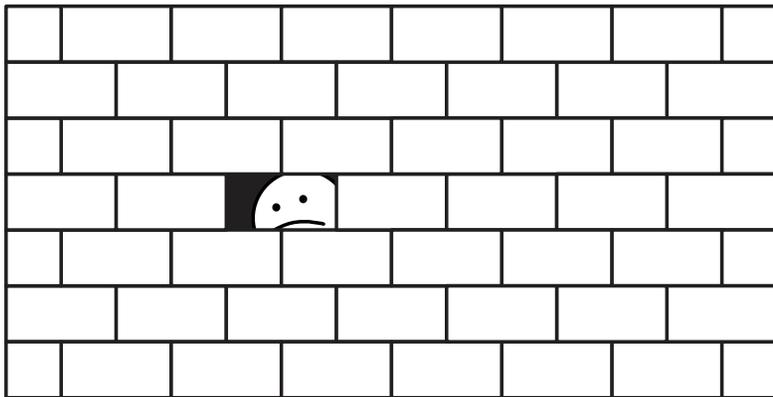


Start with any object or creature you feel confident you can draw (e.g. a cat). You might like to use some of the techniques introduced in the 'warming up' section, e.g. drawing with the hand you don't usually use to write or draw with.

Now try to identify the features that make that object or creature recognisable. Draw it again several times. In each version, try to exaggerate one of the features you identified as important.

Which of your drawings do you like best? Why? You may find that your favourite isn't necessarily the most 'realistic' drawing.

6. Drawing visual metaphors



Visual metaphors enable you to express invisible thoughts and emotions through something visible.

What does pain look like?

Start by thinking about how you could communicate the feeling of pain to another person. Is it sharp or blunt, cold or warm, mild or severe? What image might you use to show this?

You might like to show this drawing to someone else to let them know what pain feels like to you.

What if? Choose an aspect of your experience in the first column below that you would like to draw about. Now choose any of the visible things in the second column. Feel free to add anything you like at the bottom of each column.

If you have a dice, you could also let chance decide for you!

You are ready to draw a visual metaphor: What if your _____ was/were _____: What would it be?

What if your...

- 1 health condition
- 2 physical symptoms
- 3 emotions
- 4 social relationships
- 5 healthcare experiences
- 6 Other: _____

...was/were

- 1 a creature or animal?
- 2 an object?
- 3 a place or landscape?
- 4 weather?
- 5 an activity or situation?
- 6 Other: _____

You may wish to add a written message to explain what you want to express with your visual metaphor.

7. Drawing a final piece

Do a final drawing to express whatever you like about your disease experience, using any of the elements/techniques you have used so far.

Perhaps you would like to focus on a positive aspect of your health condition. For example, has it helped you discover new things about yourself/other people?

You may wish to add a written message to explain what you are trying to express.

You might like to show your visual metaphor drawings to someone else to let them know how you what it feels like to suffer from an invisible condition.

Please consider submitting some of your drawings to the online galleries on www.drawingout.org. This will give you a wider audience and help other people understand what it feels like to live with an invisible condition like yours.

Here are some examples of drawings posted to the online galleries:



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