

Colouring reduces stress and boosts creativity, study finds

May 3 2018



Credit: University of the West of England

Taking up colouring can help reduce stress and improve creativity in adults, a study by a researcher at the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) has revealed.

Together with her fellow researchers, psychologist Dr. Nicola Holt carried out two studies with [undergraduate students](#) to study the benefits of colouring in pictures.

In the first study, 47 first-year undergraduates (36 of them female) attended a session in which they were asked to take part in reading and

colouring. They completed various psychological tests at the start of the session and after taking part in each activity.

Some participants did the reading first, while others did the colouring first. The reading consisted of a chapter on study skills, while the colouring task involved colouring in a mandala.

The researchers found that after colouring for 20 minutes participants reported being more contented, more energetic and calmer than after reading. They also reported higher levels of mindfulness (attending to what is happening in the present moment) and flow (being 'in the zone'). It did not matter whether they had coloured first or read first, and all these findings reached statistical significance.

In the second study, 51 first-year undergraduates (40 of them female) took part in the same colouring and reading activities, but completed a different selection of [psychological tests](#).

Once more, the researchers found after colouring undergraduates were calmer and more mindful, but they also found that they displayed more creative thinking and had better visual attention.

Dr. Holt, a senior lecturer in the Department of Health and Social Sciences at UWE Bristol, said: "Our first study confirmed evidence for the benefits of colouring on mood that has been found in earlier studies, but the findings on mindfulness, creativity and visual attention are new and exciting.

"It would be good to see them replicated by other researchers, but they do suggest that colouring could be an effective way of reducing stress and improving cognitive performance in students."

The findings of the research will be presented at the annual conference

of the British Psychological Society in Nottingham today (Thursday 3 May).

Provided by University of the West of England

Citation: Colouring reduces stress and boosts creativity, study finds (2018, May 3) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-05-colouring-stress-boosts-creativity.html>

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