

MindUp Challenge

I have always enjoyed expressing myself through written word but as I've got older, writing and performing poetry has become so much more than just a fun activity. It helps me explore and make sense of my internal and external worlds, allowing me to play with language in a way that has no boundaries. Poetry presents an opportunity for me to use my voice in moments when I otherwise wouldn't have the confidence to speak out. I like that poetry writing is limitless, dynamic and powerful. Whereby the power doesn't just come from the words, but also the way they are written down or spoken aloud, as well as how they interact with each other. I have learned to deviate from that same old classic rhyming pattern and have accepted that poems do NOT have to rhyme!

You might be wondering what all this has to do with mental health? For me, like with all art forms, it is the freedom to express my thoughts, feelings, observations and experiences in my own unique way, a means by which I can talk about the things that matter to me and a vehicle to communicate creatively in the hope I will move and inspire others.

Miss Shah

Example of a poem related to mental health

The owl and the chimpanzee

By Jo Camacho.

The owl and the chimpanzee went to sea
In a beautiful boat called The Mind
The owl was sensible, clever and smart
The chimp was a little behind
The owl made decisions, based on fact
And knew where to steer its ship
The chimp reacted a little too fast
And often the boat would tip
The waves would come and crash aboard
The chimp would start to cry
Large tears would roll right down his face
Afraid that he would die

The chimp and the owl would wrestle at night
When the world was quiet and still
The chimp would jump up and rock the boat
And the boat would start to fill

Then the owl stepped in and grabbed a pail
And started to empty it out
And the chimp would start to get quite cross
And would often scream and shout
The battle continued night after night
Until the chimp started to see
That if it let the owl take control
A more peaceful night it would be

What this poem teaches us: Internal conflict is normal and human. If we can learn to control our primitive, scared brain more often and listen to our inner owl, we'll enjoy a more peaceful journey.

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Step 1

Take a look at the paint chart above and choose a colour that stands out to you. Perhaps the colour itself catches your eye or you might be drawn to the name. Try not to overthink it, go with your instinct! Once you've chosen your paint colour, note down initial words or images that come to mind when you see this colour and its name. Try and engage all your senses.

What does it look/smell/feel/sound/taste like?

What emotions does it bring up for you?

Step 2

Think about how you might describe this paint colour to someone else. It could be a place, an object, a person, an experience, a state of mind, a feeling or a thought. For example, 'Princess to be' could be the feeling you get the night before your birthday, 'Lime Fizz' might be when you drink your 7UP too quickly and it goes up your nose, or it could be the name of a Rockstar in a green hat!

Step 3

Come up with some words or phrases that rhyme with or sound similar to the colour name you have chosen. You could even make up words if you like. This is an opportunity to really play around with language and have fun with it!

Step 4

Time to write your poem. Put together your words, phrases, imagery and descriptions in whichever way you like. You could be telling a story, expressing yourself through your chosen paint colour, or simply describing it. You might want to use poetic devices such as rhyme, assonance, repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia etc but you really don't have to. This activity is not about using poetic techniques or writing the perfect poem but creating a poem that means something to you. Try and go with the flow and see where your writing takes you!

Step 5

If you want to, read your poem aloud, even if it's just to yourself in private. This may feel a little strange at first if you've never done it before but performing your poem to yourself allows you to really feel the impact of your words. It's also an opportunity to have fun with the rhythm, intonation and tone. Why not try and get a dramatic pause in there too?

Step 6

If you want to share your poem with the wider school then please type it or write it up and bring it to Miss Shah in Palm class so she can display it.