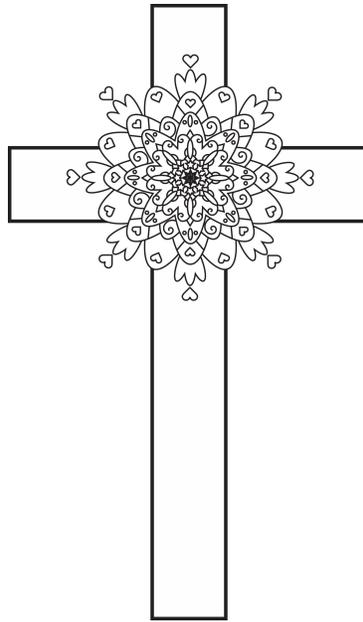


Facilitator's Group Study Guide



Graceful Transformation: A Healing Coloring Journey

By Bonnie Kelso

Graceful Transformation: A Healing Coloring Journey — A Group Study Guide

Group Study Guide for Graceful Transformation: A Healing Coloring Journey
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Introduction

Graceful Transformation: A Healing Coloring Journey was created as a result of a Creativity Class I facilitated at the Las Vegas Rescue Mission for the men and women in the Addiction Recovery Program. This book can be used by clients in any Addiction Recovery Program and at any point in the program as a tool for self-exploration. As a coloring book, it offers a non-threatening way to approach some of the complex themes of self-discovery that clients will be asked to face as they begin to transform their lives from one ruled by addiction to one that fully embraces their faith.

I created this facilitator's guide to show how this coloring book (which is available for purchase on Amazon.com) can be used in a group study format. I recommend that the group meet each week for about an hour. In between each meeting, the clients can continue to work on the coloring pages as well as journal and doodle about the various themes in their books. In each meeting, one theme will be explored on a deeper level, so that clients may better explore and share what they are going through on an emotional level. I recommend that only one topic be explored in each session for optimal focus and retention.

My hope is that through creative expression, each person who uses this book will begin to unravel the complex emotions that their addictions serve as an escape from. By using their eye-hand coordination through coloring, drawing and writing, they will experience neurological stimulation that promotes healing, relaxation, and clarity of thought. The process of coloring and creating can bring a sense of mindful awareness to the present moment where one can feel a close connection to God. This is the natural therapeutic purpose behind these creative exercises.

Day 1: Gratitude

Feelings of gratitude are best experienced when you are calm and relaxed.

To begin this first day of the group study, take some time to quietly be present with your group. Guide them to a state of relaxation by helping them to focus on their breath. Ask them to close their eyes and enter into a state of prayer with them. Allow them to feel present with all the things in their life that they are feeling gratitude for right now. Possible phrases to mention are:

Safety in this place

Camaraderie with fellow participants

Quiet time to reflect and heal

Food and shelter

An opportunity to transform my life

God's divine wisdom and guidance

Allow the group to settle into these feelings of gratitude for as long as they require. When you are ready to move forward with the session, gently guide them back to breathing deeply, and opening their eyes. Gratitude is a powerful starting place for any healing experience. It can bring out unexpected emotions. Be patient and compassionate with your group. There is no need to rush. Encourage participants to share any feelings that arise.

Read the following quote from the coloring book out loud to your group:

"Happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed.

Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude." —Denis Waitley

Ask your group to respond to this message. Here are some questions to ask your group:

- *What does it mean to be happy?*
- *What is the relationship between gratitude and happiness?*
- *How can you let more happiness into your life through thoughts of gratitude?*
- *What does it feel like to be present?*

Have your group imagine one thing that they are most grateful for right now. As they imagine this thing, are there any symbols or words that come to mind? Explain that they will express this by drawing and/or writing in the circle provided in their coloring book. Distribute crayons, markers, or pencils to your group. Encourage them to draw without judging what they draw. Remind them that it is the process and not the outcome that is most important right now.

When you try new things, you grow and expand. When you don't try, nothing changes.

Encourage your group to color for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of gratitude and encourage them to keep coloring and journaling until the next group meeting.

Day 2: Hope

Take some time to ask the group how their first week of coloring went. Are they feeling encouraged by their decision to transform their life? How did it feel when they colored and considered things to be grateful for? There are many ways people will respond to this activity. Some will feel uncomfortable, others will feel silly or childish, and others might become relaxed while drawing and coloring. Encourage the group to share their feelings about expressing themselves creatively. Encourage them to remain open to the experience, even if it feels uncomfortable.

When you face inner feelings of resistance, there is a lot to discover about where that resistance is coming from. Resistance is a significant part of any transformation.

Often when you begin to embrace feelings of gratitude, feelings of hope follow quickly after.

Prompt the group with the question: *What does hope mean to you?*

God gives us the gift of hope so that no matter what challenges we are facing, we can envision a potential for positive change.

Ask your group to consider what is inspiring positive change in their life right now? Understand where these feelings of hope are coming from. What is the source? Are they receiving support from others? Do they have a positive role model in their life? Is there a family member they care about who is relying on them to change?

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Encourage the group to color, doodle and journal for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of hope and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books until the next group meeting.

Day 3: Vulnerability

Begin by asking your group how their week went exploring the idea of hope. Ask them directly if they are feeling hopeful and why or why not? Encourage those who do not like to share to comment, even if they can only come up with one word. *Sharing requires you to be vulnerable.* Remind them that they are in a safe and supported place within the group.

Many people feel threatened when expressing themselves. They are fearful of being judged or ridiculed. Try to make the group feel comfortable with taking a chance.

Practicing vulnerability means allowing for the risk of exposure in order to grow and heal.

Encourage your group to share those uncomfortable feelings associated with vulnerability. What are they afraid will happen if they open their heart to others?

Ask the group to consider the image in the coloring book. You can guide them through the following questions to help them process the image as a metaphor for vulnerability.

- *What does it mean to have a wall around your heart?*
- *How does it feel to close off your heart to others?*
- *What does it feel like when the wall starts to break down?*
- *What can become possible when you break through this wall of protection around your heart?*

You can guide your group through a healing visualization at this point. It may help to play some calming instrumental-only meditation music.

Get comfortable. Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Imagine your heart space. Notice how it feels in this moment. Now imagine this space beginning to fill up with God's healing love. As this energy from God begins to grow, so does the space inside your heart. As it grows and heals, it can no longer be contained within the walls that try to limit it. It must break through the walls. This energy begins from within and forces its way through the barriers. As the walls begin to crumble, it can feel frightening, but at the same time you begin to feel liberated. Beyond these walls, there is the hope of transformation.

Encourage the group to color, doodle and journal for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of healing and encourage them to keep coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to explore any walls around their hearts until the next group meeting.

Day 4: Self-Beliefs

Check in with your group to see how the past week went exploring their heart walls and feelings of vulnerability. As they share try to find a connection between the fears and discomforts they are experiencing with potential limiting self-beliefs. For example, say someone is feeling a fear of rejection from being more vulnerable. The limited self-belief he/she might have about himself/herself may be related. It could be a belief that they are unworthy of understanding and compassion. Perhaps they feel they have done something that is unforgiveable. These are all limiting self-beliefs, because in the eyes of God we are all worthy of compassion and forgiveness.

As each person shares, help him/her to identify the limiting self-beliefs behind the discomfort. Common limiting self-beliefs may be:

I am unworthy.

I am unlovable.

I am unable to change.

I am hopeless.

I don't know what's wrong with me.

I don't know why I do what I do.

I can't help myself.

I am powerless.

Ask each person to choose one limiting self-belief to explore on the coloring page. Whatever the belief is, find the opposite of that belief.

If I changed each of the preceding beliefs they would read as follows:

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I am worthy.

I am lovable.

I am able to change.

I am hopeful.

I can focus on what is right with me.

I can discover healing by better understanding myself.

I am helping myself.

I am powerful.

Thoughts are powerful. If you begin to tell yourself the opposite of what you usually tell yourself, you will become empowered by these thoughts. Just as negative thoughts will sustain negative actions and outcomes, positive thoughts can create new positive actions and outcomes. Explore the power of positive thinking by writing this affirmation on the coloring sheets within the blank spaces. Work towards building the connection between what the heart feels and what the mind thinks, so that limiting self-beliefs better reflect the truth of who you really are and what you are capable of in the eyes of God.

Encourage the group to color, doodle and journal for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of healing and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to explore their new affirming self-beliefs until the next group meeting.

Day 5: Trust

Building trust is an important part of any transformation. Before you can trust others, you will have to learn to trust yourself again. The following exercise involves using your hands to explore the idea of trust.

When you were little you used your hands to explore your world. The tactile sensations of touch helped you to learn what could be trusted and what could not be trusted.

On the blank page following the Trust coloring page where it says “Doodle Your Feelings” have them trace each of their hands. Encourage them to do it with their eyes closed, so that they will rely more on their sense of touch than their sense of sight. Instruct them to trace slowly and really feel the sensation of tracing each finger. Have them notice what it feels like and any thoughts that arise while they are doing it. It’s okay if the hand tracings overlap one another. Afterwards have them share what it felt like.

Learning to trust yourself requires careful observation of your thoughts and feelings. Acting from a place of discernment helps you to build better judgment in regard to your choices. Understanding how your choices will affect yourself and others gives you a better perspective from which to make decisions in the future. When you can make better choices, you build trust in yourself.

Encourage the group to color, doodle and journal for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of healing and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to explore the theme of trust until the next group meeting.

Day 6: Detachment

Trusting yourself to make the right choice when in a relaxed mindful state is one thing. Learning to trust your choices when faced with a perceived threat requires the learned skill of detachment. Many of our poor choices are fueled by strong emotions. In order to think more clearly before we act, it is important to cultivate the skill of detaching from these strong emotions. Just a simple pause can make all the difference from escalating a negative situation to defusing it.

Guide your group through the following visualization to practice using detachment with the added association of warm and cool colors:

Get comfortable. Take a few long deep breaths. Close your eyes. Imagine a recent situation when you may have let your emotions escalate a situation. Perhaps it was an argument or conflict of some sort. It doesn't even matter who started it. What matters is how you reacted to the situation. Think of a color that best describes the feelings you are imagining as you reflect on this heated encounter. See that color now as if the whole scene is tinted with this color. Take a long deep breath. Consider now how and when you could have neutralized this incident. Perhaps it was the moment that you felt your own heart rate increase and adrenaline begin to pump through your system. The fight or flight reaction is an internal process that may not even be physically visible to others when it first begins. What would have happened if you had consciously detached from that rising feeling? What if you had walked away or closed your eyes and took a very deep breath? How might that pause have changed the outcome of the situation? Now as you are imagining the sensation of detaching, imagine a different color. This color should feel calming. Imagine this color as it fills you with a calming sensation as you let go of anger and fear. You always have a choice when it comes to conflict. You can engage through your reactive

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emotions, or you can detach and find a peaceful alternative. Take a few moments to enjoy this peaceful feeling of detachment. When you are ready, you may open your eyes.

Have your group explore this imagined scenario further by writing and drawing in the blank spaces provided on the coloring page. Colors can be used to emphasize the emotions. Oranges and reds might represent a hot temper, while greens and blues can represent the cooling effect of detachment.

Encourage the group to color, doodle and journal for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of healing and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to practice detachment until the next group meeting.

Day 7: Forgiveness

Take some time with your group to reflect on the last week's theme. Did anyone have the opportunity to practice detachment? Did they experience any conflicting feelings? Were they able to find a way to detach through breathing deeply?

Another way of practicing the sensation of letting go is through forgiveness. Ask the group what forgiveness means to them. Discuss reasons for practicing forgiveness.

How can forgiving others assist your own healing?

Are you in need of self-forgiveness?

Lead your group through the following visualization of forgiveness:

Get comfortable. Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. Imagine yourself as a heavy object like a rock. It is weighing you down and keeping you from rising to your own potential. This is the sensation of withholding forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of that painful burden. It doesn't mean that you have forgotten the pain of what happened, it means that you are detaching from it in a healthy way in order to move on with your personal journey. As you continue to breathe, feel into the sensation of letting go as you lighten your burden of withholding forgiveness. Imagine this heavy rock begin to fill with air. The heaviness begins to dissolve from the inside out as more air is brought into the space of the rock. As the rock transforms it become elastic and begins to expand with each of your own healing breaths. With each new inhalation it becomes less like a rock and more like a balloon. It becomes so light that it begins to lift from the ground. It is rising now, lighter than the air around it, as if it is filled with helium. As it

rises above the clouds you can look down and see where you came from. You can see everything, all around you in every direction and your perspective is now so much larger than it was. You are a being of light and love as you forgive yourself and others.

Have your group share what the experience of forgiveness can feel like. Have them identify a word or symbol that they can draw on their coloring page. Perhaps there is a specific person that they need to forgive in order to move forward with their own healing process. They can write their feelings about that person in the space provided.

Encourage the group to color, doodle and journal for the remainder of the group session. When time is up, close with a prayer of forgiveness and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to practice forgiveness until the next group meeting.

Day 8: Accountability

Review the past week of practicing forgiveness with your group.

When you practice self-forgiveness you automatically begin to strengthen your personal accountability by recognizing your own mistakes. Accountability is not a punishment, but rather a course of action you choose to strengthen your will.

Have your group consider what accountability means to them and how they can see it as a tool for supporting their recovery process. Ask them to consider different forms of accountability. It can show up as a personal healthy habit, a support group, a mentor, a physical activity, or a daily journal. What helps them to stay on the right course? Especially when times get tough, it will be necessary to have more than one measure of accountability in place.

Have them list all the accountability systems they can think of. Write them out on a white board or blank sheet of paper while people are calling them out. Have each person consider which ideas are most supportive to them. Is there one listed that they might be willing to explore further? Have them write all that resonate with them in the circles provided on the coloring page. Encourage them to color and write additional methods of accountability that they think of as they are coloring in the book on the following blank pages. If they think of a new one they should call it out, because it just might also resonate with another person in the group.

When time is up, close with a prayer of healing support and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to discover new ways of staying accountable until the next group meeting.

Day 9: Faith

Begin by reviewing the past week of coloring and journaling about accountability. Have the group members share any additional insights they may have gained over the week.

One of the most powerful accountability measures is your own faith. Faith in God, faith in yourself and faith in your purpose in life can become the guiding light of your transformation process.

Have each person in the group reflect on the current standing of their own faith. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion:

- *What experiences have tested your faith in the past?*
- *What experiences have increased your faith over the years?*
- *Have you ever experienced something like a miracle before?*
- *Are you open to the idea that some events in life are unexplainable?*
- *What does it mean to live a life of faith?*

Have them each explore these thoughts further in the spaces provided on the coloring page. When time is up, close with a prayer of strength and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to consider their relationship with God and faith until the next group meeting.

Day 10: Transformation

Allow the group some time to reflect on the past week and to share any feelings about faith that have come up for them. Remind them that they are on a transformative journey and that revelations sometimes come in big jumps, but at other times the changes may seem small and insignificant. Yet, each transformative step is just as valuable as the next. Think of it as a chain reaction, without one the next might not follow. A butterfly does not become a butterfly overnight. A series of seemingly insignificant changes occur over a long period of time.

Consider one small seemingly insignificant shift that has occurred recently within you. Feel immense appreciation for this tiny shift. The more you can acknowledge and recognize every small step along the way, the more you will become strengthened and empowered by your progress.

Have them consider this one recent shift and articulate it on the coloring page in the blank space of the butterfly. Give them the rest of the session to simply enjoy and relish this accomplishment as they color.

When time is up, close with a prayer of recognition and encouragement. Over the next week, ask them to notice any transformations that they become aware of, no matter how small. Ask them to write them down in their book.

Day 11: Love

Take a few minutes to allow the group to share their experiences over the week. Have them acknowledge any subtle or large shifts that they sensed in their own transformation process. When you can recognize your accomplishments, it boosts your self-esteem. Self-esteem is just another word for self-love.

The greatest reward for living a spiritual life is love. It's okay to love yourself. Sometimes this love is played down because people think it will make you selfish or egocentric. The truth is that without self-love you cannot truly experience all the other forms of love there are to experience in this life. You have to love yourself the way God loves you, unconditionally and without limits. Because you are loved so completely, does not mean that you are perfect. In fact, you have to learn to love your imperfections in order to truly love yourself. Most people who are egotistical are actually very self-critical. They are always striving to be more and more perfect in an imperfect world. When you can truly accept yourself with humility for who you are, an imperfect human being, you are on the pathway to immense self-love and fulfillment. You will be able to view every other person as your spiritual brother or sister, and your love of others will only expand and grow.

Take a few minutes to lead your group through the following self-love visualization:

Get comfortable. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Imagine being loved by God. How does it feel to be loved so completely and without conditions? You are a child of God and his love for you has no boundaries. Think of the work you have been doing over these past weeks. You have been working very diligently

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on your recovery. At this very moment, what words of encouragement do you need to hear, so that you know you are fully supported and loved. Hear these words being spoken to you now. Hear them coming from your own lips, through the loving voice of God. How does it feel to hear these words of love? How will this encouragement support your healing journey? When you are ready, open your eyes and write these words in the blank space of the heart on your coloring page.

Allow the group time to continue coloring and expressing words of appreciation. When time is up, close with a prayer of healing support and encourage them to continue coloring and journaling in their books as they continue to discover what it means to give and receive love.

Conclusion

I hope this guide has been helpful for you and your group. I encourage you to improvise as you see fit during the creative sessions. Every group is different and will have different needs, but the themes are universal enough that anyone can receive benefit from the exercises. Creative self-exploration is a journey never really ends, because there are always new ways to grow and deepen our relationship with God, our creator.

I wish you well with your own graceful transformation.

