

UNDERSTANDING ZENTANGLE®

A Zentangle® program offers a fresh approach to outreach in the library. Focusing on creative activity and self-enrichment aids the library in providing rich opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. It is an innovative and distinctive opportunity for a peaceful and enriching experience hosted in the library. Distinguish the library at your institution with a Zentangle program today.

What is Zentangle®?

Zentangle is a way of drawing simple abstract patterns in a peaceful, meditative manner. This approach to drawing is accessible to all ages and all skill levels, making it perfectly adaptable to library programs. Zentangle was developed by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas in 2004 as an artmaking technique and creative practice. They have published two books about their invention, The Book of Zentangle (2012) and The Zentangle Primer, Vol. 1 (2015) in addition to the Zentangle Mosaic app for mobile devices. They conduct Certified Zentangle Teacher (CZT) training seminars each year. Currently there are over 3,000 Certified Zentangle Teachers in the world.

Zentangles are created with an attentive mindset from an ensemble of patterns called “tangles” drawn with a black ink pen on white paper. To begin tangling, a 3 ½” square paper tile is used to create a miniature piece of art. As Linda Farmer, CZT, states, “The creativity options and pattern combinations are boundless. And anyone can do it!” Zentangle starts with an attitude of intention and thoughtfulness, breathing deeply and relaxing into the drawing process. Zentangles are completely non-representational, without depicting or describing particular places or objects. Margaret Bremmer, CZT, explains, “One of the lovely things about Zentangle is that it isn’t supposed to BE anything...Zentangle is simply beautiful patterns playing harmoniously together.” Zentangle.com states, “We believe that life is an art form and that each individual is an artist.”

How to Run a Zentangle Program

There are basic guidelines to assist students using pencil, pen and paper. Linda Farmer reminds us that, “Rulers, graph paper, stencils, or mechanical aids are not used in Zentangle. It’s just you and your pen.” Sandy Hunter, CZT, explains further, “It all depends on where your mind is when you do it. Tangling encompasses complete mental immersion in the process...keep the focus on the repetition of the patterns, the slow, deliberate drag of the nib across the paper, the ink soaking into the paper in its wake. Limiting drawing materials can inspire creativity in surprising ways. The goal is to focus on the strokes of the pen used to create the patterns, and the controlled breathing that happens along with it.” Tangling practice demonstrates the joy of unexpected insights and/or opportunities. Linda Farmer hosts a web site, tanglepatterns.com, which maintains all patterns that are endorsed for use by the Zentangle company.

To introduce participants to tangling, the instructor follows a standard sequence;

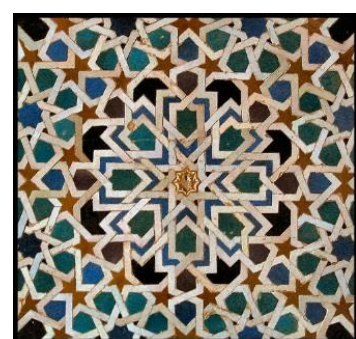
1. Soothing instrumental background music
2. Briefly introduce concept and foundation of Zentangle
3. Emphasize no mistakes, no erasers, and no right side up
4. Breathe
5. Appreciate art supplies and their portability
6. Draw a pencil line “string” and border on white tile
7. Use tangle patterns to fill in blank areas, with a black pen
8. Let go of preconceived plans or expectations
9. Enjoy the journey

When looking for someone to conduct a Zentangle session, choose a Certified Zentangle Teacher. Each CZT has trained with Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, gleaned insight and knowledge from the originators of this art method. A CZT guarantees credibility for your library along with high quality instruction. The Zentangle web site provides a list of available CZTs. In my personal experience since 2012 as a CZT, almost everyone likes tangling and gains something favorable from a tangling session. I encourage libraries to use an imaginative approach to programming and outreach although there are always budget considerations. Paying for a Certified Zentangle Teacher is worth the investment. Here is something beneficial for students, faculty, and staff that steps away from hurry, virtual reality, frenetic schedules, smartphones, and constant noise. Zentangle offers a quiet island of peace in the world and relief from stress.

BENEFITS OF ZENTANGLE®

Why is it advantageous to bring Zentangle into your academic library? This art method can bring about relaxation through quiet focus and concentration on drawing. There is no special equipment or technology required but it does depend upon good lighting and comfortable seating at a table (individual clipboards can be used if tables are unavailable). Tanglers have a way to express their creativity with visual language—even if they think they cannot draw! Participants are often delighted with their surprising innate abilities. When strategizing your events, allow 60-90 minutes for an introductory session.

Students, faculty, and staff can use their tiles as gifts of art, as an alternative to manufactured greeting cards or prints. Tiles can be compiled into a unique and delightful album or portfolio for sharing with others. Collected tiles can be incorporated into artful imaginative journals. Drawing is also an excellent and enjoyable practice for hand/eye coordination. Moreover, it buoys creative confidence and personal expression, a boon to well-being and self-esteem. Tangle patterns can be used to illustrate cross pollination of artistic themes and concepts throughout various cultures. Patterning is a universal human impulse as shown by Celtic knots, Maori tattoos, Pueblo pottery, quilting stitches, mehndi designs, the Arts and Crafts movement, Kuba weavings, Java batik, and Islamic tiles.



Zentangle offers a low-key group activity when collaborating to make a group mosaic, created by connecting each participant's tiles into one large piece at the end of a session. The group's accomplishments are organized together and viewed as a temporary tangled whole quilt. Everyone starts with the same supplies and instruction but individual differences arise quickly in how the directions are interpreted. We all work towards the same goals but each one's strengths accomplish and contribute to one unified objective. A Zentangle session offers a potential discovery of a new skill or alternative viewpoint. Tangle patterns are designed to be transparent in their construction, so that one can easily break it down into basic components. This exercise in observation and analysis allows one to deconstruct the fundamental makeup. Creative problem solving depends upon being able to see an issue or challenge from various points of view, to select the best possible solution using available resources. The practice of Zentangle provides an easy, low tech, affordable stress management vehicle while engaged in drawing. A consistent practice of tangling, such as with yoga, walking, journaling, salsa dancing, or tai chi, fosters a healthy mind/body connection in us.

Zentangle gives a special program to your library patrons—a session that promotes self expression and produces beautiful art. It supports health and well-being. And it is enjoyable and fun! In Zentangle art there are no mistakes, only opportunities. Engage your students and staff with this wonderful opportunity.

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

The Book of Zentangle by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, 2012, ISBN: 0985961406

The Zentangle Primer; Volume 1 by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, 2016, ISBN: 0985961414

Totally Tangled: Zentangle and Beyond by Sandy Steen Bartholomew, 2010, ISBN: 1574216716

Yoga for Your Brain: a Zentangle Workout by Sandy Steen Bartholomew, 2011, ISBN: 1574216988

Joy of Zentangle: Drawing Your Way to Increased Creativity, Focus, and Well-Being by Sandy Steen Bartholomew, Suzanne McNeill and Marie Browning, 2012, ISBN: 1574214276

Zen Mandalas by Suzanne McNeill, 2011, ISBN: 1574216961

Zentangle Basics 1, Expanded Workbook Edition by Suzanne McNeill, 2013, ISBN: 1574219049

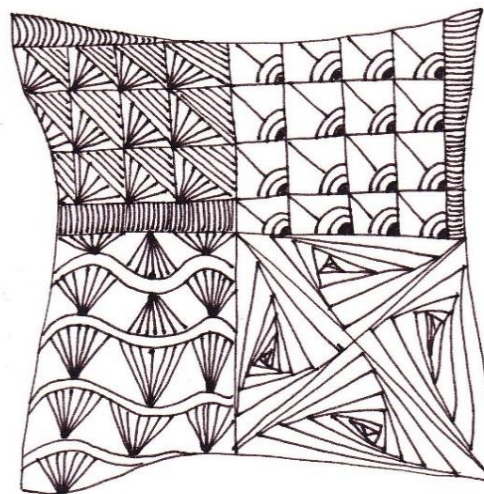
Zentangle 12, Workbook Edition by Suzanne McNeill and Cindy Shepard, 2015, ISBN: 1497200202

Zenspirations Dangle Designs Expanded Workbook Edition by Joanne Fink, 2013, ISBN: 1574219030

Zenspirations Coloring Book Abstract & Geometric Designs by Joanne Fink, 2013, ISBN: 1574218719

Pattern Play: a Zentangle Creativity Booster by Cris Letourneau and Sonya Yencer, 2014, ISBN: 0990379809

Let's Tangle: the Art of Zentangle by Kathleen Murray, 2014, ISBN: 1441314697



References:

Zentangle Method on www.zentangle.com, accessed August 9, 2016.

Understanding Zentangle by Sandy Hunter, CZT, on www.tanglepatterns.com, accessed August 9, 2016.

What is a Zentangle? By Linda Farmer, CZT, on www.tanglepatterns.com, accessed August 9, 2016.

Jane Reiter, retreadart.com / Michigan Academic Library Association Annual Conference
Poster Session on Bringing Zentangle® to Your Library / May, 2018

