

## Coloring Outside of the Book

I was new to the adult coloring book craze. I've always encouraged creative expression in my clients, believing in its powerful role in the healing process. Music, dance, art (yes, coloring) are all outlets that I feel are important and that I have embraced for years. So when I learned about this "movement" and all its supposed benefits, e.g. achieving bliss, relaxation, etc., I was excited to buy a coloring book for adults!

And then I was really disappointed. And frustrated. And confused. Was I doing it "wrong" ?? Overthinking it? I was coloring myself crazy! I decided to buy a different kind: maybe if I colored landscapes instead of geometric patterns, that would help. Well, it did—a little. I still wasn't enjoying it, much less experiencing a state of relaxation. So one day I just started coloring. Then doodling. Then drawing with my non-dominant hand. These were all the things that I used to do! This was fun...relaxing and stress-relieving. For me, that was the key: throw out the book and let my own creativity come out to play.

In recovery, freedom comes when we learn that it's okay to break the rules—especially rules that are borne out of perfectionism, people-pleasing, and performance. Aren't those three elements part of the main focus when it comes to eating disorders? Experimenting with the adult coloring books helped me relearn and rediscover this. Perhaps most importantly, I was reminded that what works for one person doesn't necessarily work for the next person.

And that's okay.

-Susan Landry, LPC