

THE ART OF HOPING

13 ways you (and your children) can use art to have fun, express emotion and receive from Jesus

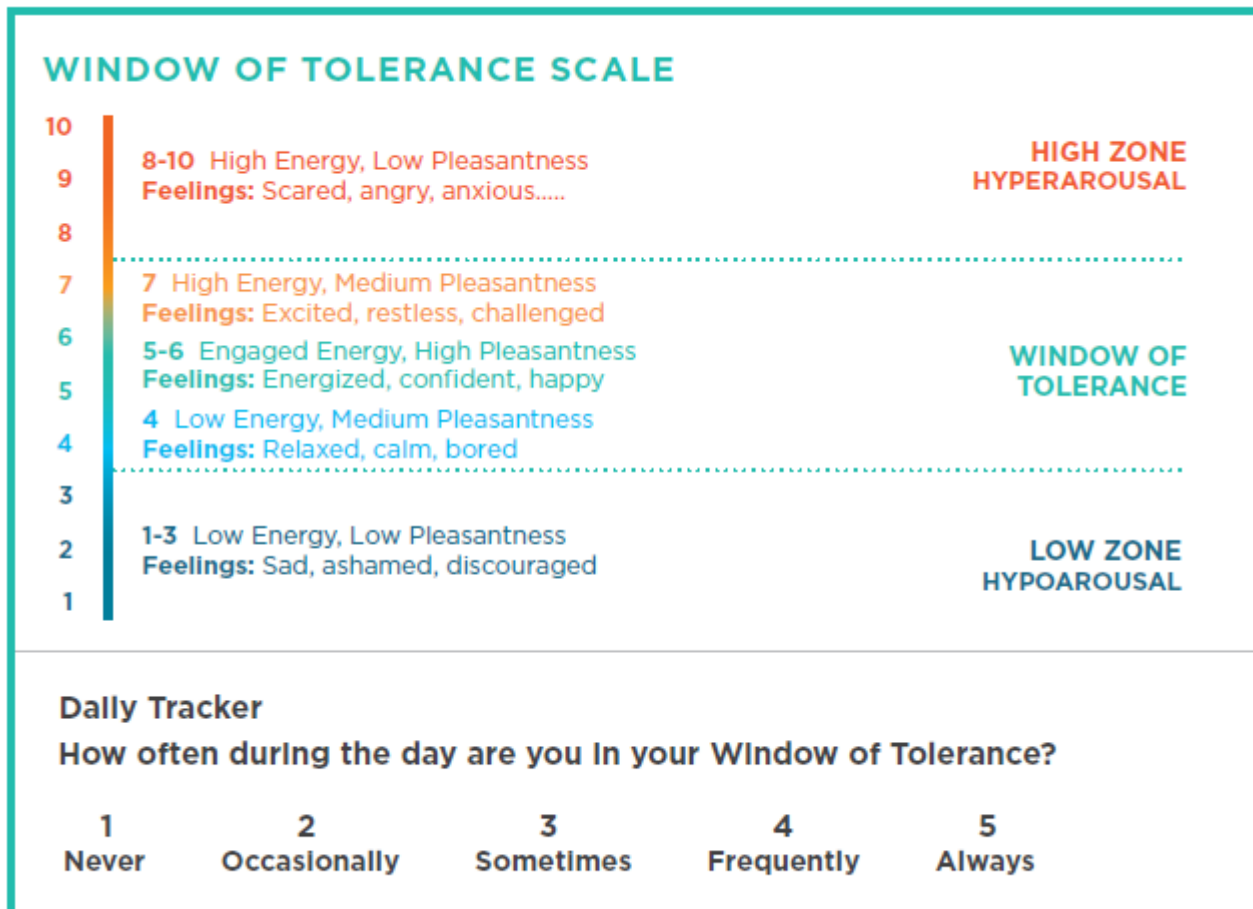


**"COME TO ME, ALL OF YOU WHO ARE WEARY AND
CARRY HEAVY BURDENS, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST."**

-Jesus

#1. Window of tolerance

This is a way of building emotional awareness and healthy responses to the emotions that we identify - **conscious of them but not flooded by them.**



Just pick the color that first comes to mind as you read through the scale. Using this on a regular basis is like taking your emotional temperature. Tracking this will help you **identify triggers** and manage your emotions and meet Jesus in the midst of them instead of your emotions controlling you.

On an average day, the goal is to remain in the “window of tolerance”, but undoubtedly, life will throw curve balls and our brains will take over with a fight response (high zone arousal) or flight/freeze response (low zone arousal). This is healthy and natural, but unhealthy to remain there for long periods of time.

And as we find ways to bring ourselves back into the window of tolerance from either extreme, we are creating

a wider and wider WoT (Window of Tolerance), a skill otherwise known as **resilience**.

It’s helpful to do these check-ins with someone else in your community. If you find yourself out of the window of tolerance often, talk to someone!

REFLECTION:

On the next page, you’ll find a page with some suggestions for how to widen your window of tolerance, but you know yourself best so I would encourage you to fill in the blanks with things you know cheer you up or calm you down.

#1. Window of tolerance, cont.

HIGH ZONE

(emotions: scared, angry, anxious)

Why do I feel this way? Shift or stay?

- Deep, slow breathing
- Slower physical exercises (such as pilates or walking)
- Calming music
- Scripture
- _____
- _____
- _____

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

(emotions: excited, restless, challenged, energized, confident, happy, relaxed, calm, bored)

Why do I feel this way? Shift or stay?

- Hobbies
- Learn a new skill
- Write a letter
- Journal
- _____
- _____
- _____

LOW ZONE

(emotions: sad, ashamed, discouraged)

Why do I feel this way? Shift or stay?

- Deep, slow breathing
- Your favorite upbeat music
- Get outside for a brisk walk or run
- Video call a safe person
- Walk mindfully and notice nature
- Drink water, eat something healthy
- _____

#2. When I can't tell what I'm feeling.

We store and feel emotions in our body. Learning how emotions manifest in our body is a way to build emotional awareness.

Materials needed: Colored pencils/markers, outline of a body (below), journal and pen if desired.

Light a candle, brew some hot tea, put on some soft music... whatever is relaxing for you.

Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes or look down and take a few deep breaths. Four counts in. Four counts out.

Take a few minutes and do a full body scan. What does it feel like to live in your body? Starting at your feet, notice any sensations you have in your feet. Do they feel heavy? Light? Is there pain? Anything else?

Move up one muscle group at a time, your legs, hips, belly, shoulders, arms... and don't forget your heart. Is it beating quickly? Irregularly?

Move up through your neck and head, is your jaw tight? Forehead scrunched?

Open your eyes and on your body outline, with your medium of choice, start to color what it feels like in your body. Use color (if it's helpful there is a color scale on the next page) and shape (e.g.. blue fog around your heart, chains, black weights on your feet, red tornado in belly, singing heart, sunny head, etc.)

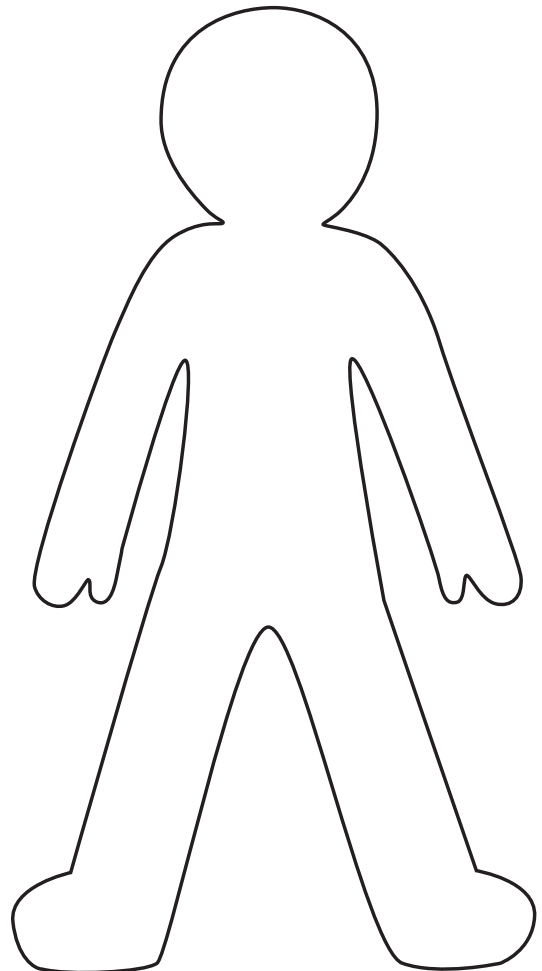
REFLECTION:

- What did you notice in your body?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Where am I carrying emotions/burdens in my body?

PRAYER:

Hold out your hands with your palms upturned as an outward expression of release. A few deep breaths.

Jesus, thank you for being with me. I surrender my burdens to your loving care. I want to exchange my heaviness for your lightness. I release the [fill in with your own emotions] that I feel in my body. I receive Your ease and lightness. I release my own burdens and I receive what You have for me instead.



#3. When I can't shake what I'm feeling.

Engaging our right brain helps us simply notice our emotions and stop manipulating, denying, judging, suppressing or otherwise over-analyzing them.

Materials needed: Paper (or use grid below), colored pencils/markers/watercolors or medium of choice, journal and pen if desired.

Emotion #1: _____

Emotion #2: _____

Find a comfortable sitting position, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Is there a certain emotion (or two or 5) that is/are closest to the top? One that has been playing on repeat in your head? One that you just can't shake? Use the emotions wheel on the next page to help you identify emotions if you need it.

Use the space above to name it and then use your preferred medium/colors and start to draw lines and shapes. You may need to get a bigger paper to express big emotions.

PRAYER:

Jesus, thank you for meeting me in the middle of my emotions. Is there anything you would like to speak to me through them?

Take some time to breath deeply and listen.

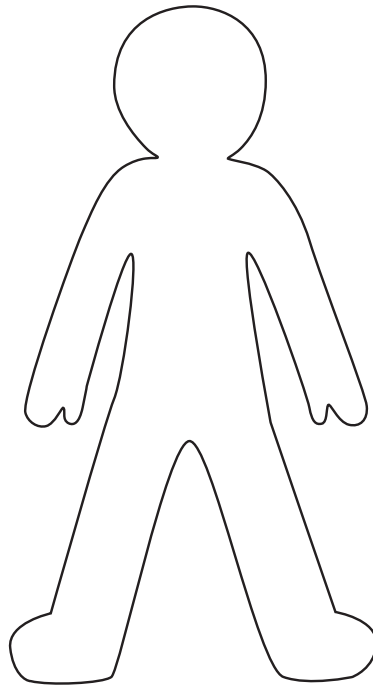
REFLECTION:

- What did it feel like to express emotions visually?
- Did anything surprise you? Notice anything new?
- What did God speak to you?

#4. When I am afraid or lonely.

Engaging our right brain is another way to allow God access to our imagination and heart and ultimately reframe how we think and live.

Materials needed: Paper (or use sheet below), colored pencils/watercolors, journal/pen if desired.



PRAYER:

Christ with me,
 Christ before me,
 Christ behind me,
 Christ in me,
 Christ beneath me,
 Christ above me,
 Christ on my right,
 Christ on my left,
 Christ when I lie down,
 Christ when I sit down,
 Christ when I arise.

Settle into a comfortable position. Light candles or play soft music. Read this prayer several times slowly. Visualize the reality of God surrounding you. You can also meditate on Psalm 91 and Psalm 139:7-12 as you enter into this exercise.

Using paint or colored pencils start to fill in the area within you, then under you and above you and to your right and left. You can use solid color or get creative with shapes and lines and representations of His character that are meaningful (fence of protection, umbrella, rock or ground underneath).

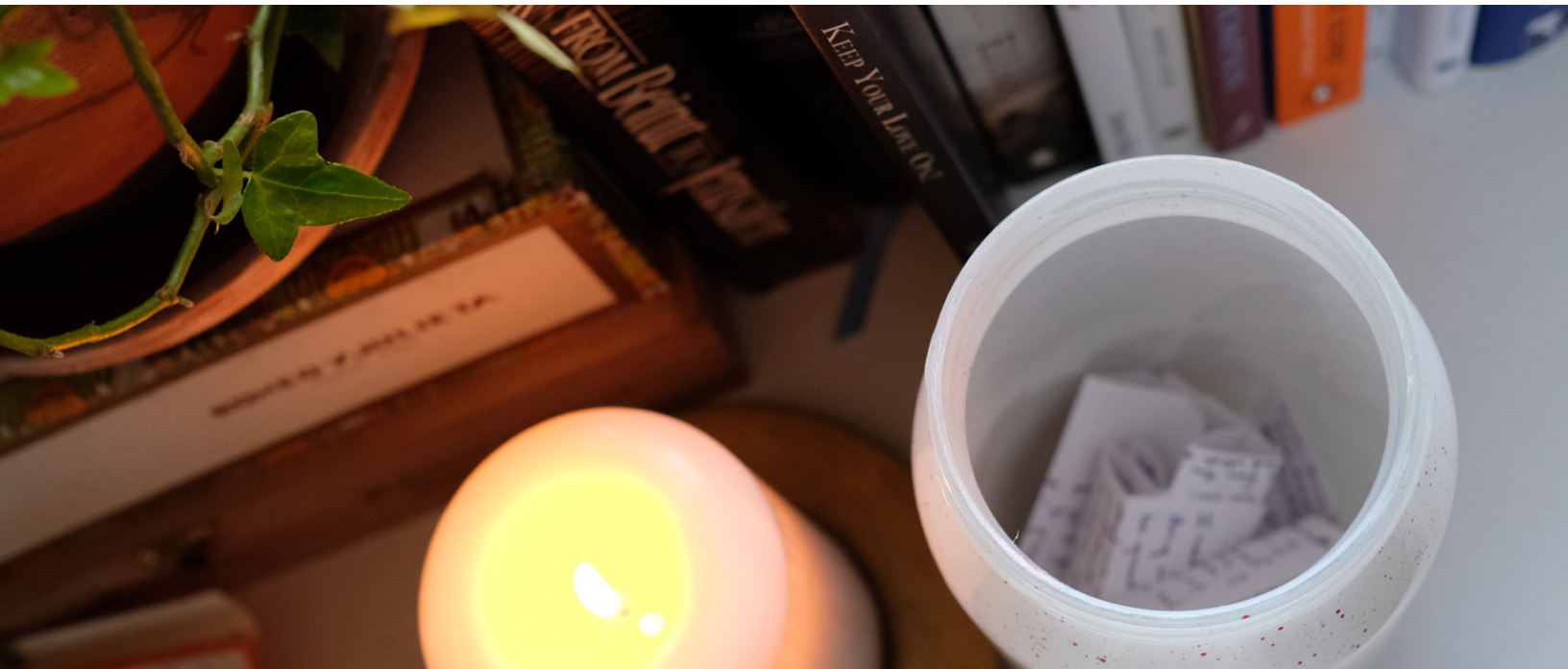
REFLECTION:

- What does it mean to you to be surrounded by Christ?
- Which fears did Jesus address through this exercise?
- In what ways are you feeling encouraged?

#5. Laments and thanksgivings.

Use this exercise as a reminder that God cares deeply about the whole gamut of our emotions. He holds all our tears in a bottle and He also loves it when we notice His good gifts.

Materials needed: Two glass jars, small pieces of paper, a few markers or pens.



*You keep track of all my sorrows.
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.*
Psalm 56:8

Invite your children to write down (as you do it as well) something that they have lost, something they are sad about, something that makes them feel like the world isn't right anymore. Put all these papers in a jar, picturing it as God's jar where He keeps them for us.

Then invite them to think about the amount of time they have been quarantined for (or the last week) and think about times that they laughed or felt happiness or saw something good happen in the world. Write those down and put them in the other jar.

PRAYER:

Jesus, thank you for being with us. Thank you for seeing and knowing our pains and sorrows. We give them to you. They are too heavy for us to carry. Could You carry them for us?

And thank you for the many ways that You have comforted us. We receive Your love through these things.

REFLECTION:

Come back to this exercise often, even once a day. This is a great way to keep your burdens seen/heard/held and your joys multiplied.

BONUS:

Paint the jars with your kids. Explain the concept and let them come up with creative ways to express God's care and goodness to us on the outside of the glass.

#6. All the pieces of our lives.

Use this exercise as a reminder that God sees the big picture and is making all the seemingly pointless things into a beautiful mosaic.

Materials needed: Construction paper, large poster board, pencil, scissors, glue.



Decide which picture you will make (fish, sunflower, bird, sailboat, stained glass, tons of ideas online) and sketch out the basic outline on your poster board. Or let the kids go freestyle and see what happens!

Cut little squares out of the construction paper. Working together from the picture, fill in the poster board, putting glue on the back of the construction paper piece and gluing it to the appropriate place.

REFLECTION:

Read Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28.

Notice the pile of random bits of paper, some jagged, some that aren't our favorite colors, some that seem too

small to be any good. If there are specific examples of recent hard or happy events, have the children name some of them.

Talk about the fact that God can be taking all the little pieces of our lives, the really hard things, the boring things, the painful things and is making something beautiful.

Hang it up in your house as a reminder of God's good plan and His faithfulness to bring it about.

#7. Storytelling stones

These little elements can be used to tell stories and express emotion in third person.

Materials needed: Small rocks, acrylic paints and/or markers



Have fun gathering rocks together. You may have to help/ do the painting, but get input from them and include different elements of normal life (church, house, car, air-plane, bible, trees, refugee tents, unicorns, etc.) and then some faces expressing different emotions (you could use emoticons as a visual guide) - smiling, laughing, crying, worried, scared, angry.

Take turns using the rocks to tell stories. Have fun with this! They can be ridiculous, insightful or both.

REFLECTION:

Feel complete freedom to just enjoy each other and hearing stories from imagination or real life.

If there is a moment that you feel could go deeper, ask these simple questions.

- What was this child feeling (pointing to a rock)?
- Why were they feeling that way?
- Have you ever felt that way?
- Are you in this story? Where?

#8. Potato Stamps

Just for fun! Use it for those long afternoons of shut-in. If you're able, spread some cheer to the neighbors with handmade cards. Or stamp a large sheet of paper and use it as wrapping paper.

Materials needed: Potatoes, paring knife or cookie cutters, acrylic paint, cardstock or a large sheet of brown paper



Cut the potato cleanly in half, dry the exposed part and then draw a design (so many more ideas online) on it. Using the knife, cut away a 1/4" of the exposed potato everywhere EXCEPT the design. You should have a raised design, like a rubber stamp, when you're done.

Or you use a cookie cutter by pressing it into the exposed potato and then cutting away everything outside the design.

Paint the stamp part or dip it into the paint and then stamp away!! Enjoy!



#9. Cupcake factory

Just for fun! Use it for those long afternoons of shut-in. If you're able, spread some cheer onto your neighbors doors.

Materials needed: construction paper, scissors, glue



Cut out all the options for cupcakes and lay them on the table, then let your children build their own versions of cupcakes (or ice cream cones, or long caterpillars, etc.) to their hearts content.



#10. Coffee filter fun

If you live in a country that is blessed enough to have American style coffee filters that don't have to be rationed, have fun with these!

Materials needed: coffee filters, watercolor paint (in the plastic trays for kids) or water-based markers, pipe cleaners, cotton balls



RAINBOW:

Use water-based markers and spray with water, or drop watercolor paints onto the filter if you have them. Start in the center and paint circles outwards - purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, red. Wait until dry then cut in half and you have two rainbows. You can glue cotton balls onto the bottom if you have them!

TIE-DYE:

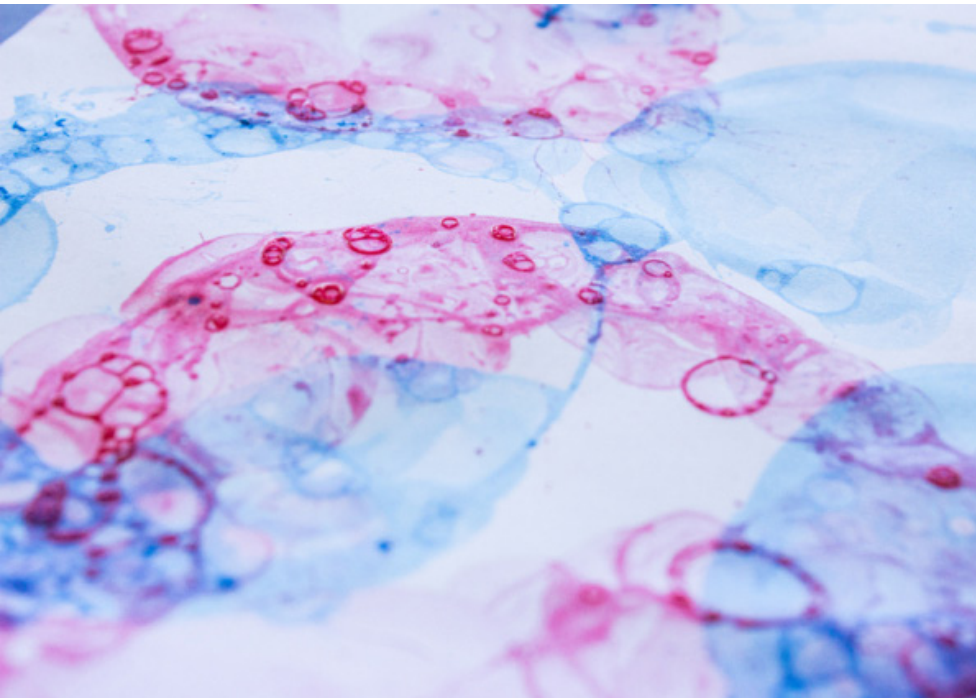
Using water-based markers, color them any way you'd like. For the tie-dye effect, it's best when you use lots of different colors. Fold them in half and then spray with a little water. Leave it until its dry and then unfold and see how the colors mixed!



#11. Bubble Prints

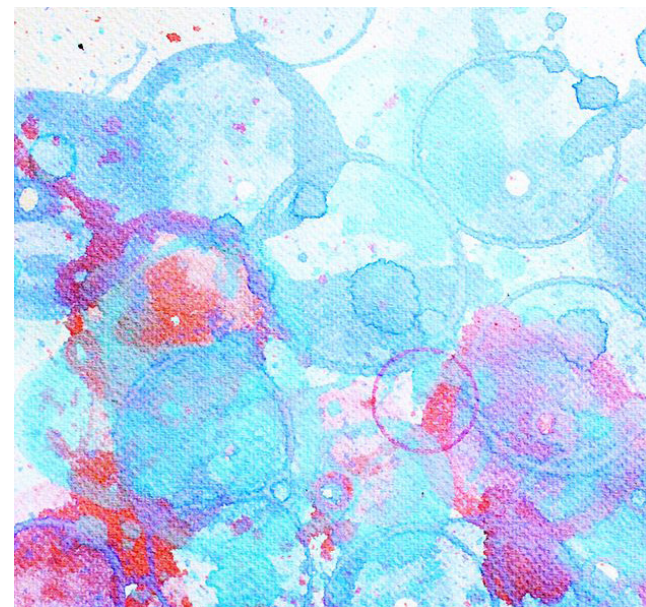
Another fun idea for card making, whether it's for your neighbor next door, grandparents across the ocean, or a year's supply of cards in the drawer.

Materials needed: medium-sized bowl, water, tempera paint, straw, dish soap, heavy weight paper



Fill the bowl with a 1:2:2 mixture of water, tempera paint, and dish soap. Mix well. Place a straw in the dish soap mixture and blow until bubbles appear and pop up over the rim of the bowl. Place a sheet of paper on top of the bowl so that the bubbles make a pattern on the paper. Repeat as many times as you like. Try blowing softly, then harder. Try layering different colors on the same paper.

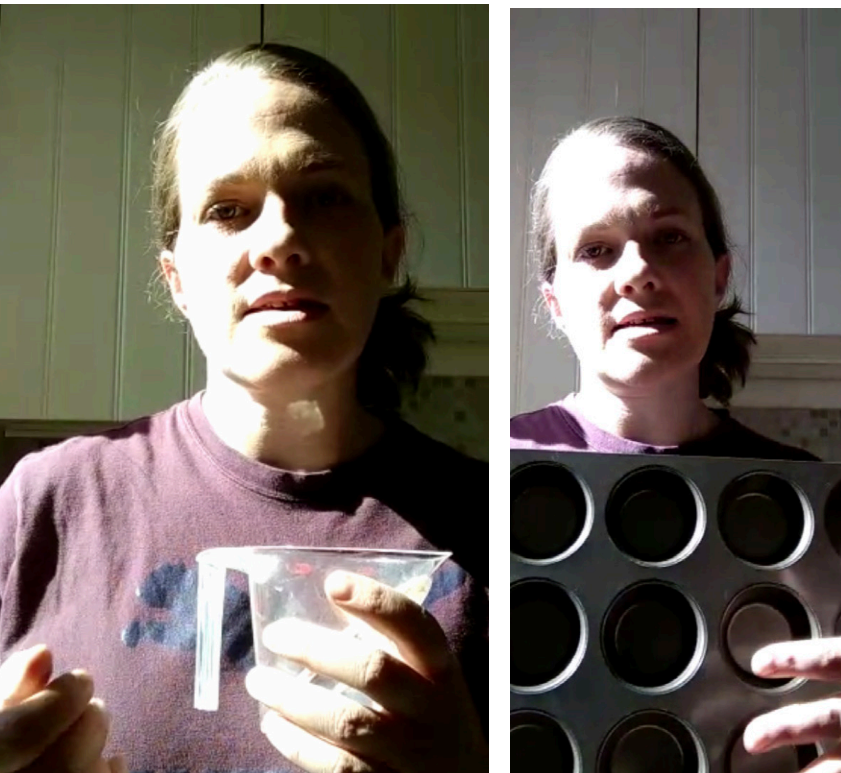
Have fun!



#12. Make your own finger paint!

Maybe you wish you had stopped by the art store? Maybe you're running out of supplies? Mix up a batch of this homemade paint!

Materials needed: 1/2 cup flour, 1 T salt, saucepan, mixing spoon, water, food coloring



Combine flour and salt in saucepan, add 3/4 cup of cold water. Mix until smooth. Add 2/3 cup boiling water and set on stove to boil until the mixture is thick and about the texture of acrylic paint. Divide the paint up in a muffin tin (a few tablespoons in each hole). Add food coloring as desired!

#13. Homemade Butter

If you've never made butter, it's so simple and it's amazing to watch the cream separate and become two different things.

Materials needed: glass jar with tight-fitting lid, heavy whipping cream, marble (optional)



Pour cream into jar, filling about a quarter of the way full. If you have a marble, clean it and drop it in to help speed up the process (but not necessary).

Start shaking! Shake continuously until the cream divides into butter and “buttermilk”. This can take anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes. You’ll know its done when it comes together and clunks about in the jar in one piece.

Scoop it out and pat it into a bowl or mold. Use the buttermilk for other recipes!

RESOURCES:

- firstaidarts.org (using art as trauma healing training, thanks for the window of tolerance activity)
- thirstyforart.com (art therapist with tons of stuff on youtube)
- paper-and-glue.com (crafts for kids)
- ourkidthings.com (more crafts for kids)
- Nanny Charity (a walking supply of crafts for kids)
- Neighbor Kate (Liza's art partner on location - aka the traveling circus)
- thejuntoinstitute.com (thanks for the emotions wheel)
- STRAHL-ENGLISCH (thanks for the color/emotions scale)

Created by Liza and Elly.