

Giving and Taking

Sharing Joy Through Painted Rocks

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Time Needed: 1-2 hours

Arts Focus: Mindfulness

Age Range: 5-8

Mini-Lesson Description:

In this lesson, learners will use the language of color to create encouraging and expressive designs on found rocks while also learning how to share positive messages with themselves and others.

Key Concepts:

Mindfulness; Design; Expression; Public Art; Community; Generosity; Observation.

Materials Needed/Prep:

- Rocks from outside
- Acrylic craft paint or paint pens
- Paint brushes
- Paper plate to protect surfaces from paint

Step-by-Step:

1. Organize a nature walk with the learner(s) and turn it into an “I Spy” game of paying attention to what’s in the environment. Guide the learner(s) to notice colors around them, and prompt them to reflect on how various colors make them feel.
2. During your nature walk, have the learner(s) collect three smooth rocks about the size of your palm.
3. Once the rocks are gathered, explain to the learner(s) that the rocks are going to be used as a gift. Talk to them more about the concept of gift giving, caring for community, and art that is shared for all people in public spaces. If there is a sculpture or public artwork nearby, walk to it and use it as an example to talk about public art.
4. Wash the rocks and set them outside to dry or dry with a paper towel.
5. While the rocks are drying, ask the learner(s) to remember what they saw on the nature walk that made them feel happy. Learner(s) can write or describe aloud a list of their ideas.
6. Assist the learner(s) in selecting a combination of images and colors from either the nature walk or their own imagination that makes them happy. (i.e. stars + blue, rainbow + pink, bubbles + orange).
7. Help the learner(s) paint the rock with a single, base layer of color. Let the base color layers dry, then have the learner(s) paint their chosen image on top. Repeat for other rocks.
8. Ask the learner(s) to take one painted rock to keep as a gift for themselves. Then, go for a walk and let the learner(s) place their other rocks in a public space to bring joy to others. If you visited a public artwork during the nature walk, you can make a connection between that experience and the rock as a gift to be enjoyed by all.

Variations and Next Steps:

- Help the learner(s) write a joyful word alongside the image on the rock with a permanent marker.
- For younger learners, the rocks can be painted with single colors and left as is without images. This is also be a great opportunity for learner(s) to experiment with color mixing.
- Continue to create more painted rocks and install a river of joyful rocks outside of your home for others to enjoy, contribute to, or take.

Watch a video of this Creative Start Mini-Lesson and find more at: <https://www.arts.wa.gov/creative-start/>