

7 Benefits of Doodling You Might Not Know

By John D. Moore, PhD



Do you doodle? I sure do. Just the other day, I found myself drawing out hexagons on the edge of a notebook. It happened during a meeting that I had trouble tuning into.

Should I feel guilty? Not really. It turns out that doodling is more than a mental distraction. According to research conducted by psychologist Robert Burns, doodles are a form of art therapy (Jaret, 1991).

What are doodles?

At their core, doodles are non-verbal messages that surface from the unconscious mind. Typically, they symbolize feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in visual form.

Burns discovered that guys typically draw geometric shapes, like squares and circles – whereas women sketch out faces. I like to think of this activity as a window into a person's internal landscape.

While this activity often gets a bad rap, there are real benefits linked to creativity, better learning and performance.

Here's seven that might surprise you.

1. Outlet for creativity

You probably already knew this one but it needs to be mentioned. Doodling offers your mind an opportunity to express itself in a creative way. Every line drawn or sketched should be thought of as an extension of your artistic side.

2. Great for concentration

In a [study](#) published in 2009, investigators discovered that doodling while listening to someone on the phone may have benefits.

The research revealed that participants were able to recall 29% more material afterward compared to those who just took notes (Andrade, 2009).

3. Promotes catharsis

One of the major main benefits of art therapy as a wellness vehicle is its unique ability to promote catharsis.

When you doodle, you help your mind tap into deeply held emotions and bring them to the surface. Over time, this promotes psychological homeostasis, much in the same way that [dream therapy](#) does.

4. Encourages humor

We all need a good laugh from time to time. This is particularly true when we're feeling blue. That's where doodling comes into play.

When you draw (particularly faces), you allow your mind's humorous side to become activated. Have you ever noticed the exaggerated features you sketch out of a boss, family member or friend are kind of funny?

That's because you're tapping into your brain's right frontal lobe; the mind's "funny bone" (ABC News, 2016).

5. Useful for anxiety

One of the amazing benefits of doodling is its ability keep you focused on the here and now. When you draw out mental imagery from the unconscious, you are engaging in a useful activity for anxiety.

That's why it's OK to doodle just before a test or job interview. Ask yourself which is healthier: Stressing about the outcome or drawing something random?

6. Helps solve problems

For reasons that we still don't fully understand, doodling (an extension of art therapy) helps to generate fresh ideas.

Because this activity distracts folks from focusing on a given problem, it allows the unconscious mind to kick it around and inspire solutions.

If you are a doodler and have ever experienced a spontaneous "ah ha" moment, doodling may be part of the reason why it happened.

7. Encourages self-discovery

When you draw out random faces, lines, and shapes, you allow an opportunity for self-discovery. By assessing some of what you sketch through mindful reflection, you learn more about the inner you.

Rather than judge your doodles for quality, it's better to examine them for meaning. Often, you'll find they symbolize abandoned parts of the self.

Conclusion

Doodling is more than a pastime. It's a form of art therapy that helps to channel your essence.

The next time someone suggests doodling is a waste of time, remember the seven benefits shared here.

References

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Described as folksy and down to earth, **Dr. John Moore** infuses current events and pop culture into his posts as a way of communicating wider points on issues related to wellness and goal attainment. His work has been featured in nationally syndicated media, including Cosmo, Men's Fitness and CBS Market Watch. He is a consultant to a number of Fortune 500 companies and institutions of Higher Learning. Dr. Moore is author of *Confusing Love with Obsession* and Editor in Chief at: [Guy Counseling](#).

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