

EMOTIONAL COLOURS



Understanding colours

Colour can affect our mood and behaviour in conscious and subconscious ways. It can be used as a tool to help us understand the world around us, and it can support our response to our experiences. Colour can provide a way to understand and manage the psychological, emotional and energetic dimensions of our interaction with the world. Understanding colour and its subtle influence can be a way to help us release tension, stabilise the mind and become grounded. Colour can therefore be a great support to help us deal with eco-anxiety.

Colour psychology

Colour psychology is the study of how colours and shades affect human behaviour. It looks at the obvious and not so obvious influence of colour on our perceptions, and recognises its interconnection with all our senses. Of course, sight is the key sense involved in colour perception. Paying attention to colour also influences the other four senses - it can help us focus and heighten our range of sensations. In this way, colour can help us understand and process emotions in a deeper way. Colour can be very powerful as a tool for therapy.

Colours and emotions

Colour can create an emotional response. It differs from one person to another as it is dependent on our background, education, the location and social context in which we live. As such, colours convey different meanings and symbols. The same colour can have very different associations even within the same culture at any given time. These differences happen because our view of the world occurs on an individual, cultural and universal basis. Colour symbolism is also context-dependent and influenced by changes over time.

RED

excitement
love
strength
energy
passion

BLUE

trust
competence
peace
loyalty
intellect

YELLOW

happiness
energy
creativity
good times
cheer

GREEN

quality
nature
healing
freshness
growth

BROWN

austerity
ruggedness
outdoors
longevity
friendly

ORANGE

confidence
success
sociability
bravey
friendly

PINK

sincerity
sophistication
sweet
compassion
playful

PURPLE

ambition
spirituality
royalty
luxury
faith

Red as an example

As a primary colour, red can be associated with blood, war and passion. It can be used to convey danger and warning. It has a rich symbolic heritage, being associated with good luck in China and passionate love in Western culture.

Emotionally, we respond to the colour red with excitement, arousal and energy. Red can help us identify positive and negative feelings as it covers emotions as diverse as feeling angry, playful, scared and happy.

Observe

What colours hold positive meaning for you?

What emotions do you feel when you think of that colour?

The energetic body

Colour can help us understand the relationship between humans and nature. Social sciences and spiritual, mystical traditions alike have looked at colour, its symbolism and effects on the body and mind in this way. Many contemporary belief systems have rich narratives around colour that help us to understand ourselves and the world around us - as well as to represent and celebrate it. Colour has also been used as a way to track the different cycles and essences of the body and as a healing tool

South East Asian spiritualities in particular Tantra, Ayurveda and Yoga use colour to discuss the energetic body. Life force, prana or energy moves through the body, concentrating and accumulating in certain parts and creating blockages in others. This system is linked to the endocrine system and the spinal column, therefore relating to hormones we release such as adrenaline, insulin, estrogen and progesterone.

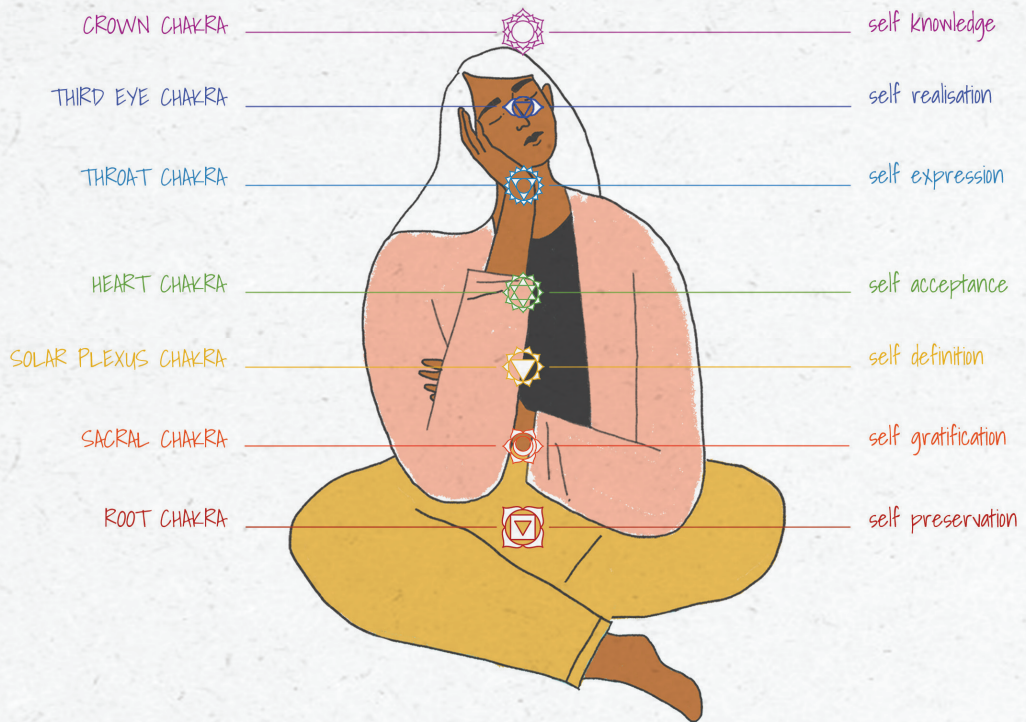
Note: Other traditions use a similar system of connecting energy paths around the body, including Chinese Medicine and its meridian system used in acupuncture where colour plays an important role to diagnose a person.

The chakras

According to these South East Asian spiritual belief systems, these energetic centres are called chakras. They are represented as seven swirling wheels where matter/the outside world and consciousness/our inner world meet. Located from the bottom of our spine to the crown of the head (ascending upward), they are always active. They monitor things such as light, warmth, sound, smells, comfort and discomfort. They relate to our five senses, to our intuition and spirituality. Even if we do not believe in these traditions, chakras offer us a creative tool to once again interconnect colour to our human experience.

Each Chakra is associated with a colour, a part of the body, a health connection, an emotion, a central concept, a sense, a gland, music and even a zodiac sign. In this way, chakras can be another tool in our colour therapy kit.

THE 7 CHAKRAS

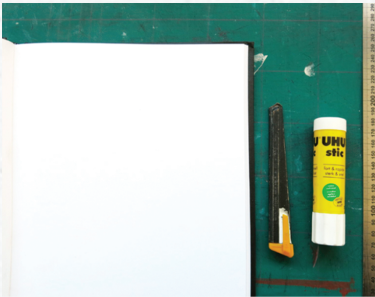


Continuing with the colour red, red is the colour of the first chakra: our root chakra. Sitting at the base of our spine, it is connected to our sense of belonging, home and safety. Its health connection is the legs and the base of our body (our ability to survive) and the hormonal gland is the adrenal gland (our fight or flight response). Associating these different characteristics and attributes to different emotions and experiences that might be hard to articulate can give us a tool to creatively express ourselves and story tell in a playful and healing way.

Colour Composition

1.

Prepare your cutting tools, glue and journal



2.

Grab some old mags or recycle some coloured paper



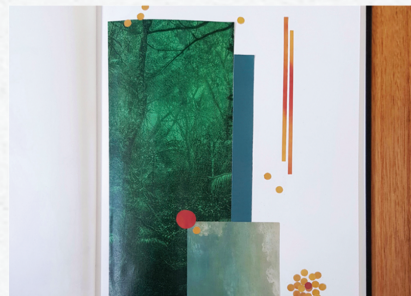
3.

Cut out a selection of different blocks of colour



4.

Now create! Shape, add, adjust + paste



Journaling

In your journal, investigate the colour that is predominant in your colour activity or that you found has a strong positive effect on you.

Research its symbols and meanings. When was that colour discovered? Who invented its name? Does it hold a special meaning in your Community? In the part of the world you live in?

Search through your belongings and list everything you own with that colour. What do you discover about your habits?



Collect paper, tickets, receipts, packaging of the same colour and glue them in your journal to form a new composition.

Write down all the words and expressions you can find that include the colour name.

Tell where you have seen that colour, who wears it and how, what happened? How does it make you feel?

Write down what the colour smells like for you and then do an online search to compare. Draw how the colour feels, sounds, tastes like.

Activity for Children

Materials needed:
colour material such as pencils,
multicoloured paper or fabric (+scissors),
paint, markers, pastels, etc and paper

Activity

Children and teenagers alike may experience complex emotions that are difficult for them to verbalise. This activity can help them identify what is happening inside them which is crucial for their recovery and to support their self-care skill development. This activity can also be used to explore a positively affecting colour.



The adult activity can be adapted to a younger audience. Collecting things of the target colour could be an especially fun thing for them to do.

Step 1 - Discussion

Ask the children to name the main feelings we all experience (sad, angry, tired, happy). Another way of helping children to label feelings is by using the simple categories of sad, glad (happy), bad (guilty), mad. If they are older they will understand more nuanced feelings such as troubled, shocked, confident, or joyful. As they name each emotion, write down a list on a white board.

Step 2 - Identifying feelings

Option 1: Using the colour material provided, ask them to create a heart shape /circle onto which they will draw the expression that matches their feeling that day.

Option 2: Provide some magazines or other materials that depict different feelings. Invite children to cut out up to four pictures, then choose the one that best shows how they are feeling today.

Step 3 - Role Play

Similar to a role play activity, ask a child to mimic with their face and body what she/he drew and let the other children (or yourself!) guess what this feeling is.

Step 4 - More Talking

Perhaps this feeling could have been mimicked differently? If so, point out that each person expresses their emotions differently, there is no right or wrong.

Discuss what to do when this feeling is experienced. In case of anxiety, for example, taking 3 deep breaths and focusing on the contact of their feet on the ground helps reduce mental noise; talking to a trusted adult can also be encouraged.

