



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 136 – Simple Mindful Art Practices with Cynthia Hauk
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[00:00:05] Kathy Robinson: Welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

[00:00:30] Kathy: Hello and welcome. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

Today, I'm joined, once again, by Cynthia Hauk, teacher and founder of MindfulCreativeMuse.com. During this discussion, Cynthia shares a favorite mindful art practice you can do anywhere, along with practical advice on how to incorporate these practices into your life with ease.

And now onto the show. I hope you find these practices helpful.

[00:01:08] Kathy: Once again, I'm joined by Cynthia Hawk, teacher and founder of MindfulCreativeMuse.com. Welcome back, Cynthia.



[00:01:16] Cynthia Hauk: Thanks for having me.

[00:01:18] Kathy: I'd love to explore one of your mindful art practices. Could you lead us through one of your favorites?

[00:01:24] Cynthia: Yeah, absolutely. The last year or two I've been really interested in and playing around a lot with what I like to call mindful drawing practices, and even drawing the breath practices. Usually, you can do these with just a pen and paper. So I love it because you can be on a lunch break or you could be waiting at the doctor's office. You don't need to have art supplies on hand. It's really simple and easy.

The other thing that I really love about these practices is that it incorporates our breath with the marks we're making on the page. So I find that it's a really simple and effective way to immediately see in front of us what's happening with our breath. And we don't have to change it, but I find that naturally, our breath will start to change as we slow down with making those marks. So I really love that.

There's so many different ones that I have around drawing the breath. One of the simplest practices that I feel really connected with is just with having that gauge of noticing our breath.

Usually, I'll start with a neutral place on the page, having my pen be right just in the center on the left-hand side of the page, because we're going to work from left to right, in this case, if you're left-handed you can always work in the opposite.



But the first thing is to just notice your breath. As your pen is resting in the center part of the page, as you inhale, whenever your next natural inhalation is, you can allow your pen to begin moving up on the page. Then as you exhale naturally, you will allow your pen to move down on the page.

What I like to notice is as you're inhaling, there's this natural pause that starts to happen at the top of our breath. And then there's a natural pause that happens at the end between inhaling and exhaling, and then exhaling and inhaling.

So that pause, you can always just curve around the line, you can make a straight line, you can make a circle. So any little shape to indicate that pause. When you're making the shape it naturally is just a feedback loop. You're taking a pause, you're also taking a bit of extra space in the mark that you're making.

Another easy way to think about this, since we are doing this just via sound right now, so you can't see me making marks on a page, is to imagine your hand. And if you were to start at the base of your thumb and just trace up your hand, let's say you don't even have a pen, you can trace up your thumb inhaling coming to the tip of your thumb, exhaling and allowing your hand to come down the center between the two fingers, inhaling coming up towards the tip of your first finger and exhaling moving down towards the base of that finger.

Then just continuing on inhaling, moving towards the top of your third finger, exhaling moving down. So you can do that process even just for five breaths, you could spend a minute, you could spend five minutes.



What I really love about it is that even just me walking through those three breaths on my finger, I feel a slowing down in my body. That may or may not happen for you, but what you might notice as you make marks on the page is that there's also this natural cascading that can start happening with your marks. So your marks might start moving down on the page, the lines you're making might begin to naturally elongate because that would be an indicator that your breath is naturally elongating as well, which can happen as we start to destress and take deeper breaths.

And so I just love the immediate feedback that we get from making marks on the page that just simply mirrors our breathwork. I find that a lot of the students I share this with, find it much easier versus closing your eyes and just trying to focus on your breath. There can sometimes be, in my experience, I've noticed if I close my eyes then I become aware of the fact that my shoulders are really tense, my jaw is clenched, I have a pain in certain parts of my body. And so by having that visual cue and keeping eyes on the page, I can see what's happening with my breath but I'm also not distracted by other thoughts or by perhaps even what's happening in my body. So I love that about it.

I also love that you can start to notice the sounds, depending on the pen or pencil you're using, you can start to notice the sounds on the page as you're moving. You can also feel the texture of the paper right underneath your hand. So there's a lot of other ways that your senses are being engaged with it.



I find that this naturally happens if you're sitting in a meeting, or when you're in school, and you start to doodle on the page and you make different marks. There's a lot of different research around that actually.

I did part of my undergrad in psychology. I did a research study on doodles and how often we make really similar shapes and marks. And there's fascinating evolutionary research around it. But the point is that I find it so natural that we want to make these little marks and expressions.

And sometimes it's a way that we're taking in information and trying to remember information as we're learning. Sometimes it's a way that we're just distracting ourselves but we're actually being more focused. If we're really wanting to check out and be distracted, it's a way we're bringing ourselves back to the page and to that place without knowing necessarily that that's what we were doing.

So yeah, this drawing breath meditation, there's so many variations and you can begin with just the pen and paper. You can then start to add color. You can move into having layers and really expanding it. There's a lot of different ways you can explore it. But that's my easiest favorite go-to with just a pen on the page.

[00:07:44] Kathy: I love it. What came to mind was, I can remember being in meetings. I used to put five dots on the page in the upper margin and make a little circle of dots around each dot and keep doing that until those dots all kind of merged. It always made this cool shape.



I have no idea where it came from. I don't know why it was doing it. But there was something, like as you're listening, and it wasn't to not pay attention, it was to pay attention, actually. It was just this meditative dot making. [laughter] It seems like there may be a purpose. If you've written a paper, I wonder what that might mean.

[00:08:26] Cynthia: Mmmhmm. Yeah, there's so many fascinating things around even the types of marks we're making. So if it's straight lines versus curved lines or circles, if you're connecting them or not. And so I absolutely can resonate with what you're sharing around it actually helps you to be more focused in that moment. It's actually helping you to integrate some of the things that you're hearing. So I love that you shared that.

[00:08:50] Kathy: And I've been thinking-- Why haven't I done this in a while? Why haven't I doodled? And it's because we all have devices now.

[00:08:58] Cynthia: Mmmmm.

[00:09:00] Kathy When we have that moment, we're less likely to pick up a pen, right?

One more practical question for you on portability. How do your students take this practice with them?

[00:09:14] Cynthia: Mmm, I love that question. Again, it's really varied. I think it depends on what your budget is, the time you have, the space you have.



You could absolutely go to a dollar store and just have a small spiral, even lined piece of paper and a pen or a pencil. I usually recommend to have an unlined journal if you can, whether it's spiral bound or a different binding. Just having that unlined is really helpful so you don't have other lines on there naturally that might distract you. That would be my number one recommendation.

I do have different art supplies that I recommend and have linked to on my YouTube channel and site. So if people are wanting to do more with let's say watercolors or they need a good quality watercolor paper then there's certain ones I recommend.

But what I love most about these practices is that the art supplies don't really make a difference. When you're doing a lot of the drawing breath meditations, it's not about the art materials. You can do them with anything that you have, your kids' crayons, a pen at work. You could do it on a napkin when you're waiting for your friend to join you for dinner and that's all you have or you're on an airplane.

The art materials, that part doesn't make too much of a difference. I think it's more so about giving yourself that space and container just for those few minutes. Honestly I find it's largely about just remembering to do it because there's so many times that we have five minutes where we're waiting for something. And I think the impetus a lot of times is to reach for our device or our phone and start scrolling, which that can serve a purpose as well. And I know for myself sometimes I'm just mindlessly scrolling. I'm just numbing out and checked out. I'm just passing time in that moment.



I flew last week so I had a small zipper bag that I'd gotten from the dollar store. I had a really small three by three unlined art journal and a couple of different pens in there. Some were watercolor dual tip markers with a water brush pen. I could actually watercolor paint with just those couple of markers.

I did several of the drawing practices we talked about and some others when I was waiting, before my plane to board, when I was on the plane and I couldn't fall asleep and I didn't want to read or watch anything anymore. I think that there's space. There's a lot of space there that we might not recognize, that I know for myself just doing that five minutes when I was waiting right before boarding the plane, I felt so much more calm versus had I just mindlessly scrolled on my phone, which I did that also but there was a way I could do both.

[00:12:01] Kathy: Right. They're not mutually exclusive. That's wonderful. I love it. It's the anti-scroll, these practices. I absolutely love that.

Well again, Cynthia, thank you so much for your time. It's been incredibly helpful. Appreciate it.

[00:12:15] Cynthia: Absolutely. It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

[00:12:19] Kathy: Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time, thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.



If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

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Until next time, be well!

[00:13:22] [END OF AUDIO]