

I Am Here

A Booklet about Mindfulness

By Eleanor Cole

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a method of being **present**: being aware of what is going on in the world around us, including our own thoughts and feelings. Practicing mindfulness is a helpful skill; by focusing on what is happening right now, we can calm down and not give in to worrying and distraction.

Take a Deep Breath!

Sometimes when we feel scared or sad or mad, the emotions can be overwhelming. When that happens, it's good to take a few deep breaths to calm down. It really helps! Try breathing in, as you count to three very slowly. Then breathe out, slowly counting to three again. Do this three times, or as much as you need to feel calm.

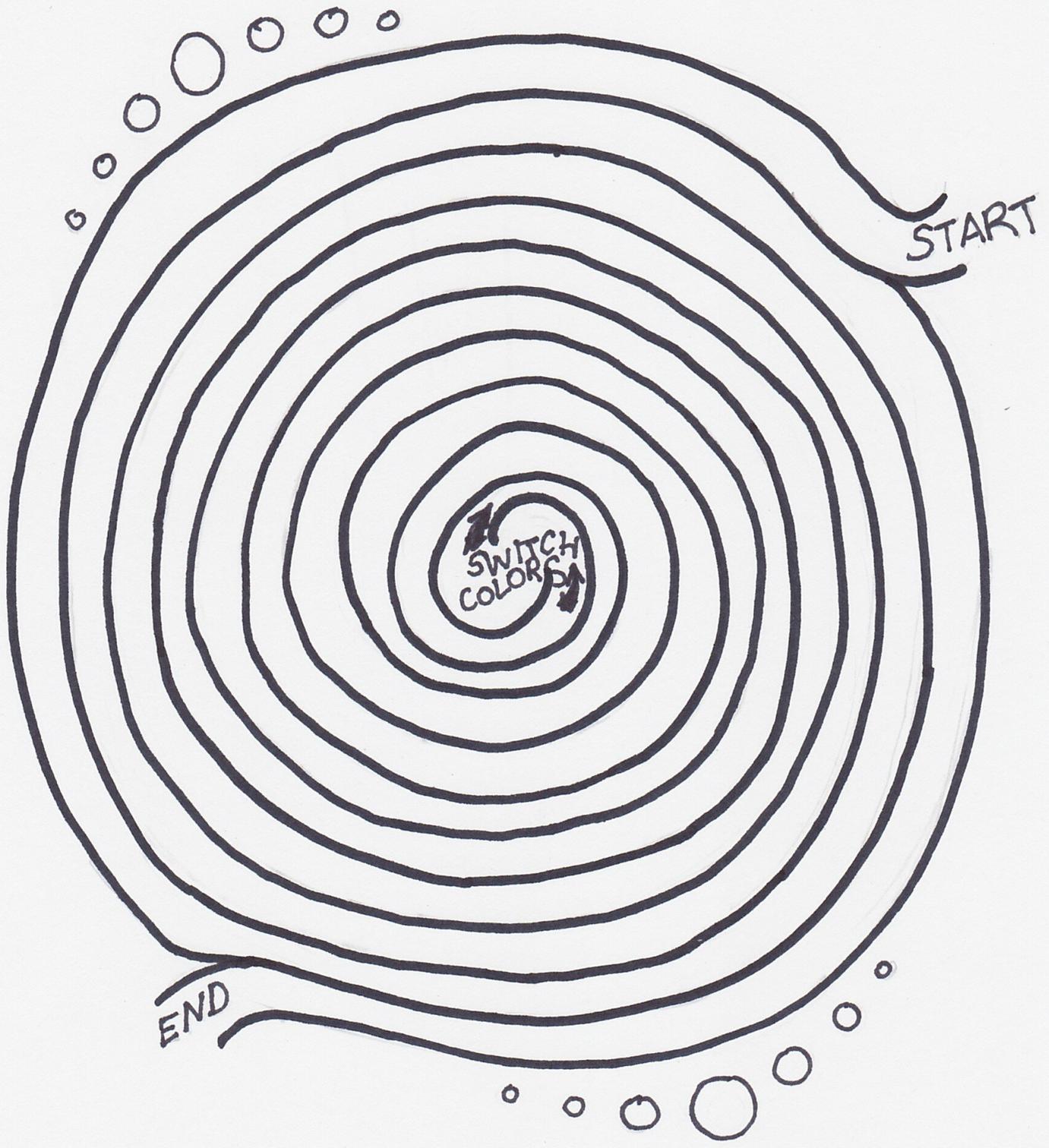
In: 1, 2, 3...

Out: 1, 2, 3...



Follow the Spiral

This coloring exercise can help you focus, and is very calming too! Pick a marker or pencil in your favorite color, and color or draw a line through the path, starting at “Start.” When you get to the middle, pick another color you like, and color the rest of the path until you get to the end.



SWITCH
COLORS

START

END

Watch the World

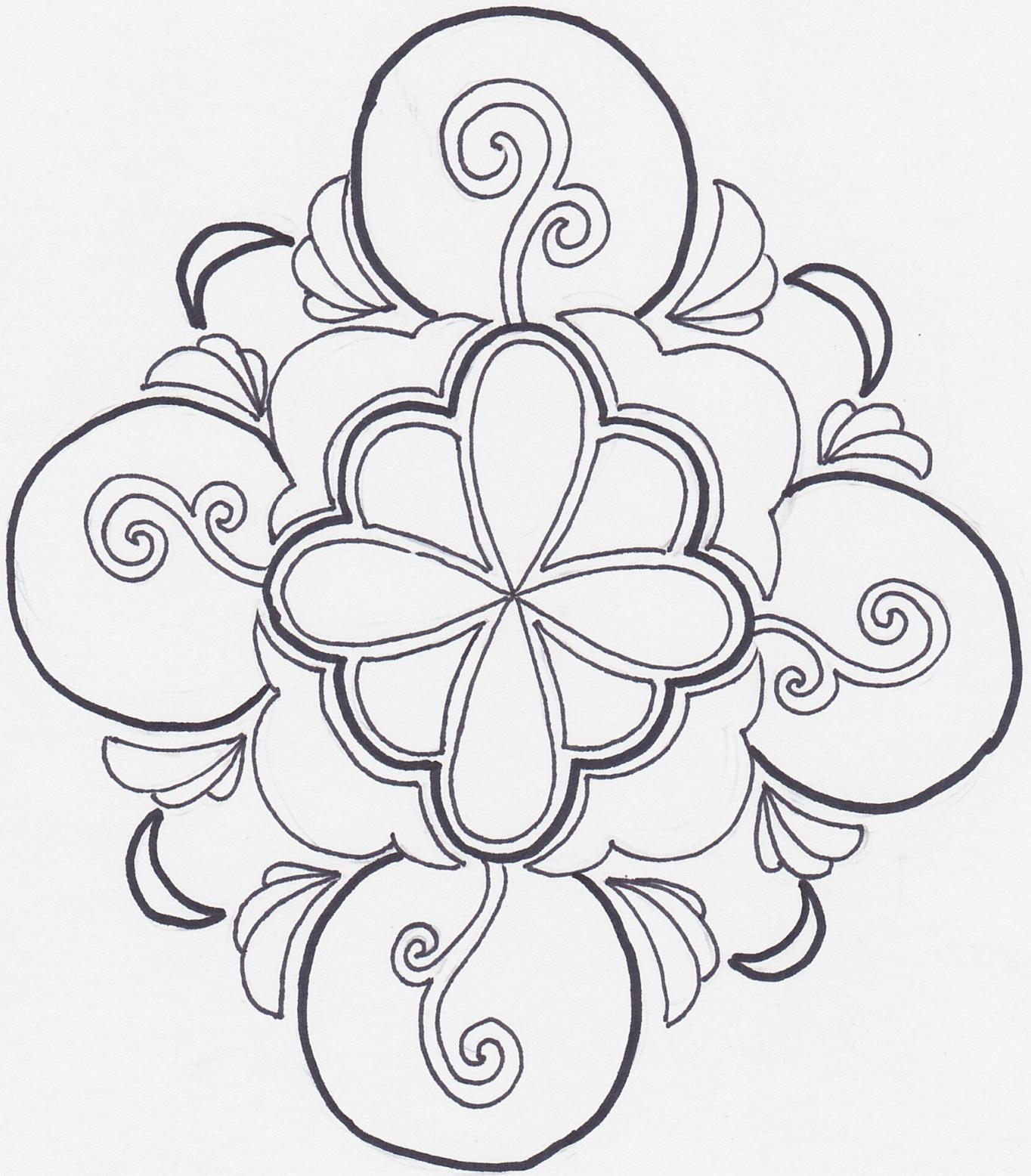
Being busy and tired can make us forget to pay attention to the world around us. When we get too stuck in our own heads, it can help to look around and notice what's happening. Can you **see** any plants or buildings? Can you **hear** birds singing, or people talking, or water running? Can you **feel** the wind, or rocks crunching under your feet? You can even make a list of things you notice with all five senses.



Tip:

When you feel upset with another person try to *respond*, not *react*. Instead of yelling, crying, or hitting, say something like, “It makes me angry when you say that to me,” or, “I really don’t like when you do that, because it makes me feel sad.”

This can be hard to do, but with practice it gets easier. Making sure other people are aware of your feelings is very important.



Glitter Jar

Sometimes, tools can be helpful for mindfulness. This one is simple to make. The things you need are:

A jar with a lid

Water

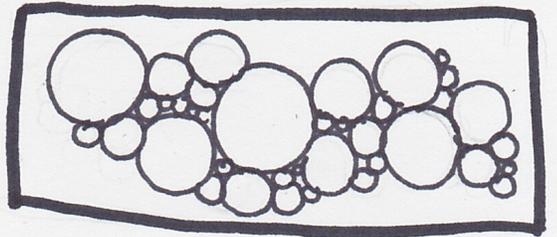
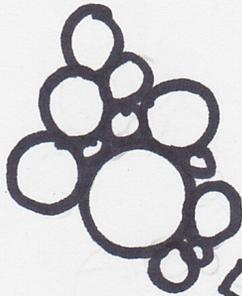
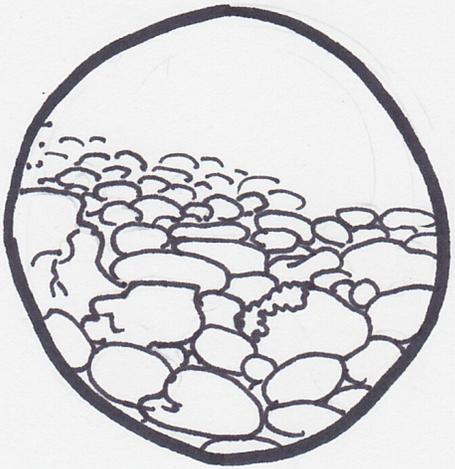
Some glitter (any colors)

Fill the jar with water, then add a few pinches of glitter. Screw the lid on tight. This jar represents your mind. When you shake it up, the glitter, like thoughts, swirl around and make the water cloudy. But if you let the jar sit calmly, the glitter settles back to the bottom, and the water is clear. Mindfulness does this for our brains! You can watch the jar and try to “settle” your thoughts and feelings along with the glitter.



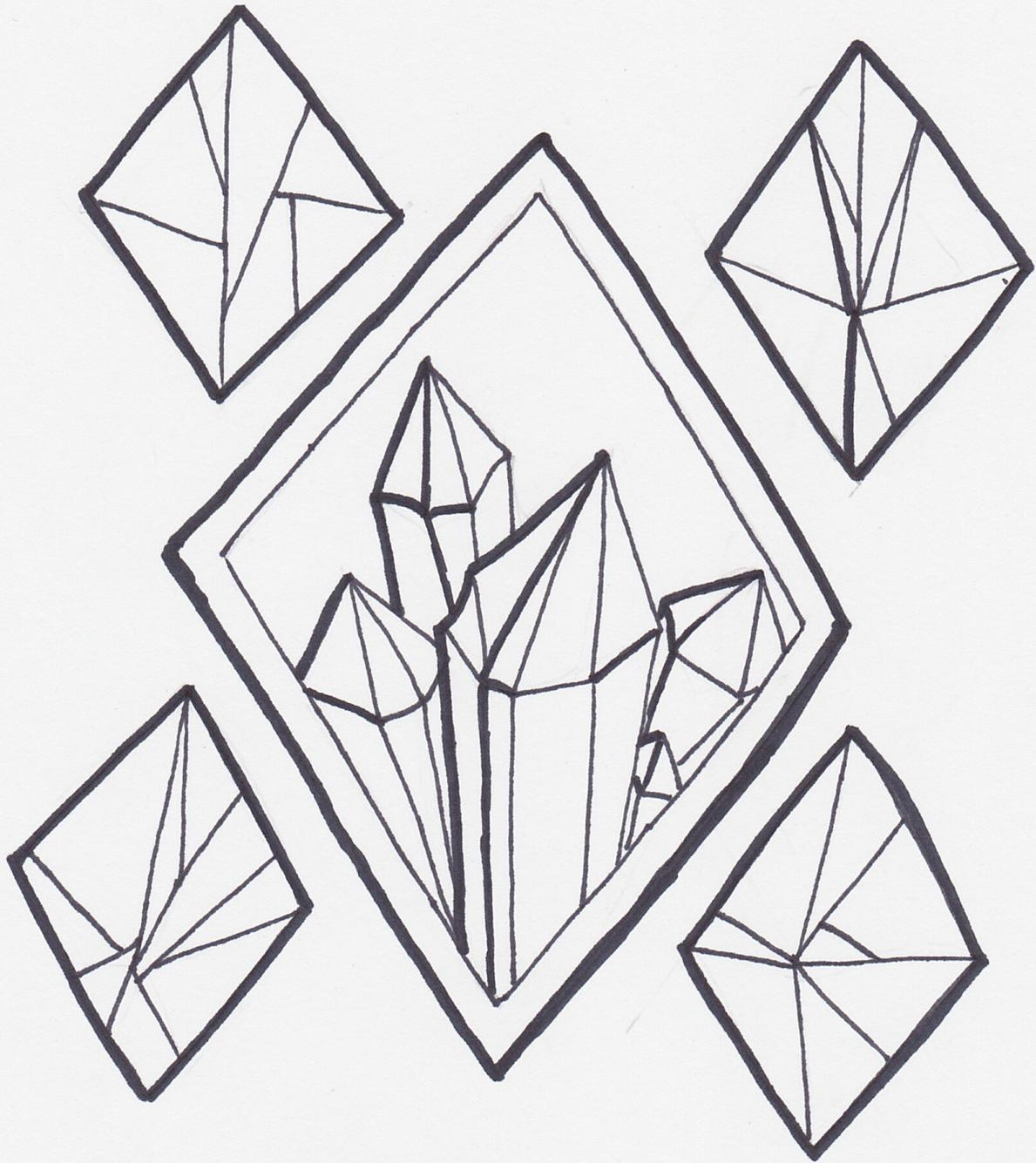
Mindful Drawing

Coloring in patterns like the ones in this book can be calming, but if you like, you can even draw some yourself. Simple, fun patterns are easy to come up with. Start with a doodle, like a circle, a spiral, or a star. Add little details, and repeat or change the pattern until you have a design you like. A good way to come up with ideas is to look for patterns you see around you, like the swirls in wood, or flowers, or the design on some curtains.



3 Good Things

Bad days, or even just not very good days, can make us feel irritated and sad. A good thing to practice is, at the end of every day, thinking of three good things that happened during that day. It helps to remind yourself of positive things, even little ones, that can make you feel better. You can do this by writing the three good things down before bed every night, or by having everyone in your family share them.



Walking Meditation

Walking is a good way to settle down when you feel out of control, and combining it with meditation makes it even more helpful. Find a good place to walk, like a park, a backyard, or an easy trail. Walk at a steady pace, and try to breathe in time with your steps. Focus your mind on walking—feel your feet touch the ground, and try to be in the present instead of letting your mind wander.

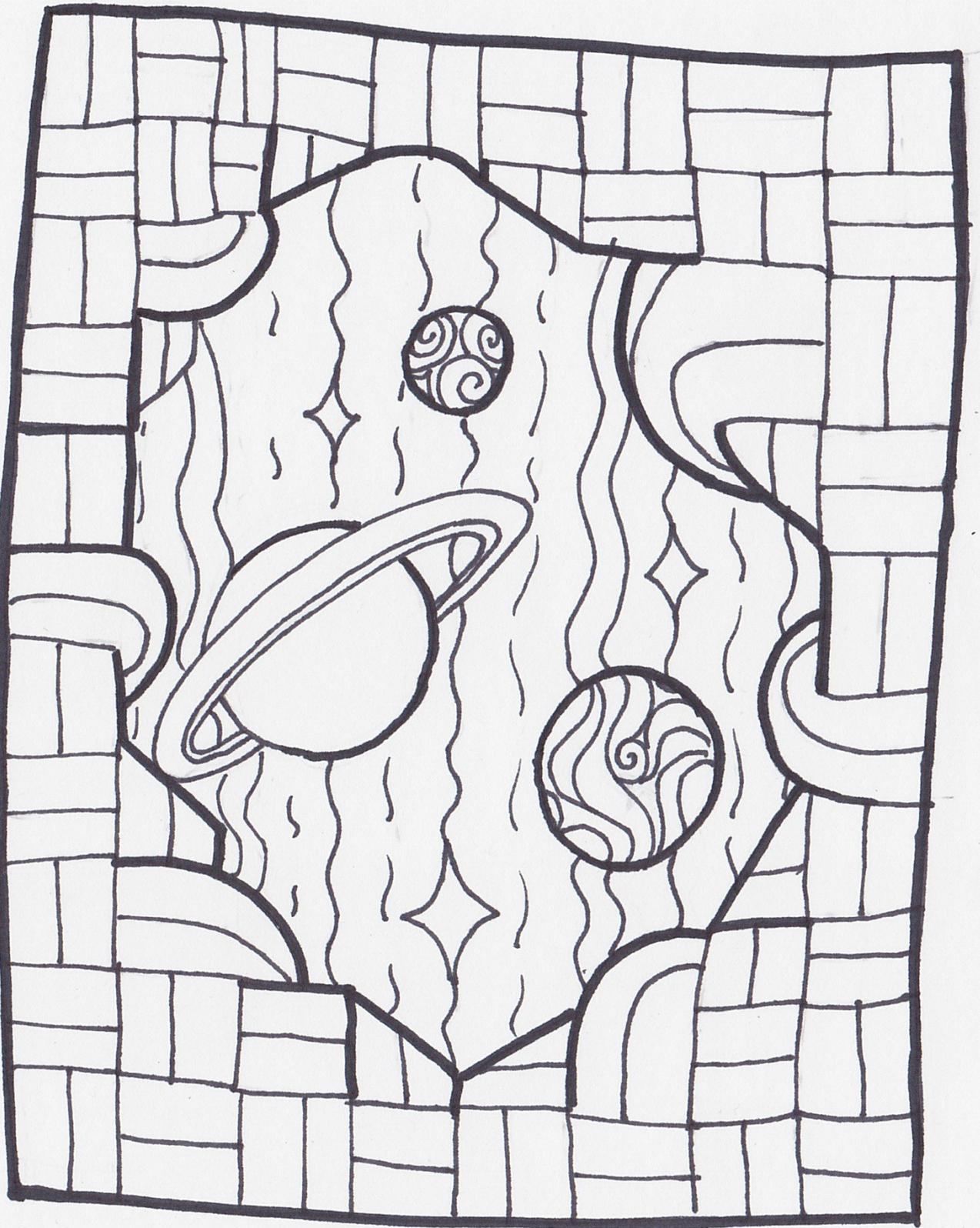
Walking meditation can help you calm down and center yourself, and you can do just about anywhere—walking to class, walking a dog, or just going on a walk by yourself.



Loving-Kindness

Sometimes when we get stressed out or busy, we forget how much we love the people in our lives. Take a moment to sit down, take a few deep breaths, and think about a person you love. It could be your mom or dad, a friend, or even a pet! Try to picture their face in your mind, and feel the love and happiness that you feel when you are with them.

Try to send that feeling out to the person, wherever they are. Wish good things for them. When you feel ready, get up, and take that happiness into your day!



Self-Compassion

We all make mistakes-- that's normal, and happens to everybody. But sometimes, we criticize ourselves for things we can't help, and only end up feeling worse.

When you notice you are doing this, ask yourself, "Would I treat a friend this way? Would I say these things to them?" If the answer is no, then try to practice having compassion for yourself.

Find a quiet place to sit. Close your eyes, and breathe deeply. If it helps, put a hand over your heart. Say to yourself, *I know I did my best. Mistakes happen to everyone. It is okay to mess up or need help. It is okay to feel sad. I know I will do my best in the future, too.* If you think of other words you like better, you can use those, too.

Tip: You can practice self compassion any time! Whenever you are being harsh to yourself, use words like these to remind yourself to have compassion.

