

Feeling the Mood

In this exercise we look at a piece of artwork whilst inducing a meditative state, to explore feeling, mood and tone within art, observing the effect it has on us.

By focusing on our own breathing, we are less absorbed by the details in an artwork and instead allow its general feeling to come through. For many people, daily life involves lots of visual stimulation; by entering a calm state of mind we can notice the influence our surroundings are having on our mood.

This exercise can be particularly useful for people who find themselves wrapped up in details, who feel disconnected to their emotions or who rarely find moments to be peaceful.

- Choose an artwork that evokes emotion, at first it is easier to choose an abstract painting with no narrative or with less detail, though if you are limited in what's available this could be on a screen, in a book or even the view from your window.
- Position yourself in front of your chosen piece (or window frame!) close enough to have all the painting in your vision, with a little wall space outside it.
- Take a comfortable, stable stance, with a relaxed body.
- Develop a relaxed gaze towards the centre of the painting.
- Keeping the gaze towards the centre of the painting, whilst starting to focus on your breathing at the same time.
- Breathe in through the nose for a mental count of five seconds. Breathe out through the nose for a mental count of five seconds. Repeat this cycle five times.
- Check that your gaze is still towards the centre of the painting. Repeat the breathing cycle again, doing so as many times as you need, whilst checking back to your gaze after every cycle.

- When ready, come back into regular, passive breathing.
- Take note of any feelings, sensations and thoughts you may have.

Does this painting have an obvious feeling? Did any particular colour stand out? Did any particular emotion stand out? Can you feel something in the painting you didn't before? Did it change the way you felt from before? Is your mood similar to that of the painting or is it in contrast to it? Would you choose a similar or completely different painting next time?