

Reclaiming Rhythm: Bilateral Art as Everyday Healing

Why Bilateral Art?

Bilateral movement refers to the simultaneous engagement of both the left and right hemispheres of the brain in a rhythmic, alternating pattern. This gentle “back-and-forth” activates pathways linked to calming, emotional regulation, and integration, similar to the mechanisms behind EMDR and mindful walking.

When we color, trace, or draw across both sides of an image—left to right, up to down, or across the midline—the nervous system receives a message of safety, rhythm, and forward movement. For trauma-impacted communities, this can create a micro-moment of grounding that is accessible and culturally adaptable.



Try These Micro-Regulation Practices

- **Bilateral Coloring:** Trace the moon from left to right while breathing slowly. Then color or shade using alternating hands if accessible.
- **Bilateral Tracing:** Slowly trace a shape from left to right, then right to left. Breathe with the motion.
- **Mirrored Drawing:** Hold two pencils—one in each hand—and draw mirrored shapes. Start with circles or waves.
- **Cross-Body Lines:** Draw long, sweeping lines that cross the midline of the page. Focus on rhythm over perfection.
- **Slow Swirls for Breathwork:** Draw spirals or loops while inhaling and exhaling. Let the pen follow your breath.

Sources: Shapiro (2018); Porges (2011); Levine (2010); Ogden et al. (2006); Malchiodi (2020).