

Letting Go Through Art is an art therapy technique designed to help process and release negative or intrusive thoughts, limiting beliefs, anger, or maybe just a way to say goodbye. You do this by writing out what you want to let go of and then covering the words with paint:

Materials Needed:

- Canvas or thick paper
- Markers, pencils or pens
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes or sponges
- Water and cloth for cleaning brushes if multiple paint colors are used
- A quiet and comfortable space for reflection

Instructions:

1. Prepare Your Space and Materials:

- Set up your workspace in a comfortable, private area where you can reflect and feel at ease. Gather your supplies.
- Make sure you have everything you need within reach before you begin.

2. Identify What You Want to Let Go of:

- Begin by reflecting on any thoughts, feelings, or beliefs that have been weighing on you. These can be self-critical, anxious, or limiting beliefs about yourself or perhaps feelings that are directed at another person or maybe a distressing event from your past.
- Take a moment to sit with these thoughts and acknowledge them without judgment. Understand that they are part of your current experience but do not define you.

3. Write the Out the Thoughts:

- On your canvas or paper, start writing down these thoughts, beliefs, or feelings in bold letters. Allow yourself to write freely, without censoring or editing yourself.
- You can write in any way that feels cathartic: a list of thoughts, sentences, or words scattered across the canvas. If you find it helpful, use different colors or styles of writing to express the intensity of each word. If it feels like too much at any time, walk away for a while, take some deep breaths and come back when you are ready. This is important work you are doing and it should be treated as such, you want to take your time.

4. Acknowledge the Emotions:

- As you write, notice how these thoughts make you feel in your body. Take a deep breath and recognize any tension, discomfort, or heaviness. You are giving yourself permission to feel these emotions, but they are not your identity.

- Once the thoughts are fully expressed, take a moment to sit with what you've written and notice any emotional shifts. If you want, take a picture of your work at this stage.

5. Calm the Surface with Color:

- Now, take your paint and begin covering the words and thoughts you've written. You can use a paintbrush, sponge, or your hands—whatever feels intuitive.

- Paint over the words completely, blending the paint to create layers, textures, or patterns. As you do this, imagine that you are transforming those thoughts into something new and healing. Each brushstroke represents your power to shift, release, and move forward.

- You can paint with colors that feel right to you. This could be soothing blues, bright white, energizing yellows, earthy browns, pitch black, or neutral greens. The color choices are completely up to you—trust what your mind and body tells you.

6. Reflect and Release:

- After covering up the words, step back and reflect on the process. How do you feel now, both emotionally and physically? What is left on the canvas now that the words have been covered?

- Take note of how the process of covering the thoughts with paint might have shifted your perspective on them.

- If needed, write about your experience: What did you learn about yourself during this exercise? Did any new emotions or insights emerge?

Additional Tips:

- This is a process of release and transformation. It is normal to feel a variety of emotions during this exercise—whether relief, sadness, anger or frustration.

- You may choose to return to the artwork at a later time to continue processing or reflect on how your feelings have changed.

- If you find yourself struggling to let go of any thoughts, feelings, or emotions, you can try incorporating more layers of paint, giving yourself permission to continue covering until it feels more complete.

This exercise is a powerful way to externalize thoughts and transform them through creativity, allowing you to move towards healing and personal empowerment.

5/11/25 Maryann Dexter, LMSW-C