

Enhancing Self-Regulation through Expressive Arts among Online Learners

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Abstract

The present study focussed on improving self-regulation among online learners through a medium of expressive arts. Online learners must be persistent in a good learning environment and self-determined to achieve their goals or complete a course. Online learning is effective and successful only when the concepts are practiced and revised through self-learning. Self-learning can be improved by inculcating the habit of self-regulation to enhance the learning experience for online learners. This paper will focus on enhancing self-regulated learning through expressive arts. Expressive arts interventions have been used in the present research work. The focus is to help learners build self-regulation resulting in efficient learning and withstand the newly learned skill and utilize it when required, with the help of skills learned during the intervention session.

Keywords: *Expressive art therapy, self-regulated learning, planning, monitoring, reflecting.*

Introduction

Online learners must have a suitable learning environment and good self-regulation and control for them to achieve their goals and achieve effective learning. But doing so they might be faced with various hindrances like social media distraction, lack of motivation, and procrastination resulting in them not being able to achieve what they envisioned. This demotivates them and takes them far away from learning. A successful learner should be persistent have good time management skills and have a good study environment. For this to be attained the learner inculcates the habit of following a route map to accomplish his/her goals. According to Zimmerman (1989), learning can be improved by self-regulation. He described four phases for self-regulation which are the forethought phase which includes; planning and setting goals next is performance phase which includes self-control. Self-motivation and self-observation and the last self-reflection phase where the learner evaluates his performance and makes a judgement. There could be difficulty in following these four phases due to lack of motivation, not being able to make goals, not having a clear vision, boredom, or procrastination. To tackle this concern a framework has been designed. The framework has various tools and activities on expressive arts which can be used to enhance self-regulated learning.

Self-regulated learning is known to be a practice by self by which learners aim to modulate their tasks in an effective and efficient way (Zimmerman, 1989). It includes cognitive skills, behavioral modification to enhance intrinsic motivation like goal setting, planning, designing strategies for learning, and extrinsic motivation like self-

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reinforcements, mind mapping, instructing self, time management, , and self-monitoring (Karkou et al., 2019). Learners are habitually aware of their strengths and weaknesses and they formulate appropriate strategies to work on their concerns and apply the same to overcome challenges in their day-to-day academic tasks (Zimmerman et al., 2015).

Enhancing self-regulated learning through expressive arts. Expressive arts are a form of intervention that allows the expression of feelings through various creative modes like movement, art, music, and drama. It aids to reduce stress, improve creativity, and expands productivity to learn efficiently and effectively. Unlike other traditional methods of therapy, this is a fun and creative way to express and go out feelings in a creative way which extends self-exploration and relieves stress. It is a useful tool to keep the learners engaged and build self-regulation resulting in efficient learning and withstanding the new learnt skill and utilising it when required. Expressive arts is helpful for both online learners and traditional learners as it is a creative and therapeutic approach that would bring effective changes in the learning process.

Research Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To explore various Models of Self-Regulated Learning.
- To describe different modalities in Expressive Arts Therapy.
- To Apply the framework to a learner and analyze the result.

Review of Literature

Rabin et al. (2020) identified in their study on barriers to learner satisfaction in MOOCs, the role of age, intention, self-regulation, etc. that one of the major barriers faced by online learners was the barrier of lack of interest predicted by self-regulation, self-evaluation, making study strategy. There was also a barrier of bad planning, goal setting, and time management according to the age of the respondent.

Rakes & Dunn (2010) investigated the impact of self-regulation and motivation on academic procrastination among online graduate students and found that when there is a decrease in intrinsic motivation to learn their effort regulation decreases and procrastination increases, therefore they devised strategies to encourage effort regulation and intrinsic motivation in their study.

Syapira et al., (2022) studied self-efficacy and self-regulation with academic procrastination during the online learning period and concluded that a high level of self-regulation and self-efficacy leads to low procrastination, conversely, low level of self-efficacy and self-regulation have the level of procrastination is high.

Jackson et al., (2022) in their study on identifying factors that influence student perception of stress with online modalities identified time management to be one of the concerns as students reported that they found it hard to manage time in their coursework especially balance between work and family.

Puustinen & Pulkkinen, (2001) studied in latest models on Self -regulated learning which included the models developed by Borkowski et al. (2000); Winne (1997); (Boekaerts (1997); (Zeidner et al. (2000) and B. J. Zimmerman (1989). The model equated four attributes which are the theories, SRL definitions, Mechanisms of the model, and work regarding it. The models that were similar were inspired by (Zimmerman et al., 2015), (Zeidner et al., (2000), and Pintrich (1999)are based on social cognitive theory. Theobald (2021) researched on university students. It was a meta-analysis on self-regulated learning training programmes to enhance academic performance and motivation. He

stated that training programmes on metacognitive background had a higher influence on academic achievement as compared to training based on cognitive theories and it was concluded that programmes on self-regulated learning enhanced academic performance and motivation in students. Kizilcec et al., (2017) wanted to predict learner behavior and goal achievement through self-regulated learning in online courses. And found that goal-setting and planning strategies projected achievement of personal goals and help-seeking was connected with lower goal achievement. And learners with more SRL skills were mostly to get back to previous course materials and assessments.

Nanda Eka Saputra et al. (2018) stated in their study creative solution-focused counseling models for self-regulated learning. The development research contains three stages which was to identify self-regulated learning level, create a proposed model to improve self-regulated learning, and conduct testing by experts. The results indicated that a Creative solution-focused counseling model with five stages of counseling was practicable to tool in the school. Kostons et al., (2012) stated in their study on training self-assessment and task selection skills as a cognitive approach for improving self-regulated learning. In their study, they stated that self-assessment and task-selection skills play a crucial role in self-regulated learning. and if proper training is given to these skills the knowledge students can have from self-regulated learning.

Cazan (2013) studied, teaching self-regulated learning strategies for psychology students. They found that a combination of metacognitive and cognitive strategies can improve self-regulation and training on cognitive self-regulation had a positive reflection on motivation and behavior. According to Lindsey et al., (2018) in their study, they used expressive arts and mindfulness as a tool to understand and manage stress among adolescents. The study was an exploration of the use of mask-making along with mindfulness training to help youth understand and manage their stress. It was a 12-hour group intervention over 6 weeks. Pre and post-tests were done along with a follow-up after three weeks. It was concluded there is a significant reduction in anxiety and stress. Art therapy includes the use of creative approaches like painting, drawing, coloring, and sculpting which helps individuals to express themselves with the medium of art. Art therapy addresses trauma, depression, stress, anxiety, and eating disorders (Karkou et al., 2019) and (Frisch et al., 2006).

Kaya & Deniz, (2020) studied the psychological well-being of college students with the help of psychodrama. 30 undergraduate students were divided into intervention and control groups. Data was collected through a psychological well-being scale. The authors explored that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test among participants of psychodrama intervention on environmental mastery dimension and it was concluded that psychodrama can improve the psychological wellbeing of students. (Safaria et al., 2017) conducted art therapy sessions in 5 sessions over two weeks. Ten students who have moderate anxiety were chosen. The participants were randomly allocated to the control group and experimental group and Man Whitney test was used to see the effect of art therapy. Results showed that the experimental group showed less anxiety. But for the control group, it was ($p < 0.05$) and ($Z = -2610$) The study concluded that art therapy reduces anxiety in the experimental group.

Li & Peng, (2022) studied the Evaluation of Expressive Arts Therapy on the Resilience of University Students during COVID-19. 263 students from the University of China were selected for the therapy group. Students' resilience was assessed in a pre-post design. It was discovered that significant differences appeared between the paired networks before and after expressive arts therapy. Facets of self-efficacy, self-acceptance, and problem-solving in resilience were notably improved after the therapy. Beaumont (2012) studied art therapy with adolescents to tap into their identity problems and identified that art can be used for self-exploration which gives more knowledge on self-acceptance. And art journaling can help adolescents as they tend to be emotionally unstable which can also help in self-awareness.

Method

The present study includes two different aspects under research design:

1) Designing framework and obtaining feedback from the experts

Various models of Self-Regulated Learner were explored and studied through search engines and journals. The major model of Self-Regulated learning was devised by a primary researcher named Zimmerman his model was called the cyclic model of self-regulated learning which was introduced in 2002. There are three phases in this model which are the fore-thought phase, performance phase, and self-reflection phase. Moving forward Expressive arts therapy was studied in detail and various interventions on each modality i.e., music, movement, art, writing, and photography which could enhance self-regulation were studied. Based on the review of literature on Models of self-regulated learning and modalities of expressive arts therapy, a framework was designed that contains various tools and activities on expressive arts that will enhance self-regulated learning. The framework is designed keeping in view, each phase of self-regulated learning devised by Zimmerman in his cyclic model of self-regulation. Five experts who are practicing expressive arts therapy with students were identified and the proposed framework was presented online (through Google Meet) as a workshop mode for content validation.

The designed framework (Figure 2) was finalised after receiving feedback and suggestions from experts.

2) Case study

The designed framework was applied to a participant who was willing to try the framework to improve their self-regulation as the participant procrastinated on their academic assignments and faced difficulty in achieving their goals. The participant was asked to use the framework for two weeks with the help of the researcher who is a practitioner of expressive arts. The outcomes were received from the participant in the form of feedback and results were qualitatively analysed.

Ethical Concern

Informed consent was taken from the participant. Confidentiality regarding the information shared and the anonymity of the participants are maintained. The information would be used only for the purpose of research. The gender of the participant is not disclosed and the participant is addressed as 'they/their' not 'she/her or he/his/him' in this research.

Models of Self-Regulated Learning

Zimmerman et al. (2015) introduced the model of conceptual dimension of academic self-regulation. His model involves six vital questions which are Why, When, What, Where, Whom, and How. The "why" includes learners' motives and intrinsic motivation for learning. The "how" includes, the learners' use of approaches and process. The "when" includes management of time. The "what" includes strategies used to monitor their academic performance or the outcome. The "where" includes the place learners opt to finish their tasks and the "who" includes the teachers, classmates, guide which re primary in the learner's learning environment. The Social Cognitive Model of Self-Regulated Learning by Bandura (1991), emphasises self-efficacy beliefs in self-regulated learning. This model includes four major processes: Self-observation is where learners regulate and scrutinise their behaviors, emotions, and thoughts in the process of learning. The judgemental process is where learners assess their observations and make judgments about their abilities and analyse the efficiency of their learning approaches. Self-reactions where learners are involved in self-reinforcements or punishments. Lastly, self-reflection is where learners evaluate their outcomes and experiences and analyse.

Process Model of Self-Regulated Learning (Winne & Hadwin, 1998) . This model is on self-regulated learning focusing on four main phases. Task Perception, in which the learners identify resources, goals, and requirements. They evaluate their previous awareness and formulate strategies to complete the task. Goal setting and planning in which learners set both short- and long-term goals and create a plan of action. Strategy execution is where learners implement the strategies, evaluate the progress, and make appropriate alterations in their approach to learning. Adaptation is where learners reflect on their performance and assess the effectiveness of the approaches. This phase includes metacognitive evaluation and control to improve future learning.

Zimmerman et al. (2015), the foremost researcher in the field of Self-regulated learning (SRL), stated “It’s not a mental ability or a skill for academic performance, relatively it is a self-driven process through which learners transform their mental abilities to academic skills.” Zimmerman said that SRL does not only involve achieving comprehensive knowledge about an ability but also improves the rest of the skillset like self-motivation, and self-awareness. Self-regulated learning is a process of identifying tasks, monitoring the performance, and later reflecting on the result. This procedure is tailor-made for each learning task and students separately.

The three major stages in SRL are Planning, Monitoring, and Reflecting. In the planning stage, also known as the forethought phase, the learners identify the goals for which they must work on and estimate a timeline within which they must complete a particular task, course, or session. This stage includes learners’ awareness of their learning environment. In the performance stage or performance phase. the learners show their dedication towards the learning practice. They also regulate their own learning progress and compare it with goals they established in the planning stage. In the reflection stage, the learners evaluate and reflect upon their learning practice. This involves evaluating the feedback and identifying the places where they found it difficult to execute a particular task, they also record the hindrances which halted their performance in the middle of the task given.

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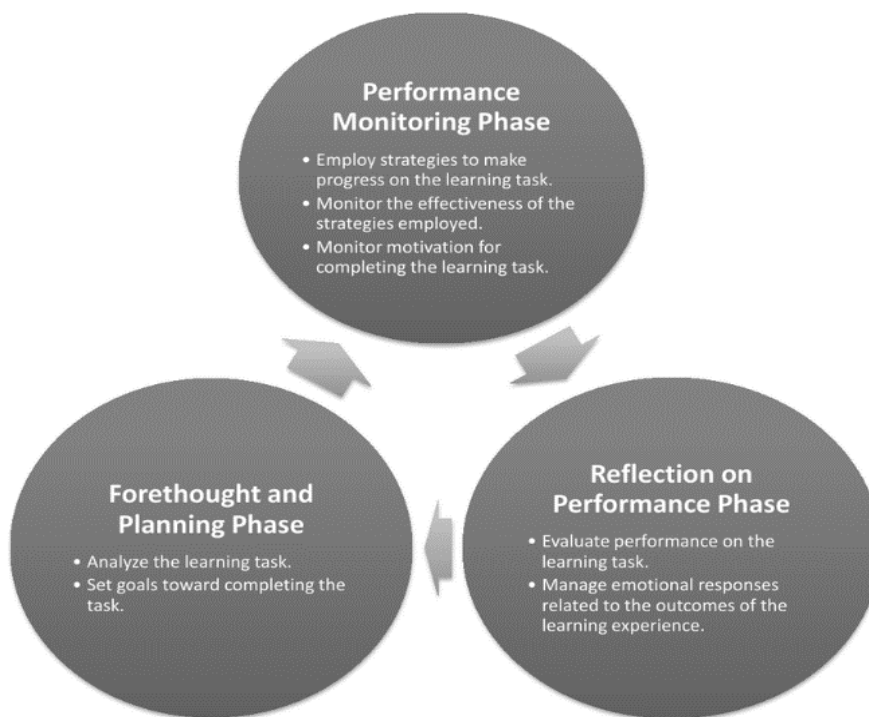


Figure 1: Self-Regulation Model

(Source:https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Phases-of-Self-Regulated-Learning_fig-1:276956403)

Expressive art therapy

Expressive art therapy is a form of therapy that is beyond talk therapy. It is a combination of several approaches which include music and movement therapy, drama, visual arts, and writing which helps explore people emotions and accomplish personal development. It is based on the hypothesis that individual can rebuild through self-exploration towards their emotions. This creative process provides the therapist with various tools to tap the clients' emotions, imagination, feelings, body sensations, and thoughts (Malchiodi, 2020). Different modalities help the client to overcome resistance which could be a hinderance in conventional talk therapies blocking their healing. Expressive arts is proved to be effective because it focuses on the process pf creating rather than the end result. Participants do not have to have any experience related to art . The aim is to provide participants a creative space to have a dialogue with their imagination. Expressive arts consists of different modalities i.e music, performing arts and visual arts.

Types of Expressive Arts Therapy

Even though talk therapy is the prime treatment style, expressive arts therapy tries to aid the way in which individuals communicate. Four main types of creative arts which are usually used in expressive arts therapy are:

- Art therapy: This method includes applying visual art like sculpting, drawing, and painting in order to work with thoughts and emotions.
- Dance therapy: This kind of therapy includes dance and physical movement which helps individuals cope with stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Music therapy: This method includes creating and listening to music in order to improve the state of mood and reduce anxiety.
- Language Art: This method includes tapping on emotions and thoughts with the help of writing. Like in the form of journaling or poems or stories.
- Drama Therapy: This method includes the use of drama and theatre processes to treat symptoms of mental illness.

Framework

Based on the literature review and exploring various models of self-regulating learning (SRL), the researchers identified the model of self-regulation which is frequently followed by Zimmerman's cyclic model for self-regulation which has three phases each phase talks about the levels of progression towards the learning goals. Each phase of SRL is mapped with the modalities of expressive arts therapy. For example, Breath drawing was mediative and helped them to clear all their thoughts which gave them a channel to set goals. Role play was assisting them to be motivated to work on their tasks and sustain the workflow. Contemplative photography helped in observation skills and reflection for them to self-evaluate their tasks after completion.

Expressive arts therapy is an engaging way to help individuals to work on their concerns. There was a significant change in participants' attitudes towards completing their academic assignments. The researcher has designed a framework based on each phase and how each phase could be improved separately with the help of expressive arts to achieve the bigger goals set.

Five experts who are experts in expressive arts therapy were called for an online workshop mode (through Google Meet) to discuss the proposed framework. Based on their suggestions the framework is finalised as shown in figure 2.

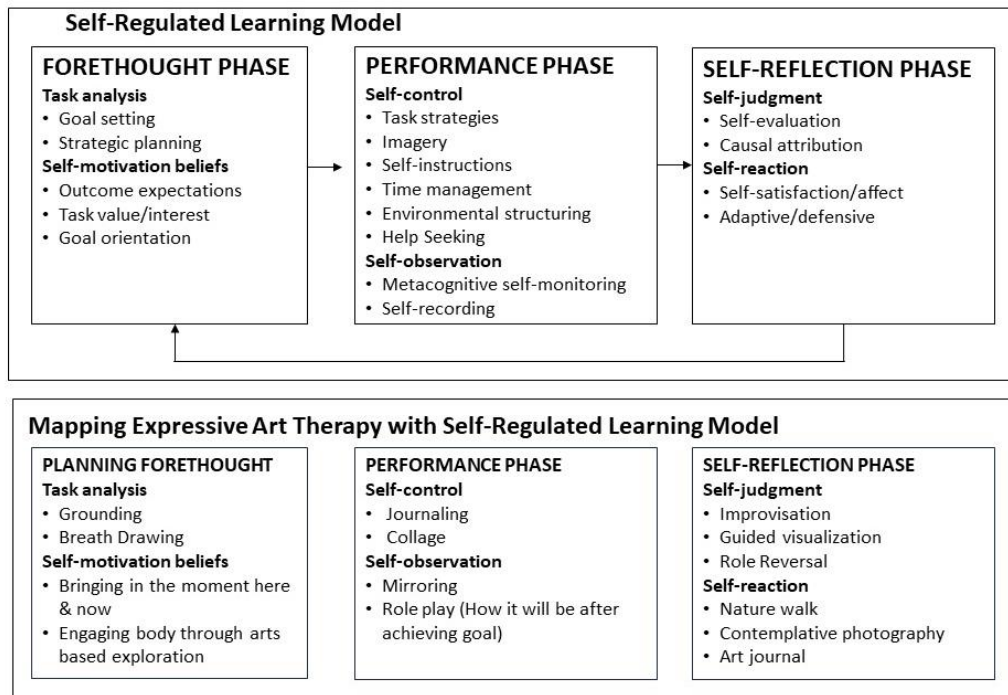


Figure 2: Mapping Expressive Art Therapy with Self-Regulated Learning Model

Case Study

Online learners mostly have less interaction among peer groups and the instructor(s) and they feel isolated. Online learners need continuous motivation and frequent intimation or messages to encourage them otherwise they are demotivated to complete their work. The participant is a working adult who is pursuing MBA from an open university through online. They procrastinate to complete their assignments as a result, it get piled up and later, they feel anxious when they have a deadline to submit. They usually overthink even before they start setting goals and that distracts them from being on track. They also shared that they usually get distracted by other tasks and hence get stressed. The participant met the counsellor to cope with stress, however the verbal counselling not facilitating to cope with their study. The participant agreed to work with research on the framework. After getting proper consent from the participant, the framework was applied to them for two weeks and the results were analysed.

Discussion

The researcher planned three sessions one each for the three phases of the framework. The sessions were facilitated twice a week.

Session 1- Forethought phase: The participant was asked what difficulties they faced while setting goals to study and planning a study timetable. They shared that their mind overthinks, anxiety and they are not able to think clearly hence they had a lack of motivation to make goals. Breath drawing will help the participant to center and ground and bring them to a calm place after which they can think clearly to make goals.

This session was about creating a relationship with the available resource (Flour). Creating shapes and forms according to the rhythm of the music being played in the background (Figure 3). The learner tried this activity by first opening their eyes and making forms on the flour and later by closing their eyes while doing the same process.

The learner was grooving to the rhythm of music entering a movement with flour. Visual arts helped them to crystallize what they achieved during the movement. Moving on to visual arts followed by writing a poem for self-reflection (Figure 4).

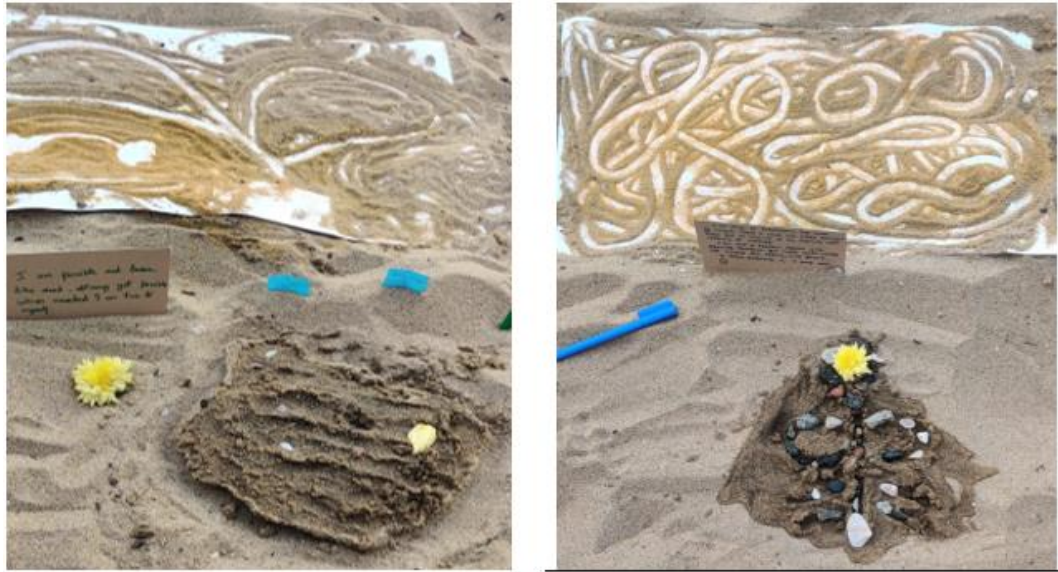


Figure 3: Breath Drawing along with music

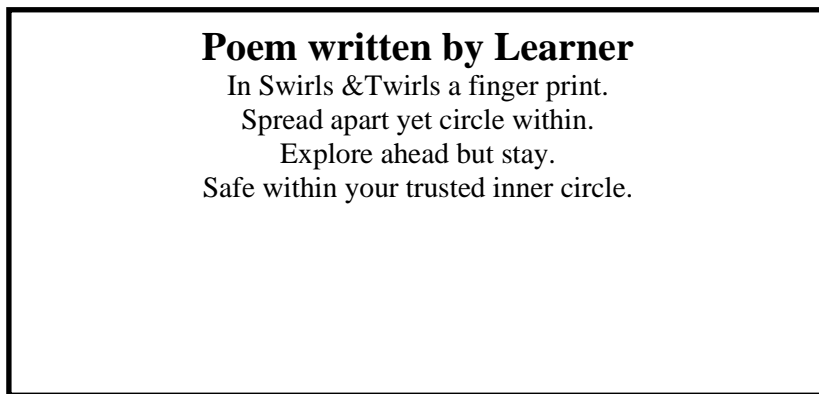


Figure 4: Poem for Self-reflection

Session 2-Performance Phase: Before starting the next session, the participant was asked about the hindrances they face in the performance phase which involves time management, self instructing etc. They shared that they procrastinate on the work given to them because they lack the motivation to work on the goals. Role play on how it would be after achieving the goal will give them a positive visualization and motivation to complete the task.

The session was about writing a story and enacting a role play. The participant wrote the story with a character who faced difficulty following a routine would always procrastinate the work and had very low self-esteem. How they challenged themselves is the rest of the story. Similarly, they felt very happy and excited to play the role of the person who has achieved their goals. This improved their motivation and their zeal to attain their goals.

Session 3- Self-Reflection Phase: The third session was about knowing the concerns they face in the self reflection phase, they shared they find it difficult to identify the errors they made or would feel they could have done better. Contemplative photography helps in improving observation and reflection skills which would aid them to evaluate their work and assignments.



Figure 5: Contemplative Photography

This session was about identifying an object that was calling them. And moving forward with contemplative photography weaving a story with clicked photographs and concluding it with visual arts and poems. The participant was doubtful about the process yet they trusted the facilitator. Finding an object and being with that object (Lollipop) was difficult for them but clicking photographs of the object gained more of their attention (Figure 5 and Figure 6). They were able to weave a story that reflected on their internal fear and had a major realization.

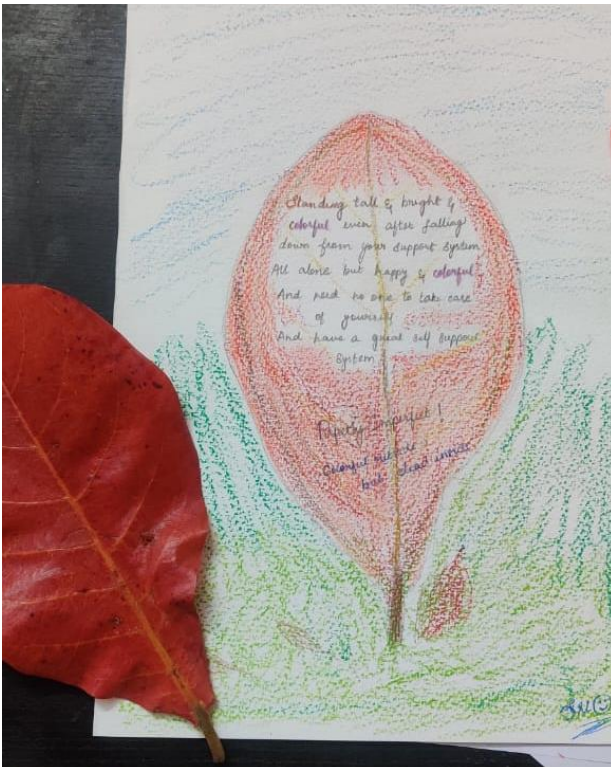


Figure 6: Art Journaling

Before each session, the feedback of the client would be taken. After the first session, they shared they still felt difficulty concentrating to make their goals so they repeated breath drawing with music without the supervision of the researcher which calmed and relaxed them and helped them to write down their goals. By the second and third sessions they shared they felt they were on track to achieve their goals. They felt motivated after completing one assignment within a week's time without procrastinating. This increased their enthusiasm to complete other assignments as well. They shared they felt supported throughout two weeks and wanted to learn more such techniques which could facilitate their self regulation for academics. The client came with a clouded vision and anxiety about completing their work on time. They expressed after a creative session on expressive arts they felt relieved and were able to achieve their goals.

Conclusion

The key aspects of an optimum learner are persistence and a good learning environment along with intrinsic qualities like motivation, and self-determination. Hindrances to achieve the set goal and achieve them have been identified. To tackle these obstacles many researchers gave various models of self-regulated learning. Each model describes a unique set of tools and approaches to accomplish the goals. Zimmerman's cyclic model of self-regulation is the base of the framework proposed. Step-by-step procedure on expressive arts in each phase of the model has been analysed and the results showed that expressive has been an effective tool to enhance self-regulated learning. It helps to declutter thoughts and set goals, improves self-motivation and self-control, and aids in having effective self-reflection through various techniques on expressive arts. Participant who participated in the case study shared that grounding helped them to be in the present and breath drawing channelized their self-awareness. Storytelling enhanced their self-motivation to complete the task. Lastly, contemplative photography aided them in having a good self-reflection. They shared that expressive arts did give them a sense of a route map toward self-regulated learning in a creative and engaging way which was fun. The researcher has investigated only one case study, this may be analyzed with further case studies with different populations for making it a standardized framework.

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