ARTS
LEARNING
LAB
@ HOME

Bookmaking with
Self-Compassion
OVERVIEW

Make an artist book celebrating your own creative growth. Join 18th Street Arts Center artist in residence and bookmaker Debra Disman to discover how to create the beautiful, fun and versatile Flower Fold book into which you can write or paste wishes, hopes, prayers and dreams. This book can become a chain to hang in your home, or give as a gift. Explore what the pandemic has meant to you while learning new skills and creating a unique expression of renewal and rebirth during the spring season.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participants develop a practice of self-compassion through bookmaking.
2. Participants analyze personal insights through self-reflection and expressive found writing.
3. Participants build technical skills in bookmaking through the creation of their own Flower Fold book.

RELEVANT CALIFORNIA ART STANDARDS SUGGESTED FOR GRADES 1-6, CAN BE MODIFIED FOR ANY GRADE LEVEL

1.2 Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative artmaking goals.
2.VA:Cr1.2 Make art or design with various art materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.
4.VA:Cr1.2 Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

10 Through artmaking, people make meaning by investigating and developing awareness of perceptions, knowledge, and experiences.

K.VA:Cn10 Create art that tells a story about a life experience.
6.VA:Cn10 Generate a collection of ideas reflecting current interests and concerns that could be investigated in artmaking.
11 People develop ideas and understanding of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

6.VA:Cn11 Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.

MATERIALS

- Origami Paper (20 sheets of assorted plain colors and patterned)
- Glue Sticks
- Railroad Board / Cardstock
- Ribbon (5 or more strips in assorted colors) cut into 10-12″ strips
- Assorted stickers

VOCABULARY

- **Self-Compassion**: extending care and compassion to ourselves during moments of perceived failure, inadequacy, or suffering.
- **Self-Care**: an immediate activity designed to promote a beneficial state of being both physically and mentally.
- **Self-talk**: what we tell ourselves in terms of being of support to ourselves and others.

INTRODUCTION

Debra Disman introduces her bookmaking workshop by presenting two central ideas to mental and physical health, self-care and self-compassion. **Self-care** is the things we do to take care of ourselves. This can include our diets, exercise, spending time with the people we love, meditation, or artmaking. **Self-compassion** relates to the internal, the things we feel, and the things we tell ourselves during moments of stress and perceived inadequacy. Both of these ideas will be enacted during this workshop. Disman points out that engaging in this workshop is a form of self-care that invites us to come together to learn a new skill, play, and have fun. Approach the technical aspects of the bookmaking process with
Workshop Description

disman introduces examples of the Flower Fold structure. Although specific material includes origami paper alternatives such as plain copy paper or any other paper will suffice. Participants are encouraged to begin thinking about words and concepts that come up when they think about the pandemic and experiences they have had over the past year. Are there words that come to mind? Participants make a note to themselves for the end of the workshop. Participants start with the first folding technique. This workshop has several technical folds, participants are encouraged to just watch at first. Begin with a single piece of origami paper. If using another type of paper make sure that the paper is in the shape of a square. Fold the paper in half, using the side of your glue stick as a folding tool to aid in folding a crease. Now open up the paper. Make another fold in the other direction, folding in half again perpendicular to the first. Open up the paper, you should now have two folds creating somewhat of a cross or a series of four squares. Disman shares that the process of folding paper is a creative and destructive process. As we fold we break the fibers of the paper slightly. This damage to the fibers while seemingly destructive is what allows for the creation of new forms, and new possibilities.
STEP 2

Participants follow along with the second fold. Turn the square sheet of paper sideways so that the square sheet resembles a diamond. Fold the paper in half again forming the shape of a triangle when folded. Continue to use the glue stick as a folding tool. Unfold the paper with the diagonal fold pointed upwards as if in the shape of a mountain. Participants have made a total of three folds, two perpendicular folds and one diagonal fold.
Participants will begin to shape the paper. With the folded paper pointed upwards in the shape of a mountain, participants use their fore finger to press the paper down in the center where all the folds meet. Naturally the paper will cave in along the crease lines subtly raising all four corners of the paper. Participants identify two raised corners of the paper, one at opposing tips of the diamond. Participants grab each opposing corner and raise them towards the center until they touch. As the two ends are beginning to touch participants will find that the paper is now naturally folding together to form a smaller square or diamond, almost as if a flower is closing together giving the book the name of petal fold book or lotus fold book. This smaller square should now be ⅛ the size of the original piece of paper. Disman repeats the folding process. Follow along and take note of the way the paper folds and opens.
The first folded paper will now be repeated creating multiple pieces that will make up the final Flower Fold book. Disman presents an example of two folded pieces of paper glued together in an alternating pattern. Watch closely as the artist shows the ways in which the pieces of paper are joined together. One folded piece of paper opens towards the screen while the other folded paper opens up in the opposite direction towards the artist. By alternating the open ends the two flower folds create one larger piece that opens and folds like a large flower. Participants now fold a second piece of origami paper following the same process from the previous steps, creating two perpendicular folds and one diagonal fold. Notice that the diagonal fold cuts through only two squares leaving two others untouched. The untouched sections of the paper will be the areas that glue is applied to. Follow along with the artists to identify where glue is placed.
STEP 5
Lay down the two sections of paper so that one piece opens upward while the other piece opens downward. Overlap them so that the sections where the unfolded squares begin to touch. Using the glue stick lay down a section of glue and join the two pieces of paper. Participants will now notice the alternating pattern of opening and folding taking place. Continue to create a third section using an additional piece of origami paper. Follow the same process as above. Again when gluing the third folded section make sure to alternate the positioning based on how each section opens and folds.

STEP 6
Participants are encouraged to experiment with the technical process itself. If mistakes are made when gluing the paper can always be refolded to match the alternating opening and folding pattern. Disman leads participants through the folding of a fourth and final section of paper. Remember that this process deals with a system of opposites. Always alternate the piece of paper when gluing together. The Flower Folding book should now have four sections of paper. Participants are encouraged to take a moment and practice folding and unfolding their books taking note of how the alternating pattern works as a whole.
STEP 7

Participants will now create a front and back cover. Cut two pieces of colored paper in the shape of a square roughly the size of your Flower book when it’s folded up. Glue each piece of colored paper on the front and back of your book. When both covers are securely glued grab a section of ribbon that will act as a way to tie and untie your folding book as if it is a gift to yourself or someone else. Align the center section of the ribbon with the back cover of your book and glue directly in the middle. Participants will now have a piece of ribbon attached to the back of their book. Flip the book over so that the front cover is pointing up and tie the ribbon into a bow. The flower folding process is now complete.
As a culminating step, participants will spend time attaching stickers and words that represent the forms of self-care, self-compassion, and self-talk introduced in the beginning of the workshop. Disman presents the ways the Flower book unfolds, making it different from a traditional western codex book. The artist shows participants a process she calls found writing. Using a magazine or newspaper start to look through the writing and graphics and make note of the words that stand out to you. Use scissors to cut out words and phrases, not paying too much attention to coherence or linear order of the words. Begin to glue the words down in your folding book. Play around with different arrangements alternating words with different graphics and meaning that together make interesting statements. When complete, show your book to others and share your thoughts and feelings surrounding self-care, self-compassion, and anything else the bookmaking process has taught you.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is self-compassion?
- What is self-care?
- How does self-talk affect the ways we are compassionate with ourselves?
- How does our self-compassion relate to the way we treat others?
- Bookmaking is a way to meditate on our feelings, thoughts, and ideas. What are other ways we can practice self-care and self-compassion?

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Now that you have learned the technical aspects of making a Flower Folding book, spend some time playing and experimenting with the technique. Oftentimes when learning a new technique our minds are more focused on doing things “correctly” taking away from the meditative aspect of book making. As a follow up create another Flower Folding book focusing more on your self-talk. What feelings, thoughts, and emotions arise? In what ways have you shown yourself compassion lately? In what ways have you shown yourself care? This time when you finish your second flower folding book write down words or draw symbols that represent the thoughts that came up. Write down words or draw symbols that represent changes you would like to make in your life that will create more space for self-care and self-compassion. When finished, share this process with a friend or loved one as a way to share what you have learned.

RELATED RESOURCES

- Students at Otis Lab Press share different options for bookbinding including a simple foldable zine.
- Rebecca Chamlee of Otis College presents a workshop on how to make a "Flutter Book"
- An advanced workshop on how to create a Long Stitch Bookbinding
ACCESS AND EQUITY

Teachers and parents can consider their role in modifying workshop instructions in the following ways:

• Vocalize and provide visual examples for expected technical and physical outcomes for all tasks. When explaining how to create a fold use your hands to mimic the folding motion. For example when creating a flower fold open and close your hands together as if it is a flower blooming and shutting. This gesture will help aid in the comprehension of how the flower fold functions as a whole. When glueing together pieces of paper emphasize the alternating pattern that makes the larger Folding Flower book possible.

• Incorporate analogies and context about self-care, self-compassion, and self-talk throughout the lesson in order to help students make connections between what they are doing and the larger ideas being conveyed. Share ways you practice self-care and self-compassion. Explain that our ability to take care of ourselves is connected to the ability to take care of others. Share examples of how we take care of each other. Emphasize that the bookmaking process itself is a form of self-care because it provides space to create, play, and listen to our self-talk.

• Check for understanding and comprehension of complex ideas by providing time for questions and discussions. Use the list of proposed discussion questions or modify them to meet the specific needs of your student or participant. Spend time making connections about how the level to which we are compassionate to ourselves matches the level to which we are able to be compassionate towards others. Positive self-talk has the potential to inform the ways we speak to others.

• If necessary, provide extra time for specific technical tasks including decorating the Flower Fold book or the cutting and pasting of found words. Encourage experimentation with the found word process by allowing students to write in their own words.
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Debra Disman is a Los Angeles-based artist working primarily in the form of the book, both as a solo practitioner and in the public sphere of community engagement. As a maker and teaching artist, she creates work and projects which push the boundaries of the book into new forms and materials, inviting altered ways of viewing the world and how we inhabit it. Her work is shown in a wide range of museums, galleries, universities and libraries including Launch LA; The Mike Kelly Gallery at Beyond Baroque in Venice, CA; The Brand Library and Art Center in Glendale, CA; LA’s Craft Contemporary; The Long Beach Museum of Art; The University of the Arts in Philadelphia; The Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA; The University of Puget Sound; and the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery.

ABOUT ARTS LEARNING LAB AND 18TH STREET ARTS CENTER

Arts Learning Lab @ Home is a series of live online arts classes for kids and families schooling from home. These hands-on artmaking workshops (which are posted as on-demand videos after each workshop) are led by professional artists in residence at 18th Street as well as members of our national and international artist community. The workshops are taught in both English and Spanish for those teachers that are bilingual, and are live translated in both English and Spanish. The workshops cover a range of fun, hands-on, and participatory ideas that connect with larger social issues.

You can visit more lessons at http://18thstreet.org/allathome

Founded in 1988, 18th Street Arts Center is one of the top 20 artist residency programs in the US, and the largest in Southern California. Conceived as a radical think tank in the shape of an artist community, 18th Street supports artists from around the globe to imagine, research, and develop significant, meaningful new artworks and share them with the public to foster radical imagination, empathy, and positive social change.