

Body Mapping

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Set the scene

Understand body mapping

Body mapping is a **creative arts-based practice** that can help you explore, express, and process your experiences, feelings, and identity in relation to a particular context.

Through drawing, painting, collage, sewing, writing, and beyond, you **create a visual representation of your body**, exploring what has shaped you, what you're carrying, and what you want to reclaim (or proclaim).

There is no right or wrong way to do it.

Create a safe space

- **Make a playlist:** If you enjoy listening to music as part of your creative process, set up a playlist in advance of songs that will inspire, empower or ground you. Here's ours.
- **Check in with yourself:** Ask whether you are in a good space to engage with body mapping. Take the time to centre yourself in whichever way that looks for you, whether it's a walk through the woods, your favourite TV show, a yoga session, or a cozy video game.
- **Get in the zone:** Set up a comfortable area to work. This might be at your dining table with a glass of wine, on your sofa surrounded by friends, on the kitchen floor with the lights low, in your bedroom wrapped in a duvet, or even out in a park on a picnic blanket.

Gather your materials

Prep your body mapping surface:
Coat a piece of canvas with mixture of 1 part PVA glue and 1 part white primer, Alternatively, pick up some thick, textured paper (like watercolour paper) or any other surface you have available (like a flattened cardboard box). It can be any size!

Gather supplies for your art box:

- Paint and/or paint pens
- Markers
- Stickers
- Pastels or crayons
- Coloured pencils or pens
- Magazines for collage
- Needle and thread
- Any other materials you'd enjoy!

Do the thing

Step 1: Reflect

Determine the context in which you will explore your embodied experiences:

- A particular issue or system (e.g. trans healthcare, abortion, migration)?
- An organisation or community (e.g. your workplace, a grassroots movement)?
- A specific moment or life stage?
- A different theme or context?

Ask yourself (or discuss with a friend):

- When you think about yourself in that context, what does it feel like?
- Where do those feelings show up in your body?
- Are any particular visuals or colours emerging with those feelings?
- What do you think of when you reflect on these experiences?

Step 2: Embody

Envision your body:

- When you imagine your body actially existing in the context you're reflecting on, what position does it take? Are you standing up, sitting, lying down?
- Your body doesn't have to be human. What shape do you imagine your body taking? Perhaps this is a robot, a ghost, or some other abstract form.

Create an outline:

- If you are crafting a life-size body map, have a friend or family member outline your body on the canvas in the position you envisioned using a thick marker.
- If you are creating a smaller body map or one not based on your human form, sketch the outline you've envisioned on your canvas.

Step 3: Create

Craft your body map:

- Grab the art supplies you feel most inspired to use.
- Thinking back on your reflection, depict the visuals (colours, images, words) that you associate with your embodied experiences on your body map.
- Draw, paint, write, collage, sew, and craft to your heart's content! This process takes as log as you want it to.
- If you need to take a break or pause and come back to it, feel free. This doesn't have to be completed in one session.

Close out

Step 4: Review

Consider your body map:

- Take a look at all the elements on your body map. What does each mean and represent?
- Consider journaling what you've uncovered from your body map.

Centre yourself:

- Body mapping can be a taxing and emotional experience.
- Give yourself grace.
- Do something relaxing or joyful.



Special thanks to Ryan Biskupović-Goulding