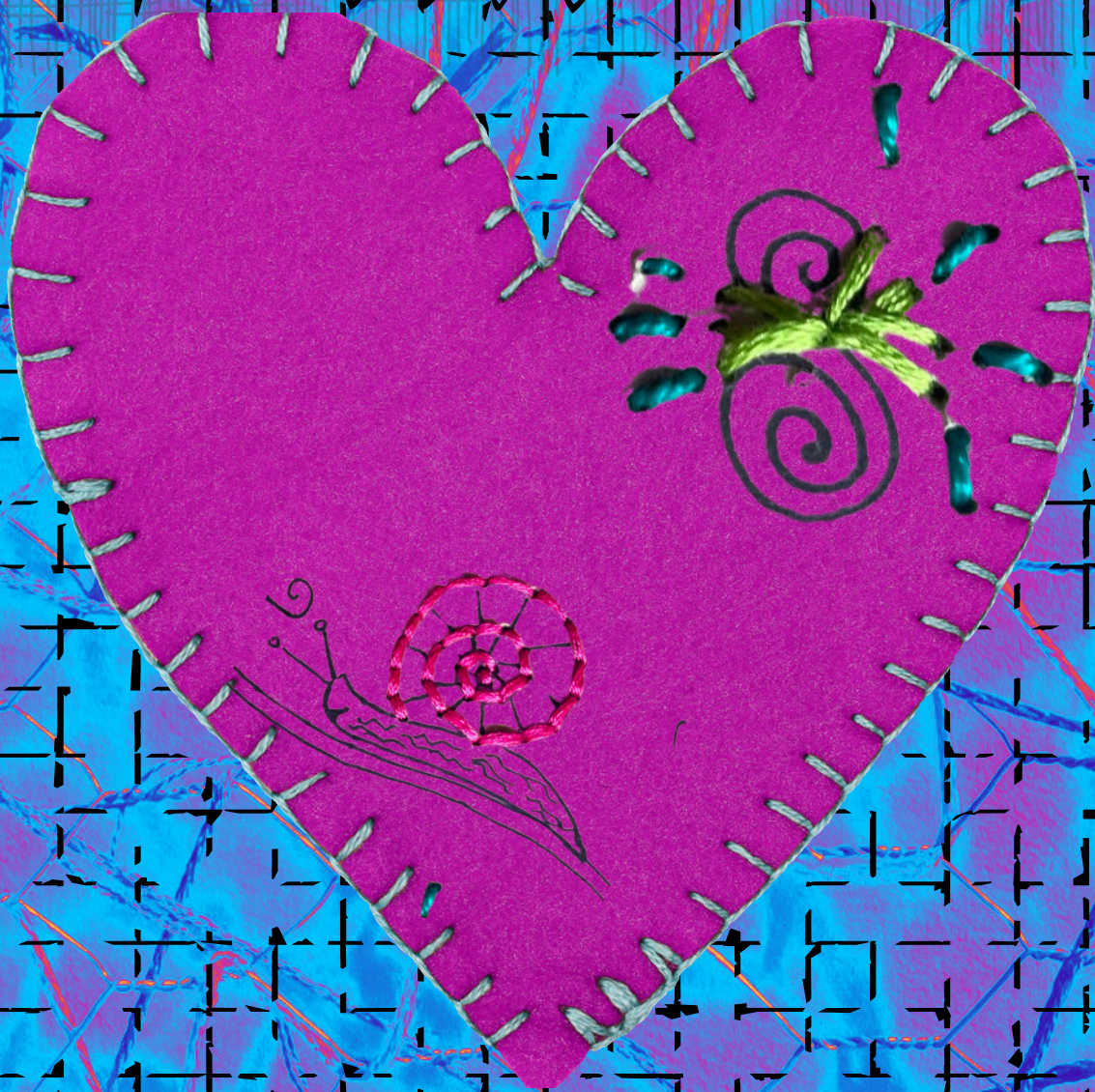


# How to Heal?

A creative resource with 'how to' guides to explore resilience, mindfulness and nature, from a queer perspective.



By Aimee Blease-Bourne &  
Annie Higgins

## An Introduction

Welcome to the How to Heal? Resource Pack. The pack is born from a vibrant LGBTQ+ craft project about queerness, collaboration, community and change. We've joined forces with queer artists and young people in Herefordshire to spark moments where craft meets activism, focusing on the landscapes of the Wye Valley.

Inside, you'll find a treasure trove of 'how-to' guides and inspiration to fuel your own craftivist journey. Whether you're looking to express yourself or champion environmental causes by leading a workshop, this resource is tailored for you by the LGBTQ+ community.

This project has brought together artists, activists and young people to imagine a queer future and plan how we can build tools to care for ourselves and our natural world.

We have focussed on craft skills and education, which can give us agency when we feel powerless. Craft allows us to slow down our consumption, consider our material choices and make a direct, positive, impact on the shape of the world around us. When we make as a group we form a community and direct energy towards caring for each other and our surroundings.

This approach of building with care provides mutual benefit. When we learn alongside nature and become more aware of our connection and responsibility to it, we can resist taking control and minimise our impact on it. We also learn to advocate for nature alongside ourselves. We begin to fight for a Queer future with environmental protection and connection as its foundation.

In return, we are able to engage with a world of abundance, diversity and fluidity. We can find affirmation when we see that plant and animal biology is far from binary. We can experience the mental and physical health benefits of green spaces and build resilience to overwhelming bad news by taking direct positive action.

Queer Ecology recognises that nature is queer and queerness is natural. This project invites you to consider your perspective and find the connections between your identity and the world around you.


Queer Ecology comes from a need to radically change our relationship to the environment. It is a way of looking at queerness and nature in partnership. We can often make assumptions about people and the natural world – that queerness is unnatural, that nature always follows rules, or that people should be in control of the world around them. This kind of thinking builds rigid categories and hierarchies and blinds us to the vital role that chaos, diversity and connection play in life on earth.

Queer Ecology seeks to deconstruct these harmful assumptions and binaries and imagine a world based on complexity and care. It follows on from work done by BIPOC environmentalists who have demonstrated that humans are not separate from nature, and challenged boundaries around who can create and define knowledge.

Queer Ecology is about approaching nature with curiosity. It is about questioning and finding creative ways to understand and connect to our world, without asking it to conform to our expectations.

From a Queer perspective, we can understand how harmful it is to reduce the complexity of life to a single biological need or category. When we see natural landscapes of vibrant biodiversity replaced by single monocultures of hyper-efficient crops, perhaps we can relate and recognise the loss and suppression of our own community.

Generations of trying to assert control over nature and human expression has caused unimaginable damage. However, Queer Ecology asserts that this damage is not irreparable. It seeks to find the connection between natural and human diversity and design a future that makes space for both.



By Annie Higgins

# Creative Journaling Prompts

Writing our thoughts gets ideas out of our heads and into a new context. It becomes far easier to play around with these thoughts, see them for what they are and make new creative connections between them. At first, it can be difficult, we often associate creativity with an end product and feel pressure to write something 'good' or 'original' which can make us avoid even starting. However, creativity is play and can be about exploring our thoughts and opinions without worrying about presenting a finished piece to other people. Ask yourself how you connect with nature and queerness, use these prompts as a starting point and allow yourself to follow the ideas that interest you. There are no rules here!

## Materials

Pens  
Pencils  
Paper or journal

OPTIONAL:  
Stickers  
Washi Tape

1

### FREE WRITING

Set a timer for 5 minutes and start writing whatever comes to mind.

Break through any blank-page anxiety and just start writing. If it helps, try starting the page with a big scribble or just introduce yourself – anything to get your pen moving on paper. Then spend five minutes putting down any thoughts as they come. Try not to judge what you write, it's all about warming up and getting used to writing while you think.



**2**

## COLLAGE POEM

Read through what you've just written. Highlight any lines that stand out to you and list them on a new page.

What happens when you rearrange these ideas? Can you change the meaning? Can you bring together two unrelated thoughts into a new idea?

Try to create a poem using only what you've already written. Make a note of anything that comes to mind or interests you while you play with these words.

**3**

## CREATIVE RESPONSE

Find a piece of writing, image, or video that made you think about nature or queerness – or both! It can be positive or negative.

Look at this piece of media again and ask yourself what it means. What is it saying? What language or imagery does it use? How does it make you feel?

Now write a response to this piece – it could be a letter, a song or poem. Focus on how you feel and what you would like to say to whoever created the piece in front of you.


**4**

## SENSORY WRITING

Write a description or poem of an experience of being in nature.

Play with perspective – what would your garden or local park look like if you were 5cm tall? How would it feel to be a tree in the middle of a city? Does your queer identity affect how you feel in nature?

Try to be as specific and descriptive as possible, use all of your senses, and look back to any words or ideas you've gathered in your other writing if you get stuck!





5

## GATHERING WORDS

If you're struggling to find a starting point, or for inspiration, you can generate a list of words to incorporate into your writing.

**To help you focus on Queer Nature try this:**

Write down 15 words you associate with climate change and 15 words you associate with Queer identity.

Create a poem that includes at least 3 words from each list.

**To challenge yourself to think creatively and make new connections try this:**

Flip through a book and choose a random word from a page. Repeat until you have 10 random words.

Challenge yourself to make these random words seem like they belong – you may be surprised at the connections you can make!

6

## FOCUSSED WRITING

Read over all the writing you've gathered so far. Notice what you've focussed on. Are there any ideas or words that keep coming up? Have you made any connections between queerness and nature? Why/why not?

Make a note of anything that you notice and repeat the free writing exercise from prompt one.

This time, try to focus on Queer Nature. Hopefully, your head is now full of thoughts and ideas inspired by the previous prompts.

It's easy to forget that our ideas have value. If your perspective is often ignored or silenced then you may feel ashamed of recording your thoughts, or pressured to create something 'worthwhile.' Journaling can be playful and relaxing but it can also help you reclaim and organise your ideas.

Celebrate the writing you have in front of you now – it may be scrappy and unfinished but it's all yours! Whether you use your writing to inspire larger creative projects, or just to get to know yourself better, the more you allow yourself to release your thoughts onto a page, the more comfortable you'll become with seeing and engaging with your ideas out in the world.

Self-knowledge and expression is a powerful thing.



By Oly Bliss

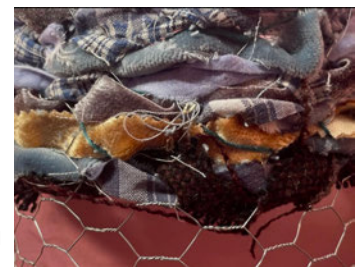
# Mindfully Queering Materials from the Landscape into Craft Objects

Activity for group with leader

This activity can help reimagine and redefine fixed labels and aid participants in grasping the fluidity. It prompts reflection on how social norms dictate what something 'should' or 'should not' be. By engaging in this process, participants can envision and transform materials into new forms.



Invite participants to collect and utilise any raw materials as a starting point for crafting something queer: something new, unique and reflective.



Conduct your workshops by giving participants freedom to explore the materials and create forms. Encourage participants to explore raw materials mindfully, allowing their creativity to flourish.

## Tools

Scissors  
String and thread  
Stanley knife and cutting board  
Ruler  
Sewing and knitting needles, crochet hooks  
Natural dyes, such as turmeric  
Pliers  
Chicken wire and gloves  
Wire

## Materials

Second-hand clothing/bedding  
Cardboard, paper, magazines  
Straw, cotton, dried leaves, and grass for stuffing  
Willow and sticks for shaping and construction  
Wool/yarn and thread, preferably natural  
Natural dyes or paints for decoration

## Potential risks to include in risk assessment

- Sharp objects and scissors need to be carefully managed. Consider their number and placement and ensure adequate supervision.
- Stanley knives may be included for older groups but require closer supervision.
- When using chicken wire, wire and natural materials wearing gloves is advised.

- Consider the location of the workshop and how materials will be stored and disposed of.
- Assess the level of mess allowed in the space.
- Foraged items may require cleaning and drying before use.
- Identify synthetic materials for workshops involving natural dyeing processes.
- Provide a few pre-made examples for participants to understand the creative possibilities. Encourage participants to choose materials freely and explore creatively without a specific end goal.

## Discussion Points

As a group discuss what queer means. Consider the idea of 'queering' an object. What does that look like? Use action words to encourage your group to experiment with the process of creation.

For example:

modify, knot, rip, weave, unravel, alter, corrupt, stuff, embellish, knit, twist, identity, bend, cut, graft, queer, gouge, unpick, reimagine, subvert, wrap, bundle, crumble, smear.

Encourage reflection on creativity, materials, feelings about the local environment and humanity's impact on it, and societal change through redefining roles and functions. Consider how you wish to capture responses as well.

### Here are some potential questions to ask:

- When was the last time you had the opportunity to be creative for fun?
- When you were handling these materials, what inspired you to start making in this way?
- How does this process make you feel about your local environment?
- What do you feel about humanity's impact on the local environment?
- How do you feel about transforming your materials into something queer?
- Can these materials have a new function or purpose?
- Why do you think assigning labels and functions to materials is helpful or harmful?



# Filming, animating or displaying the creations

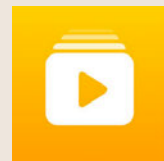
## Life Lapse

You can use a smartphone to film your creation and use a free app Life Lapse to make free stop motion animations. The app has simplified free main functions for making simple movies with its free tools. You can subscribe to the app to get more advanced features if desired, but the free parts of the app will work for basic needs. The app has tutorials embedded in the app when you first open it which will explain how to use the app.



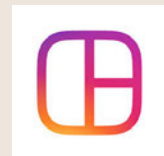
## ImgPlay

You can use a smartphone to turn a group of creations into a carousel of images that will be shown one after another. You can change the order and speed of the images and how many times they are repeated. You can turn these into GIFs but that is not a free feature of the app.



## Layout

Layout is an app which can be used to turn images into a collage. This is a free app which works with Instagram but can also be used to crop and arrange images simply.



## Further research and Reading

If there are people interested in further academic reading, please follow this link to seam collective website which provides a blog article created by Oliver Bliss and Lou Baker during their research at a residency in the Andrew Brownsword Gallery at the Edge, University of Bath.

<https://seamcollective.org/a-deeper-dive-into-permission-to-play/>

By Annie Higgins

# Tumeric Eco-Printing

Photosensitive printing uses a surface coated in a pigment that changes colour when you expose it to sunlight. To create images, you can lay objects or cut out stencils onto this surface to block the light and create shadows. You may have seen blue cyanotype prints, which are made using this method but involve very harsh chemicals. However, there are many bright pigments found in plants that can be used in a similar way to create a more eco-friendly version of these prints called anthotypes.

Using natural materials is a way to slow down our consumption. It can also help us to feel more connected to the environment. This technique for Tumeric eco-printing can help us reflect on the beauty and diversity of the natural world. You can also use it as a base for your creative journalling or as part of a zine. Visit [www.makingforchangeexpo.com/how-to-make-a-zine](http://www.makingforchangeexpo.com/how-to-make-a-zine) for more information about zines and a how-to instruction sheet.

Using turmeric produces lovely yellow and warm brown tones. You can research and experiment with different plants to achieve different colours – spinach and beetroot work well.

## Tools and materials

- Powdered Turmeric
- Rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer
- A small container, like a tub, bowl or cup
- Washing up gloves
- A tray or tablecloth to protect your working surface
- A large paintbrush
- Paper to print onto
- Some objects you'd like to make prints of
- A sheet of clear glass or plastic – the glass out of an old photoframe works well



## Method

Your finished image will be a silhouette of whatever you lay on the paper. Leaves, flowers or twigs in interesting shapes are a great place to start. Be careful – turmeric stains everything, including your hands! Make sure you wear gloves and cover your clothes and the surface you're working on to protect them.

If you work in sunlight, it will start to develop your image before you're ready, so it's best to prepare your paper inside with as little light as possible. Once it's ready, the paper can be stored out of the light in a box or cupboard until a sunny day when you're ready to use it.

1

Pour rubbing alcohol or hand sanitiser into the small container and mix in turmeric powder a spoonful at a time until you have a mixture the consistency of runny paint. You won't need much to cover a few pieces of paper – start with a small cup or about 50ml worth of the mixture

2

Paint your paper with a thin layer of the mixture. Let it dry for a few minutes and then add a second layer. It doesn't need to be thick, just enough to stain the paper.

3

Leave the papers out overnight to dry. Once they have dried completely, you'll notice a crusty layer of excess turmeric on the surface. This can be brushed away easily and you'll end up with a smooth bright yellow colour. If you brush it into a container it can be saved and used for more prints later.

4

When you're ready to print, lay the prepared paper out in a sunny place with your object on top. If it's something that it likely to blow away in the wind, like a leaf, lay your clear sheet of glass or plastic over it as well – this will hold the paper and object down without blocking the sun.

5

Leave it out in the sun to develop. The time it takes will vary - the brighter the day, the faster it works. If it's very sunny, the print may be done after an hour but if there are clouds it may take 3-4. Don't move your object to check if it's done, it has to stay in exactly the same spot. Try leaving out a test piece next to your work with a simple object like a book or mug on it, which you can peek under without worrying.

6

After a couple of hours, your prints should be finished! Where it's been exposed to the sun, the turmeric layer will have lightened, leaving the area in shadow a darker yellow. When you bring them back inside you'll notice that this area gets even darker over time, making your image more obvious.

7

Repeat and enjoy experimenting with different found objects, or cut-out stencils of your own! If you want to display your pieces, make sure you keep them out of direct sunlight or it will fade them.

Find more resources online at [craftspace.co.uk/how-to-heal](https://craftspace.co.uk/how-to-heal)

**#HowToHeal**



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## Contributions

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Oly Bliss

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## Queering the Wye

Queering the Wye is a project by the Wye Valley River Festival that focuses on uniting rural LGBTQ+ individuals through creative and environmentally-themed workshops and experiences. It includes activities such as LGBTQ+ youth sessions with a focus on creativity, environmentalism, and craftivism, queer ecology workshops, and the creation of silk banners for display at festivals. Additionally, the project works on initiatives like the Safer Spaces Ally Scheme to create a network of safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals.

## Craftspace

Craftspace is a charity creating opportunities to see, make and be curious about exceptional contemporary craft. We are based in Birmingham and work collaboratively regionally, nationally and internationally. We build relationships between artists, people and organisations and encourage the sharing of ideas, skills and knowledge.

We have 30 years' experience and continue to learn, push boundaries and challenge ideas. Craftspace initiates artistic programmes which stimulate creative excellence, critical thinking and understanding of contemporary crafts in the widest social and cultural contexts.