

## **The Art of Feeling Calm**

When we talk about healthy habits with our teens, we often focus on eating well, staying active, and getting enough sleep. During Red Ribbon Week we want to remind our students of another powerful habit that supports mental health and well-being: creating art.

Research shows that making art benefits the brain and boosts well-being, no matter your skill level. Whether your teen loves to draw or insists they “can’t even make a stick figure,” the simple act of creating can help them feel calmer and more focused.

### **Why it helps:**

- Art boosts mood. It activates the brain’s reward center, increasing pleasure and reducing stress.
- Art lowers anxiety. Studies show it can reduce cortisol levels, even after a short creative session.
- Art builds mindfulness. Focusing on colors, textures, or patterns draws attention to the present moment and away from worries.
- Think of it as creative fitness—just like physical exercise, regular creative activity can strengthen overall wellness.

### **Easy ways to start:**

- Keep a few “adult coloring sheets” and colored pencils or markers handy for quick, low-pressure creative breaks.
- Encourage your teen to experiment with different art forms, such as painting, knitting, baking, or writing.
- Set aside 10-15 minutes a few times a week for creative time, either solo or together. (Have your teen grab a coloring sheet while you prepare dinner, or plan a family art time in the evening.)

Even a few minutes of creative expression can boost mental health—encourage your teen to try it and notice the difference!