

Refresh your craft with a Zentangle break

Draw patterns, de-stress and create from within

Do you find scrapbooking stressful? Of course not! After all, you have plenty of time to complete your wedding and baby albums and finish those holiday cards as well as print your photos while organizing the digital images on the computer and backing them up to a hard drive!

Let's face it, sometimes this fun hobby can feel like a pressure-filled job. We often work too hard on our cards or scrapbook pages and we are our own worst critic when it comes to creative endeavors. We love our craftwork, but living up to some self-imposed ideal is what causes stress. One way to de-stress yourself while still enjoying these activities is to create a Zentangle.

Zentangle was co-founded by Maria Thomas and Rick Roberts for just this purpose. It is a process combining art with meditation by drawing repetitive patterns. This concept is so much more than scribbling in notebook margins during a boring lecture or business meeting. Because the pattern strokes are deliberate and focused, your mind relaxes, much like taking a break from the computer to walk around or drink a cup of tea. If you think you are not an artist, or that you are clumsy with your pen, Zentangle will surprise you with a sense of power and pleasure at your ability. I know it did for me.

When I discovered Zentangle and saw the intricate mix and weave of lines, I was absolutely intimidated by these artists' works yet captivated by the energy in them. I discovered that each pattern, or tangle, is a combination of one or two straight or curved lines repeated over and over. With the tangle deconstructed into three or four steps, I felt in control.

If you have 15 minutes to spare, then you can create a Zentangle. The process slows you down. I often "tangle" at bedtime to ease the bazillion thoughts and to-dos that ricochet through my mind. I have been tangling for over



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a year now and it helps relax me.

Part of the appeal is that Zentangle embraces the tactile experience we crafters enjoy. The Zentangle tiles are textured 3-1/2 inch paper squares, sturdy like a restaurant drink coaster, and easy to slide into a purse or bag to take to crops or the doctor's office. Zentangle uses black on white, which eliminates the stress of choosing or matching a color. The pen is made with strong black archival ink, something you probably have tucked away for journaling on your scrapbook pages. This is the perfect opportunity to unearth your pen and let it breathe on your project.



Outline a chipboard letter to create a stunning Zentangle monogram on a scrapbook page.



A Zentangle has no "up" or "down." It is meant to be viewed and appreciated from any angle.

How do you start? To break up the intimidating blank white space of a tile, use a pencil to draw a string of random lines and squiggles on it. These defined shapes and manageable sections challenge you to adapt patterns into that space or dare you to draw outside the lines. If you do not know what string you want to create, clip art or rubber stamps work well as your shape. You can trace over paisley- or flower-patterned paper for shapes. You can mask an area to provide an outline, even tangle your child's handprint.

The tangles are familiar designs, recognizable geometric shapes such as checkerboard squares, circles, orbs, triangles, and diamonds. I stare at a plain, strung tile no more than 10 seconds. If I am smacked with a creative brain freeze, I have several tangles that I default to, ones that I am familiar and comfortable with, enjoy doing and am always striving to improve.

Like anything else in life, my Zentangles have improved with time and repetition, and I have expanded my creativity. Because the completed project is intricate and delicate, this technique is versatile for any craft project. You can create an artistic and unique monogram for a page or card. Use it to frame a photo. Die



Zentangles make striking embellishments.

cut shapes out of a larger Zentangle as page embellishments. Even if you scrapbook in digital, you can benefit from this. Drawing a Zentangle lets your eyes refocus and exercises your fingers. Then you can scan the image and present the original as a gift. Other things you can Zentangle on are canvas bags, bookmarks, gift bags and boxes, a chipboard album cover, or even a T-shirt.

Zentangles are perfect to incorporate into your paper crafting, but they can be their own

stand-alone art. Display them so you have a constant reminder that you *are* an artist, whatever you do. For more information about Zentangle visit www.zentangle.com.

Diana Hirsch is a Certified Zentangle Teacher and an award-winning freelance writer who has been passionate about scrapbooking since her childhood days. She can be reached at diwolf@aol.com or through her blog at www.wolfhowlings.wordpress.com.

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