

1) WORKING WITH SYMBOLS

“DRAW YOURSELF AS A PLANT/FLOWER/TREE”

Symbolic exercises allow clients to explore themselves indirectly through metaphor and imagery. Working symbolically can sometimes feel safer, gentler, or less exposing than speaking directly about emotions or experiences.

Drawing oneself as a plant can support exploration of:

- identity
- emotional wellbeing
- relationships
- resilience
- vulnerability
- belonging
- personal growth



This exercise is simple, accessible, and entirely client led. The counsellor does not need specialist knowledge about symbolism or artistic interpretation. The focus is not on analysing the image, but on staying curious about the client’s own experience and meaning-making.

The Activity

Invite the client:

“If you were a plant, what kind of plant would you be? Draw yourself in whatever way feels right.”



1) WORKING WITH SYMBOLS

“DRAW YOURSELF AS A PLANT/FLOWER/TREE”

Rather than assigning meaning, the counsellor simply invites reflection.

For example:

- “Tell me about this part here.”
- “I notice you spent time on these roots.”
- “I’m wondering what this area is like for you.”
- “What stands out to you when you look at it?”
- “I’m curious about this part you haven’t mentioned yet.”



The aim is not to “work out” what the image means, but to create space for the client’s own associations, emotions, and reflections. Sometimes clients immediately know what a symbol represents. Sometimes they don’t. Both responses are valid.

A client may say:

- “I’m not sure why I drew that.”
- “I don’t know what it means.”
- “It just felt right.”

There is no need to push for explanation or certainty.

The therapeutic value does not depend on fully understanding every symbol within the artwork.

An important part of this approach is letting go of any attempt to know better than the client!



1) WORKING WITH SYMBOLS

“DRAW YOURSELF AS A PLANT/FLOWER/TREE”

For many clients, this non-interpretive approach feels emotionally safer and less exposing, particularly for those who fear being analysed, struggle with perfectionism, feel anxious about creativity, find direct emotional language difficult or need time before deeper reflection feels possible.



STARTING WITH CURIOSITY

It can help to keep the tone light, collaborative, and invitational. These are the sorts of phrases we have found to be helpful:



“I tried this on a training course recently and wondered if you’d like to give it a try.”

“Sometimes people find it easier to explore things visually rather than only talking - we could experiment with that if you’d like.”

“Some clients find this helps them reflect differently - we can always stop if it doesn’t feel useful.”

“You don’t need to be artistic for this. Stick figures absolutely count.”

“We can keep it really simple - even colours, shapes, or a few words are enough.”

“Sometimes creative exercises help us notice things from a slightly different angle.”

[CLICK HERE](#)
TO PURCHASE THE FULL
5 WAYS OF WORKING
WITH ARTBOOK
E-GUIDE

DESIGNED, WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY KATY BODMAN

