

COLOR MY WORLD

Why your mood, energy and even appetite are swayed by the hues you choose—and how to know what works best for you.

// BY JOANNA POWELL //

When an editor we'll call Janet was a new mom, she and her husband moved into a roomy, newly upgraded, two-story rental house in New Jersey in order to have more space for their baby. At first, Janet found the pink paint scheme throughout the home charming. "I thought the pink walls were a little quirky, but soft and beautiful," she says. Yet after a year of living there, Janet's mood began to change: depression, agitation and feelings of wanting to escape set in. She ended up being hospitalized for an emotional breakdown. Janet has often wondered if the pink paint color had something to do with pushing her over the edge.

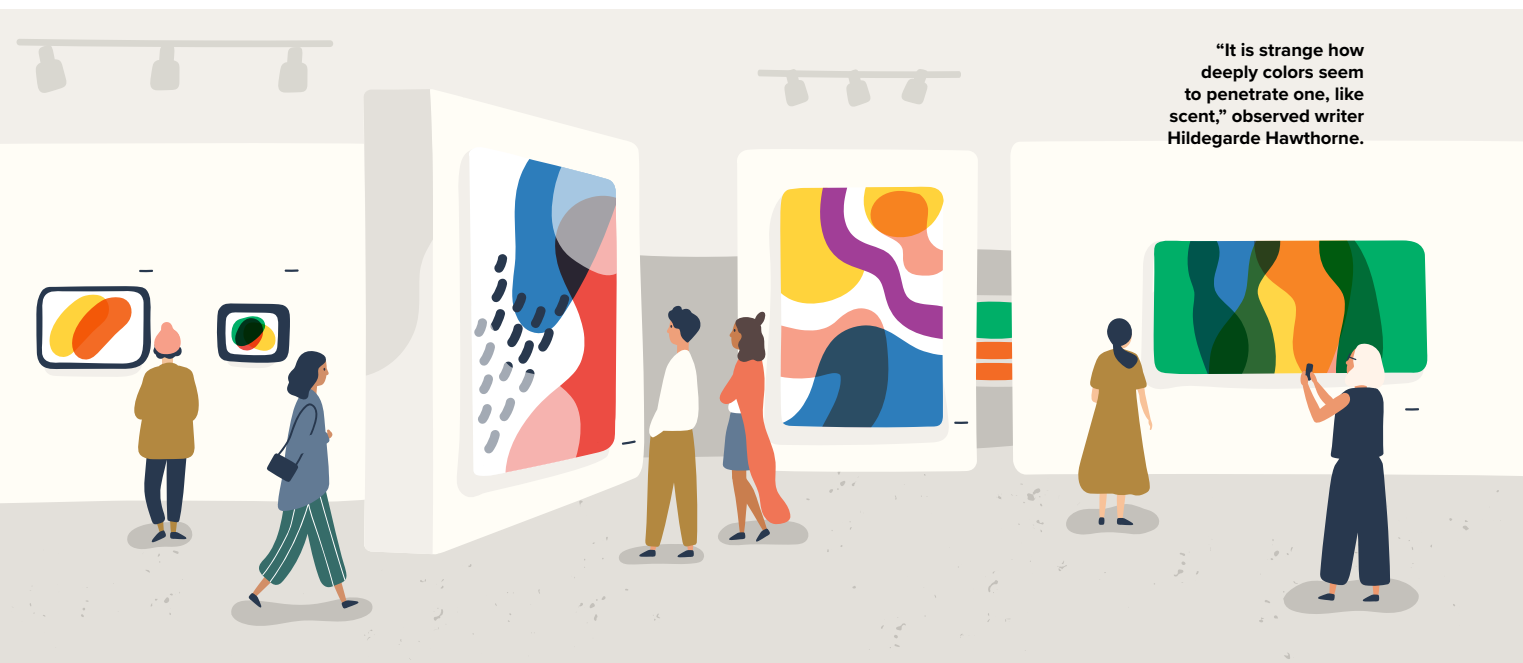
While there's no proof of any direct correlation between pink paint

and a breakdown like Janet's, we do know that "visually-unbalanced environments can certainly feel terrible," notes Rachel Perls, IACCC-NA, architectural color consultant at Hue Consulting in San Francisco. "Under-stimulating, sterile, white-walled rooms, or overstimulating spaces exploding with saturated colors and patterns, will all induce a certain degree of initial discomfort. If Janet had a negative association with the color pink, it would certainly trigger a strong negative response."

The takeaway? The colors we surround ourselves with have a direct bearing on our emotions. Choosing the right paint color for the walls of our homes and offices perhaps has the biggest impact. But the hues of our clothing, linens, even nail polish, are also sending out

"Mere color, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways," observed Irish poet Oscar Wilde.





INTO THE BLUE

What does "Very Peri" say about the times we live in?

The Pantone Color Institute's "color of the year" is traditionally chosen to be emblematic of what's taking place at that moment in time. So, for 2022's selection, the institute invented a brand-new color for the occasion: Very Peri, a dynamic shade of periwinkle blue that is meant to convey a feeling of vision and invention as we move into a world of unprecedented change. "It's unusual to refer to blue as 'happy,'" said Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the institute. "But when you add that red element to it, that's exactly what happened. We felt it was so important to put together a color that encapsulated the feeling of newness." Don't be surprised if you see Very Peri adorning some "new" products when you shop.



strong vibes. Science says colors can excite us, energize us and relax us, among other emotions—a dramatic impact from something we don't give a lot of thought.

"It might not seem like much on the surface. But, choosing the right colors for your home can make a bigger difference in how you feel than you probably think," says Sara Abate Rezvanifar, BDes, of Ambience Design Group. "The colors of your home interior can directly impact your mental health—in either a positive or negative way. For example, having a lot of bright red can make you feel more anxious and easily irritable. Soft blues, on the other hand, can provide a calming environment."

To fully grasp how colors could be impacting you, it's good to get to know a bit about color psychology. Research has shed considerable light on the potent effects color has on the human body. In one study, scientists studied people's responses to different colored placebo pills. "They found that warm-color pills were reported as far more effective than cool-colored pills," says Andre Kazimierski, CEO, Improovy

Painters Ann Arbor. "Researchers have also found that athletes in black uniforms are more likely to receive penalties and be associated with negative qualities compared to uniforms of other colors."

In other studies, color researchers found that certain shades have an effect on shopping choices of consumers—something marketers employ to send subliminal messages to the brain. One of the most notable examples is the so-called "ketchup and mustard theory" used by McDonald's, Wendy's and In-N-Out Burger. Yellow and orange are colors known to make people feel hungry. The color red is associated with emotion and passion. So, to arouse hunger, the colors yellow, orange and red appear generously on fast food signage, packaging and menus. Blue, on the other hand, tends to suppress appetite and can often be found in the logos of diet brands such as Jenny Craig and WW (formerly Weight Watchers).

"Color is so powerful, it is even sometimes used for therapeutic purposes as a holistic treatment," notes Abate Rezvanifar. "For

example, red can stimulate circulation while blue can soothe aches and pains. It's also used to help with mental health conditions."

Whether picking a restaurant for lunch, selecting new paint for your home or deciding which marker to use for the mindful coloring exercises on pages 108–109, the following guide can inform your choices.

RED

Beyond triggering the basic biological response of red=fire=beware, red is an excitable hue that raises energy levels. "It's good for home offices or an entryway," says Abate Rezvanifar. Because red can cause agitation, it's best avoided in the bedroom, where you want to enhance harmony and calm to encourage a good night's rest.

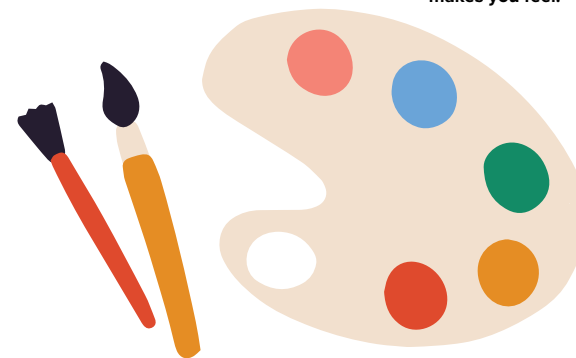
ORANGE

Associated with happiness and enthusiasm, orange has been found to increase energy levels. "It also makes it more difficult to engage in quiet tasks like studying," says Kazimierski. "Businesses also use the color to indicate affordability in products."

YELLOW

This warm, sunny hue evokes "happiness and positive energy," says Abate Rezvanifar, "making it wonderful for kitchens." Because it's also the most visible color, yellow is often used in traffic signs or on

The next time you do mindful coloring, pay attention to the colors you choose and notice how each makes you feel.



SHADES AND SATURATIONS

The primary subtleties refuse to be ignored!

When monitoring color's effect on your mood and well-being, it's important to keep in mind that every color has three components to be considered, says architectural color consultant Rachel Perls, IACC-NA. "These three variables all work in conjunction with one another, so any reaction to a color or color combination will include these characteristics."

- **1. HUE** This is the pure color tone (red, orange, blue) created by the dominant wavelength.
- **2. SATURATION** How intense is the color? This depends on how much white, gray or black is added.
- **3. VALUE** This refers to how light reflects off the color. Is it a shade (black added) or a tint (white added)?

construction workers' vests to draw attention or denote danger. While it is considered an upbeat color, people are more likely to lose their tempers in yellow rooms and babies tend to cry more in yellow rooms. On the upside, yellow has been linked to increased metabolism.

GREEN

Green is one of those colors that has many different psychological effects. Earthier tones, such as sage or oregano, evoke nature, providing soothing, relaxing feelings that can also help alleviate anxiety, depression and nervousness. On the other hand, too much green can cause us to become placid, moody and even lethargic.

BLUE

Although lighter shades of this color are often used as a calming influence, perfect for bedrooms where you want to relax, darker shades can create a cold, disengaged feeling. Known as one of the sad colors, blue can trigger feelings of melancholy and hopelessness. After all, we say that we're "singing the blues" or "feeling blue" when we're feeling gloomy.

PINK

While pink is thought of as soft and soothing, the color of happy peonies and delicate mums, it can also have slightly unnatural qualities. Perhaps you've heard of the term, Drunk Tank Pink? "It was formally called Baker-Miller pink, named for two U.S. naval officers who first tested the effects of the color to try and reduce aggressive and violent behavior in prisoners," says Perls. "The correlation was never adequately proven, though the general public ran with the theory, like painting opponents' locker rooms pink in an attempt to 'weaken' their rival."

PURPLE

Purple is a very polarizing color, perhaps because it's made up of a combination of opposites: red and blue. "It's often associated with positive feelings, which makes it great for a dressing room or hallways," suggests Abate Rezvanifar. But different shades of this regal hue can provoke a variety of emotions. Dark purple can trigger sadness and frustration, and it's said that too much purple can produce feelings of irritability and impatience. Use sparingly!



COLOR therapy

What is your favorite color to wear? How does it make you feel?

What colors mean happiness to you? Why?

What colors agitate you or do you dislike?

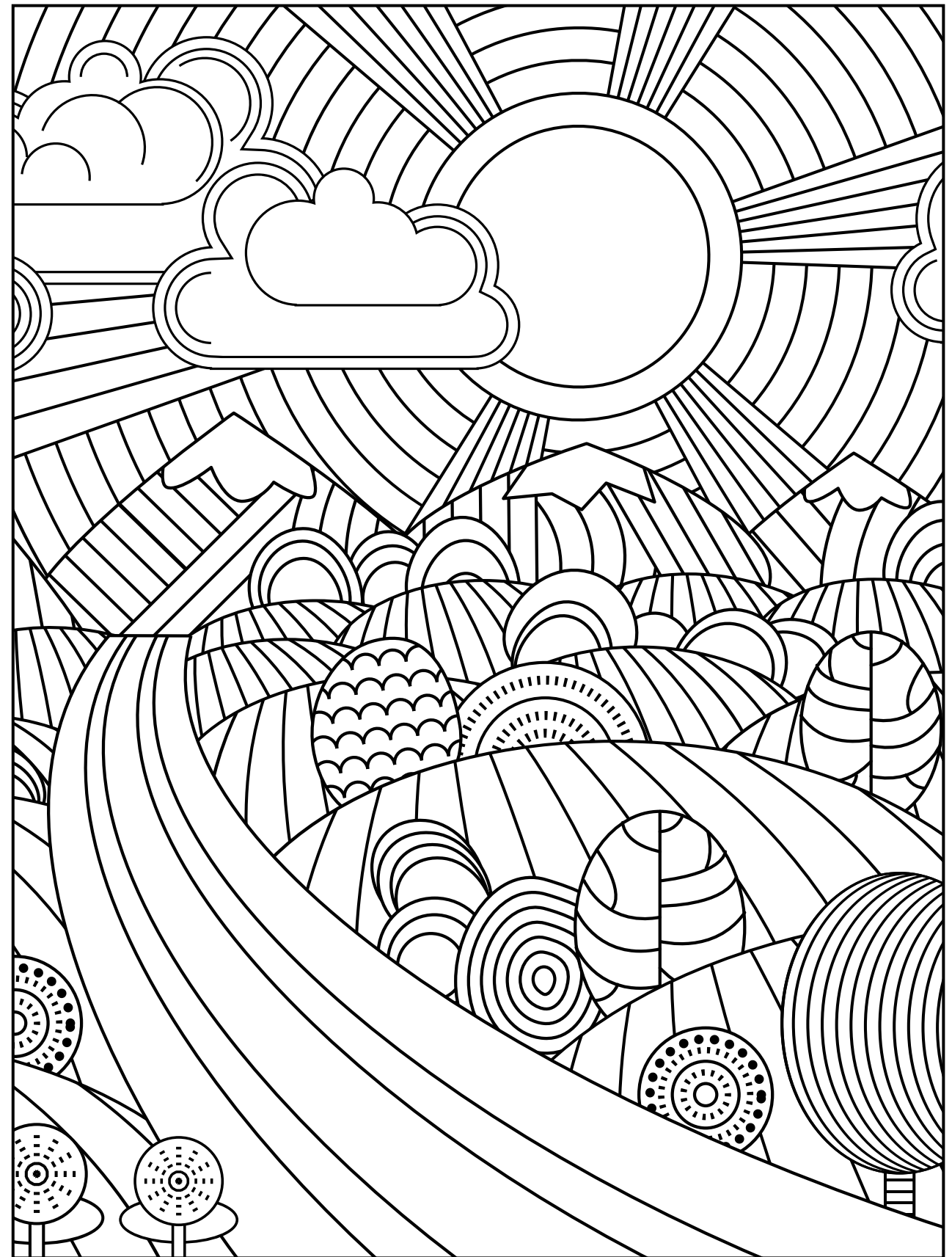


the art of MINDFULNESS

Doodling, drawing and other creative activities help us be present in the moment by encouraging us to notice the sensations we're experiencing.

MINDFUL COLORING

THERE'S A REASON COLORING BOOKS FOR ADULTS ARE POPULAR—THEY CAN HAVE THE SAME CALMING EFFECT AS A MEDITATION PRACTICE.



*Make a Collage of Vivid,
Happy Colors*

*Make a Collage of Things
That Inspire You Right Now*



**“THOSE WHO ARE AWAKE
LIVE IN A STATE OF
CONSTANT AMAZEMENT.”**

JACK KORNFELD

**“I CAN SHAKE OFF EVERYTHING AS
I WRITE; MY SORROWS DISAPPEAR,
MY COURAGE IS REBORN.”**

ANNE FRANK

**“WHAT YOU SEEK IS
SEEKING YOU.”**

RUMI

