

CREATING A COMMUNITY MURAL

A Step-By-Step Guide





Art is a powerful tool. It can bring people together, inspire hope, promote healing, and more. Use this step-by-step guide to create a community mural that will engage your community, explore the therapeutic power of art, and bring visibility to mental health. This can also be a great activity to incorporate into health or art classes in schools to give students a creative outlet to talk about mental health.

STEP 1



Come together as a community to brainstorm using these questions:

What are our values? What is most important to us?
What message do we want to share about mental health?
What brings our community joy/hope/peace?
What images/symbols come to mind when you think of our community?

STEP 2



Which answers to these questions came up most often?

Use these answers to guide the theme of your community mural. For example, if many people in your community said that the lake nearby brings them joy, you could include an image of the lake or more abstract water imagery in your mural.

STEP 3



Choose a safe, approved location for your mural. If you are not able to paint on a wall, consider painting on a large canvas or piece of wood. Make sure that the object you're painting on is wide enough for multiple community members to color/paint at the same time.

STEP 4



Find a community member with art/design experience to use your brainstorming session as a guide for creating the mural design. You could host an art contest by asking local college/high school students or followers of your social media accounts to submit designs for the mural and choose the one you like best. You could also contact local art teachers, tattoo artists, or graphic illustrators to see if they would be interested in the project.



TIP

If you are not able to find someone to design your mural, find a coloring book page online to help guide you. You can add things to the basic design of the coloring book page if you wish. Decide which color each section will be ahead of time, or allow participants to choose their own colors.

STEP 5



Buy all the supplies you will need to bring your mural to life. Determine which medium will work best on the surface you will paint on. For example, different kinds of paint will work best on exterior walls vs. interior walls, a canvas, etc. Be sure to buy brushes and cups for the paint and water. Other groups may choose to create their mural using chalk, paint markers, crayons, etc. You will want to purchase a drop cloth or table cloth, painter's tape, and whatever materials you will need to sketch your design on your chosen surface, such as pencils, chalk, markers, etc.

STEP 6



Use a projector to project the mural design onto the surface you're working on or create a grid on the surface that will serve as a blueprint to help you transfer your design. Use a pencil/chalk/marker or other tool to trace or sketch your design onto the mural surface.

STEP 7



Once the general design has been completed, it's time to create the paint-by-number guide for community members to follow (if this is the process you would like to use). First, assign a number to each of the colors you plan on using. Then, on your design, mark each section with the number that correlates to the color you want that section to be.

STEP 8



Place painter's tape anywhere on the surface that you're working on that you do not want paint to go. This could be on the outer edges of a canvas or on the ceiling if you are painting on a wall. Tape a drop cloth or table cloth on the floor beneath the mural to catch any paint that drips.

STEP 9



Set up a station with all the paint/markers/chalk labeled with the designated number. Participants will come to this table to pick up their materials.



Participants filling in paint-by-number sections of a mural at the 2024 Mental Health America Conference. (Also, see paint station on right.)

STEP 10



Facilitate the activity by helping participants identify the color they'd like to use and the number that this color correlates to. Provide encouragement and support throughout the artistic process. You can also create more of a therapeutic environment by playing soft music/nature sounds or using aroma therapy in the space.

STEP 11

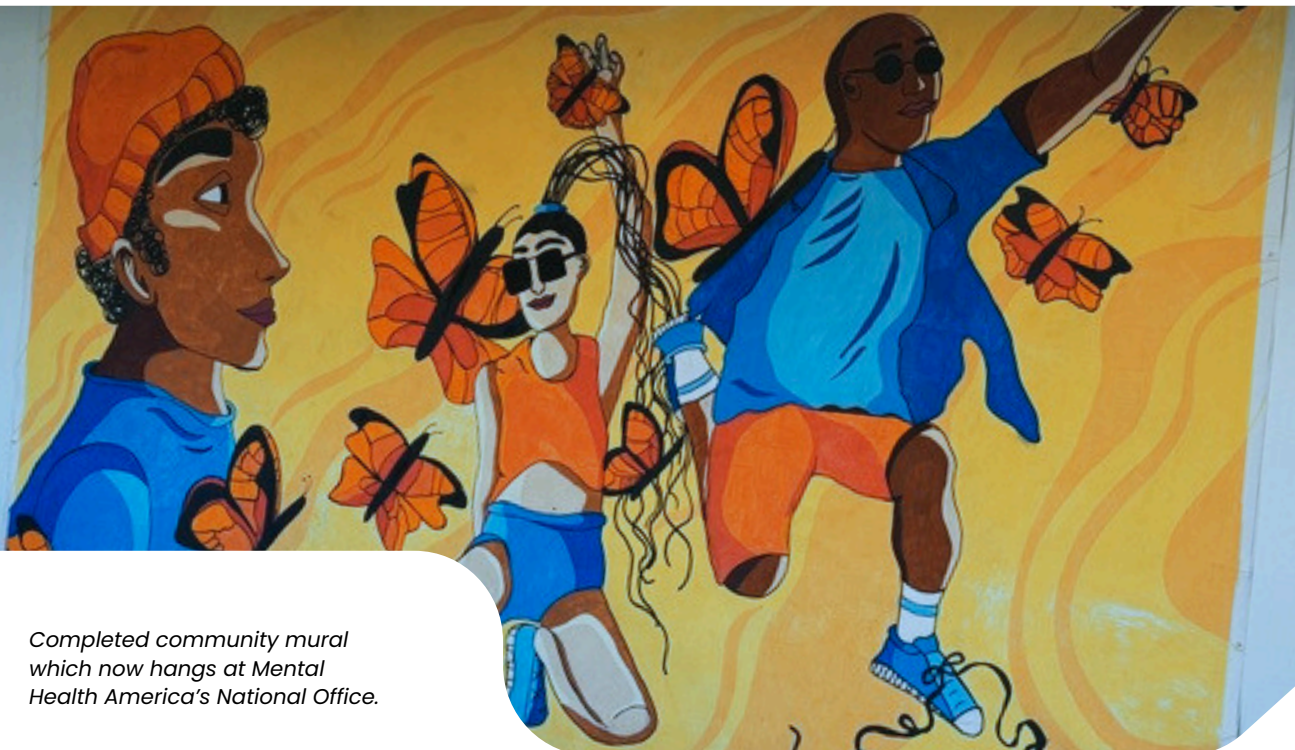


After all the sections have been filled in, make any touch ups you may need to make. Then, if you like, use black or another darker color to outline the different components of the mural.

STEP 12



Enjoy and share your mural! You can even host a celebration when the mural is finished to congratulate everyone and thank them for their participation. This celebration could also be a part of larger event like a health fair, conference, awards ceremony, etc., where the mural could be on display for the community to enjoy. Make sure to share your masterpiece with Mental Health America by tagging us on social or sending photos to info@mhanational.org.



Completed community mural which now hangs at Mental Health America's National Office.