



How to Build Your Own Serenity Kit

A step-by-step guide to building your own do-it-yourself (DIY) Serenity Kit.

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What is a *Serenity Kit*?

The *Serenity Kit* is a thoughtfully **curated kit of sensory objects** designed for youth-supporting professionals like you, to **promote self-care, healing, and sense of safety** in the workplace, designed by [Thrivology](https://www.thrivology.com), a project that translates research into practical resources that youth-supporting professionals can use in the real world.

You can use the sensory objects in the *Serenity Kit* to nurture your own well-being, and other professionals', so you are better prepared to foster **authentic, trusting, healing-centered, and trauma-informed connections** with young people.



Disclaimer



We understand that workplace trauma and burnout are complex issues that cannot be fully addressed with a single resource. The Serenity Kit is not intended to be a comprehensive solution to trauma but rather a supportive tool to help professionals unwind, destress, and de-stimulate. While it can provide moments of relief and support, it is not a substitute for comprehensive trauma care and mental health support.

We also recognize that taking care of yourself looks different for everyone. The Serenity Kit is not meant to prescribe or simplify what self-care should be. Instead, it aims to create moments of peace and calm, reminding you that self-care is personal and can be defined—and reclaimed—in any way you choose.

“Self-care is a lot of things.

It's creating closure (healing on your own).

It's moving on.

It's noticing when you have the power to make a choice.

It's making healthy choices.

It's forgiving yourself.

It's forgiving others.”

*Nedra Glover Tawwab, MSW, LCSW,
Licensed Therapist and New York Times
Bestselling Author*

Why a *Serenity Kit*?

As youth-supporting professionals, you dedicate a lot of time and energy caring for others. You may also carry the heavy burden of the trauma you encounter in your work, along with the weight of your lived experiences.¹

Amidst busy schedules and demanding responsibilities, **it can be hard to prioritize your own healing**. Many workplaces also lack adequate support and resources for nurturing your emotional well-being, which can impede your ability to provide care effectively.²

We looked at the latest research and listened to caregivers like you, to create the ***Serenity Kit***. By aiming to promote serenity—defined as the state of being calm and peaceful—it affirms that **self-care isn't selfish; it's a necessity**. This kit won't fix everything, but it's here as a reminder that you deserve moments of peace amidst the storm.



“If we aren't taking care of ourselves, we can't be there to help [young people],” explained a social worker we interviewed.

Why sensory objects?

Within every *Serenity Kit* is an experience for the senses: a **sight**, a **sound**, a **texture**, a **scent**, and a **taste**. Engaging with the five senses has been shown to be a non-invasive, autonomous, and empowering way to support healing and trauma-informed care.³

By integrating sensory experiences into self-care practices, research shows that we can **process and regulate emotions in a more holistic way**.⁴ Sensory-based interventions are particularly effective in trauma-informed care, as they can **create a safe and regulated environment that fosters healing and reduces the risk of re-traumatization**.⁵



“I truly enjoy my time with the Serenity Kit. It serves as a temporary escape on those super busy, high-stress-level days. It gives me that much-needed moment to breathe, and when I’m coloring the postcards, I usually forget about the troubles of the day,” said a coordinator at a family planning center.

How can I use a *Serenity Kit*?



Where

- Use the *Serenity Kit* in places where you work with young people (e.g., schools, community centers, counseling offices, or healthcare settings).
- Keep the kit easily accessible in a designated area in your workspace.
- Make the kit portable, so you can use it in various settings, if you wish.

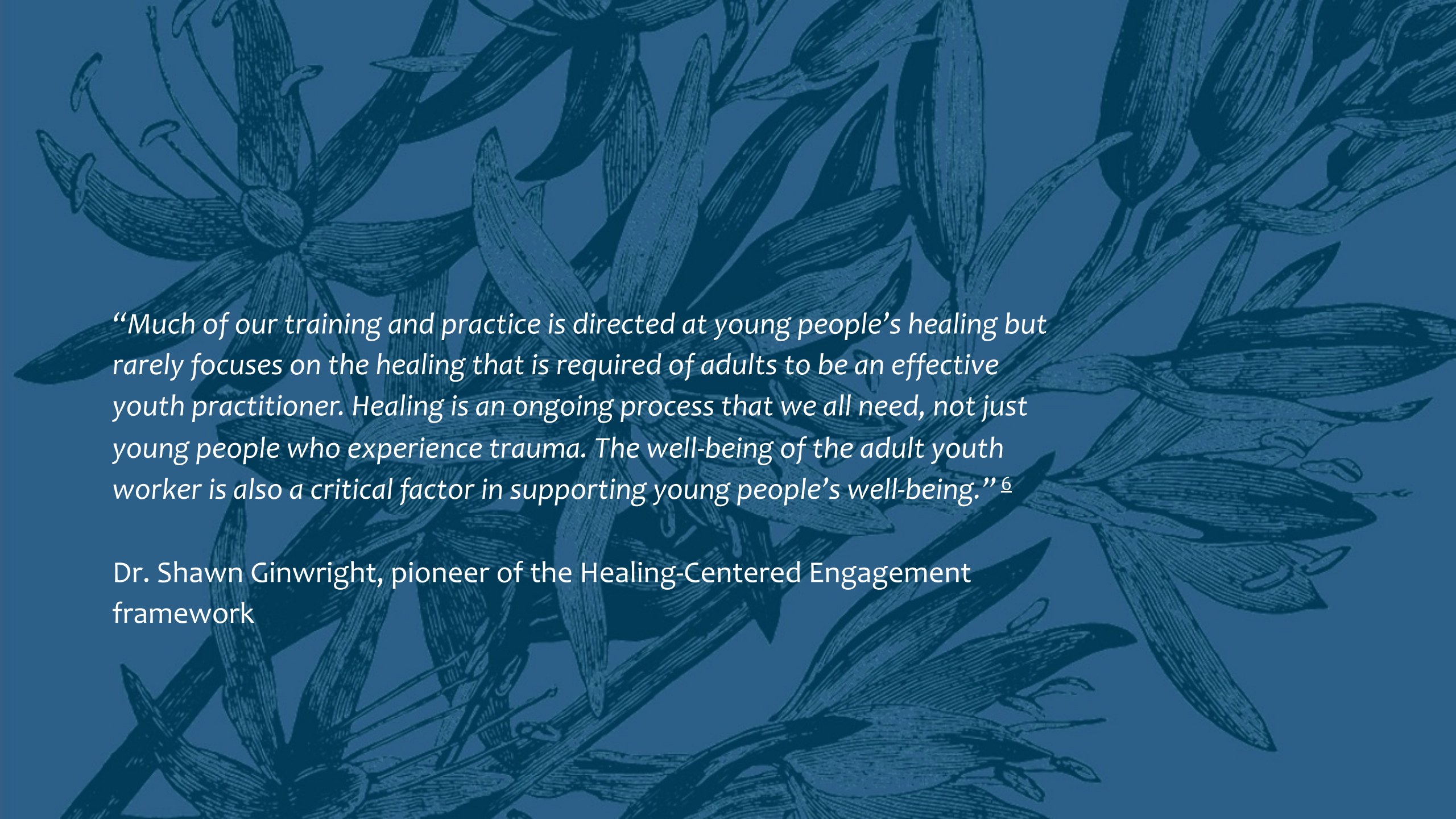
When

- Integrate the *Serenity Kit* into your daily workflow, or as part of your self-care routine.
- Use the kit during designated break times throughout your workday, as well as during moments of heightened stress or emotional intensity.
- *For team leaders:* Encourage, or schedule, regular breaks throughout the day for staff to use the kit.

How

- Find a space with minimal distractions, whether you're at home, in the office, or on-the-go. Set your electronics to silent or "Do not disturb" mode. Take a deep breath, and start exploring the sensory items in the kit, paying close attention to what your mind and body need.
- *For team leaders:* Introduce the kit during staff meetings or professional development days and provide opportunities for staff to use the kit.





“Much of our training and practice is directed at young people’s healing but rarely focuses on the healing that is required of adults to be an effective youth practitioner. Healing is an ongoing process that we all need, not just young people who experience trauma. The well-being of the adult youth worker is also a critical factor in supporting young people’s well-being.”⁶

Dr. Shawn Ginwright, pioneer of the Healing-Centered Engagement framework



Let's build a
Serenity Kit!





Step 1

Set your intention.

Take a moment to contemplate your intention for building a Serenity Kit. If you are building a Serenity Kit for, or with, others, it might be helpful to work through these prompts together.

Write down your thoughts below



What do you usually do when you're anxious, stressed, angry, or frustrated?



How do you cope with stress?
What brings you peace or helps calm you?



Which senses could help you decompress, feel calmer, and be more grounded?

Listening to calming music, such as songs on this [playlist](#), may help you reflect on these prompts.

Now, let's think about the setting, logistics, and implementation of the *Serenity Kit*.

Write down your thoughts below



Who are you building a *Serenity Kit* for: yourself or other professionals? How many kits would you like to build?



Where would you, or others, place the *Serenity Kit*—at home, in the office, in a vehicle, or in a shared workspace?



When, and how, would be most helpful for you, or others, to use the sensory items in the *Serenity Kit*?



Step 2

Gather your items.



Ideas for gathering your items

- Find items you already have or use at home.
- Make a trip to the thrift store to find something affordable and unique.
- Support local, small, or minority-owned businesses by purchasing directly from them.
- Print out a QR code for an online/digital item (e.g., music playlist!), so it's easily accessible.



Considerations for items

Allergies and sensitivities

- When selecting items for your kit, please be mindful of potential allergens and sensitivities.
- If you're building a *Serenity Kit* for others, it's important to verify that each item is safe for everyone who will be using the kit.

Different sensory needs

- Everyone's sensory preferences are unique, and certain stimuli may be activating or triggering for some individuals. You can choose items that cater to some, or all, of the five senses, to ensure a varied and adaptable experience.



Considerations for items

Costs

- We know costs can be a barrier, so this guide offers a range of items at various price points. We aim to strike a balance between accessibility, affordability, and quality of the items.
- We have also included some free resources and other budget-friendly alternatives.
- Please note that we are not financially affiliated with the vendors listed here, and do not receive any sponsorship or commissions from suggested items.

Wholesale purchase

- Buying in bulk can lower the per-item costs, and we've included bulk options in this guide wherever possible.
- We recommend contacting vendors directly for any special wholesale, nonprofit, or education discounts.
- You could also explore community or school programs that may already produce these items in bulk.





Each Serenity Kit contains an item for each sensory systems: a sight, a sound, a texture, a scent, and a taste. In the next pages, you will find a few suggestions for each sensory item, including a bonus item that you may want to include. Click on the icons below to jump to the respective page.



See



Hear



Touch



Smell



Taste



Bonus
Themed



Please note that we are not financially affiliated with the vendors listed in the next pages, and do not receive any sponsorship or commissions from suggested items.



See

Art prints with positive affirmations

Why is it important?

Engaging with art has been found to **reduce stress, inspire mindfulness, and foster creativity.**²

The act of viewing art:

- encourages a moment of contemplation,
- allows for reflection and immersion in the aesthetic experience, and
- diverts attention from stressors.^{8,9}

Where can I get one?

- Digital download: [Etsy \(Morgan Harper Nichols\)](#), [Etsy \(Self Affirmations Co\)](#)
- Printed: [Society 6 \(Morgan Harper Nichols\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- Visit your local bookstore or thrift store to explore artful postcards, bookmarks, or other prints.





Hear

Portable sound machine

Why is it important?

The therapeutic effect of nature sounds has been recognized as a potent strategy for **stress recovery**.¹⁰

Listening to nature sounds:

- evokes a sense of calmness and connection with the natural world,
- provides a comforting and grounding experience, and
- improves mood and cognitive performance.¹¹

Where can I get one?

- [Babelio](#)
- [Amazon \(Restnature\)](#)
- [Amazon \(BodyHush\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- An online playlist of your favorite nature sounds works, too, such as on [Spotify](#), [YouTube](#), or more.





Hear

Wooden egg shaker

Why is it important?

The process of making sounds or music offers us a **creative outlet for expressing and processing complex emotions**, fostering a sense of calm and emotional catharsis.

The rhythmic and melodic elements of music have been shown to:

- positively impact mood,
- reduce stress levels,
- promote mindfulness, and
- divert attention from distressing thoughts.¹²

Where can I get one?

- [Etsy \(All Wooden Elements\)](#)
- Bulk: [Amazon \(MGTECH Store\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- Besides using traditional instruments such as a [sliding flute](#) or [mini kalimba](#), you can get creative and use any repurposed everyday items to make music!





Touch

Worry stone

Why is it important?

Worry stones can serve as a calming and self-soothing fidget tool that **offers a sense of stability and security.**¹³

Studies have shown that tactile touch interventions can:

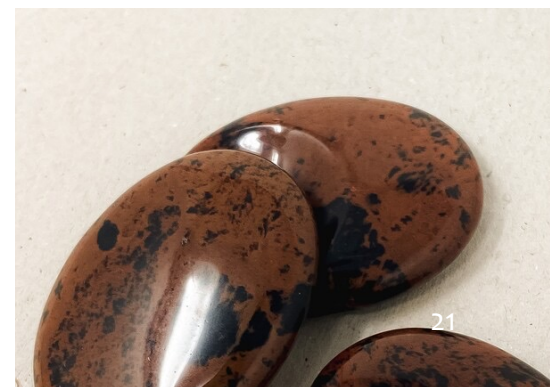
- reduce anxiety,
- improve comfort, and
- activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which counteracts the physiological effects of stress and anxiety.¹⁴

Where can I get one?

- [Kumi](#)
- [Etsy \(World Incense Store\)](#)
- Bulk: [Etsy \(Crystal Crafts 001\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- Textured [breathing](#) and [grounding](#) stickers can also be an effective tool to engage your tactile senses while reminding you to be in the present moment.¹⁵





Touch

Play dough or kinetic sand

Why is it important?

Engaging in the tactile and creative process of handling and sculpting materials such as clay has been shown to **reduce negative mood**.¹⁶

Additionally, this hands-on activity allows for self-expression and exploration.

Where can I get one?

- [Special Supplies](#)
- [Target \(Spritz\)](#)
- [Etsy \(kneadpeace\)](#)
- Bulk: [Amazon \(Kinetic Sand Store\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- Make your own [homemade playdough!](#)
- These [squish panels](#) could be a fun fidget toy that will keep your hands clean.





Smell

Aromatherapy essential oil

Why is it important?

Aromatherapy has been shown to be effective at **relaxation, stress relief, mood enhancement, and balance.**¹⁷

Studies have shown that when we are exposed to pleasant olfactory stimuli, we experience:

- positive emotions,
- overall improvement in mood,
- improved alertness and focus, and
- enhanced memory retention.¹⁸

Where can I get one?

- [Natural Amor](#)
- Bulk: [Etsy \(Essencetics\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- Put your favorite dried flowers, herbs, coffee beans, or tea leaves in a small jar.^{19,20}





Taste

Tea bags

Why is it important?

Brewing and drinking tea have been shown to **reduce cortisol levels, promote relaxation, and help people recover more quickly from a stressful task.**²¹

Moreover, inhaling black tea aroma may diminish stress levels,²² and consuming green tea can improve calmness, memory, and attention.²³

Where can I get one?

- [Art of Tea](#)
- [Numi](#)
- Bulk: [Numi \(100-count\)](#)

What's an alternative?

- You can also include food items, such as mints, lozenges, gums, nuts, raisins, and more.





Bonus Themed Item

- Healing and self-care are deeply personal journeys, and we all have different definitions of and approaches to healing. If you wish, you can introduce a “theme” for your *Serenity Kit* that resonates most with your approach to healing.
- On the next page, you’ll find 3 distinct themes, each tailored to a different healing approach, that you can choose from.
- From there, you can then select a bonus item that’s directly related to your theme of choice. This bonus item can provide additional support for your well-being.

Please note that while the themes suggested here offer potential frameworks for healing, they are intended as initial ideas and may not resonate with everyone.

Which of these three themes would be the best fit for you, or the person receiving the kit? Which theme aligns best with your, or their, preferences and needs? Select an icon below to jump to the suggested bonus item for each theme.



Reflection

This theme invites you to dive deep into **self-discovery and express your thoughts and emotions** through the written word. Research has shown that deep reflection and writing can facilitate healing through cognitive processing and emotional expression.^{[24,25](#)}



Mindful Movement

This theme encourages you to use **mindfulness and somatic movements** to focus on the present. The physical and psychological benefits of mindfulness-based interventions have been well-documented for professionals across a broad range of settings.^{[26,27,28,29,30](#)}



Arts & Play

This theme inspires you to tap into your **creativity and imagination**, encouraging you to create, explore, and play. Arts activities have been shown to decrease stress, reduce burnout, and improve patient and staff relationships.^{[31](#)}



Reflection

Self-reflection cards

Why is it important?

Research has shown that deep reflection and writing can facilitate healing through cognitive processing and emotional expression.^{24,25}

A deck of reflection cards can facilitate introspection and deep, meaningful interactions with coworkers, young people, friends, or family members.

Where can I get one?

- [Holstee Reflection Cards](#)
- [Samantha Case Reflection Card Deck](#)
- [My Therapy Cards](#)

What can I pair this with?

- A small journal and a writing utensil can further self-reflection and deepen introspection.





Mindful Movement

Mindfulness cards

Why is it important?

Mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, as well as improve self-compassion.³⁰

Bite-sized exercises, in card form, offer accessible ways to incorporate mindfulness and physical movement into busy schedules.

Where can I get one?

- [Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Card Deck](#)
- [Everyday Mindfulness Auracle](#)
- [Mindful Minute Mindfulness Activities Cards](#)

What can I pair this with?

- A print-out of [stretching exercises](#) can complement mindfulness practices with physical movement.





Arts & Play

Coloring book

Why is it important?

A coloring book can provide a **therapeutic avenue for creative expression**, as arts activities have been shown to decrease stress, reduce burnout, and improve patient and staff relationship.³¹

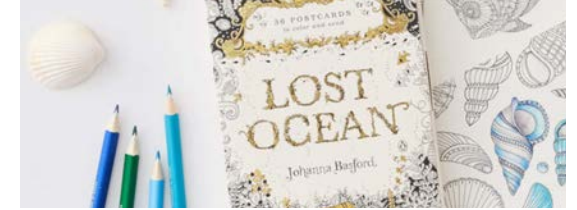
Coloring postcards can also foster connections with others; once colored, mail it to a colleague as a thoughtful gesture, especially for remote workers.

Where can I get one?

- [The National Parks Postcard Coloring Book](#)
- [Lost Ocean Coloring Postcards](#) (or this free [printable](#) one!)
- [A Brighter Year Mini Coloring Book](#)

What can I pair this with?

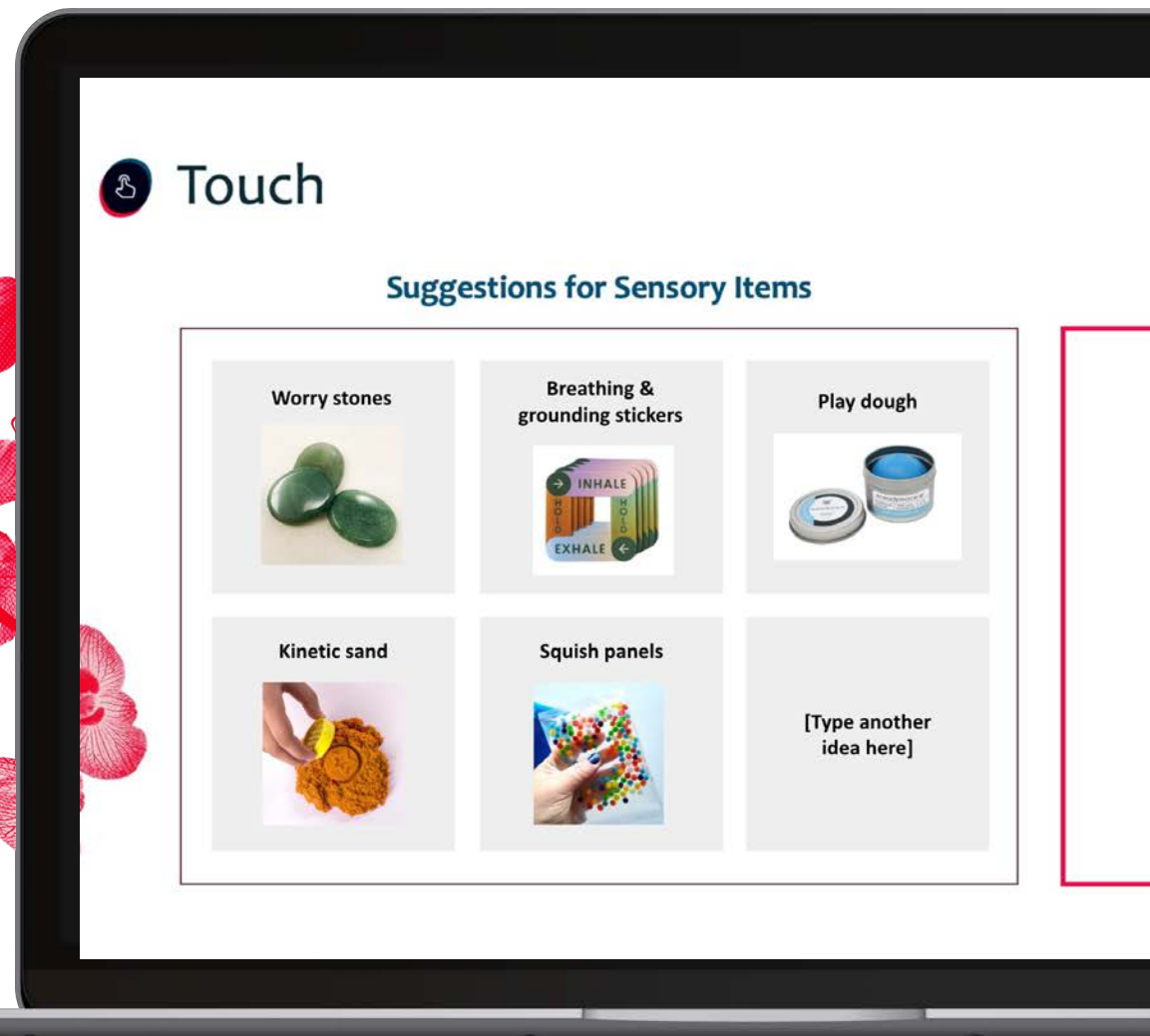
- Mini [colored pencils](#) or [crayons](#) can help someone get coloring right away.





Design Your Kit

Give it a go by digitally designing your kit on [Google Slides](#). This interactive platform allows you to drag and drop items, giving you a visual representation of your *Serenity Kit* before you finalize your selection.





Step 3

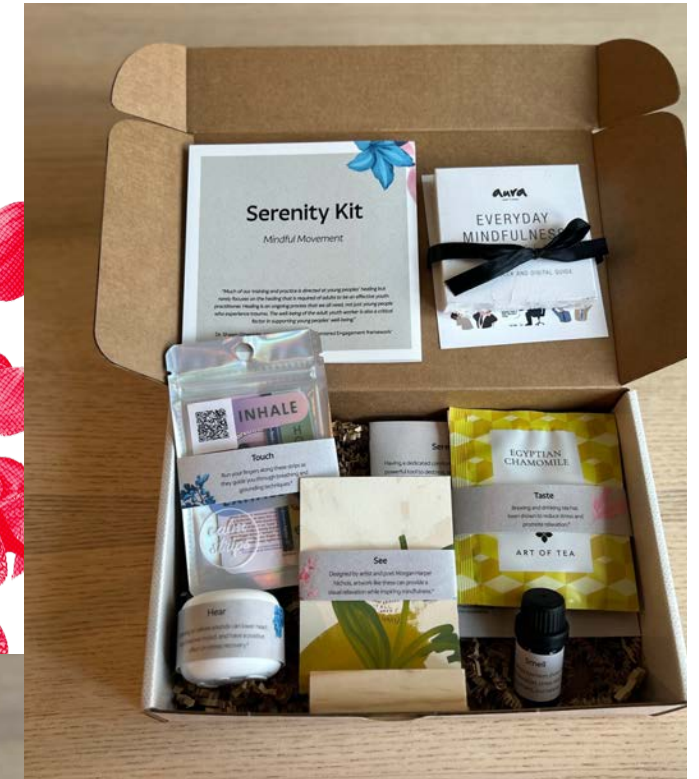
Find a container.

The container for your Serenity Kit can be anything you might already have on hand, such as a **box**, a **bag**, or a **basket**. Here are some things to consider:

- Take note of the dimensions of the items in your Serenity Kit. Ensure that the height, width, and depth of your chosen container can accommodate your items.

(If you choose items directly from our suggested links, you can be sure that they will fit the [custom Serenity Kit boxes](#) or any box with the size of 9x6x2”.)

- If portability is important for you, we recommend a smaller size that can be easily carried.
- If gifting the kit, you may wish to check with the recipient about their preferences.





Step 4

Print supplemental
materials.





To enhance your Serenity Kit, consider incorporating the supplemental materials listed below. These items provide a unified and cohesive visual, helping to set the tone and prepare you, or your recipient, for self-care. Click on the icons to access our design files and follow specific steps to print them.



Welcome card



Research card



Label cover



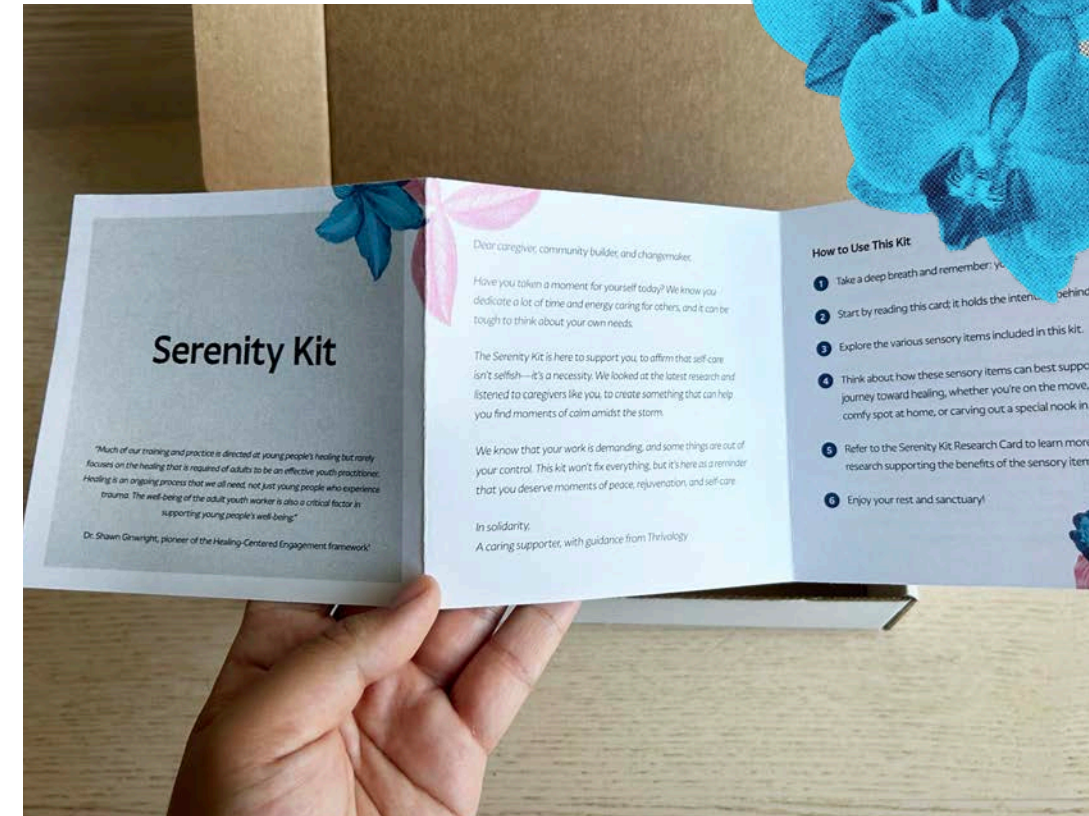
Custom boxes



Serenity Kit Welcome Card

The welcome card introduces the core essence of the Serenity Kit. It warmly invites you to take a momentary pause and explore the curated items in the kit. As a disclaimer, the card notes that certain items may not be appropriate for some individuals.

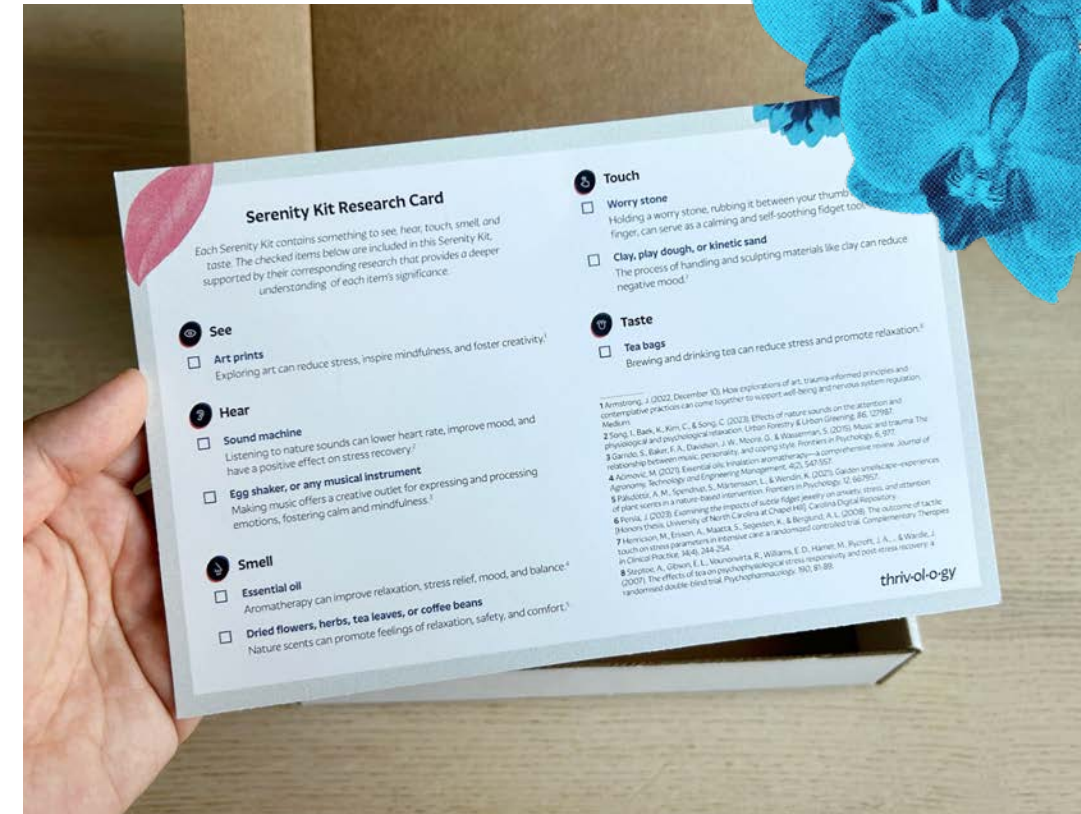
- **Design file:** [Download file](#)
- **Format:** Double-sided tri-fold brochure, accordion-style
- **Size:** 13.5" x 4.5" when printed, 4.5" x 4.5" when folded
- **How to print:** Print on standard US legal size paper (14" x 8.5"). Cardstock paper is best! You can print this at home or in the office, send it to [Staples](#) or [Office Depot](#), or visit specialty printing centers such as [Minuteman Press](#).



Serenity Kit Research Card

The research card includes a comprehensive list of references for each sensory item in the kit, offering a deeper understanding of each item's significance.

- **Design file:** [Download file](#)
- **Format:** Single-sided card, can be folded in half
- **Size:** 8.5" x 5.5" when printed, or 4.25" x 8.5" when folded
- **How to print:** Print on standard US letter size paper (8.5" x 11"). Cardstock paper is best! You can print this at home or in the office, send it to [Staples](#) or [Office Depot](#), or visit specialty printing centers such as [Minuteman Press](#).



Serenity Kit Label Cover

You can give your Serenity Kit a polished look with this label cover. Whether it's a shoebox or any other container, you can print this on sticker/label paper and apply it to the front of the box. Alternatively, you can resize this to be smaller and print it on a cardstock paper to create tags for bags.

- **Design file:** [Download file](#)
- **Format:** Label or tag
- **Size:** 9" x 6" (or can be resized to fit your container better)
- **How to print:** Print on standard US letter size paper (8.5" x 11"). Cardstock or label paper is best! You can print this at home or in the office, send it to [Staples](#) or [Office Depot](#), or visit specialty printing centers such as [Minuteman Press](#).



Serenity Kit Custom Boxes

These custom boxes are designed to hold your curated items securely, while adding a touch of elegance to your Serenity Kit.

(If you choose items directly from our suggested links, you can be sure that they will fit these Serenity Kit boxes.)

- **Design file:** [Download file](#)
- **Format:** Mailer box, roll end front tuck with dust flaps
- **Size:** 9" x 6" x 2"
- **How to print:** The design file is tailored for use with [Fantastapack](#), a custom packaging company that ships nationwide.





Step 5

Assemble your kit.

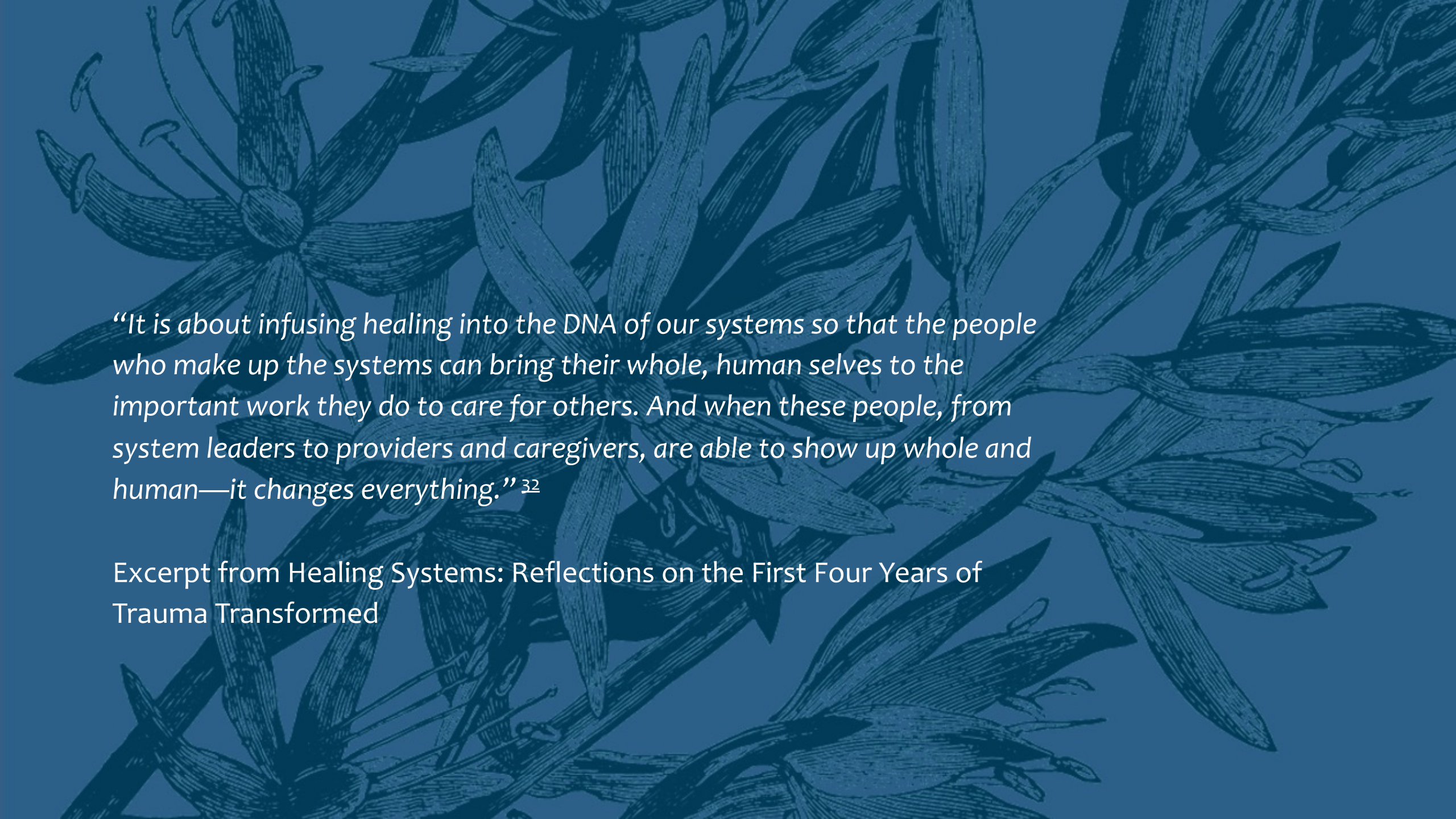
Now the fun part!

Gather your items, container, and printed materials, and assemble your *Serenity Kit*.

Kit-building can also be a delightful bonding activity with coworkers, friends, or family members.

If you are building a large quantity and need assistance assembling them, [drop us a line](#) and we may be able to connect you with an assembly vendor.





“It is about infusing healing into the DNA of our systems so that the people who make up the systems can bring their whole, human selves to the important work they do to care for others. And when these people, from system leaders to providers and caregivers, are able to show up whole and human—it changes everything.”³²

Excerpt from *Healing Systems: Reflections on the First Four Years of Trauma Transformed*

We'd love to see what you made!

Share your creations on social media using the #Thrivology hashtag, and tag us:



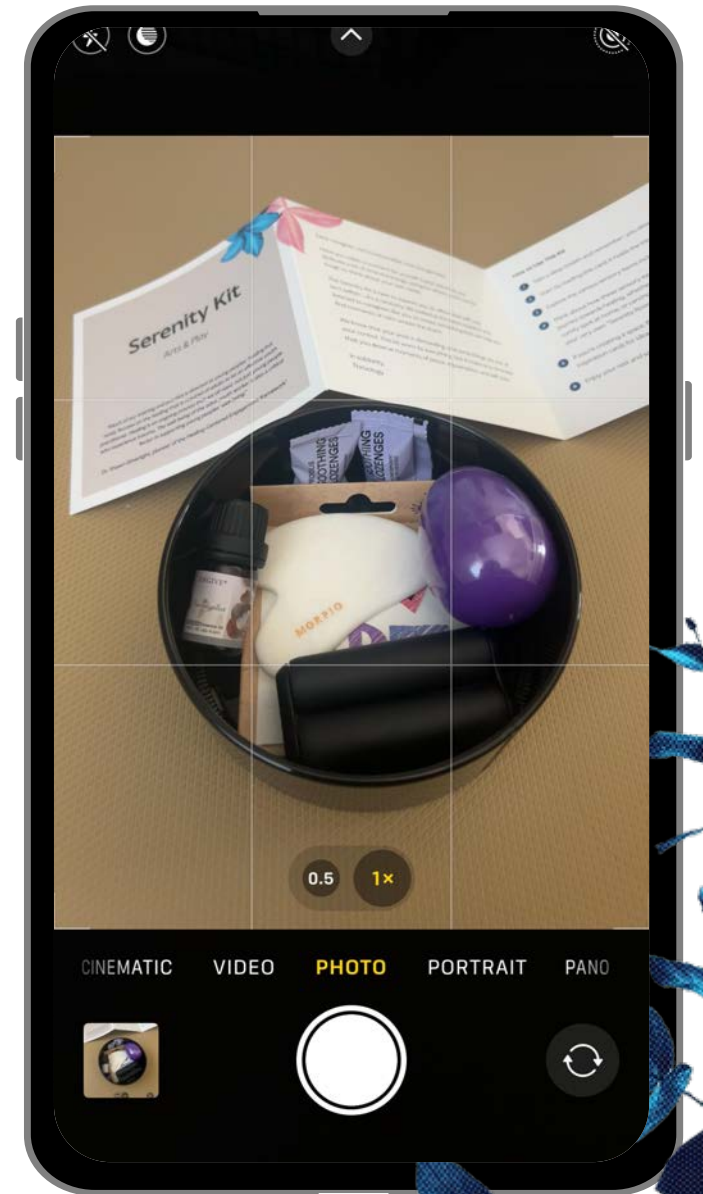
@healthyteen
@JohnsHopkinsCAH



Healthy Teen Network
Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health



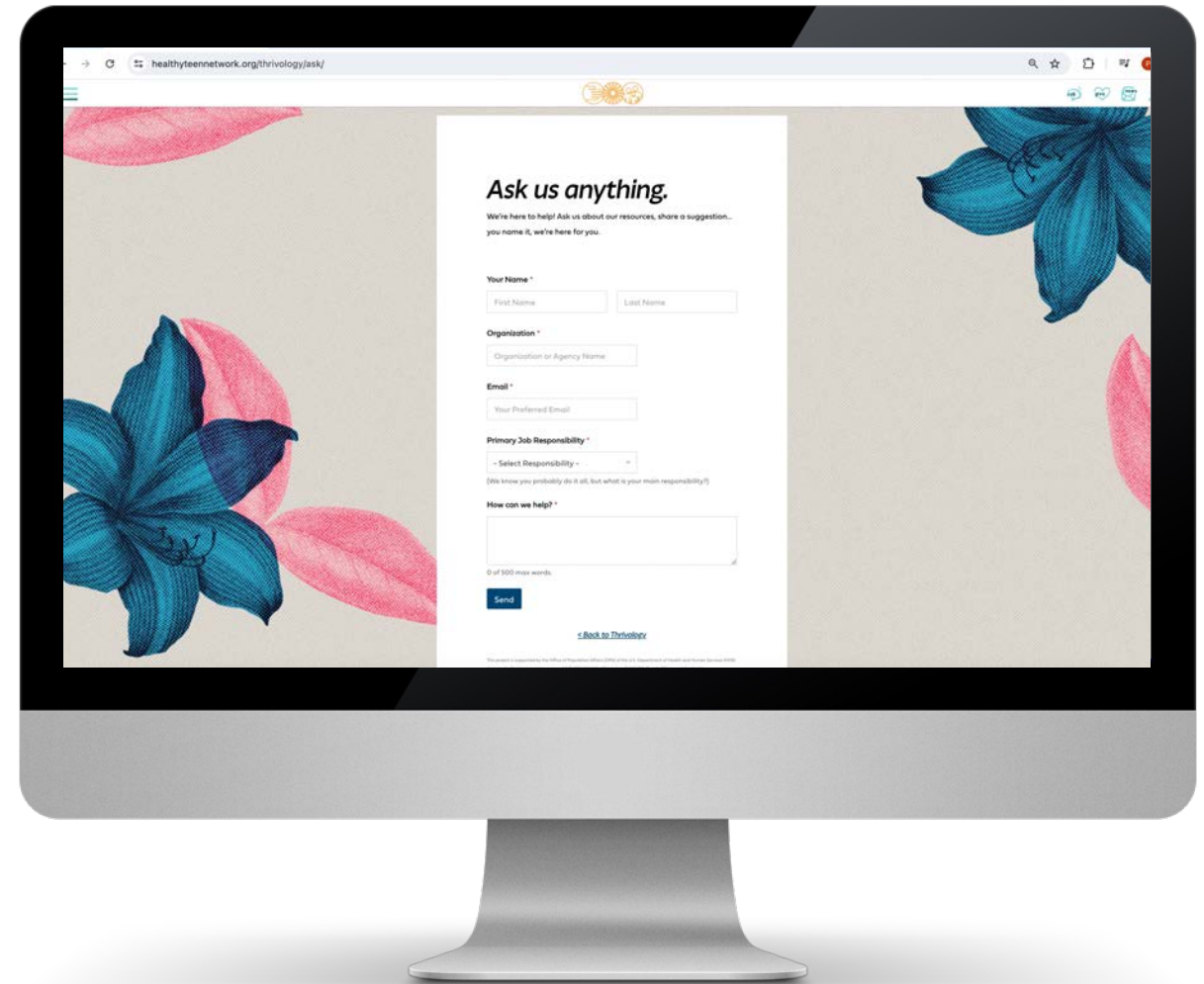
Healthy Teen Network



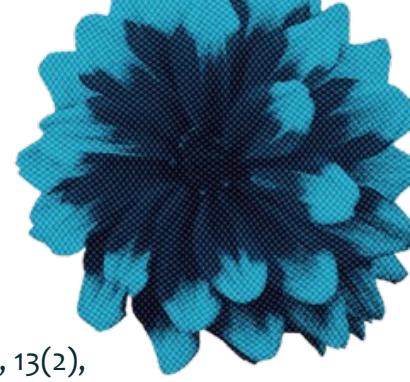
Need help building
your *Serenity Kit*?

Or have any suggestions for
this guide?

Don't hesitate to [contact us](#).



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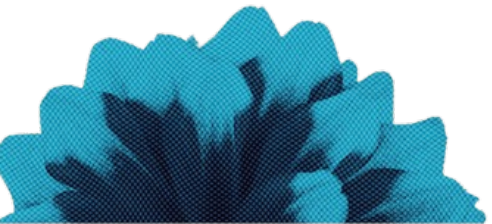
To cite this resource, please use the suggested citation below:

Natalie, P., Garrido, M., Desiderio, G., Devoto, B., Bennett, N., & Gupta, M. (2024). Serenity kit DIY guide [Guide]. Healthy Teen Network.

<http://www.healthyteennetwork.org/thrivology/resources/serenity-kit>

We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals to this resource. Their insights, ideas, reviews, and thoughtful discussions played a crucial role in the conceptualization and development of our work:

Janet Max, Ryan Mateo Sharnbroich, Marlen Ramirez, Lauren Lapointe, Cody Van Felden, Cody Ragonese, and Kelsey Stewart.



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