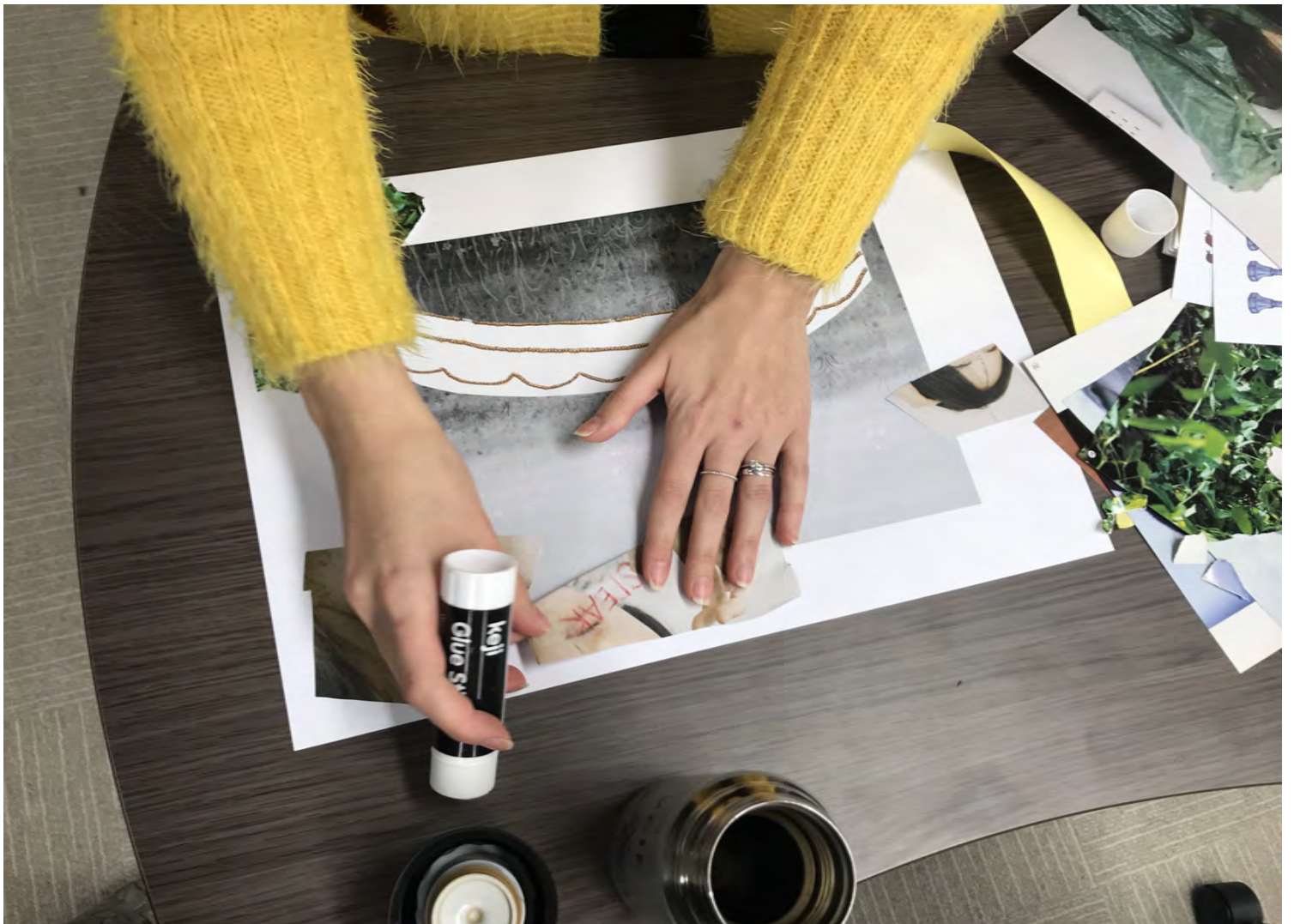


# Building Bridges

A PhD project by Alice V. Brown  
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# Instructions

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Building Bridges is a guided illustration that helps people to creatively reflect upon and express their care needs. Complete your Building Bridges illustration on your own, or alongside people you trust. You can download printables from [www.aliceachoo.com/therapytools](http://www.aliceachoo.com/therapytools) to complete your illustration. You can also use materials you have at home, such as illustrated stickers, paper, and images from recycled magazines.

Build your illustration using the following steps:

**1 Start by selecting a background for your scene to represents your emotional state or mood. Is the background sunny, foggy, rainy, or something else...**

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**2 Create a river out of paper or other materials that flows through the scene, representing an area of challenge in your life that needs extra care or support. Think about how big the river should be, how wide, and how many twists and turns it should have, and what colour/s it might be.**

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**3 Add symbols in the river that give more details or clues about the challenge, and what makes it difficult.**

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**4 Add a bridge to the scene, going over the river, that represents how able you feel to cope with the challenge**

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**5 Place items or symbols on the land that represent the things, people or places that could offer you care during this time, and while you navigate the challenge.**

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The result is a completed illustration for you to keep, or a visual aid to help you to explain your care needs to those you trust. If you'd like to share your illustration with those you trust, explain each element of your Building Bridges creation, so that they understand what the drawing means, and what your care needs may be.

Building Bridges can also be run as a guided workshop, or in a therapy environment.

# About Building Bridges

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Building Bridges is an activity designed to support people to reflect and express their care needs throughout challenging experiences. The activity guides people to create a visual illustration that represents their emotional state, a challenge they are experiencing, and what care could be provided to support them to cope. Building Bridges can be completed privately, alone, or among people who trust each other. You might also like to run it as a workshop.

The activity has been designed by combining knowledge from the fields of health, psychology and interaction design. It is driven by Salutogenesis theory, which, in practice, acknowledges that people have resources within and around them to successfully cope throughout challenging experiences (Antonovsky, 1979). Pathogenic thinking mostly focuses on curing ill-health and figuring out why ill-health has happened. Salutogenesis adds a complimentary dimension to pathogenesis, reminding us that we can also focus on how strong and resourceful people are in finding ways to cope with ill-health and adversity. Drawing upon Salutogenics, Building Bridges encourages people to express their emotional state, how able they feel to withstand their challenges, and what care could further support them. So, rather than only reflecting on challenges and hardship, it also supports them to ponder the inner and external resources they have to cope and feel cared for.

People who have been through trauma often have difficulty expressing and communicating their care needs. Feelings of numbness, difficulty with focusing, difficulty expressing traumatic experiences so that they form a life story that makes sense to themselves and others, as well challenges in planning for the future are all obstacles to those who have experienced trauma and those they trust (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; van der Kolk, 2014, Brown, 2020). Whether they have been through trauma, or an everyday challenge, Building Bridges supports participants to think through challenges more comfortably, through visual metaphor. Metaphor is a brilliant tool for supporting those who find it difficult to put their experiences into words, allowing them express themselves in safe, multi-faceted, and detailed ways. Expressing oneself through metaphor is more likely to spark curiosity and support attentive listening, so that adequate care can take place (Wise & Nash, 2012; Brown, 2020). It also eases the pressure of putting one's struggles and needs in a logical order, and allows for the use of humour or dramatisation, which for some, can make the expression of their needs more comfortable and even fun (Brown, 2020).

Building Bridges was inspired by a well-established activity booklet used by UNICEF to support resilience and growth, that was designed by my PhD Supervisor, Prof Jane Shakespeare-Finch. I then redeveloped it with those who had been through challenges so that it could become an interactive activity. To read more about how I drew inspiration from the activity and then co-created Building Bridges alongside those who have experienced trauma you can read Chapter 7 of my thesis (see Brown, 2020).

## References:

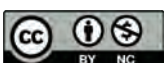
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If you'd like to share your Building Bridges creations  
or a workshop you've led, I'd love to hear from you:

#bridgesofcare

[www.instagram.com/bridgesofcare](http://www.instagram.com/bridgesofcare)

or email Alice at [alice@aliceachoo.com](mailto:alice@aliceachoo.com)

