The Humannis Deck

symbolic cards for creativity and healing

The 'Humannis Deck' is an illustrated sharable resource in the form of a practice based creative and emotional art prompt deck to be used in a variety of wellbeing settings. Created in response to doctoral research around symbolic objects and ritual, therapeutic art making, and healing and recovery, and trialled with art, drama and occupational therapy groups. It serves as a creative starting point from which outputs such as art, writing, poetry, dance, drama or music can be made to discuss emotions or experiences. The deck is intended for therapeutic use by both individuals and groups including workplace, community outreach, hospitals, hospices, addiction recovery, mental health, and palliative and dementia care.

Based on the research analysis, participants detailed several emotional benefits:

Enhanced Self-Confidence and Empowerment:
Individuals described how creating their own art objects—such as personalized talismans or sigils—boosted their self-assurance, making them feel more empowered in facing challenges.

Emotional Grounding and Stability:
Many respondents mentioned that the artworks and objects made in workshops provided a comforting, grounding effect during stressful periods, offering them a dependable touchstone for managing emotions and maintaining balance.

Healing and Emotional Release:
Workshop participants were able to choose specific cards from the deck as a focal point to process and release negative emotions, contributing to overall emotional healing and wellbeing.

Increased Connection and Belonging:
The art made and explored often fostered a deep sense of connection—whether to personal memory, ancestral lineage, or spiritual energy—which many described as nurturing a feeling of belonging and inner support. Group members also felt able to share feelings



Testimonials:
I use a variety of different cards in my work, so it is nice to be introduced to a new pack. I really like the booklet which I feel enriches the use of the cards. They are a really flexible resource, and I will definitely purchase a set for my toolbox - NHS Drama therapist working in Adult Community Mental Health

I would use this resource to help people who feel stuck and don't know what they want from the session or to stimulate imagination, or as a talking point for a group. They are a multi-use resource - Art therapist

I particularly liked how they had been researched both personally and generically through your own art making. I loved the way you put something qualitative and grounded together, with something more ethereal, spiritual, while also embodying an element of chance - Art therapist

I found the whole project a generous and exciting opportunity. A deck deeply anchored to people's individual creative process. We have two groups - a substance and behavioural group, and a group for family and carers of those with addiction, both would benefit - The living Room addiction recovery centre (staff)

I now have an item that I can have with me at all times to keep myself safe and strong - The Living Room (client)

A creative outlet, deeper understanding of my patterns and connection. It made me think deeper into how I authentically express myself - The Living Room (client)

Possible ways to use the deck

Pick a card or selection of cards, then creatively respond to the emotions, memories or feelings they bring up.

Explore experiences via symbolic objects – What object do you need for this time, or moment? Use it to help you or your client tell their story.

Use the resource as an invitation to create a meaningful artwork, object or ritual that can help guide your healing path – Which object or words can you pick to help you with this?

Pull a card / get a client to pull a card at the start/end of a therapeutic or holistic session - how does this relate to the client & your session.

Use the cards to help a client explore or describe feelings that may be coming up for them in a therapeutic session.

NB - The resource is most suitable for ages 13+ -
When working with clients, groups, or workshops please explore the whole resource before use & take the option to remove any cards you think could be inapt.

The Deck – What's in the resource

- A 78 card deck
- Accompanying 84 page guidebook inc instructions.
- 10 x A5 posters showing collated themed objects





6. Creating a resource

All research and data is collated to create 'The Humannis Deck – a sharable resource in the form of a creative and emotional art prompt deck to be used in a variety of wellbeing and community therapy settings.

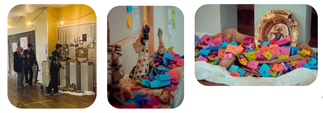
Collated findings from workshop explorations show that the resource has a wide-ranging significance across a large number of areas inc workplace, community outreach, hospitals, hospices, addiction recovery, mental health, and palliative care. Aiding those who use it to explore their own healing and recovery through creative making, conversation and exploration

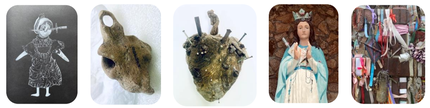


5. Exploring efficacy

Through making I establish important relationships between my academic research, art-based practice, and the creation of a work of art as a tool for personal peace and recovery .

To quantify if my work has its own agency, life and power beyond the personal, the works are installed in an interactive public exhibition. Research findings on the healing power of symbolic engagement with both art and objects are strengthened through audience participation and feedback.

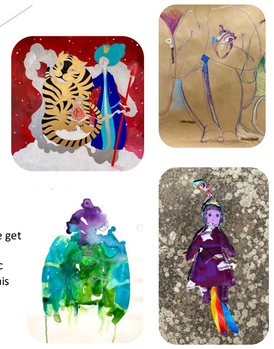




1. Initial research question

How are symbolic magical/spiritual/faith healing objects understood and used in contemporary Britain?



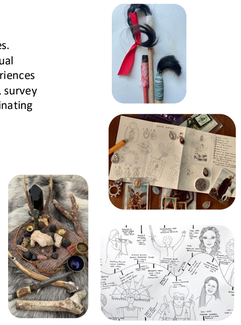


2. Exploring human engagement

What potential healing benefits can we get from symbolically engaging with ritual behaviours, esoteric beliefs and holistic healing. How can we further explore this via making?
Exploring these ideas in accordance with my own life and experiences.

3. Data collection

Recording findings from my own experiences.
Taking a wider look at the art making, spiritual beliefs healing practice and emotional experiences of others. Exploring this through interviews, survey data, fieldtrips and academic study. Disseminating and comparing findings.



4. Findings

From these exploration's threads, links and connections start to appear concerning what objects are being used and why people are using them. Words such as connection, balance, transformation, community, healing, protection, wholeness repeatedly come up.
More work is made in response to my findings.

Deck created by Sarah Bellisario. www.sarahbellisario.com ©sarahbellisario2025