



THIS IS FOR YOU:

An Artist's Book Guide

Welcome to the toolkit that will guide you through the process of making your own artist's book.

The toolkit consists of online resources on our website and this guide.

It is for mothers who are dealing with the emotional aftermath of separation from their children. It may be useful to others too who may have their own story to tell.

If you're not familiar with the artist's book, it is a visual, tactile and personal book that communicates ideas through its whole design rather than just words.

You don't need to be an artist or good at writing to make your own book. There is no right or wrong way, so feel free to experiment and try different things.



Getting started

If you need some encouragement, it may be helpful to read what mothers with similar experiences of separation from their children have said about making their books:

“ I felt surprised at how easily a theme and ideas for my book came to me. I don't consider myself to be expressive in an artistic way, so I feel a sense of achievement when I look at my book. ”

“ Among the things that I like about the artist's book is the freedom to keep it very simple or if you feel you want to be more expressive, then take as long as you need. ”

“ The book made me look at feelings that I haven't accessed for a long time. I feel that I have put them in a personal place that I can pick up when I need to put myself back into the story. ”

Maybe you, too, will create something meaningful even though it can be hard to reflect on difficult experiences.



Before you begin, take a moment to prepare. It is possible that uncomfortable feelings may arise when you begin to express yourself through your artist's book. What helps you through difficult moments? Can you place items nearby that bring you comfort? You may choose to listen to music, focus on your breath or gently stretch your body.

Remember, you can work at your own pace. If it becomes very difficult, take a break and come back to it later.

If you need additional support, you may find the resources below helpful:

For support and advice in your area, find your local Mind at mind.org.uk/localmind

If you are feeling overwhelmed or need a listening ear, you can contact Samaritans. Phone: 116 123 (24 hours a day)

Making your book

We have included some diagrams in the following pages to show you how to stitch a book together using a needle and thread and how to make a book by folding a single sheet of paper. You may find it helpful to go over the following pages before you stitch or fold your book.

You will find relevant video resources and images for inspiration on our website (Scan our QR code on the back cover).

If you're working on your book in a group, the facilitator will help you further.

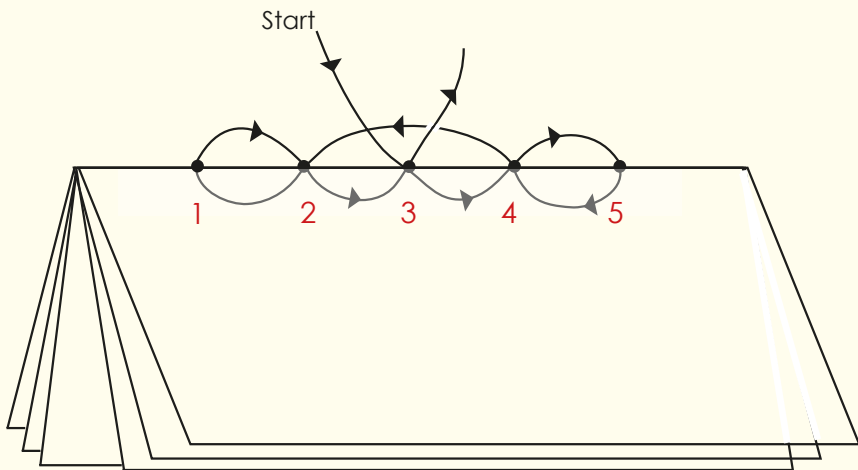
Stitched book

Start through the centre hole (3) and out through hole 4.

In through hole 5 and back out through hole 4.

MISS THE CENTRE HOLE (3) and return into hole 2. Out through hole 1 and back in through hole 2.

Return out through the centre hole (3) and tie thread catching the long loop between hole 4 and 2.



ALWAYS START IN THE CENTRE HOLE, if you want the finished knot on the inside of the book, start from the inside the folded paper.

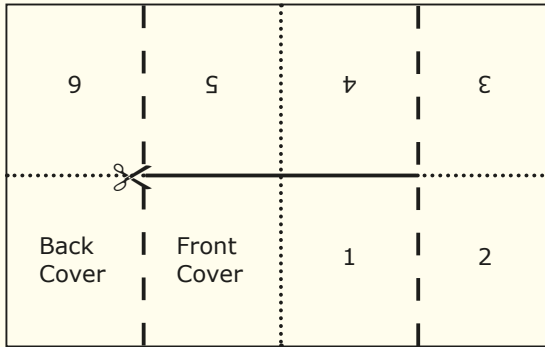
Don't forget to make a template for the holes so there all in the same position, a simple piece of card cut to the same length as the folded paper can be used.

Mark out on one side of the card where you want stitch then use this by placing along the fold and punch you holes.

This stitch will work for any number of holes as long as there are an ODD number.

FOLDED USING ONE SHEET

X-BOOK (French Fold)



FRO

Ensure your folds are even. You can use a bone folder (a tool used in bookmaking) or slide your fingernail over the crease.

Start by folding your paper so that it is long and skinny (long edge folded to long edge). Then fold the paper in half, short edge to short edge. When you unfold the paper, you will see eight separate panels. These will become the pages of your book.

REV


Fold the paper short edge to short edge again and place it so that the folded edge is facing you. Cut along the middle. Consult the diagrams for where to cut and how to fold into the final book shape.


BOOKS

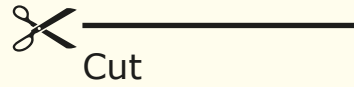
SHEET OF PAPER

©Tina Lyon

KEY

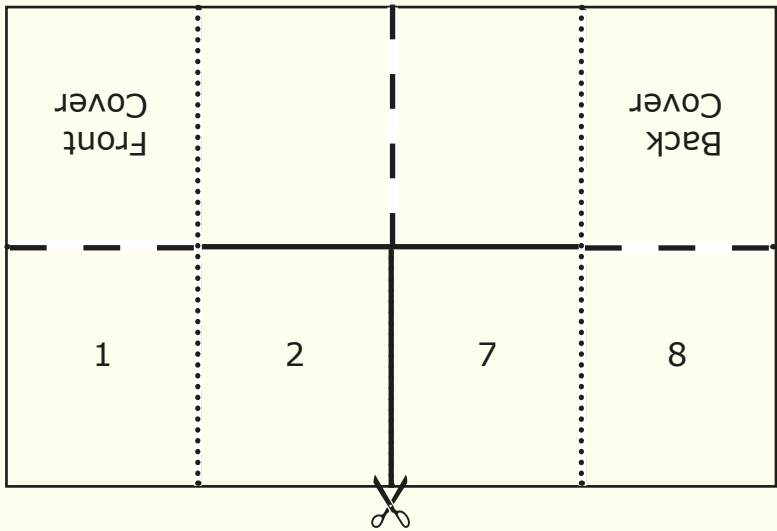
Valley Fold = 

.....
Peak Fold = 

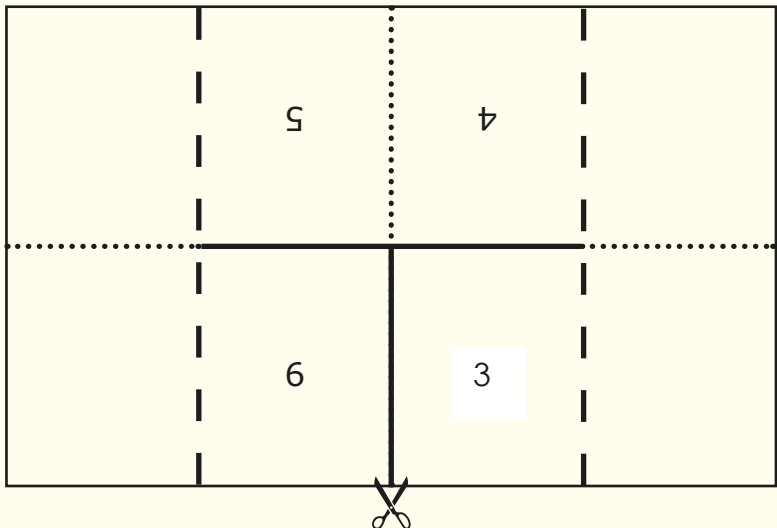


T-CUT Fold

FRONT



REVERSE





Getting inspiration

You may want to think of your book as a safe place where you can contain or release painful emotions. Where you can show vulnerability without being judged and sit with a feeling or memory that you find hard to confront.

Or you may approach your artist's book as an act of self-care, taking time to notice your feelings.

Remember, you don't need to share your book with anyone if you don't want to.

Look at our list of words on the next page if you are not sure what to explore.

ADORATION	EMPATHY	LOSS
ACCEPTANCE	ENVY	LOVE
ANGER	EXCITEMENT	NOSTALGIA
ANXIETY	FEAR	PAIN
APPRECIATION	GRATITUDE	PEACE
AWE	GRIEF	RELIEF
AWKWARDNESS	GUILT	SADNESS
BOREDOM	HAPPINESS	SATISFACTION
CALMNESS	HOPE	SHAME
CONFUSION	HORROR	SURPRISE
COURAGE	INTEREST	SYMPATHY
DISGUST	JOY	TRAUMA

Do any of these words resonate with you?

Let's imagine that the book you are starting to make is like the word or feeling you have chosen from our list. How might you represent it?

How large or small is it?

Is it light or dark?

What colour is it?

What is its weight? (Is it heavy or weightless?)

What does it feel like to the touch? (rough, sharp, prickly, smooth, with holes or cuts?)

What temperature is it? (does it feel burning, soothing, warm, or icy?)

Pick some paper and materials depending on your answers. You can use paper of different sizes, colours and textures such as tracing paper, tissue paper, wrapping paper, metallic paper or anything else you have.

How can you fold, hide, expand, layer, glue, cut, colour or decorate your book's pages so that it makes your feeling more visible?





Here are some more prompts to help you collect materials for your book:

ARE THERE PICTURES THAT REMIND YOU OF YOUR FEELINGS?

These could be paintings, drawings, photographs or existing images (for example, from magazines) which you can collage.


DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER SMALL OBJECTS THAT REMIND YOU OF YOUR FEELINGS?

These can be almost anything, fabric, ribbons, buttons, stickers, envelopes, thread and others.

ARE THERE ANY WORDS OR PHRASES THAT YOU FIND YOURSELF THINKING ABOUT OFTEN?

You can hide them in your book, or you can expose parts for others to see. You can include handwritten or printed text in your book, but you can also cut up words and text from magazines and recycle them in this way.





If you don't know how to start, you can make something small (a couple of pages). Focus on finding or creating words, images and materials first, then combining them and binding them into a book.

Or you may find it helpful to visualise the overall shape of your book. For example,

How will your book open?

How will it fold? (You may want to refer again to the diagrams on pages 8 - 11)

Will it have separate pages? Or will it look like a sculpture or a pop-up book?

Will you use the pages of your book to capture how something changed in the past or might change in the future? How can these different moments of time be presented through your book?

If you need inspiration, scan the QR code on the back cover to look at some of the books mothers have made on our website.

How do you feel about your book?

Your feelings about your book may change over time and that is ok. If making the book has stirred up feelings that are difficult to manage you may consider seeking additional support (Look at page 7).

If you found making your artist's book helpful you can always return to this creative activity to make more books. You may approach it as an act of self-care or you may choose to make something to share with someone close to you. You are also very welcome to share your artist's book with others via our website.

We hope you feel proud of your book!

Once you have made your first book, you may wish to reflect on your experience. You can make some notes here...





Guide produced by Stella Bolaki and Samantha Davey for the project "The Artist's Book: Mothers' Experiences of Adoption" with funds from the AHRC and Research England.

We would like to thank all the mothers who took part in our workshops and our research champions listed on our website. Special thanks for the creation of this resource to Chloe Sparrow (art psychotherapist) and Tina Lyon (book artist).

More resources on the project website:

www.mothersafteradoption.com

Designed and printed by The Sustainable Printworks 2024.

