

Koestler Arts produces monthly Art Aid sheets featuring creative tasks that can be done in cell and with just paper and a pencil. This sheet has been made with support from The Arts Society Northleach.

Although the 2023 Koestler Awards deadline passed on 6 April, we hope these sheets will inspire you to remain creative and perhaps try something new. New Art Aid sheets are available from the first Monday of every month.

## DECEMBER 2023

For each Art Aid sheet, we commission an artist or writer who has engaged with Koestler Arts to set a creative task and share their experience with creativity. This month we asked Koestler Award winner and mentee, Joanne.

### My Story

As a child, Christmas was always a very exciting time for me. As a child of the 70s though, expectations were limited. The go-cart that my dad made for me is definitely one of my favourite gifts. We decorated it together, though at six or seven my creative skills were limited. I did a lot of singing and played the violin, viola and of course the obligatory recorder, much to my mothers displeasure!

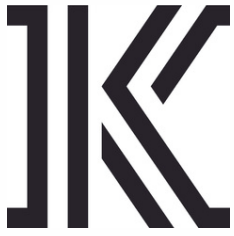
I found my time in prison very lonely, having always struggled to make friends. Being surrounded by so many people did not make this any easier. I used any creative opportunity I could and started crocheting as soon as I could afford to get some hooks and yarn. I was also lucky enough to be involved with some visiting groups from a university where we did singing and song writing. My crochet entry to the Koestler Awards was exhibited at the Southbank Centre and I was part of singing and song writing groups that won Gold and Bronze Koestler Awards.

My mental health suffered quite significantly during my time in prison and I found that writing was a great way to express things which I was unable to verbally articulate. I have a body of work now which is difficult reading but was necessary writing for me, and I advocate this as a way of coping with difficult situations.

Since my release I have, at the suggestion of my probation worker, just started a creative writing degree, and was also lucky enough to be accepted onto the Koestler mentoring program. I met my mentor for the first time recently and we have some great creative plans for my writing and photography.



Blooming Useful, HM Prison & Young Offender Institution New Hall, Needlecraft, 2019



## My Task: Gratitude Note

At this time of year I like to think about as many positive things that have helped me survive another year as possible. With this in mind, I would like you to think about someone who has done something for you, said something that made you feel good, or was just there when you needed them, and write something to express your gratitude. Showing gratitude is such a wonderful way to end a year and prepare for the next.

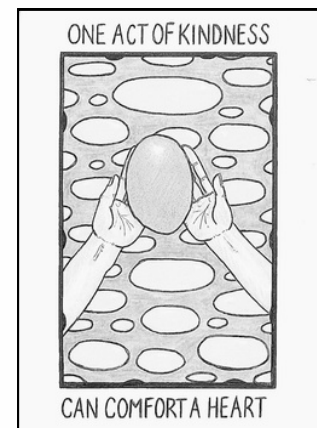
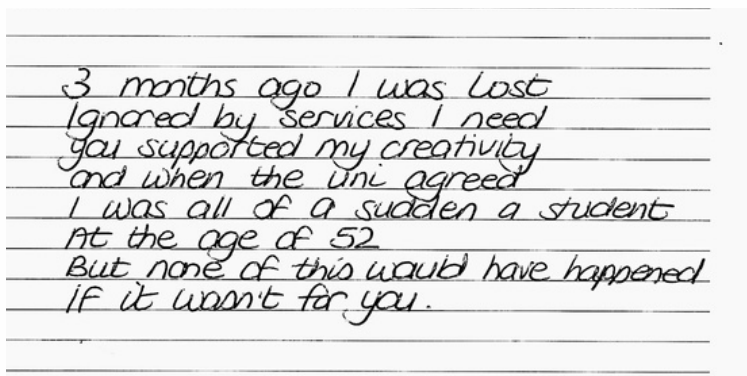
Think about a person who has made a difference in your life this year.

1. Make a list of what they did and how it made you feel; happy, safe, lucky, protected.
2. Write some sentences starting with things like: 'Thank you', 'I appreciate', 'I am grateful for'.
3. Create a note for this person in the form of a letter or a poem.

In the example below, I wrote a note for my probation worker, who has supported me and my creativity.

1. I felt heard, supported, encouraged.
2. I am grateful for all the times you listened to me. I love that you encouraged me to apply for more education. You heard me, you encouraged me, and your support helped me.

3.



*One Act of Kindness,*  
Koestler Associates Greetings Card Competition, 2022

You don't need to send your responses to these tasks to us at Koestler, we just hope you'll enjoy giving them a go. If you do we'll be very happy to see them but please note they won't be entered into this year's Koestler Awards and we won't be able to return them to you.