

# Body mapping

When we have experienced trauma, such as experiencing or witnessing gender-based violence including domestic abuse, the practice of body mapping helps us to understand what has happened to us.

It helps us to think about how the trauma has changed our life journey and our personal story. The body mapping exercise helps us to discuss with others what has happened, by taking place in a safe space with a facilitator leading the session.

My heart felt full  
and empty at the  
same time. Full of  
guilt and pain and  
empty of hope.



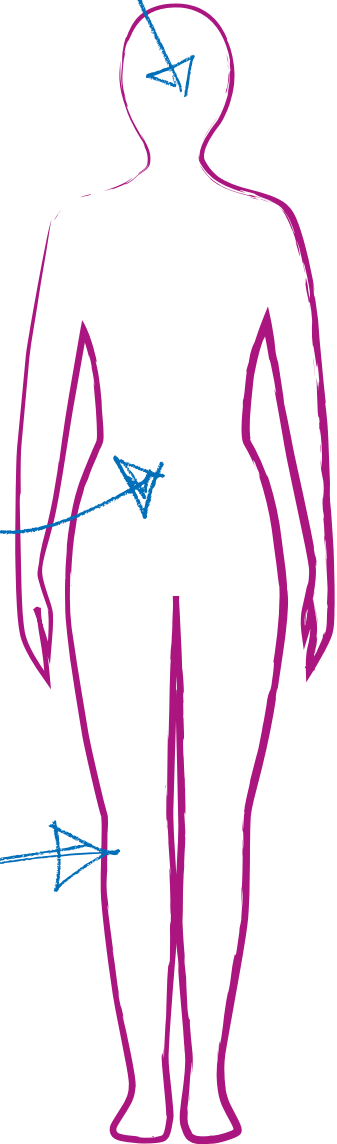


Body mapping is different for every individual. It's about your own experience and only you can understand what that was like. Through counselling God had wiped away my tears and was binding my wounds, but through body mapping, God gave me understanding and the start of a new future.

I felt trapped, I was sure I could do something to change this, I wanted things to be better and different. I would run over the words again and again in my head.

Knowing that it would happen again my stomach would be in knots, I would stop eating because I knew it would make me more sick.

My legs hold up my body but I wanted them to help me leave, but my legs and head did not link together.



## We draw our personal journey

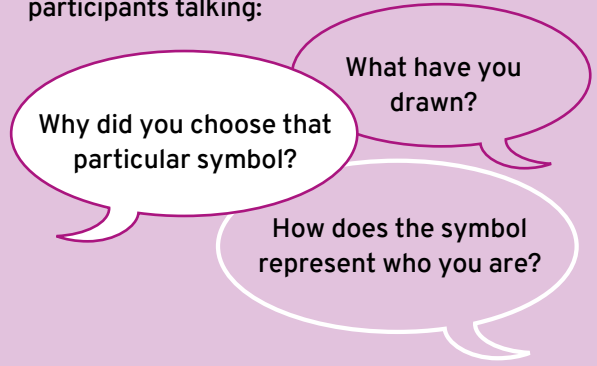
With help from the facilitator, the participants are invited to work independently on their own map, adding imagery and words to their map. They might express their identity in the sense of ethnicity, gender, ability, class – whatever is true for them. They add their feelings and memories onto their body maps.

As they map, participants consider and explore ways they might experience power, privilege, oppression or discrimination, perhaps based on their identities.

Participants can use any materials and tools that are available to make their map. Some may draw with crayons, some may stamp with paint on the soles of their feet – whatever helps the individual to map their experience they can use.

## Sharing our stories

The facilitator asks questions to help get the participants talking:



In the safe space of the workshop, the participants can share and explain their map, what it means to them, and what they discovered in the process. Every participant is encouraged to listen and to respect each other's stories. In a debrief, each participant is asked what insights they now have as a result of their body mapping.

## We start by tracing our body outline

On a large sheet of paper, each participant helps one other to draw around them as they lie down in whatever position they choose for their body map. They then help one another get back up off the floor.

## Why do we map our trauma on our body outline?

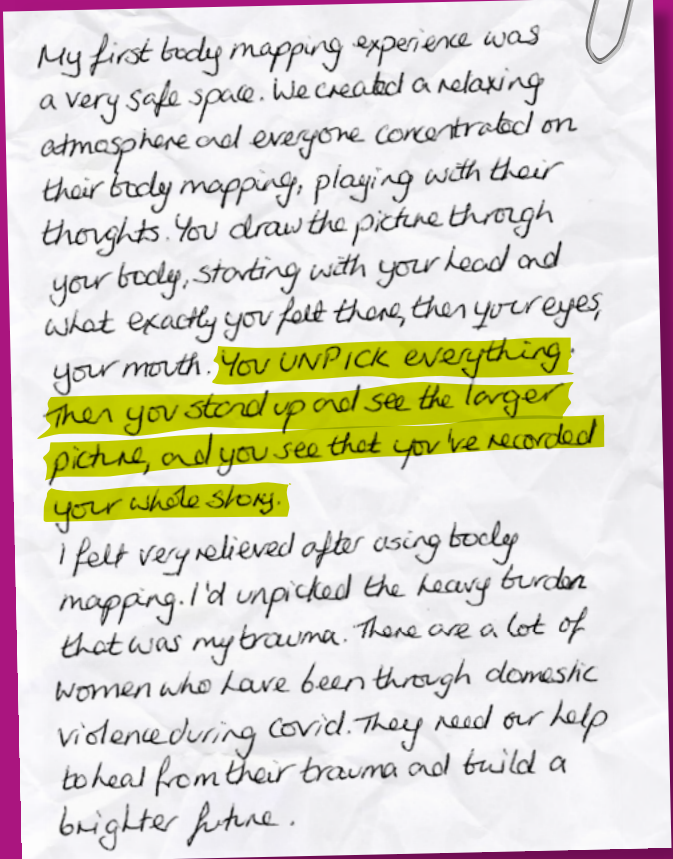
The body records our life stories through scars, injuries and illnesses. We remember what we saw through our eyes, heard through our ears, felt under our finger-tips. The body map gives us an equal physical space to focus on together, in the safety and privacy of a body mapping group.

## What tools do we use for body mapping?

- One piece of large paper for each person
- Coloured pens
- Wax crayons
- Powder paint
- Sponges and/or brushes
- Basin of water and towel to wash hands and feet
- Old newspapers to protect the floor of the work space
- Rubbish bags are useful for cleaning up afterwards

## Closing together

It is helpful for the participants if we gently end the session we have shared together with a candle ceremony and relaxing music.



My first body mapping experience was a very safe space. We created a relaxing atmosphere and everyone concentrated on their body mapping, playing with their thoughts. You draw the picture through your body, starting with your head and what exactly you felt there, then your eyes, your mouth. **You UNPICK everything. Then you stand up and see the larger picture, and you see that you've recorded your whole story.**

I felt very relieved after using body mapping. I'd unpicked the heavy burden that was my trauma. There are a lot of women who have been through domestic violence during Covid. They need our help to heal from their trauma and build a brighter future.

**This is an example activity shared to demonstrate an approach used in Mothers' Union's work. The activities and approaches in the flyer should only be carried out by trained professionals and as part of a wider programme of work and support.**

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