## Sample Craft to Heal Exercises from the Original Hook to Heal Book

Here are five of the exercises from different portions of the original Hook to Heal book.



**Keep in mind:**

- These are all geared towards crochet. Craft to Heal exercises are designed to offer broader inclusion for other crafts.
- The exercises will be presented differently in Craft to Heal, in a more interactive process. Therefore, the exercise steps might differ. The format of the written versions will differ.
- Since writing Hook to Heal, I have gained a Masters degree in Psychology, interviewed hundreds of people about crafting to heal and developed skills and insights that I'll be using to enhance the basic exercises I started with here.
- Craft to Heal will also include new never-published creative exercises rooted in both my research and my lived experience.

**With that in mind, you can get a general sense of some of the exercises we might do in the Craft to Heal program.**




## Mindfulness Crochet Exercise #5: Increased Breathing Triangle

*This is one of the basic mindfulness/ grounding exercises that form a foundation of the work.*

In this exercise, you will crochet a triangle and as you do so your breathing will get deeper and deeper.

First you'll start your triangle. You can use any simple crochet triangle pattern of your choosing. Here is one example of making a basic crochet triangle:

- Chain 2, sc in second chain from hook, turn.
- Chain 1, turn, increase, chain 1, turn. *NOTE: increase means that you crochet two stitches in the single stitch that is there.*
- Now, for each subsequent row, you will increase in the first and last stitch and will just sc in all of the other stitches. *NOTE: increase means that you will crochet two stitches in each of the first and last stitches of the row and one stitch in every other stitch across each row.*

The breathing part is what brings you to meditation. For each odd numbered row, you will inhale throughout the row. For each even numbered row, you will exhale. So you'll inhale as you start the triangle, then you will exhale on row two, inhale on row three, exhale on row four, etc. You want to start the breath on each turn and continue it all the way through to the end of the row. You will always be exhaling for a beat longer than you inhaled on the previous row. Eventually, you will reach a row where you can no longer exhale or inhale to the end of the row. That's when the mindfulness exercise is complete. *At this stage, you could frog the work. Alternatively, you could finish off and over time you'll have a large set of triangle motifs that will remind you of your meditation progress. Turn them into a blanket or wall art display!*




## Letting Go Exercise #2: Be a Beginner

*This example exercise is designed to show you how we might let go of perfectionism, insecurities, and old ideas of ourselves. Exercises like this one combine guidance, tips, activity steps, resources, and thoughtful conversation about how this might work for you.*

The exercise: Learn a new crochet technique.

The purpose: It's important in creative work to always come back to being a beginner. There can be comfort in doing work that we've gotten good at and there's definitely a time and place for that (that's why I have so many large granny square blankets at my house!) but it can be a hindrance to creative growth as well. When we forget what it's like to struggle with a technique, things get routine and the creativity can stagnate. Going back to a beginner's mindset and learning anew can refresh all of the work that we do.

In depth: Explore the emotions that arise as you become a beginner again. Is there fear of doing it incorrectly? Is there frustration at lacking skills? What negative things are you saying to yourself in this process and how can you turn those around into positive things?

Exercise steps:

1. **Select your technique**. What have you always wanted to try in crochet but haven't learned yet? (*Below you'll find a list of possible options.)*
2. **Find the right instructions**. How do you learn best? Crochet books, written online patterns, photo-based tutorials, online video instruction, in-person or online classes … there are many different ways to learn crochet techniques. Play around with what works best for you. Set yourself up for success.
3. **Gather the materials**. Most crochet techniques won't require anything new; the hooks and yarn already in your stash will suffice. However, some techniques require different materials. For example, Tunisian crochet uses a different type of hook and broomstick lace will require a large knitting needle, dowel or other comparable cylindrical item. Make sure you have the materials you need to get started.
4. **Practice the technique**. Make some swatches. Learn the process.

5. **Crochet a pattern using your new technique**. It's not enough to just learn the steps. You want to take it further and make sure that you can use them to make something. Choose a pattern that uses the technique that you're learning and work it until you've got the hang of it.

**CROCHET TECHNIQUES TO TRY**

Here is a list of some popular crochet techniques that you might want to learn if you don't know them yet. Of course, there are many different crochet techniques out there and this is only a partial list to get you started. One of my favorite things about crochet is that you can make many things with only a few simple stitches but there is also an endless array of other techniques to learn if you so desire! Here are more than two dozen suggestions:

- **Colorwork Techniques** including Tapestry Crochet, Fair Isle Crochet, Overlay Crochet and Reversible Crochet.
- **Lace Crochet Techniques** including Broomstick Lace, Hairpin Lace, Filet Crochet, Solomon's Knot and Bruges Lace.
- **Alternative Material Crochet** including working with wire, beads, glass, recycled fabric and plastic bags. You can also do mixed media crafting.
- **Alternative Tool Crochet** including Tunisian Crochet, Finger Crochet, Cro-hooking and cro-tatting.
- **Advanced Crochet Basics** including working in different loops, join-as-you-go techniques, chainless foundation, crochet felting.
- **And more!** There is always more to learn in crochet. Try amigurumi, hyperbolic crochet, Bavarian Crochet, entrelac crochet or freeform work.

One of my favorite crochet books that would be great for this exercise is *Crochet Master Class* by Rita Weiss and the late, great Jean Leinhauser. It shares information about eighteen different crochet techniques, each one written by a master in that technique, so you get a lot of information and inspiration about things that you might want to try.

Tips:

- Remember that you may not end up enjoying the technique. You don't have to love it or master it. It's all about trying it and seeing what happens to your creative process as you work through something new.
- Practice non-judgment. A lot of this "letting go" process is about letting go of the inner critic. That critic will tell you that you're not doing this right, not getting the hang of the technique fast enough, not recreating the pattern the right way, that you can't do this … Work gently with your inner critic, telling it that it's not helping you anyway and you're sending it on its way out of your mind!
- Set emotional goals for yourself. Write them down and keep them where you can see them as you work. For example, I have a tendency to give up quickly if

I'm not getting the hang of something so one of my emotional goals when trying something new is to devote at least one straight hour to it before giving it up. That gives me enough time to run through a range of different emotions and get past my blocks to learn something new.

Taking it further: How about making a crochet quilt where each square is done using a different new crochet technique? One way to do this is to learn a new technique each month, finishing the month with a 12" square in that technique. At the end of the year, you'll have one dozen 12" squares to join together to make a large crochet quilt showcasing all of the skills that you've learned. It's a very empowering process to keep learning new crochet techniques all year long, weaving together your beginner self with your experienced self into one whole creative creature.




## Self-Care Exercise #9: Crochet as Part of Your Sleep Routine

*This exercise seems to be really basic at first. The benefit of the Craft to Heal group is that we can dig into the personal challenges related to sleep issues and explore a variety of ways to make small changes through crafting.*

The exercise: Make crochet a regular part of your nighttime ritual for good sleep.

The purpose: Lack of good sleep causes / exacerbates a significant number of mood, mental health and physical health issues. Use crochet to help you improve your sleep hygiene.

In depth: Sleep hygiene is a term coined in recent years to describe the healthy habits we must engage in to get enough good quality sleep. It is a term that we need because a significant number of us aren't getting enough sleep and/ or good enough sleep. Developing proper relaxing rituals at night can significantly improve sleep. Crochet, a calming and relaxing activity, can be one key part of your regular nighttime sleep routine.

Exercise steps:

1. **Choose a simple, relaxing, long-term crochet project** that you will work on a little bit each night before bed. Large blankets like granny rectangles, ripple blankets and repeating v-stitch blankets are a great choice.
2. Complete your normal **before-bed activities**, such as brushing your teeth, before you start your project.
3. **Turn off all distractions**, such as television. You might find that light music is good. Make sure that your home is a cool, but not cold, temperature. Light a candle. Turn other lights down, leaving enough on to work on your crochet but as few on as possible to create a low-light area for rest.
4. Settle into a **comfortable position** in a cozy place that is not your bed (unless you are bed-bound by illness of course). Good sleep hygiene says

that your bed should be only for sleeping, not crafting or other activities. A chair in the bedroom is a great choice.

5. **Work on your crochet project** until you get sleepy enough that you think that you will be able to fall asleep. Eventually, your body should adjust to a specific cycle and you'll find that you're always working on your crochet for the same time (half an hour or an hour, perhaps) before you go to bed. *Note that this is a great time to work on meditative crochet and crochet with affirmations.*
6. **Calmly and quietly set your work aside**. You don't want to disrupt your body too much before you go to bed so put the work in a project bag near your craft space so that you can resume it again the following night.

Tips:

- Do what works for you in terms of your setting. The standard rules of not crafting in bed and keeping the TV off are good tips and worth at least trying as you establish a new sleep routine but you may find that they aren't right for you and adjust accordingly. I personally always fall asleep to TV; it's what works for me regardless of what the sleep hygiene "rules" are.
- Try a light-up crochet hook to see if it works well for you. This allows you to see your stitches in the dark, which means that you can create a fairly dark space as you get ready for bed each night.
- Some people (like myself!) have very little trouble falling asleep but struggle with insomnia that wakes them up in the middle of the night or they have early morning wakefulness. In some cases, staying in bed and crocheting for a very short period of time can help you relax enough to go back to sleep. If you find that you are still awake after twenty minutes, get up, make yourself a cup of soothing tea and crochet in your craft area before going back to bed.
- Make sure that you engage in other good sleep hygiene habits throughout the day to promote healthy sleep. Some of these include eating right (limiting caffeine, for example), getting enough natural light and exercise and taking your medications properly.

Taking it further: One great way to go further with this exercise is to crochet yourself items that you can use to improve your sleep hygiene. One terrific project is to crochet a sleep mask that you can put on when you lie down to block out the rest of the light. Some other helpful sleep items to crochet include:

- Cozy pillows that you love
- A stuffed animal to take to bed with you
- Cozies for your phones and laptops to keep them out of sight at night
- Cozies for candle holders in your craft space
- Crochet basket or bag to keep your project in at night
- Scented sachets to keep by the bed; lavender is great for sleep




## Relationships Exercise #4: Re-Create a Favorite Memory in Crochet

The exercise: Crochet a favorite memory that you have with someone you love.

The purpose: Celebrate something you loved in your relationship through the act of crochet.

In depth: One of the ways that we strengthen our relationships is through savoring our positive memories that we've experienced with the other person. This can be done alone, in our own minds, as we celebrate the greatest of times and let that love wrap itself around us, or it can be done together through sharing a memory aloud. This exercise puts that into physical form with crochet.

Exercise steps:

1. **Brainstorm** a list of memories that you'd like to celebrate.
2. **Choose one** memory from the list.
3. **Brainstorm** a list of images that relate to this memory. For example, let's say that the memory happened at the beach; include a list of beach items.
4. **Crochet** each of the items on your list from Step Three. You might do them as flat appliques or as amigurumi stuffed characters.
5. **Organize** them into a scene that represents the memory.
6. **Identify** anything that is missing from the scene. For example, did you forget to place yourself in it? Crochet any missing elements and add them in.
7. **Preserve the scene**. You might glue it all down, stitch it all together, set it up as a display in your home or simply photograph it.
8. **Share it** with your loved one.

Tips:

- The items that you crochet can be abstract representations instead of exact replicas. For example, when I put myself and others into a scene, I use crochet hearts in different colors to represent each of us rather than trying to actually crochet a self-portrait.

- That said, if you are skilled at (or want to try) tapestry crochet to create portraits and landscapes then by all means crochet your memory in this way!
- If you're sharing the experience with a loved one in advance, ask them what they remember about that day and incorporate what they share into your physical representation.

Taking it further: Create a play telling the story of the memory. Use your crochet items to tell the story of the play. Present the play to those who participated in the event that is memorialized. You can also use animation and video to present the story.

### Balance Exercise #12: Crochet a Stone Paperweight

The exercise: Crochet over stones to create paperweights.

The purpose: Paperweights give physical weight to our world.

In depth: A paperweight is physically heavy. Crochet is naturally light so when we crochet over a heavy object to create a paperweight, we are automatically creating an item of balance. The paperweight itself can be used to weight down lighter objects in the home, such as stacks of papers, or even to flatten out crochet projects in the works. Paperweights can also be distributed decoratively around a home to balance out the lighter-weight decor in your space.

Exercise steps:

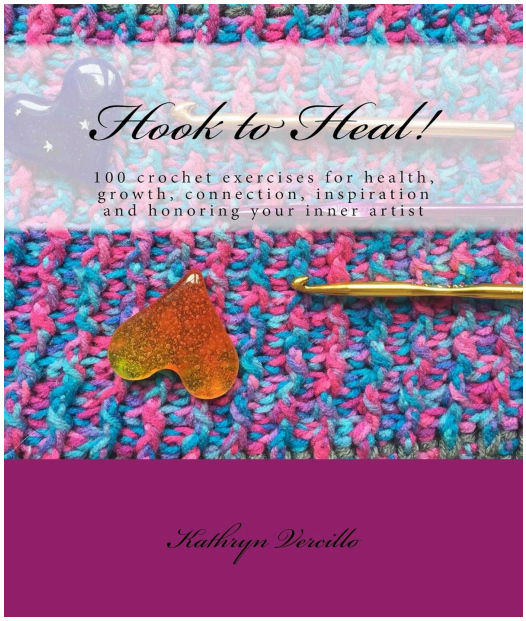
1. Go on a **nature walk** to select stones. Leave your phone off, go on this walk alone, experience peacefulness in searching for the right stones.
2. Select a **round crochet motif** that is approximately the same diameter as your first stone.
3. **Crochet two** of the same motif.
4. **Sew the motifs** together with the rock in between them. Nature isn't perfect so rocks aren't perfectly round; feel free to freeform and make creative adjustments so it fits.
5. **Repeat** with all of your other rocks.

Tips:

- Look at patterns for flowers, snowflakes, and mandalas to find the right round motif.
- Play with different sizes and colors of stones to find the right balance for you.
- Explore the use of color vs. neutrals when selecting thread / yarn for this exercise. Which option feels more balanced with the stones that you select?

- Try this technique with other materials from nature as well, such as seashells and large leaves. *See crochet artist Susanna Bauer's leaves for amazing examples.*

Taking it further: Crochet a set of stone paperweights and practice the art of rock balancing. This is where you meditatively select one rock after another and stack them into towers. This can be done for an indoor display in your home or outdoors in your yard. You must practice great balance to grow the tower of stones taller and taller.







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