One small habit getting me through a difficult season

How diamond painting helps me cope

By GINA LORUSSO
Managing Editor

Gem by gem, color by color — diamond painting is something that's helping me get through an already tough start to the year.

Never would I have imagined sitting in my dorm room at the start of my last undergraduate semester, consistently turning to a time-consuming craft to cope with grief.

This past winter break, I experienced a heartbreaking loss in my life that I wasn't sure how to begin healing from. As someone who has always been private about their struggles, I didn't find much comfort in talking to others — I found it in diamond paintings. It sounds ridiculous, but it works for me, and it's something I refuse to be ashamed of.

Diamond paintings, or diamond art, are a color-by-number-style craft that requires you to place different colored gems on a canvas to create a design. The gems, or drills, can be placed either one at a time or in groups onto the adhesive canvas using a special tool.

I picked up this hobby during COVID-19 when I had absolutely nothing else to do except sit in my room and watch Netflix, but it unexpectedly wormed its way back into my life a few weeks ago. Needless to say, I'm so glad it did.

My diamond painting era in 2020 was sparked by boredom. Now, I returned to it with intention and care.

What surprised me most about this was how easily it became a part of my daily routine. In between classes, assignments and other tasks, I find the time to just sit and be present. I didn't have to force myself into it again — it became a low-pressure habit I look forward to each day and gives me a sense of structure when everything else feels so unbearable.

There's something grounding about the repetition of placing the gems — the quiet focus it requires leaves little room for intrusive thoughts that could upend an emotionally heavy day. It helps control the ever-present stress and anxiety that I didn't have to deal with much before now.

To me, it's all about the environment and making the space comfortable so you can enter a gentle state of mind and be at peace with yourself. Soft lighting, a comfort movie or show in the background and something warm to sip on is all I need to, at least somewhat, reach a place where I can reflect and be content with my healing journey.

Watching the canvas slowly come together with each section feeling like a small accomplishment, even on days when simply getting out of bed feels like the greatest achievement. Diamond paintings are tangible progress, not progress that is typically invisible. With every gem I place, it's proof that time has passed and an effort has been made, even if it was in a quiet way.

Healing comes in moments. Right now, it's gem by gem, color by color. My diamond paintings aren't a cure — they're a pause. Some days are heavier than others, so it's important to let yourself enjoy something simple that doesn't need much energy. A gentle activity, such as this one, is choosing softness over that "just push through" mindset when you feel like you can't.

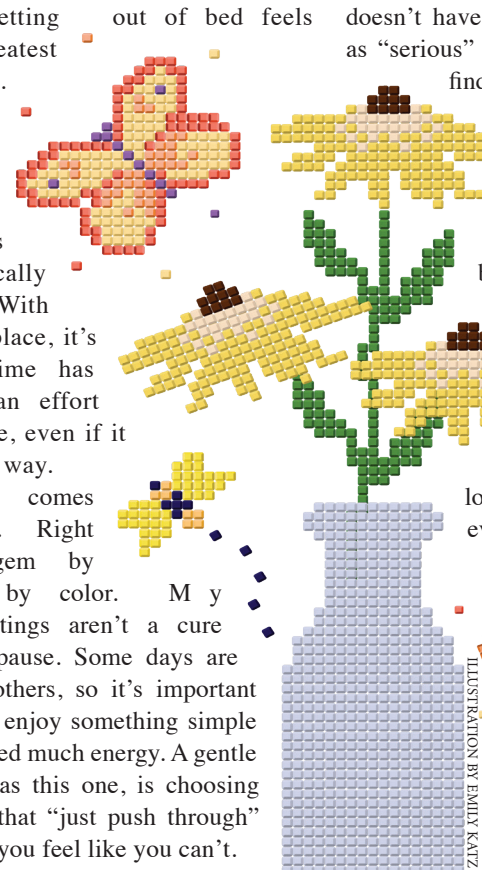


ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY KATZ

Many people dismiss crafts as childish or unproductive, but in reality, healing doesn't have to be productive or looked at as "serious" to be valid. Any way that you find helpful to handle grief is not embarrassing — it only has to make sense to you.

Diamond painting hasn't fixed everything, but it's given me space to breathe, and that feels like it's enough for now. This small habit has given me something to hold onto. It reminds me that healing doesn't need to be loud gestures; it can be found in even the smallest pockets of peace throughout each day.

So now, if you'll excuse me, I have a diamond painting to finish.

What I would do if my closet disappeared tomorrow

By SOPHIE MURRAY
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I used to open my closet and feel overwhelmed. Racks packed with clothes, yet somehow nothing to actually wear. It wasn't because I didn't own enough, but because I didn't know how to style it or just completely forgot it existed.

As a devoted sweatpants wearer, I made it part of my New Year's resolution to stop defaulting to lounge wear every day, especially since I own far more than just gray sweats.

I love fashion and I love putting outfits together, yet I constantly feel like I am missing key wardrobe staples, while simultaneously owning an excess of random sweaters I've had since my junior year of high school.

That contradiction got me thinking: if all of my clothes disappeared and I was left with absolutely nothing, how would I rebuild my wardrobe from scratch?

And in a world where trends are constantly cycling in and out, what pieces are truly worth investing in while staying timeless but can still reflect a personal style?

So, if you woke up tomorrow with an empty closet, here's how to start your wardrobe over again.

The first step is inspiration, not shopping. Before buying anything, scroll through Pinterest and save outfit ideas that align with your actual lifestyle: everyday classes, work days, nights out.

One of the biggest reasons people overbuy then under wear is because their clothes lack styling vision. If I can't picture at least three ways I'd wear something, it usually ends up in the back of my closet.

Having a clear idea of how you plan to wear an item makes shopping more intentional and prevents pieces from going unworn.

Once you're ready to shop, begin with "timeless" staples. No, this doesn't have to mean boring. It just means pieces that won't feel dated in six months and can be styled in many different ways. Clean lines, classic cuts and neutral color palettes will be your best friend, especially when you want your outfits to be effortless yet put-together.

Building this foundation does not have to break the bank either. Amazon is a great start to find affordable basics that will act as the backbone of any outfit.

A black, white and gray tank top, T-shirt and long sleeve tops are a strong starting point for any outfit. They can easily dress up by pairing with jeans, statement jewelry and polished shoes, or styled casually with leggings or a colorful pair of sweatpants. I also like finding colorful undershirts or patterned ones for layering. These look best peaking out of a neutral sweater.



ILLUSTRATION BY SOPHIE MURRAY

When it comes to pants, I would break them down into three essential categories: leggings, sweatpants and jeans.

A reliable pair of black leggings is a closet staple. They can be worn with any daytime outfit and offer the added benefit of comfort. Incorporating leggings in bolder colors can add variety while maintaining versatility.

Despite my goal to wear fewer sweatpants in 2026, they still deserve a place in a functional wardrobe. However, the difference is intention. A well-fitting, high-quality pair feels very different than the ones reserved for laundry day. A well-fitting pair can work for casual outings, travel days or just a relaxed weekend.

Jeans take the most trial and error, but are essential. You don't need every style under the sun, just ones that work for your body and life. I highly recommend trying any pair of jeans on before committing so you can experiment with different variations: dark or light wash, high rise or low rise, straight or wide leg.

Sweaters were one of my biggest problems. I am a full sweater hoarder, and somehow they are still the most overbought and under-worn item in my closet.

A lot depends on weather and lifestyle. If you live in a cold climate, heavier knits are worth the investment. If your daily outfits lean more casual, look for sweaters that can be easily styled with leggings or sweats. When the weather transitions, cardigans or half zips offer flexibility and easy layering.

If you can picture a sweater working with multiple outfits and fitting seamlessly into your routine, it's likely a smart investment. If you're anything like me, it might be a sign to finally clean out your sweater drawer.

Hoodies and crewnecks are pieces I will never give up. While neutral options are always reliable, they're also a great way to express personal style.

Whether it's your favorite sports team, a nod to your music taste or a pattern you're drawn to, hoodies can reflect personality while remaining practical. Lately, I've been into stripes. I love how they add a visual interest while still being effortless enough to dress up or down.

Finally, to rebuild my closet, I would invest in a small but reliable shoe rotation. Since I don't play sports or need an overly athletic shoe, my go-to everyday sneakers are New Balances. I love that I can wear them to be active, but I can also wear them with jeans or a nicer outfit.

Next, I would repurchase my Ugg Minis. They're perfect for the colder weather, extremely comfortable and still look nice paired with more dressed-up outfits.

My favorite recent investment has been my Adidas Sambas. I always reach for these to elevate a simple outfit. Mine are navy blue, which I love using as a subtle pop of color with otherwise neutral outfits. They're incredibly versatile and surprisingly comfortable.

An intentional wardrobe isn't about perfection. It's about pieces that can show up in your life. When your closet reflects how you live and your personal aesthetic, getting dressed and curating outfits feels less like a chore and more about self-expression.