This research was conducted to understand more about the relationship between a person’s mental state and how color is perceived. It uses graphic design to bring awareness to the issue of mental health by visually comparing these differences through the use of a pamphlet and handout. By measuring the color perception between those who are clinically depressed and those of a healthy mental state, this gives an objective way to help diagnose depression. This objectivity can also help create Awareness and give better understanding of depression to the general population. This can be done through well known phrases used to describe sadness, such as, “feeling gray,” and understanding their scientific meaning, the relationship between perception of color and mood. Understanding the objective meaning behind these phrases helps bridge the gap of understanding and awareness. From these results of the study (image 1) I have made visual results to communicate to people the study in a visual way. (Image 2 and 3) These two images can give an idea of the possible differences found between depressed and healthy people.

In turn, lower levels of dopamine equals lower contrast. This research resulted in using gray surrounded by color to show the visual differences that depressed people see in the world. The focus of the pamphlet is gray surrounded by color to visually show this research to help educate.

For this body of research, I chose to explore this research further by educating the general public about it visually. In one case study, 60 healthy individuals were tested and 40 depressed individuals were tested through a pattern electroretinogram. The participants were shown different contrasted squares. Conscious vision was not tested, as this is an objective test. I used this research to explore my own by visually showing the results of these tests to help people better understand depression from the standpoint of a non depressed person. By combining graphic design with this research I was able to visually show the differences in color perception and bring awareness to the issue. With this pamphlet, the non depressed will be able to visually see a part of depression. By showing these differences side by side, one with less contrast and one with more contrast, healthy people will be able to see the potential difference a depressed individual sees. In addition to a pamphlet, a small poster zine will highlight the visual research with the scientific research to help people understand depression.

From this research we can not only see the difference in color perception between those who are not depressed and those who are depressed, but we can also see that people who are depressed see the world in a different way. A less colorful way. With lower color perception, the world is not as bright. Things brings up phrases that relate color to mood. The common phrase, “feeling gray,” actually has some truth to it. Individuals who are depressed really see less visual contrast. This results in their seeing the world as more gray. Their world is more dull than a mentally healthy individual. Another phrase associated with color is “Brighten up.” This phrase is usually said to someone who is feeling sad. This is an interesting phrase to look at because its associating more color with more happiness. Our associations with mood and color go both ways. We can use these common phrases to help the public understand this lack of color that depressed individuals see.

The body of this research looks at the relationship between a person’s mental state and how color is perceived. It uses graphic design to bring awareness to the issue of mental health by visually comparing these differences through the use of a pamphlet and handout. By measuring the color perception between those who are clinically depressed and those of a healthy mental state, this gives an objective way to help diagnose depression. This objectivity can also help create Awareness and give better understanding of depression to the general population. This can be done through well known phrases used to describe sadness, such as, “feeling gray,” and understanding their scientific meaning, the relationship between perception of color and mood. Understanding the objective meaning behind these phrases helps bridge the gap of understanding and awareness.

BRIGHTEN UP

According to a study by Bryner, Jeanna, “Depressed People Really Do See a Gray World,” Scientific American, 6 Oct. 2015, psychcentral.com/news/2010/07/21/decreased-perception-of-color-in-depression/, accessed 18 Mar. 2016. This study found that depressed individuals have a lower perception of color in their world in contrast to those who are not depressed.

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