

Mapping Control in the Body

*A Somatic & Creative Exploration of Control in
Eating Disorder Recovery*

INTRODUCTION:

Control in eating disorders is often embodied before it is conceptualized. Muscular tension, breath restriction, rigidity, collapse, and hypervigilance frequently precede conscious thought.

This activity bypasses over-intellectualization and invites clients to:

- Locate control somatically
- Externalize it visually
- Explore its function without pathologizing
- Experiment with micro-softening rather than relinquishment

MATERIALS:

- Large paper (11x17 preferred)
- Markers, colored pencils, crayons, or pastels
- Optional: clay, collage materials, or textured paper
- A quiet, regulated space

Part 1: Somatic Arrival

Invite the client to orient to their body without changing anything.

Clinician script (optional):

“Notice where your body feels most held, tight, braced, or managed right now. There’s no need to relax it—just notice where control seems to live.”

Ask gently:

- Where in your body do you feel control most strongly?
- Is it sharp, heavy, rigid, numb, tight, contained?

Let them sit with this briefly.

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Part 2: Body Mapping Control (Art-Based)

Ask the client to draw a simple outline of a body (no detail needed).

Instructions:

- Use color, shape, line, or texture to show where control lives
- There is no right or wrong way to do this
- Control does not have to look “human”

Prompts (offer selectively):

- Does control feel like armor? A wall? A knot? A cage? A structure?
- Is it centralized or spread out?
- Is it rigid, precise, heavy, sharp, contained?

Let the drawing remain descriptive, not interpretive.

Part 3: Witnessing the Image

Before interpreting, invite witnessing.

Ask:

- What do you notice about this image?
- What stands out or draws your attention?
- What feels familiar?

Avoid questions like “Why?”