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Newsletter 8

CREATIVITY AND HEALING

*"We may not be responsible for the world that created our minds,*

*but we can take responsibility for the mind with which*

*we create our world."*

Dr. Gabor Maté

REFLECTING ON OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSES

The role of creativity in the healing process:

Through our discussions of late, we have been exploring the role of creativity in the healing process. It’s through our ‘occupations’ and ‘generative’ contributions that healing occurs. And within this healing process, we may discover newfound creativity, curiosity, and courage. It’s cyclical… each element further inspiring and informing the next.

Finding respite in creativity from the persistent stress of a global pandemic is a much-needed form of healing needed for our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Throughout the ages, people have used storytelling, drawings, dance, song, and other creative rituals to capture experiences that were often too difficult to put into words. Creativity can give a voice to what is felt even without words. Our collective emotional experiences of loss, fear, courage, loneliness, anxiety can be expressed and be seen in a soulful poem, a song, or a beautiful piece of art. However, creativity doesn’t only live in museums or in the world of poets, we can cultivate moments of creativity in our everyday lives. Noticing a sunset, inhaling the fragrance of flowers, preparing a nourishing meal, can each engage the brain in ways that make us feel better and less stressed.

The Japanese art of Kintsugi ‘golden repair’ is a magnificent example of how creativity is used to heal and repair. The art of repairing broken pottery with gold is guided by the Japanese philosophy that views the breakage and repair of an object as part of its history rather than something that needs to be thrown away or hidden. As a result, the cracks of a broken pottery bowl are filled with gold, transforming it into another beautiful piece of art. Guided by this metaphor, the cracks that this pandemic has created or highlighted, need to be filled with the ‘gold’ of connection, compassion, and a commitment to transforming our world into a more equitable, just and kind place.



*The Journey,* by Mary Oliver

*One day you finally knew*

*what you had to do, and began,*

*though the voices around you*

*kept shouting*

*their bad advice –*

*though the whole house*

*began to tremble*

*and you felt the old tug*

*at your ankles.*

*“Mend my life!”*

*each voice cried.*

*But you didn’t stop.*

*You knew what you had to do,*

*though the wind pried*

*with its stiff fingers*

*at the very foundations,*

*though their melancholy*

*was terrible.*

*It was already late*

*enough, and a wild night,*

*and the road full of fallen*

*branches and stones.*

*But little by little,*

*as you left their voices behind,*

*the stars began to burn*

*through the sheets of clouds,*

*and there was a new voice*

*which you slowly*

*recognized as your own,*

*that kept you company*

*as you strode deeper and deeper*

*into the world,*

*determined to do*

*the only thing you could do –*

*determined to save*

*the only life that you could save.*

Collective expertise:

We’ve all watched with respect and admiration as the international scientific community has come together to gather their collective knowledge and expertise in the battle against Covid-19. As these new partnerships continue, we are excited to highlight creative collaborations that support healing in several new arenas. The following article explores exciting new research at UofT, showing the potential for new *lighting* that kills corona viruses and HIV!

<https://www.utoronto.ca/news/flip-switch-uv-led-lights-could-be-used-kill-coronaviruses-and-other-germs-u-t-study?utm_source=The+Bulletin+Brief&utm_campaign=d5bcedf74b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_13_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b5083c0488-d5bcedf74b-110374768>

In his 2003 book *The Powerful Self,* Steven Stosny asks the question, how do we cope and deal with our feelings of helplessness and dependency? Among other things, he suggests that we notice our sense of competence and that we reach out and embrace creativity, because that is what inspires us to see possibilities. He invites us to take stock of that which we appreciate and can be grateful for. He suggests that in addition to reminding ourselves of our core values we can actively acknowledge and appreciate our spiritual connections, the beauty in nature, the beauty in humankind’s creations, the power of community and the power of connection. Being able to call on and be open to this message in times of distress and helplessness can help us through the darker moments.

Stosny, S., (2003) The Powerful Self: A workbook of Therapeutic Empowerment, BookSurge LLP, North Charleston, SC.

Relying on each other and asking for help:

If you find yourself uncomfortable asking for help, you are not alone. And yet, generally, we want to assist others – we want to be asked to help. When are friends experience challenges, we ask, “What can I do to help?”; “Please let me know how I can be helpful.” And still, many of us do not ask others for help when we may need it most. As we often do, turning to David Whyte for his creative thoughts provides the following reflection on ‘help’:

“HELP is strangely, something we want to do without, as if the very idea disturbs and blurs the boundaries of our individual endeavors, as if we cannot face how much we need in order to go on. We are born with an absolute necessity for help, grow well only with a continuous succession of extended hands, and as adults depend upon others for our further successes and possibilities in life even as competent individuals… Not only does the need for help never leave us alone; we must apprentice ourselves to its different necessary forms, at each particular threshold of our lives. At every stage we are dependent on our ability to ask for specific forms of help at very specific times and in very specific ways. Even at the end, the dignity of our going depends on others’ willingness to help us die well; the sincerity of their help often commensurate to the help we extended to them in our own life. Every transformation has at its heart the need to ask for the right kind of generosity.”

*From Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words. (2015) Many Rivers Press: Langley, WA.*

THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTION

Columnist and writer Rob Walker, in *The Art of Noticing* *(2019),* presents multiple creative and thoughtful strategies to notice, see and connect withthe world around us. He quotes Susan Sontag in the introduction. “‘Pay attention,’ Susan Sontag once advised a young audience; she was speaking of the creative process, but also of living. ‘It’s all about paying attention. It’s all about taking in as much of what’s out there as you can, and not letting the excuses and the dreariness of some of the obligations you’ll soon be incurring narrow your lives. Attention is vitality. It connects you with others. It makes you eager. Stay eager.’ To stay eager, to connect, to find interest in the everyday, to notice what everybody else overlooks – these are vital skills and noble goals. They speak to the difference between looking and seeing, between hearing and listening, between accepting what the world presents and noticing what matters to you.”

And isn’t this what we hope to encourage and explore in the therapeutic process?

In her 2008 article, *Anxiety, Courage, and Healing*, Maryetta Andrews-Sachs explores the therapist’s task of healing, and the elements of therapy that heal people. She begins by exploring her own process, and elements that were healing for her. “I think about what has healed me: a combination of love - and raising my tolerance for anxiety…When I think about love I think about accepting someone just as they are - a tall order indeed. Yet this sets the scene for personal growth. The therapist is then able to become the ‘encourager’ - to lend courage so that the individual can dare to face what he needs to face.”

*TELL ME*, by Shel Silverstein

*Tell me I’m clever,*

*Tell me I’m kind,*

*Tell me I’m talented,*

*Tell me I’m cute,*

*Tell me I’m sensitive,*

*Graceful and wise,*

*Tell me I’m perfect –*

*But tell me the truth.*

The creative and healing potential of dreams:

Dream analysis is a cornerstone of depth psychology, a ‘royal road’ as Freud described it, to our unconscious material. Carl Jung’s important work with dreams and active imagination also tapped into the creative and healing potential of dreams.

In his recent book, Jungian analyst Machiel Klerk explores the world of dreams and introduces us to a fascinating and ancient method of working with our dreams, called dream incubation.

Dream incubation is a simple concept in its most basic application. It is learning how to ask your dream a question before you go to sleep with the goal of eliciting a practical response. Engaging with our dreamworld in this creative way opens the door to accessing our inner wisdom and activating the healing potential we all possess.

To hear Klerk describe and elaborate on the process of dream incubation you can listen to this recent interview on *This Jungian Life:*

<https://thisjungianlife.com/episode-218-dream-incubation/>

The healing power of creativity:

# In this moving TED talkJacques Lalonde, an award-winning actor, writer, and producer, speaks about a dark period in his life when he had a stroke and almost died. It was in the hospital room deep in despair that he turned his nightmare into a play, changing the narrative and transforming the other stroke victims, as well as himself, into heroes in his story. He explores how creativity has helped others in remarkable ways and tells us about his greatest hero, his incredibly creative mom, who taught him to do something he loves every day.

https://www.ted.com/talks/jacques\_lalonde\_the\_healing\_power\_of\_creativity

We would be remiss if we ended this exploration of creativity and healing without acknowledging the immense power of music to heal and connect.

Jon Batiste is an extraordinarily talented American musician and winner of several Grammy awards for his recent album *We Are.*

His inspiring acceptance speech at this year’s Grammys is definitely worth viewing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFA6JJyj178>

And his joyful performance of his song *Freedom* at the actual award ceremony, and in this YouTube link below exemplifies the spirit he described in a past interview with Forbes magazine where he stated,” Music is a real form of connection to a higher power at its greatest; music is a form of community that brings people together and gives them a common purpose.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YHVC1DcHmo>

Enjoy!

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) has created an original web series, *Inner Space*, that explores the personal studios of 12 emerging Canadian artists, examining their creative processes:

<https://ago.us11.listmanage.com/track/click?u=054b8cc360979db4f44aa5ebb&id=c1f9d3adf9&e=63edca5dfa>

The following link, about healing and divides, references an interview, *How to have a Conversation with Anyone (Even your Enemy),* between journalists Monica Guzman and Stacey Lindsay

<https://www.mariashriversundaypaper.com/are-you-fearlessly-curious-in-your-interactions/>

In this thoughtful article, Dr. Seku Gathers talks about the importance of honouring your own creativity and following your own true passions as a way to heal yourself, and thereby offer your healing contributions to your wider community:

https://www.mariashriversundaypaper.com/heal-yourself-heal-humanity-dr-seku-gathers-shows-us-where-to-start/

Respectfully submitted,

Aida Cabecinha, Susan Farrow, Maureen Mahan, Allan Sheps and Terry Simonik,

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