Chapter 7
Healing through Self-Discovery and Artistic Design Journals

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ABSTRACT

The author explores the process of healing through the use of artistic writing activities in a journal, which promote self-discovery. Techniques that involve art making and writing are shared, such as collaborative drawing and writing, ekphrasis, hand-made journals, mandala drawing, marble paper abstract drawing, and sensory printing. Through artistic design, the journey to better understand the self is addressed, emphasizing management of everyday stresses such as those stemming from relationships, roles, and change. Managing these stresses leads towards a healthy life by providing a balance between creative drive and daily obligations. Guided exercises using various media are explained. The process is emphasized, not the end product or artistic merit of the creation. It is through this creative process that tension and stress are released and the joy of discovery becomes a part of life. Individuality is valued through thoughtful reflection of the activities that are embedded in artistic design journals.

INTRODUCTION

Drip, drop, ripple, and swirl, the oil based Suminagashi ink travels across the surface of the water in the bucket. The ink has a will of its own, moving and pushing through space like people jostling across a busy New York City street during commuting hour. I stare into the flowing waves that evolve from the mass of swirling colors, like a bird flying high above the bustle of city life viewing traffic patterns as designs. Gently, a single sheet of white paper is placed on the top of the water to visually capture this moment in time. Removing the sheet from its watery nest, I consider how the marble paper guides my imagination while setting it on the table to dry.

I often use marble paper to draw found designs, which relaxes my shoulders and lets my mind wander. The random designs (doodles) are like cloud formations that take various shapes, some of which are recognizable and offer a tenuous safety line of reality. One swirl might create an eagle with its wings spread wide over a vast wave crested ocean. Another swirl reminds me of dust whirls rising from...
hooves beating a trailhead during the Georgia dry season. Marble paper is the result of transferring the swirling ink onto a sheet of paper and can be used in a variety of artistic work such as, collage, book end pages and drawing. For example, guided doodles can be drawn on marble paper as a starting point for artistic and creative writing activities, which promote self-discovery through imagination. The drawing process helps to relax the mind and body to alleviate daily stress which promotes the healing process. Creating marble paper is only one way to self-express your ideas for healthful living. The experience of making artistic works is the emphasis for an artistic design journal.

Healthful living involves management of diverse roles, demands, relationships, change, and other factors of daily life. Imagination and creativity can help balance our creative self and daily obligations. In this chapter, I discuss various artistic exercises that allow for self-expression and self-awareness, which are two important parts of self-discovery. Our emotions, thoughts and concerns can come to light through the art media. It is through this creative process, that tension and stress are released and the joy of discovery becomes a part of life. Playful and creative exploration of the world around you opens doors to possibilities. Having the confidence to value this exploration is an important step on the journey.
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