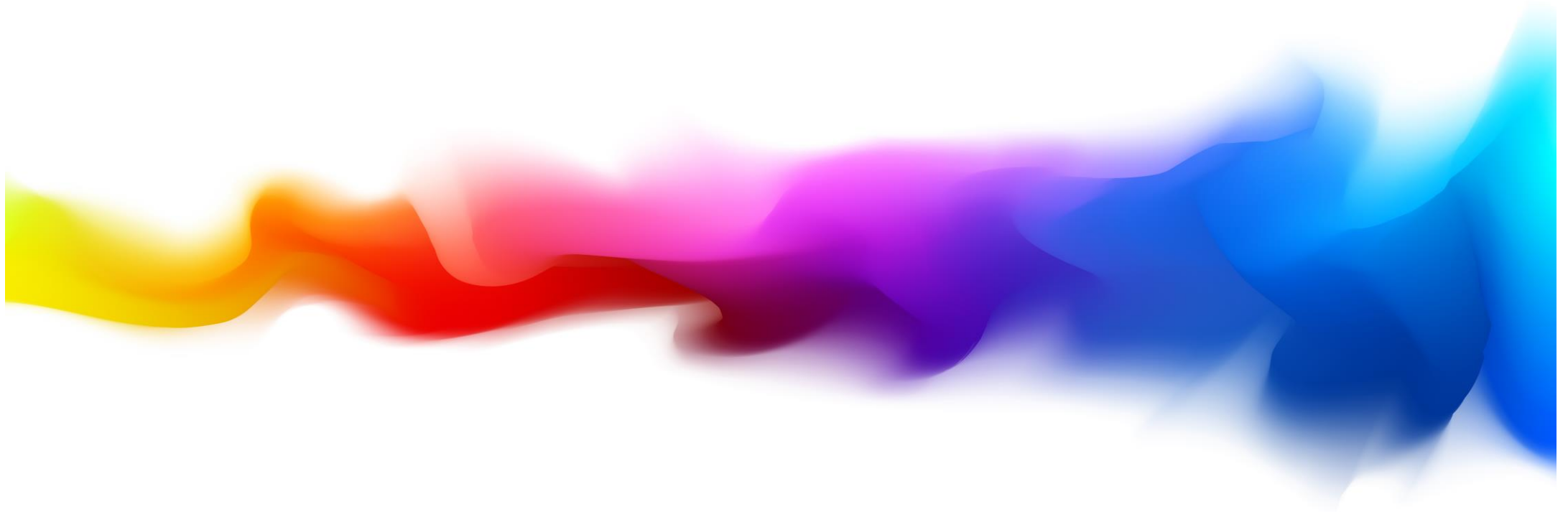


Creativity and Spiritual Direction

Kathy Milans, Path of Life Ministry

Retired KY Licensed Pastoral Counselor

Spiritual Director



Are you a creator?

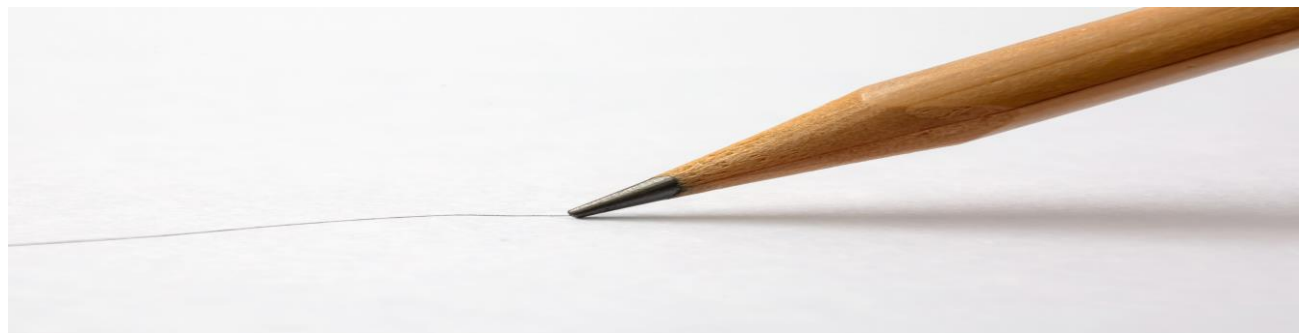
- In her rich work, *Walking on Water*, Madeleine L'Engle states, “But unless we are creators we are not fully alive. What do I mean by creators? Not only artists, whose acts of creation are the obvious ones of working with paint or clay or words. Creativity is a way of living life, no matter our vocation or how we earn our living. Creativity is not limited to the arts, or having some kind of important career.”

Does God Care About Human Creativity and Art? (Cultural Conversations)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPzdbYYLtEk&t=1s>

Take five minutes to draw or write the many ways that people might engage in creativity.

Then take five minutes to draw or write the ways that you engage in creativity in your everyday life.



I think that everything you do in life is art, what you do, how you dress, the way you love someone, and how you talk, your smile, your personality, what you believe in, and all your dreams, the way you drink your tea, how you decorate your home or party, your grocery store list, the food you make, how your writing looks, and the way you feel.

Life is art.




Art is so many different things
Our lives should be art-
What we do, how we speak
how we think, how we create,
how and what we feel,
how we see the world,
what we do with our God given gifts.
It's all art,
just not in the conventional sense. We are art.





We are all artists, painting our lives upon the canvas of reality. Mix the colors your own way and apply emotions liberally. Don't be afraid to let your brushstrokes show, and above all else, make sure your art has soul.

Christen Rodgers



For you created
my inmost being;
You knit me together
in my mother's
womb.

Why did she make things?
Well, she enjoyed it, of
course,
but it also somehow
helped her remember
who she was
and where she came
from.



Art washes away
from the soul the
dust of everyday
life.

Picasso

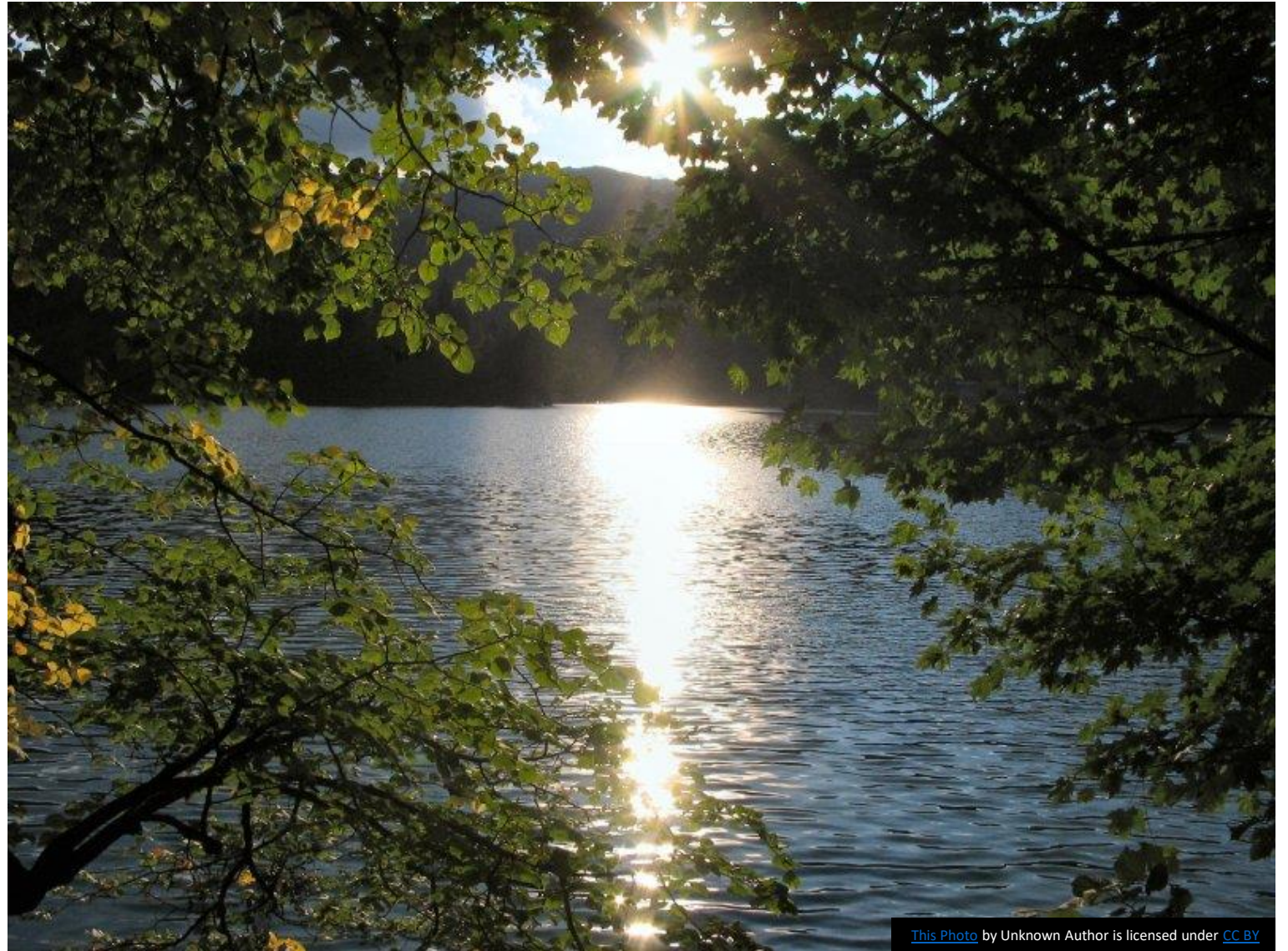
Whenever you are
creating beauty
around you, you are
restoring your own
soul.

Alice Walker



Art does not
reproduce
what we see. It
makes us see.

Paul Klee

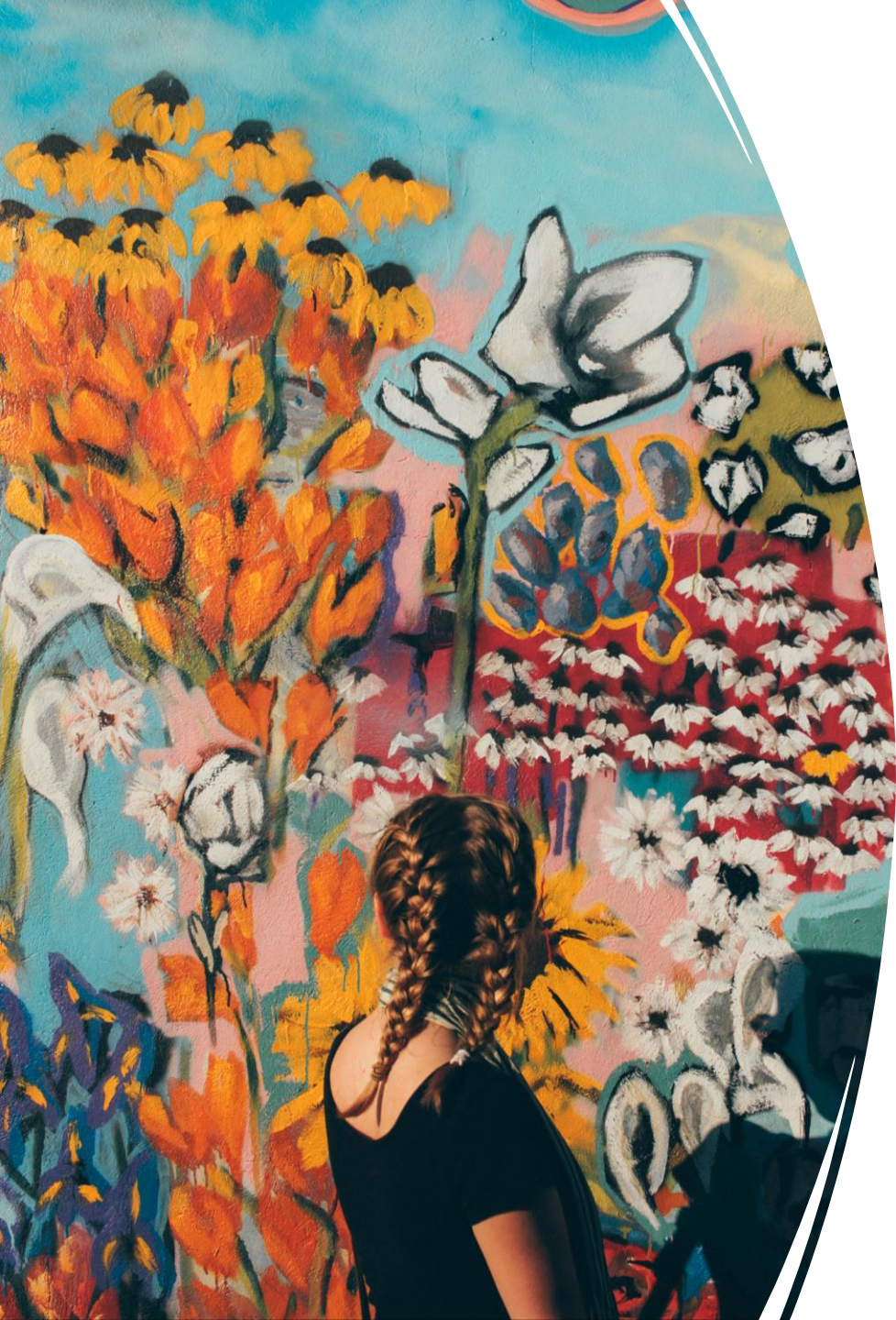


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“But I’m
not
creative?”

We are holistic beings—heart, mind, soul, and body. Unfortunately, we compartmentalize and deny ourselves the rich spiritual experience that God can give us through the arts.

It may be that we feel that we are not qualified to “do art.” Yet, we are made in the image of a creative God! Engle says, “In a very real sense not one of us is qualified, but it seems that God continually chooses the most unqualified to do his work, to bear his glory. If we are qualified, we tend to think that we have done the job ourselves. If we are forced to accept our evident lack of qualification, then there’s no danger that we will confuse God’s work with our own, or God’s glory with our own.”



Creativity is not a mood.
Creativity is not a gift. It is
the very nature of God
inside of you.

Dan McCollam



You are the artist
of your own life.
Don't hand the
paintbrush to
anyone else.

Children and creativity



“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” Picasso

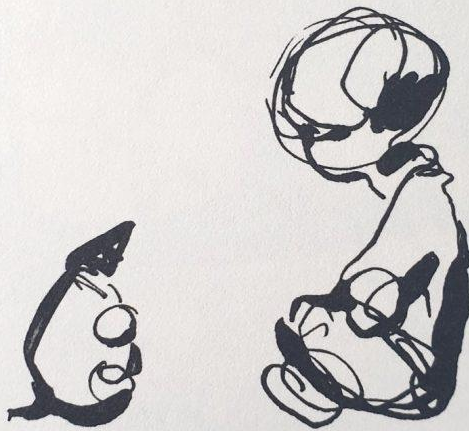
(Story of my grandson TJ)

Internal critical voice... What do you hear from that voice? Where did it come from?



Everyone is born creative: everyone is given a box of crayons in kindergarten. Then when you hit puberty and they take away the crayons and replace them with dry, uninspiring books on algebra, history etc. Being suddenly hit years later with the “creative bug” is just the wee voice telling you, “I’d like my crayons back, please.”

"I wonder if there is
a school of unlearning."



Starting over: inviting our child or true self

- Image from Charlie Mackesy's brilliant book, The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse

I make art to show my soul that I am listening.





Art offers a
sanctuary to
everyone willing to
open their hearts as
well as their eyes.

Nikki Giovani

Traditionally, we might suggest that our encounters with the holy are deepened through scripture, study, prayer, relationship, church, nature, and meditation, but what if we consider that a primary way we can experience the revelation of God's mystery is through the process of creative expression?

Becky Beckman

The arts are the language of the soul.

God's Call for Creativity

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPtsHY-Tz-I>



So, what does
integrating the arts
into spiritual
direction look like?
Let's experience it!

Loosing up; scribble art



Beautiful Opps!

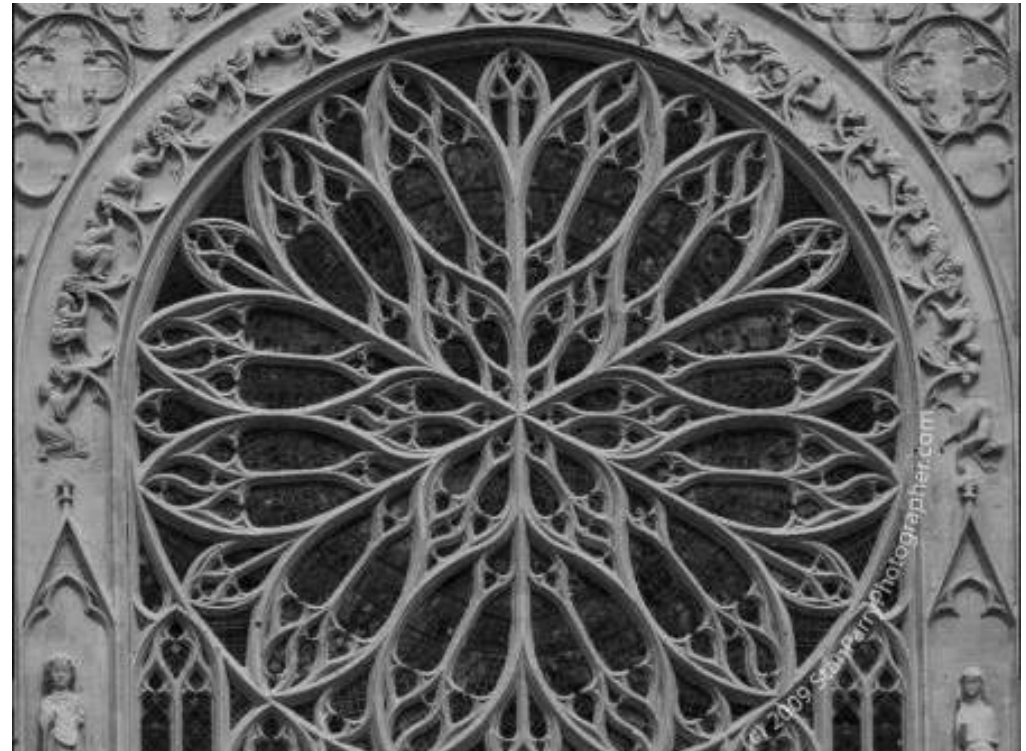
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5NaB60jxrw>

Scribble on a piece of paper for 20 seconds.

Sit back and take in your scribble. See if you can create anything out of your scribble.

Praying with Mandalas

- Mandalas are an ancient practice that are used in many religious traditions, including Christianity. The word “mandala” means “circle” in Indian language of Sanskrit. Traditionally, mandalas are designs that have a center and are based on circle.



Let's make one!

“The experience of making a mandala (Sacred Circle) is trusting the wisdom of your soul, letting it emerge in form and color and gathering it into a circle like a jewel.”

—Mary Southard, CSJ

15 minutes

Richard Foster and Imagination

- Using the imagination also brings the emotions into the equation, is that we come to God with both heart and mind. It is virtually important to understand the scripture intellectually, but if we have not felt it emotionally, we have not fully understood it.





Safe place with Jesus for imaginative prayer

Sit quietly in a comfortable position.

Take several deep breaths, letting them out slowly.

Begin to whisper words of thanks and praise to the Lord.

After a few moments, invite the Holy Spirit to take over your imagination.

Ask the Spirit to create within your mind a safe place where you can meet the Lord. It may be an imaginary place or somewhere you have actually been before that is special, like a cabin, beach, or spot along a quiet stream. Create this place on paper.

5 minutes to create

Continuation of safe place with Jesus

Rest

Rest there for as long as you like, enjoying all the surroundings. If you experience some dissonance or distraction, ask the Holy Spirit to take it away in the name of Jesus.

Invite

When ready, invite the Lord to join you in that place. If that frightens you, ask him to come as the Lamb, or simply allow you to feel His presence.

Notice

Once there, notice the warmth of his love. Let it soak into your being. If you are allowing Christ to be there, notice his posture, eyes, and extended arms. Draw close to him if you desire.

Lectio Divina with the creative arts

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.


Psalm 139:7-10

15 minutes

Who is driving your bus of life?

- Draw a bus. Add a driver and as many passengers as you would like.
- Label each person or thing that is occupying space in your bus.
- 10 minutes



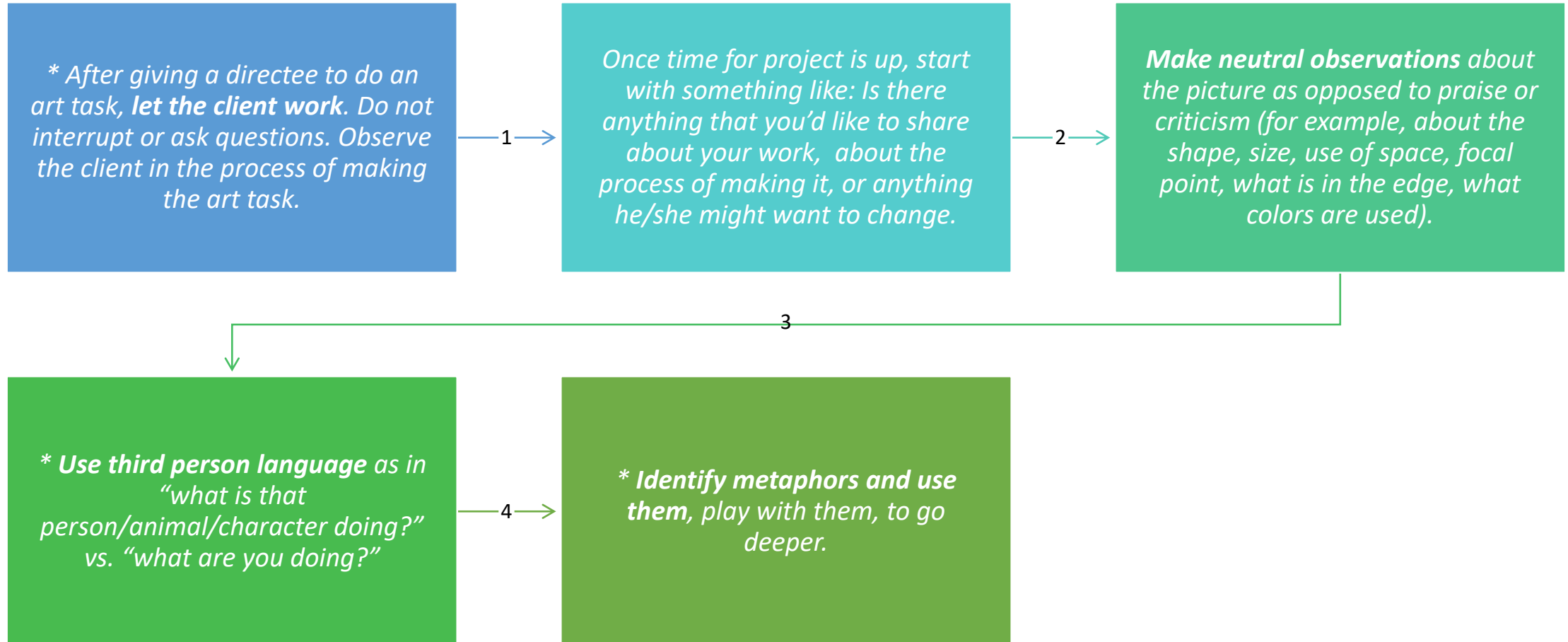
A close-up photograph of a person's hands gently holding a small, fluffy yellow chick. The person is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is dark and out of focus. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

What to hold onto and what to let go of

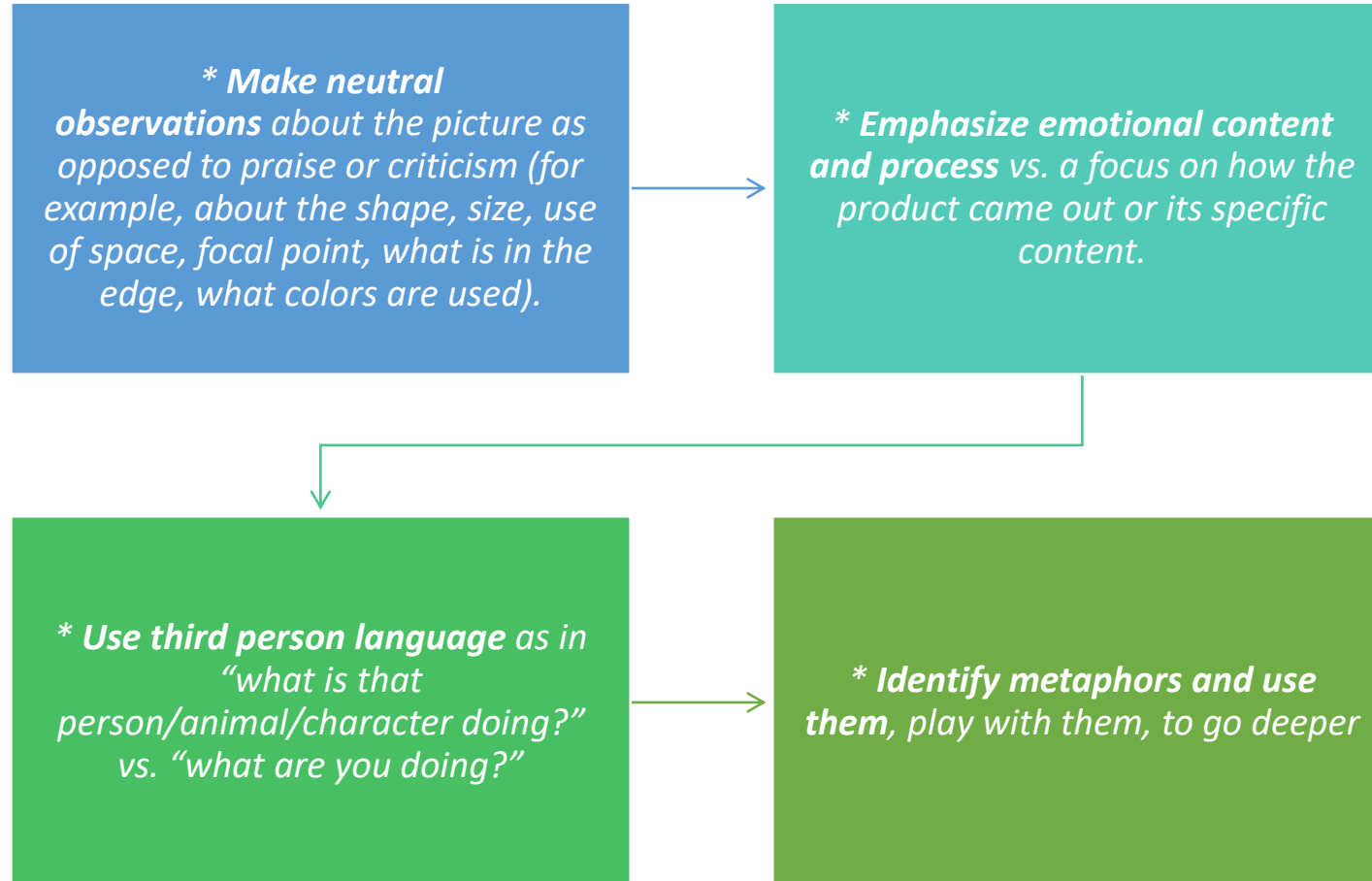
Trace your hands on paper. Label the left hand with “let go” and the right hand with “hold onto.”

Draw items in each hand. Then cut out the let go of pictures and place them under a cross.

Processing with the directee



Processing continued...



Processing continued...

** Ask questions about the picture to help the directee tell a story about it such as: "If you were to step into this picture, where would you go? ...what would you do?" (Avoid the question "why they did X in the picture?" You could ask if something has meaning.*

** Discover the surprises in the image by asking the directee to really look at what he/she created. Is it what he/she expected? If not, how is it different from what he/she intended to make? The meaning of these surprises may be messages from the unconscious.*

** Respect your directee's work and involve him/her in all decisions about what to do with his/her art. This means that if you your client wants you to save it, keep it safe and only display it with his/her permission.*

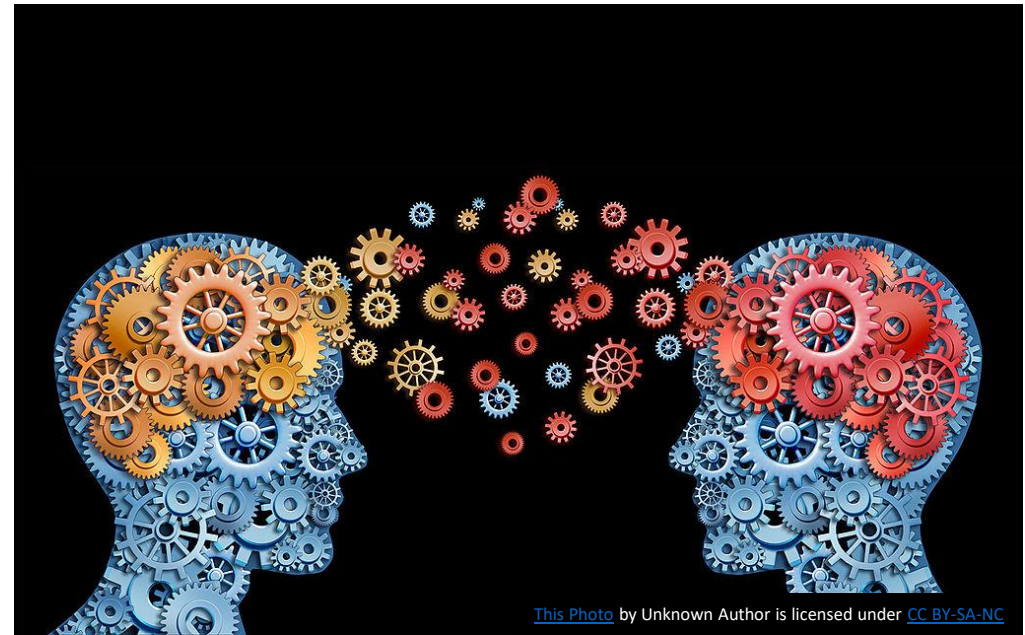
Does God have any direction, wisdom, or invitations for you through the work that you did?

In some creative way, express this through music, clay, paints, photography, etc. (20 minutes)



Now it is your turn to share and direct

30 minutes



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Questions

The heart of human identity is the capacity and desire for birthing. To be is to become creative and bring forth the beautiful.

John O'Donohue

The Piece of Chalk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkh03G5qz08>