

Expressive Arts: Avenue to God and Creativity

— Lisa Berg



*Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the
ground. — Rumi*

The joy of using the arts to celebrate life and create an avenue to God, variously known as our Higher Self, Spirit, or the Divine, is not questioned in the indigenous world. Yet, Western society is not so kind to those who express their power in this way. The feminine energies of intuition, creativity, and harmony have given way to logic, speed, and mass production. Burdened by society's expectations, many people are understandably afraid to quiet their minds and risk delving into unknown territory. Yet, more than ever we need to reclaim our creativity to reach our potential and experience freedom and joy.

I reclaimed my childhood sense of creativity and awe during a weeklong seminar held at the Omega Institute during the Fall of 1999. There in my first course at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, I learned to submit to the force of creative expression and delve into my unconscious, bringing forth personal images, symbols and experiences to feed my soul.

Until that point, I had no awareness of how stifled I had become or how far I had strayed from my core. My experiences that week provided avenues for me to move quickly into what Ken Wilber calls "Unity Consciousness," a state of identifying with the Universe.

This, he says, is "not an abnormal state of consciousness, nor even an altered state of consciousness, but rather, the only real state of consciousness, all others being essentially illusions" (K. Wilber, *No Boundary*, Shambala, 1979).

I share what I learned, through my talks and workshops where my clients' and my experiences with expressive arts continually remind me of the hidden magnificence within each of us. Creativity is a playful and beautiful avenue to God that feeds our souls and provides a perfect vehicle for reaching our potential in this logical, fast-paced world. We don't need to please or placate others. All that is required is to embrace the creative process as a gift and to appreciate the magic of the moment.

We need to find balance. We need to clear the old patterns that hold us back. And, we need to embrace positive futures. One way to facilitate these things in ourselves and our clients is through expressive arts. When we drop our defenses and remove the voices of doubt and criticism, loving spiritual guidance can flow through our bodies and allow our true selves to emerge with clarity and grace. Dance, artwork, collage, journaling, poetry, and dreamwork are some of the activities that help us understand on a deep, cellular level that we are all connected and that the "I" we experience on most days is limited.

AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT AND DRAWING

For eleven minutes, we closed our eyes and danced in silence, witnessed by a partner and paying close attention only to our own inner experience. In my mind, I saw flames rising from the ground, surrounding me with energy. My body moved with devotion and exuberance between the earth and the sky. I felt engulfed in a comforting and powerful force. I was one with my Essence, a powerful, feminine energy connecting earth and sky that I had not known before. My own Wild Woman Within.

That journal entry, written after an Authentic Movement session, reminds me that we are all much more than our bodies. With movement, we are able to release tension, let down our protective veils, and allow feelings and images to arise. I am reminded that we are multidimensional, energetic beings who have access to many realms of reality. The journal continues.

Moving to the drawing materials, my hand swept across the page. The color was quick and energetic. The figure that emerged had arms raised in joy, dancing amongst the flames. My partner, who had been a loving witness to my inner journey, drew the same picture. She had "seen," on an energetic level, the scene I was experiencing. The connection between us was palpable.

Moving silently from dancing to drawing, the energy of the dance, as Natalie Rogers suggests, allows us to experience an interrelated form of creativity she calls the “creative connection.” Rogers states that when we move, it affects how we write or paint. When we write or paint, it affects how we feel and think. During the creative connection process, one art form stimulates and nurtures another, bringing forth our core, our life energy (Natalie Rogers, *The Creative Connection*, Science and Behavior, Inc., 1993).

COLLAGE

Accomplished intuitives and novices can quiet their minds and express emotional goals by creating collages. In my workshops, I create a safe and fun atmosphere that promotes self-exploration. The participants feel

potential, which serves them throughout the year.

The task of creating a visionary collage is best served by silence. “The silence allowed me to really listen within and be guided. I so rarely do that,” is a comment echoed by many. For a lot of people, this is their first experience tapping into the flow of their subconscious without the need to impress others.

Soon enough, Spirit takes over the process. The woman who needs to heal her relationship with her mother, a Holocaust survivor, finds among the hundreds of magazines a picture and article that explores the topic. The budding entrepreneur, reticent to market her children’s clothing line, finds a photograph of the New York retailer she wants to approach. The images of beauty, nature, love, and hopefulness that emerge speak volumes to the desire of all women to deeply embrace beauty and connect to

what has been lost. This gentle process opens the door for people to reclaim their power.

Another advantage of the work-shop occurs as participants are encouraged to share their work. As each piece is witnessed, the hopes and dreams of the person explain-ing her collage are validated. The open-hearted sharing touches all in observance and is a reminder of our deep connection to each other.

struggle to create them. Stopping to edit or criticize destroys our flow. When practiced regularly, journal writing enables Spirit’s voice to be heard.

If we want something revealed to us, we must begin with a clear question. Intention is everything. Having a dialogue with our bodies is a useful technique for exploring physical symptoms. Our bodies are constantly communicating with us. We just have to listen and interpret the symbols.

For example, at one time I was coughing phlegm and having difficulty breathing. I suspected pneumonia and was scared. I began with a question.

Dear clogged throat, what are you trying to tell me? The fact that you cannot breathe sometimes is an indication of your being hidden under the dark fabric of the shroud. We know you have made a contract to let go of the forces that keep you down. We are so pleased about that. We are celebrating you. Now, let’s be sure you are serious. We want to give you a clear way of working with the energies you say you are ready to move. You have been afraid to exert your will, to speak your mind, to stand up for yourself and be counted. Now, self-care is of maximum importance.

I listened, wrote, and did as I was told, which was to rest and begin speaking up for myself. You see, I had uncovered a psychological as well as a physiological impediment. Once I had this epiphany and acted upon it, my illness went away.

POETRY

It may be years since that tenth grade poetry class that taught you iambic pentameter. I see that as a positive thing. The further we are from needing our self-expression to look a certain way, the better off we are. Flowery language spoken from deep within the heart can reveal a truth unknown to one’s intellect. The biggest hurdle is

free to create, play, and be inspired by their own, internal, guidance.

I lead a guided meditation, and then give everyone time to flip through pictures and words in hundreds of magazines, literally to their heart’s content. They rip and clip anything that jumps out at them. What they produce is a concrete reminder of their highest

JOURNALING

Free writing, or journal writing, about an issue that concerns us, often leads to a connection with our personal source of guidance. It is important that we allow the pen or computer keys to dance under our fingers and trust the words to flow through us rather than



POSITIVE FUTURES COLLAGE

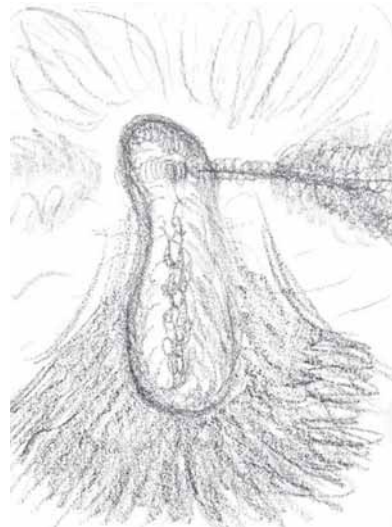
getting past the fear of writing. Poetry and other forms of writing are especially helpful in delving into pain to discover what the soul wants to reveal. Allowing oneself to cry, sing, growl, and find expression on paper can be very healing. The creation becomes a mirror of our innermost thoughts in a form that can be used repeatedly to inspire and support our growth. As I experienced burgeoning insights, rage, and power in my own life, I was not sure where, when, and with whom to share. I addressed my confusion in a poem that helped ease my mind.

DREAM IMAGES & ARTWORK

The drive to experience our higher self requires the whole personality to rearrange itself, says Ferrucci (*What We May Be*, Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1982). Psychological blocks have to be faced and old habits transformed. Harnessing the images of dreams, visions, and mystical experiences in our artwork tells our unconscious mind that we are ready to face these challenges courageously and to move into the unknown. The support we receive from the Universe will be relative to what we can handle.

Miriam, a highly visual and intuitive client and artist, experienced a powerful physical clearing as a result of working with the energy of her dreams and artwork. She was experiencing pain in the base of her neck. In one of our sessions, I encouraged her to try painting in free form, rather than realistically as she is accustomed to do. She allowed the paper to speak to her and the feelings in her body and neck to emerge.

A Native American face was the first image to appear. From the mouth flowed emotional waters, encouraging her to speak her truth. As she painted the tightly braided, long, dark hair she felt her own "tied-up" self merging with the darkness.



Miriam's Healing Spine

On a separate page, the painful area of the neck became engulfed with red and orange. Allowing her intuition to lead, Miriam drew a vortex of healing green energy leading to the painful spot and surrounding the whole area with light.

That night Miriam woke from a dream. There was a crystal pyramid radiating rainbows at the base of her spine. In her waking state, she literally felt a clearing energy moving up toward her neck. To facilitate the movement, she rose and did some gentle yoga, at which point a whispering in her ear promised, "There is going to be some more physical clearing." After the promised clearing, Miriam experienced sparkles surrounding her body, but felt little pain. Later that day, to honor Spirit and the work they had done together, she painted the sparkling pyramid. This positive, nurturing image continues to give her healing energy. It is a reminder of her connection to the Divine and her own powerful healing abilities.

SUPPORT

Delving into expressive arts as a healing modality requires people to drop their defenses and move deeper into self-

awareness. This path requires courage. Support is very important for encouragement and depth of experience.

Many of us have forgotten how to listen to our inner guidance. As we peel away the layers we wear for self-protection and love, we need support to welcome the person who is emerging.

It is important that we, in turn, support our clients as they delve into this alternate form of self-discovery, because often what they uncover may be both encouraging and dark. To do this alone, without a personal support system, may be dangerous to the soul. Encourage your clients to share their work with others or to seek workshops that provide safety and nurture for experiential work. The road isn't always easy. But it doesn't have to be so hard. Engaging in expressive arts is enriching, revealing, and fun.

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Miriam's Pyramid

References to explore creativity & connection to higher self:

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