

LIFE GALLERY EXERCISE

PART 2 – CREATING IN MESS

This exercise is designed to be completed in three parts along with the information presented in the Cultivating Creativity webinar series.

We can all look at messy, negative experiences in our lives with shame, fear, regret, hatred, and disappointment. There are some that leave deep wounds and others we can carry as scars, many of these instances we did not choose and they still hold power over our decisions today – like being held hostage by your own life. In Part 2 of this Life Gallery Exercise, we'll look at some of the messier life experiences, and begin to restore them and create from them. The purpose of this activity is not to say that your experiences were not messy or even to clean them up so they look less messy, but rather to learn from the suffering that was so that it ceases to create suffering in the present. In other words, to set you free to live at choice.

Instructions:

1. On a piece of paper, create a timeline from the year you were born to the present. (Get ready to get the paper messy – don't worry, you can transfer it to a clean, pretty piece later).
2. From the beginning of your life to the present mark and describe your top 10-20 most impacting negative, messy, and/or difficult life experiences. (These can be recurring traditions, one time events, or phases that periodically repeat themselves.)
3. After your 10-20 experiences are listed, answer these questions about them:
 - On a scale of 1-10, how negatively impacting was this life experience?
 - What specific relationship with a person, idea, or object was damaged by this experience?
 - What is the primary emotion that comes up when thinking about this experience?
 - What colors and/or temperatures are descriptive of this experience for you?
 - What songs, words, books, or poems are connected to this life experience for you?
 - What textures pop out in your mind as you remember this experience (water, grass, fabric, cobblestones, cable-knits, etc)?
 - What personal values are being dishonored in this experience (faith, family, freedom, nourishment, respect, learning, etc.)?
 - Is there an object that you have in your possession that brings this experience to mind when you look at it? What is it?
4. Now go back and redeem each experience. What is the gold amidst all the dross? How are you stronger? What meaning can you take from the experience? What or who do you understand differently or better? What do you know to be true now?
5. After you have answered each of these questions about each of your experiences, see what themes you might be able to observe.
6. If you're comfortable, ask someone you trust to look at your timeline and organize themes they might see that you missed.

When you complete this part of your life gallery exercise, let yourself rest a little and meditate on what kind of experiences you are being stirred to create for yourself and those around you in the present and for the future.

