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INTERPERSONAL GROWTH THROUGH ART: PUTTING THE PIECES BACK
TOGETHER

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Abstract

This essay is going to explore the need for self-analyzation and personal growth using art. Artwork can help therapists work with trauma victims and help improve symptoms of stress, avoidance behaviors and self-medicating problems. Artwork can help people describe what has happened to them by using a different medium. Often abuse survivors cannot remember the trauma or it may be too painful to reencounter. Artwork can be a safe space to think about hard topics like abuse without becoming re-traumatized. Artwork can help a person look at themselves from afar and see what they can do to better themselves without judgment. It can allow the artist to see areas of improvement and adapt to change their parts. This essay will look at different ways a person can heal through professional help like therapy or parts therapy which can be done on their own or with a therapist. Creating work in any medium painting, clay, drawing, sculpture, writing, or knitting can give someone a way of expelling negative energy that could otherwise lead to negative consequences. Negative energy needs to be released from the body in a healthy way allowing for the process of healing. Creating artwork can help people learn how to express their feelings in a safe environment, teaching them how to deal with negative emotions and fears. Artwork is one way humans can learn how to balance pain and happiness both physically and mentally for a well-rounded life and allow them to accept the past in a way that will allow them to experience a healthy future.

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My Inspiration

"One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain." - Bob Marley

"Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent." - Victor Hugo

"The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls." - Pablo Picasso

"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way - things I had no words for." - Georgia O'Keeffe

"Dance is the hidden language of the soul of the body." - Martha Graham

"To dance is to be out of yourself. Larger, more beautiful, more powerful. This is power, it is glory on earth and it is yours for the taking." - Agnes de Mille

"To gain your voice, you have to forget about having it heard." - Allen Ginsberg, WD

"If I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad." - Lord Byron

"The intimate relationship between drawing and thought is ancient – drawing is a direct medium of ideas, of emotion, of cultural input that translates with great immediacy the poetics of the artist." - Jean Fisher

Introduction

People tend to avoid pain in all its forms in anyway possible. People will avoid conversations that will remind them of trauma or problems in order to not feel uncomfortable. People avoid friends, family and other people who seem to be struggling with painful issues. People are so afraid of pain they will avoid others who are going through a problem in order to not be infected by it. People allow fear to control their daily decisions such as fear of physical pain, fear of death or fear of feeling a negative emotion. The problem with all this avoidance is people start to cause unnecessary hardships for themselves instead of learning and growing. When something traumatic happens, some people will start to try and numb the pain with self-medication or act out with anger or violence. These coping mechanisms then lead to new suffering. Society has taught people that it is better to pretend that pain has never happened than it is to face it and feel the pain. This leads to people feeling victimized and unsure of how to deal with the negative feelings. People end up feeling as if the world has unfairly come after them and have no idea how to deal with the after-effects. This essay is about art, the misunderstandings about art, how to look at suffering in a new way, to use art to grow and change and to face the pain, and to find the right words to express the pain in a safe healthy way. Art can help children analyze and learn how to express how they are feeling and keep the pain from becoming lifelong issues such as PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder. Therapists can use art to help patients talk about painful issues both physical and mental that they otherwise would find too hard to deal with. Art can also help an adult who wants to better understand themselves. Using parts therapy and art, a person can self-analyze smaller issues that are causing them to be stuck mentally. They can learn these parts of themselves and learn how to coexist with their different parts. Art can help a person see suffering not as something to avoid, but as something to learn from and use to

become a better person. Art can help a person live with what has happened to them either physically or mentally and allow them to live a happy fulfilled life.

The Purpose of Suffering

It is important to understand that suffering and pain are a part of a healthy life. This is not to say that someone should feel no pain and be able to easily move on with their life. Traumatic, life-altering changes are something to see as a way of learning not only for the individual but also for the next generations. In the book *A Man's Search for Meaning* we meet a man named Viktor E Frankl, the author of *A Man's Search for Meaning*. Viktor was separated from his family and forced into a concentration camp during World War II. With all the suffering he endured and the loss of his entire family, Viktor was able to prosper and has become successful in life and as a writer. Viktor talks about the importance of suffering in our lives and the value it holds even when we cannot see it. People do their very best to avoid pain in anyway they can. But without pain we would never understand how wonderful happiness is. For example, if a man has been locked away in a concrete box for years and then is set free he now knows what it is like to live without the sky. The man now looks at the sky and sees it in all its beautiful glory. He can now love the sky even when it is raining because he knows what it is like to be without it (Frankl).

Viktor talked about a book he had been writing that contained his life's work and research when he was taken to the concentration camp. Once at the concentration camp he was forced to give up the only copy he had of his book and was devastated to lose it. Despite this, he began to rewrite his book on small scraps of paper he found. Paper was limited and he could only find small scraps around the camp. He was able to recall a surprising amount of the book and spent his minimal amount of free time writing. Writing this book gave him a sense of purpose and something to fight for daily. If he was caught rewriting his book he would have been punished for it. Being able to focus on his passion for writing even for a few moments gave his

mind and body a moment of reprieve. He could feel his life had meaning and his art was something bigger than himself (Frankl).

Viktor also talks about the use of poetry and singing in the concentration camps. In his book, he explains that occasionally the men in the concentration camps were allowed to have a gathering where the men could stand and say poetry or sing. Viktor talked about how starving men were giving up their dinners to go to this gathering because it was something the men could look forward to. The men used poetry and singing to feed their souls and used this time to express love, loss and hope. Even the SS guards would come to the gatherings and speak poetry or sing, and would rarely cancel the gatherings. Art gave these men a way to express themselves and find happiness when things were at their darkest. To find small rays of happiness and hope where there was none. Viktor talked about finding happiness after his rescue in 1945. He talks about how writing gave him a way to share his experiences and pain. While writing about his experiences he was able to face them and find peace in the loss of his family. Writing helped him heal from the tragic things that he was forced to witness. Writing helped him cope with what was done to him. His books will teach the next generations and inspire people and this has been a source of relief for him (Viktor). Not all artists are equal when it comes to their work and not all artists strive to make a difference in the world like Viktor did. Many artists use art to understand their pain privately rather than publicly.

The Purpose of Art

Art can be used to help someone look at an experience from a different point of view. Sometimes art can help them see what they missed the first time or even the second time. Shaun McNiff, the author of *Art Can Heal Your Life: Techniques for Self-Healing Through the Creative Process* talks about the importance art has on the subconscious. Shaun talks about letting the mind relax and just making marks. Shaun explains how by not forcing one's self to see meaning and find meaning but just sitting in the work and just looking at it as it is, allowing the mind to find connections on its own and using the energy from the body to make movements that will make marks on a surface without worrying about what will come out. This allows the artist to expend energy on the work they are making. Shaun talks about the importance of making the same marks over and over again and letting repetition become a part of an artist's work (McNiff, Appleton). Someone who has never made artwork before may have a fear of starting an artwork. They may fear failing at it and not being "good" at what they make. Shaun explains in his book the importance of using movement and repetition to get started, to just pick up a piece of paper and let it move your body and allow the body to make whatever mark it wants. This kind of repetition can help new artists feel confident and give them time to start making work. Repetition gives the mind time to think and allows energy to be expelled at the same time. Symptoms of feeling on edge can be relieved with some form of repetition like knitting, wrapping, painting, or cutting and gluing paper (McNiff).

Society has placed large importance on artwork and its outcome. Society believes that art is worth looking at or thinking about is only in museums and made by a genius artist who was born with talent. This kind of thinking has led some people to feel that they cannot make art or that making art is for a special kind of person. This is an unfortunate side effect of the miss

understanding of art and what art is and who can make art. Shaun states, “You cannot be at the end in the beginning”. A new artist cannot become a Picasso before ever making work. Shaun also talks about how starting a work that has no plan of how it will end can be healing. Using the process of making work can be more healing than the finished product. It can allow the artist to use pent-up energy to express the pain, frustration, and anxiety onto the surface of what’s being made. Shaun also talks about using art to create a personal record that can be both private and public. Making artwork can help someone who has suffered from trauma by giving them a safe space to talk about what happened without actually saying it out loud. Painting, writing, or sculpture can let someone talk about their fears and pain without being forced to speak about actual details of the trauma and give time to internalize what they are thinking or feeling through making artwork before putting words to what happened. For some people, reliving the trauma in words can retraumatize them however, making artwork can give a healthy way of thinking about what happened and allow the energy to flow from the body in a safe way (McNiff). Not all artists have experienced life-changing trauma but still feel the need to express themselves through art. As human beings, we all have had pain and suffering in our lives one way or another, and no pain is more important than the other however, some people feel they cannot make artwork because they have not experienced any trauma, will have nothing to say in their artwork (Cameron).

Misunderstanding of Art and Who Can Make Art

Society has a stereotypical view for artists, such as the great artist who is a starving, mentally damaged human being with deep pain or anger or a person who is unfit for society because they have become so damaged that the only way this artist can live their day-to-day lives is by making profound work (Cameron). The image of a mad man crying or yelling with a paintbrush in hand may pop into your head, someone like Jackson Pollack for instance. Mary Gabriel, author of the book *Ninth Street Women* talks about Jackson Pollack in her book *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine De Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art. First ed.* Jackson was this wild man with a drinking problem who was uncontrollable and angry. Jackson became hugely popular for his new style of artwork with his drip paintings, and so did his problems. Jackson was notorious for his bad behavior during show openings and parties. He had a terrible drinking problem that eventually helped to end his life (Gabriel). The truth is creating a work of art is very difficult to do for someone who is a professional let alone for someone in deep pain. Creating a well-balanced composition that others can relate to without being repetitive or too personal can take a great focus of the mind. A mind that is willing to think deeply and analyze why about everything. Someone in deep mental turmoil going through something traumatic can rarely make “great” art, however, it has been done. Art on the other hand can be a great way for someone to think through what happened. A person just starting to make work should not be worried about making “great” art but focus on just making. Artists like Jackson Pollack, Eva Hesse, or Vincent Van Gogh are rare and worthy artists to look up to. However, these artists should not keep someone from creating artwork out of fear or worry of not being “good” at making work (Cameron).

Julia Cameron explains the difficulty in making something thoughtful when full of pain, rage, or sadness in her book, *The Artists Way*. Julia talks about artists having a notion that to be great artists they must suffer in some profound way. The idea that a person can only become a great artist if they are dealing with deep life-altering pain can be problematic. Unfortunately, this stereotype can lead young people into creating traumatic situations for themselves in the hope to become “great” artists. The damaged artist idea is more of a fantasy that has been brought up in movies and television to entertain the masses and make money. Even though some amazing artwork has come from artists that were suffering like Vincent Van Gogh, suffering should not be the main point of the work. All people go through something painful at some time in their lives. Each person can make artwork based on their own unique personal experiences and do not need to force trauma for “great” artwork. Each artist has his or her own take on a situation which can bring a new view on an old idea. Art is a way to think about what you have gone through later once the dust has settled. You do not have to be in pain to be a great artist but art can make you a better person (Cameron).

Art Therapy

Many different types of art can be used in a process called Art Therapy. Art therapy is the process of creating artwork to help someone gain awareness, think about problem-solving, recover unconscious material, and work through conflicts (Landgarten, Rubin). Art therapy was founded in 1966 by Margaret Naumburg. Art therapy is about being creative and allowing the brain to make connections without the pressure of making a “great” work of art. Art therapy can be done in any medium like paint, clay, sculpture, knitting, collage, drawing, writing, or photography. It is up to the artist or participant to decide what they feel most comfortable working with. In art therapy, participants are encouraged to make small simple art projects to help foster creativity and help them understand themselves. These artists and participants need to learn how to stop worrying about what others think, they need to stop thinking about what’s best for someone around them and start caring for themselves and art therapy can help them do that (Beattie, Naff).

Different kinds of art materials can be used in art therapy to help artists start working through the fog of emotions (Landgarten, Naff). Squeezing clay, or forcing it through something may release frustration or built-up anger. Drawing out a feeling instead of saying could help the person see it as something physical that can then be dealt with instead of an invisible force. When talking about a painful memory it can be hard to find the right words and some artists can have trouble with finding the vocabulary to express themselves. This could be due to age, education, upbringing, or another number of reasons (Carlisle, Naff). A child with a small vocabulary can draw pain or a bad memory but might not have the vocabulary or clear understanding of the memory. For example, in the documentary, *Susan Powell: An ID Murder Mystery* a young mother goes missing. The father Josh Powell is suspected of foul play but there

is no evidence pointing directly to him. The couple's two young children are questioned by a professional therapist. The therapist asks Charles Joshua, the oldest son who is five years old at the time of his mother's disappearance, where they went on the night his mom went missing. The little boy states that he and his brother, his father, and his mother went camping but mom stayed at the campsite "where the crystals are". When she asked him to draw a picture of the family driving to go camping and where everyone was sitting, he drew his mother laying down in the trunk of the car. Charles did not understand why his mother was in the trunk or why she stayed at the campsite, but the drawing gave investigators a clue to what had happened. It may be too painful to speak about what has happened. Words can only say so much about what the artist is dealing with. Words can have boundaries to them and may be seen in indirect ways. Art on the other hand has no boundaries and can say many things in different ways. An artist can express many feelings, issues, or memories in many different ways (Carlisle).

Another helpful process for the artist is automatic writing about their work. As the artist is making work they take notes and write about what they are doing and why. This helps the artist to keep a record of their therapy process. They are asked to write down what they are feeling while making work then they are asked to write down why they think they feel this way. This helps the artist to look at their work and analyze what's being said through the artwork. Many times, the artist can see things represented in the work that they did not initially mean to put there. This automatic writing allows the artist to see and take ownership of their artwork, writings and feelings. For example, in the book *Clinical art therapy: A comprehensive guide* written by Helen B. Landgarten, Helen speaks about a participant and artist Mrs. Day who looks through images, groups them together and writes about each image. Mrs. Day was asked to write the first thing that came to her mind when looking at the group of images. The first image

was of a little girl and Mrs. Day explains she thinks this image reminds her of her daughter. She then points out images of musicians and explains that she has a love for music and loved to play the piano. In another group of images, she had placed a meadow scene that to her represented her love of nature. Her last images were of two pedestals; however Mrs. Day was not sure why she picked these images but the therapist pointed out how they could represent her need to have two feet. Mrs. Day at the time had experienced a car accident that caused her to lose one of her feet. She refused to talk about the incident and became extremely depressed. The process of art therapy helped Mrs. Day work through her trauma in a way that she could mentally handle (Landgarten).

Not all people have the ability to use an art therapist in their healing and understanding of the process. With that being said it is important to know that everyone has a different meaning or insight into what they are using to make art. One person may use something like the color red because it provokes a feeling or memory for them. This does not mean that it will provoke the same feelings for another person (Earley). According to Jay Earley, Ph.D. who wrote the book, *Art Therapy 2nd edition*, the process of art therapy needs to be done in the presence of a trained Art Therapist. It is important to have a trained professional because people with life-threatening illnesses, trauma, and challenging lifestyles need help noticing subtle hints in their work that they may not see themselves. A trained professional can help the artist to move past overwhelming feelings (Appleton). At times reliving illness, trauma, or pain can feel overpowering leaving the artist to self-medicate, become violent or use avoidance tactics (Earley). Art therapists have the tools to help someone see through the fear, anger, or pain and come through to the other side of it. If someone is not trained in art therapy and tries to help someone in need it can be a dangerous situation. An untrained therapist may see and put their own interpretations of the artwork and

suggest what they are seeing, not what the artist is trying to say. An art therapist would be able to gently help the client to see their own ideas and feelings with proper questions that safely lead the artist to their own answers (Earley).

Art Therapy and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Art therapy has been proven to help children heal from violent events and in doing so help lower stress-levels and decrease the symptoms of PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Linda Chapman MA, ATR-BC, Diane Morabito RN, MPH, Chris Ladakakos

Ph.D., Herbert Schreier MD, and M. Margaret Knudson MD participated in a research project that studied the effects of art therapy in children who suffer from violent trauma. The study took 10 years to complete and had hundreds of participants (Chapman). They were able to prove that the children who showed symptoms of PTSD as a baseline during the beginning of the experiment, had fewer symptoms by the end of the study through using art therapy than the children who had basic inpatient treatment. Thinking about what happened and using drawing allowed the children a safe way to access and move past the trauma.

The limbic system is responsible for memories and emotions associated with fear, anxiety and anger. The physical activity of drawing the trauma would activate the limbic system in the child's brain (Chapman). Chapman argues that one must first feel the negative emotion for the brain to realize something has gone wrong and therefore would need to be fixed (Chapman). For example, if a child falls and breaks a bone, the pain tells the brain it is important not to fall again. The child becomes more careful and tries to avoid what caused the pain. Without pain the child would continue to damage his or her body by continuing the behavior that caused the fall. The negative emotion lets the brain know something is wrong and needs to be dealt with to protect itself. When using art therapy, the child draws the trauma and experiences the negative emotions in the brain causing the child to feel strong emotions. The art therapist is then able to help the child understand their emotions and let the child know what they are feeling is normal. The child can calm down and find words to what they are feeling. Children in this study who worked with

the art therapist showed a stronger ability to vocalize their traumas and used less yelling, screaming, or avoidance tactics. Facing the trauma by finding a way to express their fears and misunderstanding allowed the children to learn how to better express their emotions instead of allowing them to become symptoms of PTSD (Chapman).

Internal Family Systems

Another form of therapy that art can be a part of is called Internal Family Systems or IFS. IFS is also known as Parts Therapy, and is a method of looking at one's self as a group of different personalities. Each part of a person's personality relates to one another by creating a single family-like group (Earley). All the feelings and reactions inside a person can be analyzed and pinpointed to a memory or trauma. In a way, IFS is a person with multiple personalities that are triggered during different kinds of situations. This is not the mental illness multiple personality disorder that society has attached negative cognitions to, but a positive way to see and imagine your feelings or actions (Schwartz). An artist can imagine a feeling they are having and draw what they think the feeling or problem might look like. One may ask, 'What does fear, anger, sadness, happiness, or loneliness look like? Is this feeling or part of one's self big or small, is this part young or old?' and then materializing a feeling or action in a way that gives the part a physical presence. Giving the feeling or action a physical presence will give the artist a place to start finding out why the feeling or action is happening (Schwartz). In Jay Earley's book, *Self-Therapy* he talks about the parts of self and explains what each part is. Each part of the self has its own feelings, needs, and wants. There are three main sections of parts in the self, the first one is called the protector. Protectors keep the self safe by not dealing with the outside world. This could be many different kinds of pain and not just physical pain. Protectors are created out of traumatic experiences that the part will then try and keep from happening again. For example, Jay interviews a woman named Jenny in his book *Self-Therapy* who becomes extremely angry when her friends who are going through a divorce fight in front of their four-year-old child. Jenny talks about seeing her protector part as a burning hot worrier energy that is there to defend the child. As a child, Jenny was subjected to seeing her parents fighting during their divorce

causing trauma for her. Seeing the young four-year-old child possibly being subjected to the same trauma as she was as a child, causes her to become angry. Her protector comes out to keep her inner child safe. She is defending herself as a child when defending her friend's child.

Protectors Are created to protect the exiles from more pain. Exiles are parts of the self that are created during a painful or traumatic situation. Exiles are normally created during childhood and are usually seen as small, and innocent. They come with feelings of sadness, and fear. That does not mean that an exile cannot be made during adulthood, they can but are mainly created during childhood. Once an exile is created they usually represent feelings of fear, sadness, trust issues, and loneliness. Once an exile is created a protector is then made to watch over the exile and keep it from becoming damaged again. Protectors are normally coving feelings of abandonment or sadness, and fear with anger, control, or jealousy. The third section is called the self. The self is the center of the person and the connection of all the parts in balance. It is the self when the protectors and exiles are all working together in a calm, loving, curious, and balanced way (Earley). The purpose of drawing out and imagining your parts is to connect them in a way that helps a person become whole.

A part that is causing issues for a person needs to be considered and thought about. Having issues with trust, anger, or jealousy is a sure sign that a part is out of control and needs to be paid attention to. To create balance and bring all the parts together and become the self the artist needs to meet the part that is causing issues. Introducing the part by drawing it out or writing out a description of the part makes the part more personable (Earley, Schwartz). Having an image of the part allows the artist to meet the part and get to know it. They can ask themselves through the part, why it is there. If the part is angry they can ask the part why it is angry, and if it could stand aside so the artist can meet and heal the exile. For example, Jenny

was able to see and picture the protector that was making her feel and act so angry towards her friends. By taking a step back and looking at her part, and then asking her part who it is protecting, she was able to see where the anger was coming from. Her hot worrier was protecting her younger self from seeing her friends arguing in front of their child. This allowed her to see that she was reliving her own pain from the past (Earley). An artist needs to meet their parts with curiosity and kindness. If an artist is judgmental of their part the protector won't step aside and allow the exile to be healed. If an artist is meeting their part only to get rid of it or try and stop it from protecting or needing to be protected then the part will stay hidden. An artist needs to be curious about their parts and not be overly judgmental. The point of Parts Therapy is not to get rid of the part but to get to know the part and understand it. This will allow the part to balance its needs with the needs of the other parts. Learning to work with one's parts and understand why protectors and exiles exist will help the self to maneuver difficult situations in a healthy way (Schwartz).

Moving on

When something happens that is difficult to deal with people can become stuck in that moment. Reliving the trauma over and over again asking themselves why did this happen to me. Understanding one's feelings and learning how to express them healthily can help a person move on from the damage. Nora McInerny talks about this idea of moving on in her TED Talk *We don't "move on" from grief. We move forward with it.* When something happens that is life-altering people do not move on from it. People just learn how to accept what has happened and see it as a new chapter in their life. Trying to ignore what has happened, or pretending it never happened only causes a barrier. The barrier keeps a person from growing and learning from the experience. Instead, the person becomes angry, distant, and self-medicating. This keeps the person down and unable to enjoy life. Working on one's self and learning how to handle negative feelings allows the person's self to balance with itself. We do not move on from our pain, we learn to move on with our pain. Nora explained that experiences do not just disappear. We do not get to pick and choose what life experiences stay with us. We do not tell someone who is celebrating their wedding anniversary, or birthday to move on (McInerny). When something happens like a violent accident, death of a loved one, or abuse it stays with that person for the rest of their life (Chapman).

Moving on is not forgetting what happened but living with it, learning from it, and seeing the good that came out of it (McInerny). We can choose to live in victimhood or we can choose to be a survivor. Victimhood comes from inside of a person, a person who chooses to be angry, vengeful, and feel sorry for themselves. Edith Eger talks about choosing to be a victim in her book *The Choice: Embrace the Possible*. After surviving the horrors of the Shoah during World War II, Edith like Viktor E Frankl found healing in her writing. She found a way to take what

happened to her and teach others how to forgive and move on with their lives, and live with trauma. Being angry about what has happened to you is an important feeling to deal with. Being angry is ok. Getting stuck in that anger, however, is the problem for people dealing with trauma. Dealing with grief and allowing all the stages to naturally come and go throughout the process is key. Let the feelings come and then sit with them. Feel the pain, fear, and anger, and then remind yourself that it is over and you have learned from that experience. Then finding a healthy way to express that energy like making artwork can help move the process along. Learning to forgive what has happened is for the victim and not for the aggressor. Forgiving what has happened lets the mind, soul, and body heal, learn, and move on becoming the survivor (Eger).

Conclusion

Creating artwork has many positive effects on the social environment. Things like entertainment, beauty, inspiring creativity, and changes that are needed in society. One of its most helpful abilities is to help heal broken people. Allowing people to see the purpose of suffering in life. Showing artists that pain is natural and without pain there would be no happiness. Without the dark people would not know to appreciate the light (Frankl). Pain is needed for growth and change, for the better. Artwork in all of its forms drawing, painting, film, dance, writing, and many others give people a way to say things they cannot find the voice for. Creating work is not just for the professional artist. Making something creative is an outlet anyone can do, and something everyone should do. It helps release pent-up negative energy that can block balance in the self. If someone has never made work before they should start, even if they never plan to show the artwork in public. They may learn things about themselves they never knew were there. Letting the artwork become a therapy where they can say and feel everything. Letting it flow from their bodies into the work. Seeing it as a way to let go and feel it, think about it, and learn from it. Then moving on with it as a balanced part of you. Letting it become a learning experience that will now help guide you in life without overpowering and controlling you. Learning to forgive what has happened, not forgetting but forgiving. Not being afraid to change your thought process and allowing for growth. Pain is a part of life not unique to one person. To grow, change, and learn means to feel pain, and live with suffering.

“Being an artist doesn’t take much. Just everything you got.

This means of course that as the process is giving you life, it is also bringing you closer to death.

But it’s no big deal. They are one and the same and cannot be avoided or denied. So when I

totally embrace this process, this life, and death, and abandon myself to it completely, I

transcend all this gibberish and hang out with the gods.

It seems to me that, that is worth the price of admission.”

-Hubert Selby Jr.

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