



Umbrella

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On living creatively ... the nature of creativity

by Donna Doxtator

There is a fascinating synchronicity in our creativity and our humanity. We all have an inherent understanding that creativity is the essence of life; procreation begins the life cycle.

When we apply the understanding of this synchronicity to our daily life, we develop a greater appreciation for our own creativity and how we can create fullness and balance in our lives. And when we experience the seasons of our humanity, our creativity allows us to express what we are feeling.

Kathleen Foster-Morgan is a clinical psychotherapist who understands those seasons and uses art in therapy and nature's creativity to assist individuals in grief counseling. Recently returning to our community, she founded the The Edith Fox Life and Loss Centre in 2003 and is the resident psychotherapist.

'On Living Creatively' is a series of articles that explore how different people within our community bring creativity into their lives and how their creativity influences others. Who are these people and what impact do these people have on our community?

Kathleen grew up in Prince Edward County where she attended one of the last one-room schoolhouses in the province. Kathleen attributes her love of art, in part, to an education from a "creative method" that is, an education that was abundant and diverse in arts experiences - from this little schoolhouse and Florence Needham, her only grade-school teacher.

Her post-secondary studies took her to Toronto where she graduated in nursing from the Scarborough General Hospital. Her expertise and advanced certification in grief therapy was obtained through the Association of Death Education and Counseling, Hartford, Connecticut. She also studied at the Gestalt Institute of Toronto where she learned to apply the Gestalt theory to her work.

The Gestalt theory (to paraphrase) defines a person as greater than merely the sum of his/her parts. As a human being, we are heart, kidneys, lungs, etc, but also emotions, sexuality and life experiences. When apply-

ing a clinical perspective, a Gestalt therapist is concerned with an individual's physical, emotional and spiritual health and how that is manifested in the present moment.

To experience life in the moment and to integrate art into therapy as a means to experience that moment, is Kathleen's life's work. As a keen painter, home decorator,



Kathleen Foster-Morgan

author and lover of nature, Kathleen brings balance to her own life. (And admits it sometimes gets distorted with her personal theory of work hard and play hard!) As a therapist, she encourages others to use their creativity to find balance in their lives as well.

Creativity and nature surround Kathleen in her quaint and cozy office space - a renovated "pig house" - settled quietly on edge of the Bay of Quinte. My favourite example of this creativity is the "quiet monster" that rambles ever so inconspicuously up a crevice in the white-washed concrete wall.

The monster, a vein of blue glass pebbles, represents to Kathleen an experience with a young boy with whom she worked with for several months. Suffering from loss in his life, the boy was experiencing violent outbursts and great distress. After months of therapy, Kathleen asked him how he felt about activities of their sessions. His response was that it "took away the monsters".

That's a pretty powerful expression for this little guy to find. His therapy included the Lambs for Children program, a therapy developed by Kathleen in 1995. More recently, Kathleen has integrated bunnies into the program. The young boy was able to express his emotions through visual art - he drew bunnies that represented his

anguish. He also was able to spend time with a real bunny to cuddle and love as a means to project those feelings that he was needing for himself.

Other therapies that Kathleen integrates into the Edith Fox Life and Loss Centre's programming include Camp Star - a five day program of performing arts that encourages self-confidence and healing in young children. Adult programs include the Bibliotherapy Book Club, which uses literary arts to explore and gain a greater "understanding of their own mortality, values and judgments".

For Kathleen, love of art and love of nature provide an ever-fascinating insight into the healing process of the human psyche. Creating a work of art challenges us to experience our emotions 'in the moment' simply by focusing on that creative process. "I've drawn this bunny, but why is it angry?" Nature continually provides ways to challenge the sometimes rigidity of our thinking. "Dead branches aren't beautiful." These are examples that Kathleen uses to demonstrate that there are "creative methods" to express our humanness and our mortality.

Each of us experiences seasons in our lives - times of loss and suffering and times of happiness. When we express ourselves creatively, we celebrate our humanity and in doing so, find a place of balance and genuine contentment in our existence.

How do you Live Creatively? Send us your thoughts - you can e-mail me at donna@quinteartscouncil.org or mail to Quinte Arts Council, PO Box 225, Belleville, ON K8N 3V3. In subsequent articles of this series, we'll share your stories and ideas.

You can learn more about Kathleen Foster-Morgan and The Edith Fox Life and Loss Centre by visiting their Web site: www.edithfoxcentre.org. This is a charitable organization supported by our community. You can support the Centre and their good work at their upcoming fundraiser - check out Umbrella's Calendar of Events for details.