

## Health Benefits associated with developing Creativity and Artistic Expression

To practice an art, we have to face problems which approach us from outside in the form of the material to be worked on. For example:

- Paper – many different weights, textures and types each one reacting differently.
- The medium in which you choose to work: eg. different types of paint, charcoal, lead pencils, coloured pencils, pastels etc.
- Clay for sculpture, modelling or making different household utilities
- Wood for wood carving, sculpture
- Pen and ink for calligraphy or creative writing
- A musical instrument
- The human body itself as an instrument for drama, dance, speech

We cannot solve the problems unless we enter fully into the material. This process of entering into the material often leads to a wide range of feelings in the soul: expectation, disappointment, anger, resignation, thoughtfulness, surprise, new hope, new efforts of will, intense joy at being creative. Working with the material and entering into a creative process also has a physiological effect. Something might change in our breathing or pulse rate. We might be surprised that we are suddenly hungry, or very tired!

Practicing an art is particularly important in life today. We are either performing actions that are automatic: everything at the flick of a switch or a button; or using our attention in a cool, concentrated way with quick split second timing. This would be the case with driving a car. Administration work, generally on the increase, demands computer skills; logical, intellectual appraisals and responses to constant emails and also the ability to write papers and documents that are well-researched, and factual.

We are forced into using a one sided thinking which is cool and analytical rather than reflective, colourful warm and creative. Generally, the pace of life is super-fast and gives rise to many stress related conditions.

If we could become more conscious of what senses and faculties we use during the day we might discover that our job necessitates using only one or two of our senses and a limited range of actions. We would be far more balanced and fulfilled at the end of the day if we developed a greater range of skills requiring physical dexterity, together with soul and spiritual engagement.

Pursuing an artistic activity can be just the right balance because it places you in quite a different situation. Nothing is based here entirely on routine. Try to imagine what occurs through painting, modelling a form in clay, practicing a piece of music on an instrument, or creating a part in a play. Full concentration is certainly necessary but it opens you up to a much wider range of experiences on a physical, soul and spiritual level.

Through an artistic activity a person learns to enter with all the qualities of his soul and with every fibre of his body into a creative process with a problem which is important not because a solution will bring any material gain but simple because it is humanly interesting.

An important but little known outcome of participating in an artistic creative process, is that of being able to see your family, colleagues, nature and situations around you with fresh interest and positivity. It is as if new eyes of the soul open up. Annoyances and irritations are reduced as you see wider and further, not so much with head thinking as with heart thinking.

Through artistic activity, the body becomes pliable and receptive towards impulses which come out of the inner life. Perhaps we reach the source of our deepest purpose and meaning in life. Integration and harmonious interplay between body, soul and spirit promotes deep contentment, good health and vitality.

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