

An Art Therapist Emerges by Phylis R Tomlinson

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I graduated from college with a major in elementary education and minor in physical education. At that time the extent of my formal art training was an undergrad course in art for the elementary teacher and a post-graduate drawing class.

Over some time I was married, moved to Texas and had a daughter. Sadly our marriage did not work and I had a lot of inner and outer dissatisfaction. I didn't have words for all I was feeling and when I did express myself, my "speaking my truth" was untimely, very intense and not productive to problem solving. I was now a single parent working full-time as a teacher.

One day I instinctively (like a squirrel in the fall) gathered materials. I bought canvas stretchers, paints, brushes, glue and used my own double bed sheet as canvas. I worked to build the frame, stretched the sheet and started to paint. With no hesitation I used a 4-inch wide brush with black paint and then I wrote the strongest irreverent words I knew sh.t, d..n, and f..k ! LARGE and BLACK! Step back, cry, scream and breathe!

Next I proceeded to brush and splatter paint, dribble a mix of glue and water, throw powdered tempera, more dribble, more splash and THROW DOWN! This all felt like a big THROW UP! Just after expelling toxicity, relief followed and ah sweet rest.



I hung the painting on my apartment wall and felt it every time I walked by...passion and rest, relief and wonder.

Life went on and I earned my Master's Degree in Educational Psychology. Soon several counselor co-workers, who were taking art therapy classes at a local university, asked if I might be interested. My response was "Absolutely"! I knew what art therapy was and I had personally experienced the process of it's healing effects. I immediately enrolled in classes to become a registered art therapist. Then, in the 1980's, Texas cut back funding for *frills in education*. Since I was already half-way through the requirements, I was fortunate to find the courses I needed through the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Now the rest is history...my resume' and other artistic endeavors pushed and persist! In gratitude to all the people who walked this path with me and especially to my strong and tender daughter, Allyn.

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