

Vulnerability Check

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of connection and the path to the feeling of worthiness.”

– Brene Brown

Have a look at that picture above and see, can you spot yours truly? Yep, that’s me in the back. If you take a closer look, you will see the face of vulnerability smiling back at you. That’s my face that says, “I can’t believe I am really doing this, but I am.”

So, how did I end up in that picture – and what’s with the vulnerability? Good question! It all began when I decided to put some focused effort into busting out of my routine and learning something new. Over the years, I have dabbled in crafts now and again, but never real art. All of my creative energy of late has been directed at bringing forth ideas on healing and writing. I felt the call to step out of the limits I put on my creativity and challenge myself.

Registering for an all-day mixed media class at our local co-op gallery seemed to be the perfect start. And it was – until I arrived and discovered my classmates were all professionally trained, practicing artists from a wide variety of backgrounds. Of course, they were all arriving with their personal selection of real artist materials, clearly ready for some serious work. Feeling way out of my league, and having shown up empty-handed, I found myself retreating. I quickly searched the room for a back door to sneak out. None was handy, and bolting for the front door felt a bit too obvious. Oh dear, I was stuck – and there was literally no place to hide. And... you know what? It turned out to be a very, very good thing. Unbeknownst to me, when I signed up I got the bonus ticket for a personal growth course in being vulnerable.

What happened next was really quite sweet because the uber-talented instructor-artist Susan Best didn't even flinch when I exposed my zero credentials for being there. After her insightful introduction to the elements of design and how they relate to mixed media collage, everyone was invited to begin. The act of doing always gets me out of my head and my cycle of thoughts, so I didn't waste any time. I knew from experience that if I hesitated, I would lose any morsel of courage I had found. Off I went to peruse the shared materials table. Within minutes of sifting through the eclectic mix of papers, my innate, yet untrained, love for color and pattern overrode my discomfort. Suddenly it didn't matter who else was in the room or what their credentials were. It was just me and my own experience using my brain in a way I haven't for years.

Connecting with this inner but often neglected passion was my ticket to stay. The next three hours flew by, and as our time drew to a close, I found myself wanting to hold on to something very special that was bubbling up from within. I was challenged at the time to put a name to it – then I read Brene Brown's quote and saw one of the words I was looking for: worthiness. Webster's says worthiness is the "quality of being good enough" and that was certainly true. Seeing the class through – and engaging to create something I never would have ordinarily made – felt by far good enough. It had nothing to do with the quality of my work, trust me, but rather the sense of pleasure that comes when you are able to drop all expectations and just be. Just beyond the thin veil of vulnerability, there was a rich fulfillment in just being me, no title, no labels, or illusions. What a wonderful reward for trying something new.