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Utilizing Healing Crystals for Mental Health and Wellness

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Utilizing Healing Crystals for Mental Health and Wellness
by

Erin M. Holt

An Abstract of a Project
In
Creativity Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2007

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

Utilizing Healing Crystals for Mental Health and Wellness

This project is about using earth's natural healing energy to boost mental health and wellness. It was a cleansing process for me to deal with my past and pave the way for my future. There were several pieces of jewelry created with healing stones and vivid descriptions of why each was chosen. There is evidence of healing in this project.

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Dates of Approval:

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Background to the Project

Purpose

This project represents a new beginning in my life. To really explain the purpose of it, I must first discuss the history behind it.

I grew up, like so many do, in an environment that was less than acceptable. For most of my adult life, I have denied where I came from. However, the time has come to address these issues because I know that my personal and professional life is suffering because of them.

My father is a physically and emotionally abusive husband and father. Punishments in most homes are usually a combination of yelling, grounding and discussion. In my home, they consisted of choking, yelling, name-calling, hitting, punching and a lot of crying. We lived in a constant state of fear, tension and worry. My mother and consequent stepmothers had it the worst. Whatever the issue it was always their fault. I think I knew about the abuse when I was little, but was extremely afraid to expose it because I wanted my dad to still love me. He really did treat me the best until I stood up for those he abused. We used to go fishing, skating, biking and boating together all of the time. It all ended the first time I witnessed him beating up my stepmother. A switch had flipped.

I'm not sure if many people ever feel fear for their life, but I have- more than once. The first time I was 16. I played softball for my school team and we had practice on one of the coldest days of the spring. By the time the practice was over, I was chilled to the bone. My friend and I usually got a ride from her parents, but this time it was my turn. I called home and at once realized there

was something wrong. Trying to please my friend, I continued with the call. As soon as my father arrived, I knew I was in trouble. Within 30 seconds of the ride, I was punched in the face, right in front of my friend. She didn't say a word as she left the vehicle. I didn't say a word, or cry, until I reached my bedroom. The next time I feared for my life was when I had already moved out. I got into a fight with my father about living with my boyfriend (current husband) and he held me against a wall by choking me. I was actually in the air and gasping for breath. This was not the end of the abuse, but it was the worst.

On the other side of the parental genes, I was the child of an alcoholic mother who had been severely physically abused as a child by her own stepmother. My mother endured such abuse as hot curling irons to her backside for an infraction so mild as talking back. She was frequently locked in the broom closet for the entire duration of her father's shift because my "Nana" didn't want to be bothered with her. The sad part about this is when she told me I didn't believe her because she was such an alcoholic. I thought it was the booze talking. After she died (at 42) it was confirmed by all of her siblings. My mother was third in a family of eight. She, along with my uncle, was the only one abused.

Today, I have many problems with social development and peer interaction. Psychological stress in childhood has fairly profound effects on brain chemistry and morphology, which are long lasting and permanent (Reading, 2006). For example, when my husband and I have a fight, I can't fight, I just cry. This behavior frustrates him because he doesn't think I act like an adult. He frequently tells me that I need counseling. Well, this project is my counseling.

So, the purpose of this project is to stimulate my healing process and begin to deal with my childhood in a holistic and safe manner.

Description and Rationale

This project deals with the healing powers of the earth in the form of crystals. Evidence that gemstones were used to heal disease can be found from the most ancient civilizations (Peschek-Bohmer & Schreiber, 2002). Crystals heal holistically (Hall, 2003). That is to say, they work on the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual levels of being (Hall, 2003). I have found that the more fundamental ways to approach this problem are not something that I relate to. It has to be something that I will identify with or it will not work. For many years, I have collected rocks and geodes, without really knowing what they were about. I just connected with them. I am not the only one. For thousands of years people have used crystals and gems to heal, soothe and calm the soul. Crystals have been used for millennia to heal and bring balance (Hall, 2003).

I will use specific stones and crystals and create a set of jewelry with them. By wearing the jewelry, I can harness the power of the specific healing crystal I need at the time. The stones and crystals to be used are: sodalite, unakite, tiger's eye, hematite, and amethyst. Each has a very profound effect on the user. For example, sodalite is best worn by Sagittarians, which I am, because it gives the user the strength to defend his/her point of view and remain true to him/herself (Peschek-Bohmer & Schreiber, 2002). If there was ever a time I needed to remain true to myself it is now.

What this project adds creatively to myself and others

The creativity in this project lies in the creation of a set of jewelry. For me, specifically, I have never made jewelry before, so the addition of a new skill will enhance my overall creativity. In addition, I am learning about what crystals have been used for in ancient societies and the present day. When I see jewelry made with crystals or stones that I have been studying, they take on a new meaning for me. It's not just a pretty necklace, or bracelet. For example, hematite jewelry has become extremely popular, probably because of its metallic color and the way light plays over it. But, what people don't know about it is that it stimulates the absorption of iron and the formation of red blood cells (Hall, 2003). When your basic bodily functions are working well, you feel better. Simple. Basically, I am learning a new skill and taking in information about something I was previously interested in.

This project will add creativity to others in the form of jewelry I will make for them. I plan on continuing making jewelry after this project and selling it at various concerts, bazaars, and shows during the summer. With each purchase, I will provide a pamphlet that highlights the stones used in the specific piece. That way, others learn about what crystals can do and how they help heal.

Pertinent Literature

Introduction

Finding literature for this project proved to be very difficult because much of what I found either related to the "magic" of crystals, or the specific way it formed in the earth's crust. Neither one of these topics was what I was looking for. Also, much of the research conducted on abuse was not the kind of abuse I

experienced. I never lived in a shelter, or exhibited many of the behaviors connected to severe physical and mental abuse. What I did choose was exactly what suited my needs.

Expanded CBIR Abstracts

Hall, J. (2003). *The crystal bible: A definitive guide to crystals*. Cincinnati, OH: Walking Stick Press.
(ISBN: 1-58297-240-0)

The goals of this book were to provide readers with a background of how crystals form, the energy of crystals, types of crystals, and how crystals can be used in healing.

Peschek-Bohmer, F., & Schreiber, G. (2002). *Healing crystals and gemstones: From amethyst to zircon*. Munich, Germany: Econ Ullstein List Verlag GmbH & Co.
(ISBN: 1-56852-442-0)

The authors of this book sought to educate readers on the different methods humans have used across the centuries to heal with crystals and stones from the earth. There are many anecdotal tales of how ancient civilizations would apply the energy of different crystals to heal people. There is also detailed information of over one hundred stones and crystals, ranging from where to find them geographically to what part of the body to place for maximum benefit.

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Process Plan

Introduction

When I began this project, I had to really plan for making mistakes. Because I had never made jewelry before, I was unaware as to how much time to plan for such “disasters”. I quickly learned that most of my time was needed to correct mistakes. Much of my time was used figuring out the differences between each of the tools and metal parts that are essential to jewelry making. But, it all came together.

Timeline

- March 17 & 18: I spent approximately three hours each day conducting research on gemstones, crystals, and child abuse. Running Total: 6 hours.
- March 24 & 25: I visited a couple of bead shops and learned some valuable lessons about using the jewelry tools. I completed the shopping for the necessary materials: pliers, beads/stones, crimpers, spacers, hemp, bead thread and beading needles. Time spent: 5 hours. Running Total: 11 hours.
- April 9-13: The entire week was spent creating the jewelry. I decided to use my vacation to complete the project. I spent between 8-10 hours per day working on the jewelry. Running total: 56 hours.
- April 14: Completed the draft of sections 1-3 for the final write-up. Time Spent: 5 hours. Running Total: 61 hours.

- April 21 & 22: Completion of the draft of sections 4-6 for the final write-up. Time spent: 6-7 hours. Running Total: 68 hours.
- April 28 & 29: Prepare presentation for the class. 3-4 hours. Running Total: 72 hours.
- May 5 & 6: Complete editing of final write-up and binding. 3-4 hours. Running Total: 76 hours.

Outcomes

Introduction

I was skeptical of what this project would actually do for me because I have lived so long denying what happened in my childhood. In a way, I am still skeptical because I feel well. I am not used to feeling well about anything, or not having an upset stomach, or feeling that there is something wrong. But, I do feel well. I don't have an upset stomach, and I don't have this feeling of foreboding. Is it the crystals? Is it the fact that I addressed my past? I'm not sure, but what I do know is that something has changed in me. I feel safe and sound. I sleep at night. I can call my dad and have a conversation without worrying if he loses his temper over something ridiculous. I can let my fear go for my stepmother. She is an adult and must take responsibility for her own life.

I am sure that a part of this whole feeling of well-being has something to do with pride. I have never felt "creative". I was never the kid in art class that people were awed by, or the soloist who brought tears to the audience's eye. I guess I was always pretty average. My jewelry might even be average, but the point is that I learned to do something new and I think it's cool. I look at my

pieces and say to myself, “wow, you could buy that in a store!” I am proud of myself and that was an outcome I didn’t expect.

Throughout the following sections, I will detail each stone I chose to use in my project. Each of the stones was picked due to its specific healing property. Interestingly enough, each of the stones I chose I was drawn to on a spiritual level.

Outcome One: Amethyst Hemp Anklet



Amethyst is one of the most commonly found stones on earth. Its beautiful variations of purple have long given people soothing and calming feelings and tranquility. Amethyst balances out highs and lows, promoting emotional centering, while dispelling anger, rage, fear, and anxiety (Hall, 2003).

When I made the decision to do this project, I sought out stones that were known for their emotional healing benefits. I found many, but most of them were out of my price range. Because amethyst is known for its healing and it's inexpensive, I decided to use it in my first piece.

I decided to use hemp as the mode for display of the beads. The hemp jewelry I have seen at hippie concerts for the past 15 years has always fascinated me. It looked extremely difficult, and I was not that sure of myself to try to make some on my own. It is difficult, but I prevailed.

Outcome Two: Sodalite Anklet



As previously stated, Sodalite is recommended for Sagittarians, which I am. It is bizarre because I was drawn to it when I was exposed to it. Each time I

would enter my office and look in my bead case, I would see the Sodalite and feel a need to touch it. Interestingly enough, Sodalite is an ideal stone for hot-tempered people (Peschek-Bohmer & Schreiber, 2002). I feel calmed when I wear my Sodalite anklet. Its healing properties that relate to me lay in its ability to transform a defensive or oversensitive personality by releasing the core fears, phobias, guilt, and control mechanisms that hold one back from being who he/she truly is (Hall, 2003).

Outcome Three: Hematite Necklace



Hematite has always been one of my most favorite stones. I am truly awed by its metallic appearance. It almost seems as though I could stare into it forever and never actually experience its depth.

My husband actually proposed to me the first time with a hematite ring under the stars beside the Colorado River in southern Utah. We had been rock shopping earlier, and he had found a hematite ring. He waited until later to pop the question. I said “yes”, of course. Unfortunately, it broke two weeks later in the Denver Zoo when I landed my hand against a metal railing.

Ancient Egyptians used hematite to staunch blood and to promote the formation of blood cells (Peschek-Bohmer & Schreiber, 2003). Its psychological healing properties include healthy sleep (Peschek-Bohmer & Schreiber, 2002), supporting timid women, boosting self-esteem and survivability (Hall, 2003). I was very excited to learn that one of my most treasured stones could potentially have the power to aid me in my mental recovery- not to mention its physiological healing abilities in the form of creating red blood cells.

Outcome Four: Unakite Bracelet



It is hard to tell from the photograph, but Unakite is a truly warm and welcoming stone. It has several different colors, ranging from a deep green to a vibrant red, with many variations of orange in between. When I first saw it, (before I researched it), I was mesmerized by its warmth. I connected with it on a personal level. It was so beautiful.

Beyond its beauty, Unakite has healing powers, as well. It facilitates rebirthing, bringing to light and integrating insights from the past about the cause of blockages, and gently releasing conditions that inhibit spiritual and psychological growth (Hall, 2003). I can attest to the powers of this stone. I wore the bracelet I made to a family dinner. During the dinner I was struck by the fact that I am unable to move forward into adult emotions because I allow myself to be blocked by the images of my past. Maybe it was reading what the stone could do before the dinner, or maybe it really works, but I was able to release.

Outcome Five: Tiger's Eye Bracelet



Psychologically, Tiger's Eye is effective in lifting depression and promoting concentration (Peschek-Bohmer & Schreiber, 2002). I chose Tiger's Eye

because of its ability to lift depression and because of its warmth. I think the reason it lifts depression is because of its warmth. The yellow and brown highlights of the stone speak to you and make you feel good inside. This stone is useful for recognizing both your needs and those of other people (Hall, 2003). It differentiates between wishful thinking about what you want and what you really need (Hall, 2003). For me, what I really want is different family. What I need is acceptance of the family I was born into. As I researched the stones, I realized that I needed Tiger's Eye on my side.

Key Learnings

Introduction

First, and foremost, I learned a lot about myself by completing this project. I never had a very high opinion of my artistic creativity prior to making the jewelry in this project. I think in my mind artistic means drawing, or painting. The reality is that art encompasses many talents, and what I created is artistic. I have developed a new confidence and pride in the fact that I am still able to learn a new skill even though I am an adult.

In addition, I have learned the value of time management. It had been a while since I had to complete a large project and, therefore, I was a bit rusty. Plus, my life has changed since I was an undergrad. I have a professional career, a husband and other commitments. Blocking out time to complete this project was a challenge, but I prevailed.

Content

There were several things that worked well about this project. I researched stones and crystals prior to purchasing anything because I wanted them to be specific to the healing that I needed. I knew that different stones had different healing properties, and I thought it prudent to know exactly what I needed before heading to the jewelry shop. This action was the correct one because as I conducted my research, I discovered that there are hundreds of stones and each has very different properties, and more importantly, price. When I originally conceptualized this project, I thought it would be nice to use malachite in a piece. Malachite can cost upwards of a thousand dollars for a

very small piece. So, exploratory research worked very well in determining what stones to use in the project.

Another component that proved to be essential to the creation of the jewelry was taking a beading class at Bead Creative in Williamsville. If I had gone to the store and blindly shopped for materials, I would have spent too much money on things I wouldn't have needed. There are very intricate procedures involved with making clasps that I never would have learned if I hadn't attended the class. I did some research on the internet about knotting and clasps, but that paled in comparison to what I was able to learn at the jewelry class. A bonus to this is that I made a contact for future purchases, or problems.

A final thing that worked well about this project was that I didn't approach my family about the past. I knew in my heart that the only person who would make me feel better was myself. I do not have the power to change what happened, but I do have the power to ensure that I don't have to suffer for it my entire life. I was at a crossroads, and I knew that I had to change something. What I found was that I could do something creative. Creating jewelry is a calming activity and the stones did offer a sense of tranquility. Even if it was psychological, it worked, and that is the point.

The only thing I think I would change about the project would be the hemp. It turned out that I didn't really like the outcome as well as the beading and it is hard to find beads that have holes drilled large enough for the hemp thread to go through. It's also more expensive and because many people know how to make

their own, it wouldn't be economical to create pieces to sell at concerts because there would be very few buyers.

Process

The creativity tool most effective in this project was the use of Pluses/Potentials/Concerns/Overcoming Concerns (PPCo). This tool is really helpful when making decisions. It is affirmative. Often, people will dive head first into a project without really examining any concerns they may have towards it. By using PPCo I was forced to address my concerns and make a decision as to whether or not one could potentially be a deal breaker. Because my project centered on psychological healing due to childhood abuse, I knew that I needed to really think out any concerns I had for doing it. I was able to overcome my concerns by brainstorming solutions. I decided that I did not even have to discuss it with my family because it was specific to myself.

In addition to using PPCo, I followed the format of the Torrance Incubation Model (TIM) (Torrance, 1993). I believe that by extending my learning through creating pieces to sell at shows, I will continue to hone my new skill and learn more intricate kinds of beading. I have developed a new motivation to continue learning about jewelry making.

If I were to do it over again, the one thing I would definitely change would have been doing the preliminary research, or brainstorming topics before the semester began. I think I could have produced richer outcomes, or learned more ways of beading had I given myself more time.

Conclusion

Introduction

By doing this project, I have developed a better understanding about how to approach creativity. Up till now, I have felt that it was all very vague and ambiguous. However, I now understand that true creativity stems from motivation and passion for a domain. I have a newfound sense of motivation to learn more about beading and crystals. I have pride in myself and want to continue feeling that.

I think that this embodies change leadership. For a person to be a leader of an organization, he/she has to have passion for the products. A teacher's products are the students that leave the classroom with a headful of knowledge that wasn't previously there. To be a leader of the class and be effective, that passion must be present and visible for the students to want to follow and learn. For a CEO to be successful, he/she must show passion and motivation for the products in order for everyone to develop a passion for them as well. For example, Bill Gates is passionate about technology. He is so passionate and motivated about technology that he has made it his mission to provide the means to learn about technology to school districts that can't afford it themselves. He is the leader of a corporation that is technology and is extremely successful. We hear Microsoft and think of Bill Gates. We hear Bill Gates and think of Microsoft. It all boils down to passion and motivation.

Next Steps

What I see myself doing next is creating several pieces before the summer and selling them at concerts, or shows. I am very excited by this because I was always so jealous of people that could do creative things and make a profit from them. I am sure that there will be many chances for me to use my new skill for gifts, or thank you's. The point is that I will absolutely continue to make jewelry and learn about crystals.

Eventually, I will try to talk to my father about what happened in the past. I know that before I can have the courage to do that, I must first release the pain inside myself. Until that happens, I am just going to continue exploring the feelings. Unfortunately, I will never be able to address the issues with my mother because she died. However, I will deal with it because I know that it is the only way to live happily.

This project has changed my life for the better. I know that I have a way to go in dealing with the past, but I am confident that I will get there. I am proud of myself for learning to do something artistic and to actually do it well. I am excited for the potential this skill brings me in relation to the future.

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