Art for Life: A Place for Healing after Suicide

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Survivors: Jill Coutts, Sara Tagget and Krystle Washington
Community Art Studio based on Open Studio Concept

ART FOR LIFE
Art for Life Studio

• **Artists**- No prior art experience necessary!

• **Art process**- invites creativity

• **Community studio**- group members are supportive to each other, creating a safe, accessible place to express intense emotions after suicide.
Open Studio

• Open studio format – *Witness the process of art-making, not the product.*

• Art therapist leaders make art along side the survivors.

• Survivors can develop an artistic identity without judgment.
Found Objects/Altered Book

• Re-Purposing, recycling and re-working found objects facilitates meaning and transformation.

• Old, discarded books are given new life, observed in a new way

• Creative process inspires the artist with a commitment to self and life.
Grassroots

• A safe place in the community.

• Resources are available: SOS group, Crisis Intervention, 24hour Lifeline.

• Healing is possible…
1. Choose Art Materials
2. Express feelings in response to suicide.
3. Create. Do not judge yourself or your artwork.
Jill Coutts, mother of Jay and survivor of suicide

ART FOR LIFE
So tired of this burden
NO Sinking Deeper into the Void

Memories

MAGIC and the BRAIN

OUTRAGE

No PAIN RELIEF

My boy A Love Story

BEST EVER PIE

Sacrificial Lamb

miss you

Such beautiful gifts

Are You happy?

Magic and the Brain

Fall Please Visit Again

Tough LOVE for your own GOOD
"Justice is worthy in word and deed."

A Well-Traveled Story

No Justice in this Life

After the Crash

sex crimes

powerful words
When did you see Black?

Where are you now?

We are all dead stars.

Just look up in the sky, you can hear me laughing...

Are you in a tree?
Bucket of Tears
Never Ending Cry me a River...

What Could I have done
To make you stay?

Your Choice!
Your Decision!

We love you so much. We love you so much. We love you so much.
THE PASSENGER

Like a shadow, his fear was attached to him for the rest of his life, making him feel alien, not of this world...

I stand on the platform of the trolley car and am completely insecure about my footing in this world, in this city, in my family. Nor could I indicate even casually what demands I might rightfully make in any direction. In no way can this platform carry me to the way.

FEAR

One Christmastime in Great Depression

I wondered back then: How come she's not astonished at herself, how come she keeps her mouth shut and says nothing along those lines?

Nails, wire, two-by-fours whip by in winds that soon reach 200 miles an hour.

LIFE AS WE KNOW IT
When did your heart stop?
POTASSIUM CHANNEL

The human body is a complex electrical network. Nerve cells shuttle signals from the brain, and pulses in the heart cause its muscle cells to expand and contract. Cells would never receive these electrical dispatches without special proteins like the one depicted above.
The Volcano
THE EARLY STORIES

"everyone deserves to be safe."

Threat Zone

He peeked over the top, eye to eye with the boiling lava. This was beyond science. This was personal.

THE PAST is never past
under the bed, wrenching up the loose floorboard, and grabbed the pillowcase full of his books and birthday presents. He wriggled out, seized Hedwig’s empty cage, and dashed back downstairs to his trunk, just as Uncle Vernon burst out of the dining room, his trouser leg in bloody tatters.

“COME BACK IN HERE AND PUT IT RIGHT!”

But a reckoning had come over Harry. He locked his trunk open, pulled out his wand, and pointed it at Uncle Vernon.

“She deserves to be back-breathing very fast. She deserved what she got. Too keep away from me.”

He turned behind him for the latch on the door.

“I’m going,” Harry said. “I’ve had enough.”

Uncle Vernon, the next moment, was out in the dark, quiet street, hearing his own stupid, fearful footsteps. Hedwig’s cage under his arm.
THE DEMENTOR

Never, ever. He...
KS, he added blandly.

“It is not in the nature of a dementor to understand pleading excuses. I therefore warn each and every one of you to give the nearest reason to harm you. I look to the prefects, and our new H
d and Girl, to make sure that no student runs afoul of the
ors,” he said.

Percy, who was sitting a few seats down from Harry, puffed
nest again and stared around impressively. Dumble
again; he looked very seriously around the hall, and no
d or made a sound.
The Stoker

The footman told us that the Stoker was to be taken down to the cellar for a few minutes and that we should not disturb him. We all went away, and I went down to the cellar and found the Stoker sitting on a stool by the fire. He was a short, fat man, with a red beard, and he looked very uncomfortable. He said that he had just finished his work and was going to have a rest. He asked me if I wanted any hot water or tea, and I said yes. He poured me a cup of tea and we talked about the weather. He said that it was very cold outside and that he wished he could get warm. I told him that I had a warm coat and that I would give it to him if he wanted it. He thanked me and said that he was very grateful. We talked for a while longer and then I went back to the sitting-room, where I found a few people sitting around the fire. Some of them were smoking, and they all looked very happy. I sat down and had a chat with them, and then I went back to the Stoker and said goodbye. He thanked me again and said that he had enjoyed his talk with me. I wished him goodnight and went up to my room. I thought about the Stoker and how kind he was, and I felt very happy.
Sorry.

It's a bit hard to explain.

Sort of.
It's a bit hard to explain.

Sort of.
Fraxinus is the Genus of Ash Trees...

More commonly known as The Hanging Tree
Let us consider for a moment what most of the trouble and anxiety which I have referred to is about, and how much it is necessary that we be troubled, or at least careful. It would be some advantage to live in a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization. If only to know what are the real necessities of life and what methods have been taken to provide them, or even to look over the old day-books of the past.

The work necessary to life is not whatever, or of what kind it obtains by its own exceeding, but work from the one or the other of its long use has become, so important to human life that if it is not, whether from savagery, or poverty, or philosophy, or even an attempt to do without it. To many creatures there is but in the sun but one necessary of life, Food. To the brain of the prudent it is a few inches of palatable grass—water to drink, unless he seeks the Shelter of the forest or the mountain's shadow. None of the brute creation requires more than Food and Shelter. The necessary of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel, for not till we have assured them are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success. Man has invented not only houses but clothes and cooked food, and possibly from the accidental discovery of the warmth of the sun, and the consequent use of it, at first a luxury, arose the present necessity to be by it. We observe cats and dogs acquiring the same second nature. By proper Shelter and Clothing we sec—

Chasing Rainbows
Sara Tagget, mother of Kara and survivor of suicide

ART FOR LIFE
Send Silence Packing

• *Send Silence Packing* is an art installation created by Active Minds, of 1,100 backpacks to represent # of suicides on college campuses in the US per year.

• Artists can create personal messages on the backpacks as a canvas in response to suicide.

• Alison’s goal is to reduce the number of backpacks each year the exhibit goes on tour. [www.activeminds.org](http://www.activeminds.org)
LOVE
FUN
HARD
DARK
BEHIND THE MASK

DESPAIR
HOPELESSNESS
PAST
SHAME
ANGER
SSSINS
LONELINESS
NUMBNESS
CONFUSION

SUICIDE

CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH

CRISIS UNIT
 MD YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

SPARK ON 5

MATTERS!.ORG
OUR END

HER BEGINNINGS
A BEAUTIFUL Life

gone IN A MOMENT
I CAN'T DO IT ANYMORE.
I WANT TO DIE.
I'M JUST SO SAD.
I WROTE 'THINKING OF JESSICA' ON FACEBOOK.
I NEVER DO THAT TO YOU.
I WANT TO TALK BY A BODY AND HAVE A BURIAL.
IF WE HAD ONLY UNDERSTOOD, HOW DIFFERENT YOUR TODAY MIGHT BE.
I'M JUST SO SAD.
Krystle Washington, survivor of attempts

ART FOR LIFE
And the heart that you broke
I was yours and
the heart that you
broke was devoted
and pure and I was
just anybody's mec

and I said I'm fine, yeah I did my best. But you can't tell me you didn't know the bli
Praise for Transformation Soup

written in the stars...
Resilience in the face of adversity is perhaps these women’s most valuable asset. They may have been stopped in their tracks, but they have not been derailed.
the insane cost of abandoning troubled minds.
THE COASTER PROJECT:
UNBELIEVABLE THINGS PEOPLE SAY AFTER A SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT
Coaster Project

Death makes people uncomfortable. How often have we heard the words, “I don’t know what to say.” After the suicide death of my youngest son, I know that many people didn’t know how to react. In an effort to help me cope with my devastating loss, many friends and colleagues tried to find words of comfort, or words to make sense of something that could not be explained.

Some words said to me were unnecessary, some were hurtful, and some were just silly. I had suffered the loss of my sweet son, whom I loved more than I can describe. It was such a profound loss, and how could words affect me? Early on I decided not to let the words of others hurt me. I didn’t want to become bitter. Most did not even know what they said. But the fact that I can remember them at all means that they were still inside me, and I did not want to carry those words around with me.

The most helpful thing in my healing journey was to make art. I found that through art I could take some of the pain and loss that I felt and put it on a page. Slowly, I began to heal. So why not take all of the words that were stuck in my head and put them onto coasters? Sitting with my friends who share a similar loss, we found ourselves laughing and sharing our latest creation. The process was so amazing. And we all found ourselves using the most perfect words to describe how we felt. One word comes to mind, spoken by my dear friend Sara, who lost her daughter Kara. Although it is now almost a cliché, but no one says, “Really?” quite like Sara. I think that simple word sums up “The Coaster Project.”

Jill, mother of Jay
She was selfish.

You don’t have any reason to feel that way...

Look how much you’ve got to be grateful for!

Are you trying to go to Hell?
You know, God only lends us our children...

32 years?
20 years?
15 years?
10 years?
5 years?
“Rather than focusing on the relationship with the art therapist, the open studio process seeks to promote the relationship each one of us has with the artist within, or between the self and the soul…the community studio is a place of all possibility.”

(Allen, 1995)