

### The Artist Within

I see your lines both simple and intricate, elegant and distorted. Sometimes your colors are deep and shallow, bright and dim. Sometimes you shine, sometimes you're numb. Your nuances blend in and blend out sharply contrasting each other and sometimes the colors are obscure. I feel your textures both polished and coarse, sometimes invincible but vulnerable, rhythmic yet intermittent.

There are no imitations or substitutes for you. You, are your own sculptured piece of art—individual and unique. But something is amiss. Your best friend/ your worst enemy beckons to you and you partake. But in the taking you're losing you and gaining an obsession with your friend. All those lines, all those colors, all those textures covered by a blob of clay.

Who are you now? I know you're inside that blob of clay somewhere. I know you're not formless. I've seen those lines, colors and textures that make you up. I wonder...can you give up your "friend" and become an artist again?

In being the artist of ourselves, taking control of destructive habits or addictions of any kind (alcohol, drugs, food abuse, sex, exercise-addiction) requires a deeper knowledge of all the little payoffs that keep us hanging on to those seemingly helpful yet destructive behaviors. For example, an alcoholic might use alcohol as a way of avoiding responsibility. Poor time managers might thrive on the chaos they create in their lives and the lack of time may be a mechanism to avoid failure. It's easier to blame than to take responsibility to change. Certain addictions are also a way of asking for help. The payoffs are numerous, complex and often unknown or unacknowledged. In changing addictions or habits, a person may be struggling to let go of something s/he has grown comfortable with. Change is filled with uncertainty and to move past the inertia of remaining "stuck" is risky. There are no guarantees. There are reasons there for remaining stuck in behaviors that simultaneously help us cope and hold us back.

For those artists who have chosen to give up their pseudo-friend, there are some tools to facilitate that change:

1) Self talk: Be aware of the tapes you are playing and re-playing in your brain. Evaluate those words and ask "are they realistic? Supportive? Destructive?" Chip away

those negative words and replace them with positive words because it's here you create your own internal environment that guides or belittles you.

2) Keep a private journal or record of your actions, feelings and thoughts. Review your writings for patterns in what you do and how you feel. Choose what you'd like to change accordingly. This helps to "decode" the payoffs you may get from remaining stuck.

3) Practice relaxation or meditation techniques to relieve stress and pressure. Improve your self concept; increase openness to new behaviors and enhance your awareness of your strengths and past victories. Paint in the varied colors that new awareness brings. Allow yourself to develop in new directions and let go of your past down falls—these are gone and this moment, now, is new.

4) Open yourself to awareness. Expand your experiences. Choose to obtain an interest in the large and small things of life. For example, take a few minutes to marvel at a sunset without thinking of anything else—enjoy the essence of the moment.

Part of being an artist includes being open to new experiences—even vulnerable to new experiences. New experiences entail a willingness to feel both good and negative feelings and knowing it is okay to feel successful; it's okay to feel lonely—it's okay to feel! Society doesn't allow people to have negative feelings, yet negative feelings are as much a part of life as the good feelings. The more we shove them away and ignore them, the longer they have to fester. Stating how we feel gives both ourselves and the people around us a clearer picture of our identities—taking off the blobs of clay we hide behind. By permitting that blob of clay to remain we think it helps us to handle life better (e.g. the alcohol user who drinks to socialize) but in reality, the means we choose to "get there" may actually stop us from "getting there."

To a greater degree you can create your reality through the filter of your perceptions and values. You are the artist within.

Melanie Steed

### FROM THE HIP

#### INSIDE

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**AND MUCH MUCH MORE...**

**Start off the new decade on a healthy foot!**

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**Sticking to those new year resolutions is easier said than done!**

If you'd like to see a health counselor regarding a low fat diet, getting in shape, losing weight, quitting smoking or managing stress, stop by the Health Education Center and make an appointment or call 686-4456.

**Love your Heart in the 1990s!**

The Student Health Center can assist you in checking your blood pressure and total cholesterol for free. Stop by the Health Education Center on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Space is limited to the first 25 each week.

**Need help with a term project or paper or speech?**

The Health Education Library has free pamphlets, handouts and current articles on a variety of health topics. A peer health adviser can help you fill in the gaps of your health knowledge and direct you towards more resources on campus and in Lane County.