



## How Art is Part of My Healing -- by Elly Brosius, July 2010



Fibromyalgia and CFS disrupt life, are often disabling. Using anything that may help makes sense. Creating or just looking at art, crafts, and decoration can be used for coping and even healing, depending on how and how often one does them and what one says within while doing them. Art with healing intent doesn't require expense, talent, originality, or experience. It takes a willingness to work with a bigger picture about health.

### **Adapting & Adding Patience, Staying Close to Color & Beauty**

After pushing, while in a flare or crash, energy and skills can become unavailable. Crafting became a way for me to feel like I could do something, anything and not feel so useless. Learning to adapt my crafting methods taught me lessons for adapting my life. I adjusted to doing less and functioning with brain fog. I learned to honor and value myself though I had more muscle weakness, more aches and heart ache, less coordination and circulation. I found crafts I could enjoy without stressing or wearing myself out further, without actually hurting myself as much. I learned patience and discovered ways to generally increase self-care. I chose *plastic canvas arts* over cross-stitch needlepoint; I *made envelopes from colorful calendars*.

### **Feeling Encouragement, Spending Time Liking Myself**

Confronted with fewer capabilities while feeling more suffering, it is difficult to continue liking oneself, to find ways to be quiet, alone and okay. When I would choose a pastime I could do and enjoy, I could distract myself from worries. I had an easier time liking myself and staying encouraged. I learned to more deeply be my own friend—if I didn't become too critical of art or myself. I considered self approval while *rubber stamping* and *watching arts, crafts, and cooking on TV*.

### **Adding Color and Shades of Gray to Black and White Thinking**

When art changes to include new shades, shapes, and perspectives, our general thinking can also shift. I found new treatments and new ways to handle living. *Gratitude journaling and gathering appealing images into a book* expanded my delight, acceptance, non-judgment, and self-compassion, saving me energy. All of that made it easier to recognize and receive help, to notice coincidences, to feel self-love.

### **Slowing the Shrinking of a Sensitive's Life**

When chronically ill and tender, it can feel like there are many forces shrinking your life, reducing and distorting the circles you live in. Sensitivities to medicines, foods, chemicals, perfume, temperatures, alcohol, perhaps with unpredictable mood swings can really shrivel where, how, and when you can go out, interact with others. Art time, especially *word art of making a daily list of 5 things I'm grateful for and rephrasing language* to eliminate "should statements" and other expectations halted my life's shrinking and began to reduce my sensitivities. *Observing how I wrote and talked about myself and making it truly supportive and less full of hyperbole and complaint* opened doors to vibrant aliveness I feared had slammed shut forever.

### **Engaging and Calming / Balancing the Nervous System**

When too busy-minded to relax or veg out, making art focuses me and allows meditative moments of gazing and being free between the moments of doing. When I avoid perfectionism and competitiveness in my art with more heart, I nourish my frayed nerves. I *engage in creative story telling*. I *sooth myself with music* I can appreciate.

### **Breaking Free, Using Mind-and-Spirit to Journey Beyond Pain**

What kind of art we do, which art tools we use, what we like or hate about our art are clues to aspects of health we may be clueless about. *Poetry* assisted me in saying things I couldn't otherwise express. Seeing repeating themes in words or designs helped me comprehend when and on what I was stuck, when to accept or let go. I drew in a *left-handed art journal* to reveal embedded frustrations and to draw out from the right side of my brain more feminine intuition and creativity. I *make mandalas* for balancing my body-mind-soul.