



healing the world one book at a time

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Foreword Excerpt

Did you know you were created to be creative? In fact, your creativity is just as unique as your DNA. Creativity is sparked in your imagination and you are invited to put objects and ideas together in new ways. At Retreat House, we call this invitation cross-pollination and we encourage this core value as a way to experience how creation is evoked from within. We believe imagination is a vital ingredient to cultivating the spiritual life.

Lil Smith, Retreat House Founder

Preface Excerpt

At Retreat House, creativity can be birthed in stillness or chaos. It makes its presence known between breaths and amid birdsong, hidden in the notes of a flute or the clatter of soup bowls. The gifts of creativity are abundant for all those mindful enough to receive them.

For our community, to create is to cultivate deep listening for what waits to awaken within us and travel through us. Creativity thrives on brave vulnerability, the courage to face mystery and shape it as an act of divine inspiration and creation. Creativity takes on many expressions— writing, painting, gardening, cooking—and it flourished with cross-pollination. Creativity is a pathway to and a journey of healing, discovery, and spiritual discernment.

Gretchen Martens

Sample Poem

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i fell from the stars and the blackberry sky

By Gretchen Martens

i fell from the stars and the blackberry sky
half-baked and happy, covered with dew
ready to explore the vastness of this world
gifted with fire in my belly
bedazzled, banged hopeful as temple bells

and then i met her
surrounded in shadow
barely looking up
as i strutted by in my bodacious boots
(when had she last smiled?)

and i whispered softly
knowing she would hear
“yes! you can.”
and a small smile broke her darkness
and the fire in her belly rekindled

Sample Poem

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At the Intersection of Curiosity and Creativity

By Karen Hoffman

When the safety valve was loosened,
her creativity flowed.
From a once-cavernous space,
tamped down by the heaviness of life,
came newly-discovered joy
in even the smallest of things.
Everywhere she looked,
life seemed more brilliant, vivid.
“Were you always creative?”
someone asked one day.
She paused before replying,
thinking about it for a while.
She couldn’t recall feeling such an electric pulse,
the creativity now coursing through her veins.
She wondered if her creative spirit had been dormant
until the escape valve was opened.
Her creativity started to unfurl like an infusion of blood,
flowing freely through her body, difficult to contain.
Every walk became an experience
of wonder and wander.
Each being—whether human, animal, or plant—
became part of her everyday palette.
Crossing the street, walking on a trail—
each encounter took on new meaning.
Out flowed stories, poems, images from every facet of life.
Curiosity and creativity now coexisted in a magical way.
Leaning into the blessings of this creative spirit,
her breath grew lighter, smoother.
Her eyes shined brightly,
even on dark, cloudy days.
Her smile helped others find their way,
even as darkness lingered throughout the days.
She met her once-hidden self
at that intersection of curiosity and creativity.
In each season, she found new meaning:
being alone but never lonely;
sharing rich experiences with others;
often being alone, together.
The cracks stretched open, letting light in
as she embraced the sparks within.
Her still, small voice always whispered:
Wonder. Wander. Clear. Create. Share. Be.