

UNLOCK YOUR CHILDLIKE CURIOSITY TO UNCOVER AND ACTIVATE
THE CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE YOU ARE

LIFE IN FULL

Colors



7 TRANSFORMATIVE TOOLS
FOR LEVERAGING LIFE'S
CHALLENGES AS YOUR
ULTIMATE CREATIVE MATERIAL

Corry MacDonald

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Corry MacDonald

corry@creativehealingwithcorry.com

www.CreatingHealingWithCorry.com

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Welcome Note from

Corry

When I began to write this book several years ago, it was from a place that felt forced, like I was not truly ready. It was clear to me I had some living and growing to do. I had several challenges to own and subsequently leverage for my learning, upcycling, and transformation. This is the process I am going to teach you in this book—how to take any personal challenge you experience and shift it to create something beautiful.

I know now that if what I create flows in from a Higher Place with a power far beyond me, then it is meant to be shared out into the world. This book flowed into written form steadily and with a speed that surprised me during the first lockdown of

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COVID-19 while I was living in Dubai. Tucked into a quiet room at home, I would begin each day in the silence of my heart and received the words in these pages as Divine downloads.

One thing you will notice is when I refer to our Higher Power, I use various names interchangeably. Names such as Divine, Creator, Source, and Creative Intelligence. As I wrote, I welcomed all the words I received and recorded them as they came. They point to the same timeless, formless, Universal life energy that we all share, as it is ultimately pure love. Substitute the name(s) that resonate most for you as you read.

I am more than grateful for all the family, friends, clients, and unseen Divine Guides who helped to bring this book into form simply by being part of my journey to discovering how to live my Life in Full Colors. I dedicate this book to you all with a special dedication to my beautiful, colorful family. I love you.

Because I have lived almost half of my life overseas, an amazing adventure that both my husband and I chose for our family, complete with its own set of challenges, I have a big place in my heart for displaced people. When I consider immigrants and refugees who lack the luxury of choice, who must leave their country due to trauma, only to arrive in a new culture to experience more pain, such as anti-immigrant sentiment, I am moved to give my support.

This is why I am donating all net proceeds from the sales of this book, *Life in Full Colors*, to the Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees (VICCIR). VICCIR is a non-profit, charitable group that provides various forms of support, including art therapy, “for those immigrants and refugees suffering the impact of trauma.” I resonate with their vision, which implores “all citizens to contribute to communities that thrive on diversity of origin, culture, religion and interests, and are strengthened by shared common values.”

As VICCIR is based in the province of British Columbia, which is where I completed my art therapy training, I am grateful to align with such a big-hearted team who share my Canadian roots. Roots which gave me the wings to fly far so that I could grow, learn, and share this way.

To learn more about VICCIR or how you can donate visit www.viccir.org.

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“With everything that has happened to you, you can either feel sorry for yourself or treat what has happened as a gift. Everything is either an opportunity to grow or an obstacle to keep you from growing. You get to choose.”

—Wayne Dyer

Tools for Your Journey

Please note: Before you begin reading this book, it's important that you know that there are several creative exercises throughout the upcoming chapters for you to embody the learning. To participate and receive the fullest experience for yourself, you will need these basic art materials, most of which can be found within your home. For our work here, it's best to use children's art supplies rather than fine art supplies. This way you can relax, play with the colors, and enjoy the process without worrying about the product.

Here are the simple art materials you will need:

1. White paper (simple bond) or a sketchbook (11 x 17" or A3 size) to provide lots of creative space.
2. Colored crayons or pastels in basic sets of either 8 or 12. Some people like oil pastels

while others prefer chalk. I recommend both if possible.

3. Colored markers, also in a set of 8 or 12.
4. Children's tempera paint "cake set" of 8 or 12 colors (the kind with the hard round disks of paint that only require you to dip a wet brush in to use directly). These are paints are most commonly found in a small rectangular case with a lid that snaps shut on top.
5. Paint brushes of a few different sizes. I recommend buying a set of three or five in sizes and shapes that make you curious to use them.
6. Journal or notebook and a pen you enjoy writing with.
7. Glue stick.
8. Pair of scissors.

We Begin Within

“The infinite wonders of the universe are revealed to us in exact measure as we are capable of receiving them. The keenness of our vision depends not on how much we can see, but on how much we feel.”

—Helen Keller

Chapter 1

Shake Things Up:
How Depression, Direct Advice,
and Disaster Woke Me Up

I imagine yourself as a child lying back in a bed of pine needles under evergreen branches. With eyes full of wonder, see yourself catching countless white clumps of heavy snow falling from an inky-blue sky. This is how I remember enjoying many winter evenings as a little girl growing up in Canada. I felt most at home within the quiet hug of the natural world outside.

Hold that picture in one hand while you take hold of another picture in complete contrast to the first. Here again, we see a child—me again. This time I am tucked into the quiet playhouse within my kindergarten classroom, surrounded by rambunctious children playing freely throughout the space where I stand—nervous, fearful, and alone, peeking out from behind the window.

These two pictures, while contrasting in so many ways, are also descriptive of our human story in general. While there is a curious and wonder-filled part of us connected to the Universe, a closed-off, cautious self who prefers to sit safely on the sidelines exists as well.

Fear Takes the Front Seat

Over time, in my little story, this more fearful version of Corry began to show up more often than the

free and fearless one. From a very early age, I had been conditioned to expect things to feel unsafe and unpredictable. I grew up in a home where the tools needed for healthy family communication and stability were lacking. Even when I tried to lighten up, there was a voice in my head that kept me stuck.

For much of my teenage life, and into my thirties, I listened to that relentless voice in my overthinking and ruminating mind. This created a strong downward pull into sadness and mistrust in myself and others. I would try to outrun it by diving into friendships, jobs, and commitments, thinking, *This time it will be different*, but the entrenched pathway of my programmed thinking mind was far more powerful than any of the desires of my heart.

With my mind judging everything as a danger or a threat all the time, as soon as I would start something with the hope of bringing something meaningful and lasting into my life, I would suddenly pull away, quit, or disappear behind the window of a false, forced smile of protection where I felt most “at home.”

My perfected happy face masked my fears and came everywhere with me. It joined along when my husband James and I jumped at an opportunity to move across the globe for work in Yokohama, Japan. This would be the first of several stops in our international journey. I was excited to go and put distance between myself and the unhealthy family and cultural dynamics that I felt were pulling me down at that point in time.

While distance helped in a way, what surfaced, however, was a deep sense of isolation. Especially as time went on and I became a young mother of three. Disconnected from both my family and my Higher Power, another part of my life that I had let go of along the way, I lost connection with my childlike Universal Self.

This rift sent me spiraling down into a heavy inner sadness that overtook me and often confused those around me; it just wouldn't fully lift. Over time, I came to understand that this inner sadness had deep roots. During my childhood, my parents were in a lot of pain, which stemmed from their own families' dysfunction from when they were small children. With no tools at the time to heal their personal traumas, they simply passed them on to me and my sisters unknowingly.

As a little child, I could sense the stress and strain of their suppressed fear and anger humming below the surface of our family's day-to-day. Sporadically and unpredictably, it would erupt in ways that scared, surprised, and confused me.

I have now come to understand that this fear-based anger—a pattern I have repeated in my own life—is what co-dependents feel when they give their power away in hopes that another will save them from their pain. The anger and resentment we feel appears to be directed at those around us but is actually aimed at ourselves for being so needy and feeling stuck in victimhood.

My mom's ever-present stress and resentment at having to be the main caregiver to four little girls coupled with my dad's drinking, his absences due to travel with his work, and then his unpredictable mood swings when he was at home with us were absorbed by me at a very early age. Known as "the sensitive one" in my family for my emotional outbursts, I developed a core belief that life was unsafe and that as a sensitive person, I couldn't navigate things as well as the others.

By the time I was in grade school, my mom sought some sort of order and structure for our family. That led us to church, as was typical within the culture I came from. While some beautiful aspects ultimately came into my life through those church days—such as coming to know the difference between fear-based religion and heart-based spirituality—as a child growing up within an oftentimes confusing and contradictory belief system, it only deepened the conditioning I had already begun to receive at home. This being to hide and contain my heavy, painful emotions while creating a bright and shiny surface in order to appear highly competent, positive, and happy.

I was not alone in this either. I laugh now at the memory of my three sisters and our parents driving to church, all in full fight-mode, yelling in the van the whole way, only to hop out fully reconfigured with bright smiles and "God bless you's" for everyone outside. What made it worse was I really thought

that this was the way all people *should* behave, as I observed it all around me both in the church culture and within society, even though it wasn't authentic and felt dishonest to me.

Still, it was all I knew and it continued to be my *go-to* way of handling my heaviness through my 20s and into my early 30s. While it seems like a dream to write all of this now, knowing how much has changed since those early days, back when I was a young mother of three, it was my main mode of operating. I knew I was in need of a miracle, yet at that point in time, I highly doubted there could be one for me.

My Miracle Moment

And then it happened; in a moment, everything shook me up. Literally. It was 2011, and I was on a tightly packed train traveling back from Tokyo, on my way home from a first-time session with a new therapist, a warm, deeply intuitive woman who had just given me the support and the direct guidance that my heart had long been crying out for. By this point, I had been suffering from depression for some time, so to leave her feeling curious, even a little hopeful, was a big thing in itself.

She had really shaken me up, in a good way. She said the depression I'd been stuck in for the past several years was due to a rift between who I thought I should be for others and my Authentic

Self. Appealing to the artist within me, she told me to start over, to turn everything upside down, and begin each day by sitting in absolute silence with my paints—no more retelling my victim story and no more running around saying “Yes” to everyone—joining endless coffee mornings and helping each person and committee who asked for my support, only to return home to my children and husband depleted and resentful that I said “Yes” again. Nothing more. Nothing less. I held her words like a lifeline.

She promised that if I was faithful to myself in this way, if I was watchful, things would change for me and, in turn, they would change for all the people around me. She used the analogy of a mobile hanging from the ceiling, where when one piece is touched, all the pieces move. She warned me that some people on the mobile would not want me to change—some people would prefer the over-giving, pasted-on-smile version of me to stay put—but to not let that deter me.

As I wrote everything down in my journal on the train ride home, I wondered what it might look like if I really took her advice. Suddenly, the train jarred and lurched forward, wildly—the infamous earthquake that triggered a devastating tsunami had hit Japan and left all of us passengers trapped underground for several hours.

So much transpired during those hours that I could write a whole book about it, but for now I

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want to focus on two key discoveries that changed my life miraculously. I would never have guessed that those hours spent underground would become a doorway to Awakening to Life.

More Love Than Words Can Convey

The first key discovery was how much love and Universal Intelligence is flowing to us through an ever-present silence, which our noisy lives drown out completely. My therapist had mentioned the importance of connecting to this Divine Silence, and I actually experienced this intimately that life-changing day.

See, when you sit in a train full of people in this sort of situation, one you have never before found yourself in, so much happens in your head. You wonder, *What's going on?* with no idea how it will play out. *How bad is it? Is this the big one that was supposed to hit Japan? What's happening out there?* I had so many questions and nobody to ask. Nobody had any answers amid all the confusion that day.

Instead, I found myself listening to the Divine Silence, which was so strong in contrast to the continual aftershocks. I could hear my innermost self so clearly as I turned within. The silence on that dark train was oddly beautiful. It took me somewhere that felt strangely familiar, perhaps how I felt as a child snuggled up in the falling snow. Words cannot

really capture it, but if I could choose a few words, they would be the following:

- deep calm
- slow stillness
- beyond fear
- pure knowing
- circling warmth
- pulsing life

The sublime silence I felt so deeply in the midst of all that upheaval was a profound contrast to the confusion and discord all around me, in my life as well as on that train. I was shocked to become aware of this new wave of calm spreading through me as waves of aftershocks shook the train. I was a stranger among strangers, trapped underground. But I felt deep inner peace.

My Commitment to My Self

That's when I experienced another key learning, then and there, sitting on the floor, wrapped up in that still point inside. From a place deep within, I suddenly made a commitment to my Higher Power that when I got out of that train, I would be true to my therapist's words. I would shift everything up. I would begin my days in colors and silence. I would choose my life and rediscover what I loved. It was

crystal clear that the silence within me was uncovering all these hidden impulses—another beautiful key.

And then, suddenly, it all shifted, the moment we got a “clear track” signal. The train inched forward toward the light until, ever so slowly, it limped its way up to the station and we all made our way up to the surface to stumble out into the sunlight. Each of us figuring our way back to our families and homes.

As I ran toward my husband and children, I replayed the commitment I had made to the Universe. My promise to shift my life’s mobile around played over and over in my mind each time the soles of my running feet hit the ground. No longer was this Higher Love “out there,” disconnected and uncaring. I could feel it closer than close, pulsing deep within me as I did when I was a little girl, wonder-filled and free. Little did I know then that all the learning my soul needed to make that shift was embedded in my train tunnel earthquake experience.

A New Way Opens Up

Soon after the earthquake, I stuck to the commitment I made to the Universe as a way suddenly opened up to help others. Two dear friends had been to a high school shelter up north in Ishinomaki, a city hit hard by the tsunami. They were heading back up and asked me to join them. They knew that using art as a therapeutic support was important to me and

they felt it could be of great benefit for those in the shelters too.

This would be my first experience in assisting others to create healing for themselves. With no formal training and no real plan other than to provide an outlet for people to tell their stories expressively, I gathered art supplies from friends and neighbors who were more than willing to donate and help out. The earth was still rumbling, and the world was watching the Fukushima nuclear power plant nervously. We hauled everything up to the shelter and laid crayons, clay, and paper out on a blue plastic tarp for people to sit, create, and take as they needed.

People gathered. They drew pictures. They pressed and formed clay with their hands, often making black snakes, a symbol many used to represent the tsunami that churned up the volcanic black sand. They folded origami paper into neat, crisp shapes and shared painful stories: lost loved ones, lost homes, the loss of the lives they had known before the tsunami came. I was deeply moved by their stories and touched by how, in spite of all their challenges, they continued to find ways to help others struggling, even in the midst of their pain.

My few days in that school gymnasium were filled with more learning than I could ever have imagined. Being with the people who sat on that blue tarp, sharing their stories with me as they set out to rebuild their lives amid disaster, changed me.

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I experienced the Creative Intelligence and authenticity radiating from all the beautiful people calmly responding to their extraordinary challenges in ways that humbled and inspired me. Moment by moment, surrounded by hope and quiet strength, I started to believe in a new way forward for me.

More Learning Comes In

Trusting a strong impulse to apply for formal art therapy training, I got accepted and completed my training via distance learning with the Vancouver Art Therapy Institute. Simultaneously, I enrolled in an Integral Art Therapy course offered by expressive art therapist Eri Yoshida on a strong impulse toward my personal healing. Over time, Eri became a mentor and a dear friend.

I learned how to deepen my connection with the Universal Intelligence within me, how to feel my emotions and express them with all my unique colors to receive the Divine guidance flowing to me. I came to know and love my colorful self, every shade and hue. This love naturally poured outward to the people and situations in each area of my life. Day by day, I began to live Life in Full Colors.

After completing my art therapy training, my family and I moved to Bangkok. I opened an art studio to help others discover and experience their innate Creative Intelligence so that they too could live and love every color and piece within. As I worked with

more and more people, all from different cultures, classes, ages, and genders, I recognized that the discoveries we were making took a similar shape. Over time, I understood: our fear-filled, heavy-hued challenges show up in our lives time and again until we turn toward them for the teaching they hold for us.

This is what I learned from my own miracle moment that woke me up and from the miracle moments of those I have worked with—while none of us share the same miracle moment, we do share the same heart at the center of them. Big, little, dark, light—all moments are one and the same.

We need to own such moments. Sit with the fear. Be with the struggle. Welcome the pain and uncover what is tucked beneath it. Trust the process. Expect a miracle. Find the gift.

Facing Fear to Find a New Focus

I saw this happen for Talia, a soft-spoken woman who joined one of my workshops to discover that she took up very little space in her own life. While she had a sense that her vibrancy had been swallowed by her new role as a practical-minded at-home mother, it wasn't until she saw it reflecting back at her from her artwork that she realized how small her self-worth had become.

Amid a chatty group busily creating magazine collages to express who they perceived themselves

to be, Talia sat pensively. The emptiness of her large white paper engulfed the only image she managed to set into her collage—a lone peering eye. For Talia I could see this eye felt almost unbearable to own. And yet, that is exactly what she did. As she looked into the eye surrounded by all that white space, it looked straight back at her. At first, she gazed back disturbingly, as the expanse of emptiness echoed back the emptiness she felt inside.

Then, as she grew easier with it, that lone eye, initially piercing and judgmental, transformed for Talia. Now she had a focused partner to help her to look below the surface. Her artwork became an invitation to honor the silent space within her life, as in the collage, allowing Talia to be intentional with what she chose to fill that space. As she listened inwardly to the Creative Intelligence within her, she recognized she could now consider her happiness and explore her life as a blank page waiting to be filled.

What followed that powerful pivot point were many more moments for Talia using art to express her innermost self. To her delight, her color-filled creations became more and more vibrant and radiant, as did her life. Recognizing she had uncovered her passion, she took up a series of art lessons until one day she began to introduce herself as an artist. Talia uncovered a whole dimension of herself by literally moving through the eye of her personal storm to allow the fullest expression of herself out.

What Unopened Gifts Sit Within You?

I wonder what unseen potentials are tucked inside you? You might be wondering if you are poised to live a Life in Full Colors right now; to bring Creative Healing into and through every challenge in your life. After working with hundreds of people, I know your potentials are limitless and are waiting for you to dovetail with your Creative Intelligence to uncover them.

Perhaps you can feel that pulsing Love Force within you right now, filled with impulses unique to your precious life journey. You are now receiving the unique invitation to step into a whole new experience of yourself as a Creative Healer. A space where you can choose to show up in each moment in a whole new rhythm rather than defaulting to reactivity each time people, things, and events in your outer world don't resonate with your idea of what *should be*. You are invited—as I was many years ago—to “shake things up” completely!

This book is an open door to enter into a totally new understanding of what's playing out before you. It's your time now to learn how to activate the innate Creative Intelligence within you so that you can walk right up to any challenge in your life fearlessly and have the tools in hand to pivot its heavy hues and transform the situation for lightness.

So, my dear Creative One, are you ready to take this next step? Are you ready to walk straight

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through and into a journey of Creating a Life in Full Colors for yourself? If your whole body, mind, and spirit are saying “YES!”, then you are well on your way. Just turn the page (like a key in a door) and let’s begin.



Creative Spark

Feeling Mind and Thinking Mind

- Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. On one side at the top of the page draw a heart shape and on the other side draw the outline of a brain.
- Open a box of colored markers and choose a color that feels good. Below the heart, begin to write all the ways that you live from your Feeling Mind. Perhaps you follow your gut feeling and instincts very well. If so, write that down. Are you the impulsive one in the family who will suggest a sudden weekend away? Do you find it easy to laugh and cry at the movies? Just note all the unique ways your Feeling Mind is experienced by you without judgment or analysis.
- Repeat this process for your Thinking Mind underneath your brain drawing. Close your eyes and consider all the ways you express

your Thinking Mind each day. Perhaps you are extremely good at organization in your work or in your family's finances. You may be the one who never forgets anyone's birthday. Do your family and friends refer to you as the "Rational One"? Whatever comes through for you, jot it all down without judgment.

- Once you're done, simply look at the page with open curiosity. Notice which side of the page filled easily and which side was more challenging. Sense if you operate more from your Thinking Mind or from your Feeling Mind. Perhaps you will discover you have a good balance of the two and have integrated them both. Or maybe you tend toward one more than the other. Regardless, don't judge yourself; use your inner observer to see where you are at with these two minds here and now at the start of your journey.
- Set an intention for yourself to integrate these two minds of yours during your journey ahead. Write that intention down clearly like this: "I intend to integrate my Thinking and Feeling Minds now!"
- Loop it with bright colors or underline it in a bold blast of hues to celebrate the start of your journey! Your words hold great power, which you

can amplify by feeling deeply into your heart as you read your intention aloud, inviting all the forces in the Universe to join you!

**Imagine this taking place for you now—
See it, feel it, be it!**