

Expressing ourselves creatively can actually improve health

When I was first asked to teach an art lesson with dementia residents in Rose Lodge I was terrified and unsure of what that may entail, so I decided to begin by finding out what I was going to teach and more importantly why.....
the search led me to this quote

“Expressing ourselves creatively can actually improve health. Creativity is a natural, vibrant force throughout our lives - a catalyst for growth and excitement..”

Cohen, Gene D ‘Welcome to the Creative Age’,
Bottom line/Tomorrow Vol.9, (Aug 2011)

So was this borne out in practice?
Did I find Art had the ability to heal and inspire?

A year on and now every week as I walk in the door I am met by my Rose Lodge art group all ready for me and excited to see what we are going to do this week. I now plan in 3 monthly cycles so there is a range of mediums and techniques used and taught. I have been amazed at how the residents have responded and constantly surprised at the progress they have made.

Following each class the work is displayed on a board for all to see until the following week where it is renewed again, giving residents, visitors and staff an ever changing display of what is achieved, to be celebrated by all.

After the input is introduced all are helped to get started and then following some initial queries very often a concentrated quiet descends as everyone starts work, this enables

me to go around offering 1:1 tuition where needed. It doesn't take long for the laughter to start bubbling to the surface as everyone enjoys the shared experience. Ena often grasps my hand and says at the end of the session “I'm still not sure why I'm here but I do feel better after that”. Mary beams from ear to ear and tells me how much she enjoys it. Joyce asks frequently if I could get a nice looking male model in to draw too much laughter.....and that's the magic of art in this setting..... the lightness, the sense of fun, the encouraging comments made of each other's work and as the teacher to be able to give encouragement: it is a beautiful thing. Even residents that have never picked up a paintbrush before often surprise themselves and soon find themselves on a creative journey. When Harry tells me it's the highlight of his week I can hand on heart tell him it's mine too. ♦



Angie Seaway is an Exmouth based artist who runs a weekly art class at Rose Lodge



Gold Award

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