

Q: You talk about how creativity can make people feel uncomfortable, and that it requires confronting fear. I appreciate this insight because it is a challenge I routinely encounter in myself when creating, especially at the sharing phase. Can you share a personal experience of working through your fear while creating?

A: My first ambitious work of nonfiction, *A Deadly Wandering*, came out in 2014. Six weeks before, I was at the gym when I became overcome with brutal anxiety. It overtook me, but I had no clue why. I had to dig deep to dig out. I discovered what I've come to understand as a regular pattern; when my creativity gets introduced to the world, I suffer. I'm not afraid when I create it, but I regularly experience fear with

its release. This is strange to me because I am so confident and certain when I'm creating it that I am sure IT NEEDS TO BE IN THE WORLD. Of course, this isn't certainty I'm actually feeling, or confidence, it's inspiration. I've learned to breathe through these releases and understand they are a byproduct of the creative process. The emotions pass.

Q: I was in Ojai for the first time two months ago. You write about Rhiannon Giddens and her creative music journey. I recently learned about the Ojai Music Festival from my local newspaper, and googling about it while reading *Inspired* found it serendipitous that she was the 2023 Musical Director. Did you attend? While doing your creativity research did you find serendipity to be related?

A: I did not attend. But serendipity, yes, it is ever-present in the process, though I'd put it differently. When in the creative process, I tend to see the world through a certain lens -- the story I'm telling, the research I'm doing, etc -- and so information that I take in starts to enter my consciousness through that lens. What seems like serendipity might just be perspective.

Q: *Inspired* includes reflections from several talented musicians, including at the end, one of my inspirations, Yo-Yo Ma. I started taking Zoom cello lessons in March 2020. I am a creative person but learning to play a musical instrument is challenging for me. Do you play an instrument? What did you discover about creative development across genres?

A: I play guitar and keyboards, not by formal training. I write a lot of music. What I've learned is that even when you've become a relatively fearless creator, you still need technical skills. The permission to create, and even modest skills can go some distance. I write extensively in *Inspired* about the value of new inputs, like new information, observation and experience. The same could be said of technical skills. The more you avail yourself of, the more you've got to work


with. To that end, it's a pet peeve of mine that would-be creators sometimes don't expose themselves to new things, whether out of fear or inertia. They don't realize it's not just the will to create but the willingness to ingest material, skill, practice, which are all versions of the same thing.

Q: What did you learn about yourself writing, *Inspired*?

A: I'm on the far end of the spectrum of creative energy without being insane. Meaning: I keep creating things, for better or worse, without suffering terrible side effects of being on the far end of the spectrum of a particular behavior or emotional state. I'd suspect that is lucky, although, having said I'm not insane, I will say that I have periods where I have to work hard to maintain my happiness through meditation or exercise. I think of that as in the range of "normal," for want of a better word. I've also learned that I'm not a perfectionist. Part of the reason I create so much is because I don't get stuck on whether the outcome is Just So. There are a million ways to skin a book. Finally, I've learned that I am lucky. I wound up finding a groove in this lifetime. I can only theorize I'm getting paid back for a really bad prior lifetime, or one forthcoming. Mostly kidding. Sort of.

Q: What do you think it is about creativity that helps people to "unburden themselves" and heal? It would be wonderful to hear a doctor/healing professional more often say, your prescription is to go be creative!

A: Yes, but. The "but" is that it's just too simplistic to tell someone to "go be creative," in much the same way that it would be simplistic to tell someone to "take up a sport." The idea of creativity requires some unpacking, some direction, learning. With that in mind, the extent to which a person can find some place to be creative is an incredible way to spend time. It is unburdening, an expression of individuality, self-acceptance, a use of time that, if I'm being a little grandiose about it, makes of a person, a God.

Creation. There, at your fingertips. You and your kitchen, palate, pen, guitar, canvas, with an anvil, hammer, impact drill, block of wood. You, the creator. Making something, in your image. Create! 



You can learn more about author, intuitive healer, and jewelry artist Allison Bruce at www.FlourishIntegralHealth.com