



Written by eileen spillane On July 1, 2016

HEALING NURSES THROUGH PAINTING



How long have you been a nurse and what areas of nursing have you worked in? I graduated from Nursing school in 1978 and was active working with patients until 1997, working in the following specialties: Surgical ICU,

Post Anesthesia Care Unit, UCSF Out-patient Osteoporosis Clinical Research and HIV research at the Blood Center and Epidemiology Department

What did you love most about nursing? On one side, the thing that lit my fire as a young Nurse was the excitement, the emerging science and oh, how I loved the gadgets- ventilators, ECG monitoring, arterial lines, and oximetry. I loved it all except for the alarm sounds. On a more holistic approach, being the patient advocate was the single most important concept I held in my heart. Hospitalized patients are almost always defenseless in some area and need someone standing on their side.

What were the biggest challenges you faced in Nursing and what led to leaving the workforce? What led me to burnout were periods of extreme turmoil in my personal life, while at the same time there would be a favorite patient dying or I would have a string of patients with the same diagnosis as my dying father. I could cope until my world was falling apart.

What led you to creating Paintbrush Cafe? Creative projects are like mana (life power) to me. Whether it was creating batiks, making candles, needlepoint, cooking- these types of activities always soothed me. My first weekend painting experience with Shiloh Sophia McCloud in 2012 was so powerful in transforming a core 'story' of mine that I signed up 6 months later for Color of Woman™ Intentional Creativity training. I knew early on that my work would be with Nurses. I *know* Nurses, I know that more practical outlets for self-care are needed and the Intentional Creativity method is genius.



Paper collages from Hospice Nurses

Intentional Creativity is employed when a person creates with a focus, such as dealing with Grief in Hospice, or Painting Your Legend as a Nurse, or turning a thought that ‘runs’ you on its head by turning it into an affirmation. Color, intuition and writing are the vehicles of transformation and a new personal story is created. The method addresses heart, body, mind and spirit. A large draw is that it is also fun. It is less about ‘fine art’ and more about the process or the journey a person is on. Here are some Legends painted on canvas by Nurses- all beautiful, all different.



Legends painted on canvas by Nurses

What are some of the benefits Nurses report from your workshops? Relief, shift in story, feelings of support, honor for their story and a remembrance of how much fun you had as a child coloring with crayons, finger-painting, all without an inner critic bossing your actions.

What throws you off balance and how do you know you are out of balance? Out of Balance vital signs: Champion breath holding and Olympic shoulder tensing. Their root cause results from being out of the present moment.

What brings you back into balance? Morning Café. Café is a daily introspective, meditative practice. It takes place in my art studio space usually before sunrise, starting with lighting a candle, breathing and uses several intuitive writing and sketching methods. Sipping coffee and warm water also plays a part. It can last from 15 to 45 minutes. This practice sets the tone for my day. Walking every day is a must.

What advice would you give to new grads starting out? Nursing is a fantastic profession; it can take you anywhere you want to go. Remember to always put the oxygen mask on yourself first, before assisting others. That is, if you can make it a habit to honor yourself by taking care of yourself, Nursing can provide never-ending scientific wonders, a good income and rich experiences.

To learn more about Eileen Nash and her work, [click here to her website](#)