inner studio

TESTIMONIALS + PHOTOS

from my previous three-month small group classes: #1, #2, #3, #4

(I couldn't get a group portrait of Class #1 in 2016, so I made a collage using all of our social media pix instead)

"I think I'm still understanding how powerful this process has been, to be honest. Shit, stuff has really CHANGED for me. **My day is different because I just have more access to myself,** and that's huge! I feel more connected, and that's amazing. Oh my god... And also the space. I really appreciate your space."

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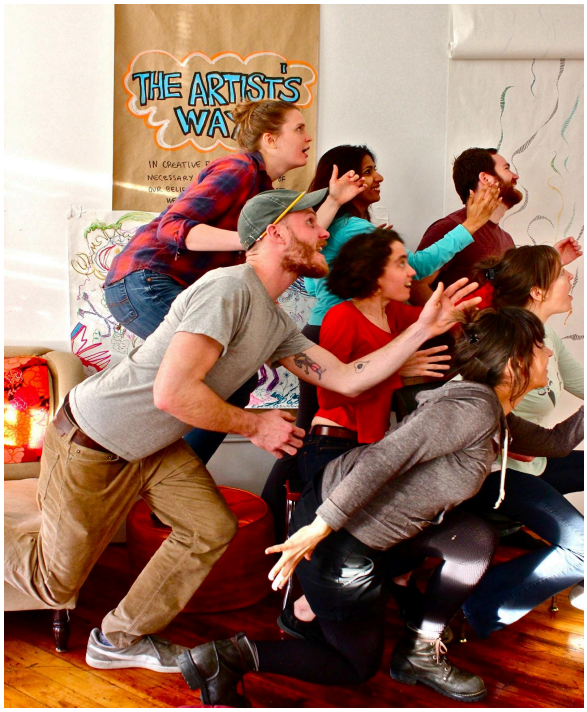
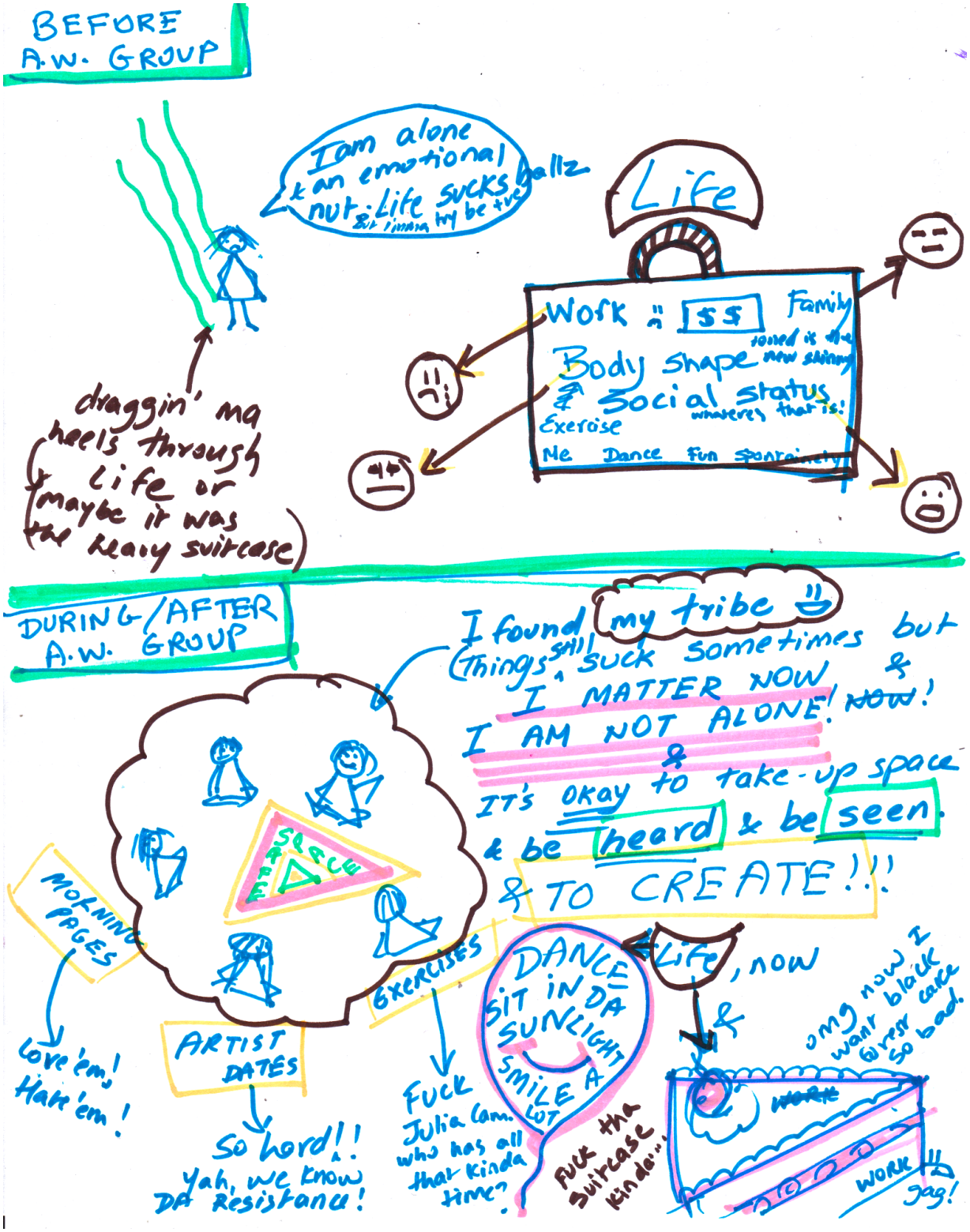
“It was just so supportive of a place to share some of my deepest things like ‘I really love this thing, but I never let myself do it...’ **And a lot of the mystique of making art feels gone**, which could feel like a loss but it’s really not -- because if something has soooo much mystique that you NEVER do it**,** then that’s pretty shitty! So, art now feels normal -- because coming here every week was like ‘oh i have to think about this,’ and that was normalizing.”



“Highlights: probably the biggest most significant insight I had was how trauma leads to blocked creativity. How self-expression is the foundation of being creative; how, as you said, Dana, ‘Creativity is part of personhood.’ So, when we’re unblocking ourselves creatively we're basically doing trauma work. So so much has come up for me during this course, in part because of the course -- and in part due to the other life things. The Artist’s Way, both the individual and the group practice, has been such a helpful container to process what feels like deep gut-stuff for me. This work has allowed me to embody or physically / viscerally / energetically process my own trauma re: being seen, wanting to be seen, hiding, internalized self-criticism. This work has really informed my

practice as a therapist too. But mainly I think I'm just relieved and happy to be back and in better communication with the little-girl me who was always imagining and making… This was like, ACTUAL recovery. Like I recovered something, and that's really cool. Also, I can just **draw in my journal** now. It's fun! I haven't done it in years -- and I used to do it all the time. It's been a really good anchor, having this. I really appreciated being here."

One student drew this comic as their feedback. I love it so much!



“I TRUST MY PEN MORE. I see where materials can live so I can return-to, find. Making time is a gentle process, a challenge I have had. Welcome pen, welcome page and moment. Welcome. I AM WELCOME TO BE CREATIVE.”

“Where to begin… From day one I felt a sense of ease with our group and was moved to share myself unabashedly. I was able to try-on many hats and PLAY in a way that was always previously looked on with unease (parents). Or maybe I needed a new lens through which to see myself judgment-free? AW helped me let go and be brave. I've never felt more present in my life or been more aware of negative self-talk and WHERE IT COMES FROM. There is a psycho-social-political impact on all of us that I am able to now see more clearly. I want to understand this impact more.”

“In terms of my own take-aways and the value I have gotten from this process, I think there is something about enthusiasm and playfulness that feels important -- about making time and space for unstructured exploration. This is something I want to continue to work on/play with in the upcoming year. I feel like I am able to give myself permission to approach creation is a less serious and more generative way, and am also attending more/noticing more the cultural norms and structures and stories that push against this spirit of playfulness and try to dampen it.”

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“The weekly meetings are mostly what kept me accountable in this course. I need deadlines as motivation and without the group, I'm not sure I would have finished the course. The mid-week emails also helped me keep on-track and aware of the weekly readings.”

"So, without this group I would have had enormous difficulty with or casually dismissed The Artist's Way book. What started as a quasi-request from my girlfriend (and something I thought was a one-time meeting!) has transformed into a new community of sorts, and an expanding of my knowledge of self; a new perspective on what it means or could mean to be human, to be an artist. While I still have my obvious issues with Julia Cameron and the book itself, it has been a lovely experience taking-in the attitudes and habits of the course… none of which I would have been able to receive without you, and this group of wonderful folks. The weekly commitment has been real good for me, not only for being held accountable for reading, and morning pages, and artist dates -- but also for being able to carve time out of my schedule and do something to care for myself has been highly therapeutic. I don't believe it's a secret that we all get some excellent group therapy out of these weekly meetings!

I feel like I have grown as a person more in the last year than I have in my entire life, and taking part in this course with you was beautiful timing. The amount of what I call 'duh moments' moments -- of finding words for ideas or feelings that have been spinning through my head, whether directly from the book or from the group discussion -- has been unbelievable. It's been a start of a brand new vocabulary of words and theories for me. Things like simply being given permission to own my artistry, my creativity, and nurture and care for it (and encourage others to do the same) has been wonderful.

I want to thank **you**, in particular, for the success of this class and making this such a comfortable space and inviting us all into it. You, specifically, made the course and some topics I could have completely brushed aside really easy to take-in, and the growth and knowledge I got from this and will continue to work on have been a life-changing experience."

"I discovered that I don't have to do it all, but I can't put it off any longer -- and that very teeny weeny baby steps are absolutely an appropriate measure for this girl who ultimately has felt paralyzed for most of her life. And that the benefits of me making shit -- whether it's cookies, or sellable art, or love -- creates a deeper connection with my soul, my self, my sense of well-being. And that deprivation is not useful to my process any longer. I know that I can access the fullness of my creative self each day…"

“One of my big take-aways is an awareness of how pervasive -- and toxic/undermining -- my perfectionism is. Though not a new insight, what was new was noticing how frequently I come up against ‘Am I doing this right?’ even when there clearly is no right! All day long, with tasks big and small. I'm again trying to embrace imperfection -- to practice and + celebrate the (unharmfull) mess-up”

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“This group has been a place where I can validate my urge and need to create. I am able to bring all my questions, confusion, and dissent to this group and have it be acknowledged and seen. Mostly what I take away from this course is that I must be my own advocate for my art and for myself. It’s very challenging for me to do this, but this class has helped me do this in more ways than one! Thank you, Dana, for your commitment to fostering and growing creativity. I appreciate how passionate you are about this work!”

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“Weekly, in-person group meetings were SUPER helpful -- it felt like there was a community and therefore accountability around the A.W. process. I have felt a definite shift -- I have begun to draw and paint regularly and am making steps with moving forward with creative projects. I think it was particularly helpful to talk through A.W. in a group because it reinforced the idea that I’m not alone and there is inherent worth in creative process. I loved getting to know people of different backgrounds, age groups, etc. “

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“It’s easier for me to attend to my creative projects without feeling guilty that I should be spending my time attempting to make a profit. This course absolutely drilled into me the necessity of creating, and the reasons behind my self-sabotage. This is what happened over the 3-plus months from this course:
I have filled 3 notebooks front to back
I have started filming a short doc
I have made 5 paper sculptures
I finished a 6-minute video doc of my trip to Peru
I have made the realization that I don’t play enough
I have decided I am an artist more than anything else
I have finished long-shelved projects
The energy of creativity is flowing through me, discovered through empirical evidence

Being in a group with others working with this book/course was a way more supportive and beneficial experience than attempting it alone. The amount of insight increases in the presence of others. Listening to a spectrum of weekly stories helped me elicit and discover more facets of my own experience.”

Fall 2018 / Class #4
Recovering a Sense of POWER
Recovering a Sense of INTEGRITY
Recovering a Sense of POSSIBILITY
Recovering a Sense of ABUNDANCE
Recovering a Sense of CONNECTION
Recovering a Sense STRENGTH
Week 9:
Week 10:

“I think one of the biggest take-home messages was about the spirituality of creativity. I love the idea that spirit, divinity, is speaking through each of us, and that we are each called to bring forth an aspect of creative expression that is unique because each of us is. I love the idea of surrendering the creation living inside me and making myself and my life an ideal channel or vessel for the creative calling to speak through me.”

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“The Artist’s Way course was amazing! It literally helped me create ACTUAL creative change and movement in my life after a few years of feeling stuck. I got clear about goals. I started de-cluttering my house. I made art with my child. I wrote. I got ideas for my career. I bought new clothes and started wearing earrings again (which may not seem like a big deal but actually signaled to myself that I care about myself), processed creativity and the world/political shit storm. The supportive, awesome members were inspiring, real, and co-travelers of the process. I needed this, and you were the perfect non-hierarchical travel ‘coach,’ sharing your experience of using these tools and helping create a group that felt safe, fun. I looked forward to it every week. That is an understatement. I grew to depend on that time to remember myself and my goal of creative recovery. I loved the check-ins and discussion of the chapter. I really appreciated that it was okay to do it imperfectly and go at my own pace. I should also say that it re-inspired my relationship with my own inner Guidance, the most profound and important aspect of my life really. Thank you!!!!!”

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“I can invest, attend to, nurture, and devote time to my creative interests. They can be something meaningful, not just luxuries or frivolities, but another aspect of self-care, devotional self-love -- another measure or practice of health and wellness. In terms of thinking about future AW Groups, I think they are necessary and vitally important refuges for healing and I hope they continue.”

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“I’ve realized that my relationship with creativity is pretty complicated. But I’m not alone. I’ve learned to chill out about it quite a bit. I think I’ve been able to take more ‘risks’ more comfortably and not worry about being perfect so much.”

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“Nothing happens until something happens, but creating space for things to happen feels sometimes impossible. Group dynamics can help. Help create some external accountability. Someplace to be at some time. The insights of others can make the creative process less isolating. It was odd -- odd in ways that were liberating and in ways that were, well… just odd -- to devote intentional time to something as abstract as creativity. I know I wouldn’t have done it alone.”

“It provided a quickening of a path I was already on, and more focus. I feel that what I have to offer is valid, important, and a true expression of the divine. **I also firmly believe creativity is the best and most effective antidote to hate, trauma, and fear**. Further, that offering your gift sincerely and confidently allows others to look at the gifts they have to offer, and helps provide bravery for them to share it.”

“I was amazed by the amount/significance of the personal changes that I went through over the course. I couldn't believe how synched-up they were with each week. I have finally begun to play music more (and actually feel a desire to, which is exactly what I was hoping for). I didn't expect to pick up a new hobby over this course either. I didn't feel like I had much time to begin with, but I found my love for dancing during this

course. That has given me a whole new community centered around music & movement. I felt that it has filled a lot of voids in my life that I overlooked. I would not have been open to going to the initial (dance) class if it wasn't for this course. I didn't feel like I deserved to dance and put it off for a long time. It seemed random and irrelevant (even though it turned out to be one of the most important things in my life right now). I think that the support and work that we did in this course allowed me to make space for the things I need in my life to feel full and able to do other important work."

"Ultimately I think it was very helpful to meet with a group of like-minded individuals who are trying to kind of get through / get past / get over some hang-ups around the courage to create."

"I am a person who needs discipline, **so the group was essential for me to have done the course sufficiently. That Sunday deadline gave me motivation to stay focused. Sharing experience out loud helps me to process it, and hearing what others are experiencing is inspiring and can create 'ah-ha' moments. Also, community-building even on this small scale is important and feels very empowering**. Having the group to process the election results was invaluable to me, for instance."

"The group meeting element was important because we're human and creativity is a social gift. We make for others even though at times we may think we're just making for ourselves. I tend to have more of a Taoist approach in that most of what is to be created is there waiting to be tapped into like a stream. I think being able to see and hear peers, and also be in the presence of the group leader like yourself, is a total reinforcing context. To be beholden to tell me the truth, to be beholden to a group, to be beholden to feeling successful in other people's eyes gives you something to strive for. Not adoration or anything selfish, but an anchored reason. I want to be able and to feel able -- and if I can get there, it's nice to know that other people knew I was trying -- and we can all share that. So there is a great supervision piece that I think is a hardwired social benefit. It was good."

“I said from the beginning that I did not feel ‘blocked,’ but this course helped open up some surprising and pleasing new aspects of my creativity. **I liked hearing about other people's processes and the raw honesty and trust that was established pretty early on.** I had breakthroughs with guitar, collage, a lot of creative community-building activities, re-reading all of my journals… I generally feel a confidence boost. I liked meeting everyone, and formed new friendships whilst deepening others. ”

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Thanks for reading. Inspired to join the next class?

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