

Soul Crafting

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by Barb McLaughlin

If you love crafting as much as I do, you can understand the little thrill you get when you have finished making something beautiful or functional, or better yet, both, with your own two hands.

I have noticed that when I'm bored or need a lift, if I pick up raw materials to put them together somehow making something new, it opens up something in me. Sometimes I am amazed how an idea to create something just pops into my head as if by magic, lifting my spirits and making the hours fly by. I believe that creative ideas and the actual acts of bringing them to life with our hands involves Divine inspiration. Many writers and artists experience these little miracles. They remember an idea from a dream, or just find words flowing from their fingertips onto a written page, or notes flowing from their fingers onto piano keys.

All of my life I have loved sewing, drawing and crafting. Creating beauty where before there were ordinary raw materials can be so uplifting. I don't believe it matters if you think of yourself as creative or artistically talented either. Anyone can glue pretty baubles on a plain picture frame or stack clay pots and saucers to make a candle stand. I think a little spark of the Divine is what helps us create in this way. When you channel inspiration to make something beautiful or useful, it's a gift from the Higher Power, however you imagine or believe that to be.

In the same way that architects create plans for grand buildings, scientists come up with revolutionary theories, and religious leaders inspire the masses to live in peace with their

fellow human beings, so can you and I, the administrative assistant or the homemaker, the nurse or the teacher, the maid or the cashier allow our souls to whisper to us from our heart to create a beautiful or functional object. What we make doesn't have to be large or impressive or important to anyone else, if we express what our soul nudges us to make. And what we do with it after it is done is less important than the fact that we created it. We might choose to give it as a gift, keep it, or sell it.

My favorite materials happen to be glass and terra cotta, but whatever sparks your own imagination is what is calling to you to be turned into a handcrafted item.

I suggest you go through a craft store and just walk up and down the aisles. Notice what you feel drawn to pick up. Dollar stores have quite a good selection of craft supplies as well. Scrapbooking materials may attract you. Involving images of loved ones gives a project very personal meaning. The memories the photos you use to create the scrapbook inspire your project from the depths of your soul.

Maybe you have an aunt who loves beautiful colored glass objects. If her birthday is coming up, you may feel inspired to get a colored vase and glue glass beads on it in a beautiful pattern. Your love for her is Divine inspiration. Love and creativity are both inspirations of the soul.

Maybe you love gardening. You could buy a simple terra cotta pot and paint it in bright colors to give a favorite plant a beautiful home. Nature in the form of plant life is an inspiration of the soul. Many people find that walks in the park or the woods inspire them to craft.

If your sister is having a baby soon, you might crochet a baby blanket to give as a shower gift. New life is an inspiration of the soul.

Suppose you just moved into a new house or apartment. Maybe you love it and want to give it your own personal stamp. Or maybe you don't love it so much and want to change the

way it looks. Thumb through decorating magazines or books to get some ideas. Our basic need for shelter can inspire us to make our house a home. Even just painting walls or sewing curtains is an act of creativity making a space ours.

You may have toddlers who have trouble reaching the bathroom faucet to brush their teeth. Your parental instincts may inspire you to make a simple stepstool or to paint an unfinished one to help them feel more independent.

You may get your creative juices flowing like this:

I have made some, well, let's call them play sheets, not worksheets, that you may want to fill out as we go along. The first one is a list of your favorites. You might want to list one or more favorites next to the word for each category.

Favorites Play Sheet

Color_____

Texture of fabric_____

Scent_____

Sound_____

Taste_____

Piece of artwork_____

Style of architecture_____

Season_____

Holiday_____

Time period in history_____

Person in history_____

Style of clothing_____

Decorating style_____

Animal_____

Relative_____

Teacher in school_____

Figure in mythology_____

Fairy tale_____

Restaurant_____

Room in the house_____

Location you'd love to visit, but haven't_____

Time of day_____

You might use your Favorites Play Sheet to help you get to know yourself a little better.

Think about why you might have the preferences you have. Was it exposure to them at a young age by a favorite relative? Do you have pleasant memories associated with them?

Do they make you feel peaceful, or loved, joyful, or safe?

If you have a list of your preferences it might be easier to select craft materials that you can use to make something that will please you. Or, you might want to present a similar Play Sheet to a friend or family member to help you get to know them better. A gift is easier to make for someone whose preferences you understand. Understanding others is an inspiration to crafting.

The next Play Sheet is kind of along the lines of the first, but it may allow you to understand yourself even further, as all of the things you may write down may not be pleasant.

Sometimes we need to examine our shadow side as well as our light side. It's a Word

Association Play Sheet. As in the psychological tests, write down the first thing that comes to your mind. You might think of several words in rapid succession. You can write them all down. Don't censor yourself. This is for your eyes only. It's not a test. It doesn't matter what anyone else might think. This is to help you get in touch with your self on a deeper level.

Word Association Play Sheet

Soft _____

Rough _____

Fragrant _____

Soothing _____

Whimsical _____

Ugly _____

Functional _____

Frivolous _____

Nurturing _____

Shadow _____

Winter _____

Summer _____

Spring _____

Fall _____

Warm _____

Earth _____

Air _____

Fire _____

In doing creative work, sometimes what we feel drawn to make stirs something uncomfortable in us. We recall an unpleasant memory, or it may make us feel grief, sadness, fear, or anger. Negative emotions are there to let us know there is something we have not processed or accepted. Trying to repress the bad feelings usually just makes them come back at us later with a vengeance.

If you find something that you make brings up a negative emotion, this is your soul urging you to express it in a safe way. There are different ways to deal with the object you make after you become aware of the discomfort it makes you feel. If it is not ugly to you, and you think someone else might enjoy it, you can give it away or sell it. You may also wish to dispose of it in another safe or appropriate way such as burying it, burning it, or throwing it in the garbage. I think it is a good idea to say a little prayer or blessing that the negativity you felt be transformed to positive energy within the object. Do what feels appropriate to you. You may want to hang onto the object for a while until you feel you have processed what it made you feel. Sometimes journaling your feelings in cases like this helps to process the negativity.

I once drew a very ugly colored pencil rendering of a fairy. It was really unlike most of my drawings, but done when I had trouble expressing my anger in a safe way otherwise.

The beauty of something you make like this is that it helps you free yourself of repressed emotion.

You may want to use repressed negativity by hitting a wooden piece of furniture with a bike chain to distress the piece giving it an antique look. This type of creativity works well when you are already aware that you have unexpressed negativity.

The next Play Sheet helps you dig even deeper into your soul to heal and become more self-aware. It is an Emotional Memories Play Sheet. Next to each emotion, you may want to write down an incident or event from your past that evokes that emotion in you.

Emotional Memories Play Sheet

Love _____

Hate _____

Fear _____

Jealousy _____

Joy _____

Humiliation _____

Anger _____

Security _____

Since creativity is a very sensory experience, hopefully the Play Sheets will help you.

For instance, if one of the memories stirred by the last worksheet involved a hike by a river with your dad that gave you joy, you could glue smooth river rocks to the frame of a mirror.

Looking in the mirror at your reflection will show you the person you have become because your Dad spent time with you.

If, for instance, on the Favorites Play Sheet you listed satin as a favorite texture because you loved the satin trim on your baby blanket, you can purchase some satin in a similar color and make a pillow for your couch or bed to give you comforting feelings like your blankie did.

Cooking is another act of creation that calls to our senses of taste, smell and sight. Though this workshop is not really about cooking, one way you can tap into the good feelings you or someone you love gets from it is to make decorative containers for favorite foods. A glass jar for jam can be topped with a padded fabric top and tied with a pretty ribbon. Canisters for pasta can be painted with ceramic paint in a favorite design.

To appeal to someone who loves the sound of wind chimes, you can make handcrafted ones using an embroidery hoop from which you can suspend flea market silverware with fishing line to make a silvery tinkling sound in the breeze.

After a few projects, you will probably start seeing everyday objects in a completely different way. A brick can be painted to look like a curled-up cat and used as a doorstop. A child's sled can be decoratively painted and used as a log holder for a fireplace. You can create a "window" on a wall in a room where there is none by hanging blinds and curtains right on the blank wall. You could even put rope lights behind the closed blinds to give the illusion of sunlight beyond the window. Old chipped dishes with a pattern you love can be broken into small pieces and used to make a mosaic pattern on an inexpensive or damaged tabletop.

And on, and on, and on. What tends to happen, is the more you practice using creativity,

the more developed it becomes. The human soul longs to give expression to creativity. Our spiritual healing and evolution depend on it.

Another way of connecting with your Higher Self through crafting is to make objects that are directly spiritual. Prayer beads are used in several spiritual traditions and are very meaningful when crafted infusing your energy into them and then used in prayer. Prayer quilts can be made by squares being pieced together which have been individually blessed with positive intentions in meditation. Crafting vestments for clergy is another way of connecting with Divinity. Or you can make altar decorations and cloths for your own private altar that you can use in a daily spiritual ritual

I have listed some websites for those interested in crafting spiritual objects.

Prayer Beads: <http://prayerworksstudio.com/prayer-beads/make-your-own/>

Prayer Quilts: <http://mysunshineroom.com/prayer-quilts/how-to-make-a-prayer-quilt-.html>

Soul Collage cards: www.kaleidosoul.com/soulcollage-cardmaking.html

I have also listed some books that offer wonderful craft projects.

Books for crafting spiritual objects:

[Crafts for the Spirit, by Ronni Lundy](#)

[Magical Needlework, by Dorothy Morrison](#)

[Crafting an Angel a Day, by House of White Birches](#)

Books for crafting in general:

[Jazzy Pots, by Mickey Baskett](#)

[Really Jazzy Pots, by Mickey Baskett](#)

[The Home Spa, by Carol Endler Sterbenz](#)

[Nature Crafts with a Microwave, by Dawn Cusick](#)

[Gift Baskets: How to Prepare Them, by Maureen Burgess](#)

[Dollar Store Décor, by Mark Montano](#)

[Fast & Fun Scrap Crafts, by House of White Birches](#)

There are SO MANY great craft tutorials on YouTube. You may want to type some craft materials of interest to you in a search there to find specific craft videos in which you might be interested.