

## **“Art Heals”**

**By Penelope Starr**

This is the collage I made at the beginning of the pandemic. I was working through my emotions about the global health crisis by creating cards to express my thoughts and feelings.

Art has always been my way into and through life’s experiences. I come from a family of artists, so we were expected to spend our time on creative endeavors.

So, when the pandemic hit and we were in lockdown, full of uncertainty, leaving deliveries in the garage for 24 hours, wearing masks, having Bring Your Own Everything meals with friends, and doing puzzles, my thoughts turned to how to make the most of this time.

My sister had introduced me to SoulCollage, an expressive arts card-making practice which develops creativity and intuition and encourages self-discovery. The in-person facilitator training that I signed up for was canceled so I had to take the classes online.

Instead of being side-tracked by what I was missing, I focused on the benefits of this turn of events, I was saving money by not having to travel to a workshop and could pay for the training with my stimulus money; the facilitator was an internationally acclaimed trainer; and after I mastered the technology, I could avail myself of continuing training via the internet.

The cards I made reflected some of the feelings I was experiencing such as fear, and the safety of hibernating. Some cards reflected heroic or horrific stories I heard and some reminded me to take care of myself.

I was in one of the first groups to get the Covid vaccination because I was seventy-five, and we were told that the risk of developing dangerous symptoms increases with age. After I got my first two shots, I felt that I had a way to navigate this new reality, and I could offer in-person classes to immunized participants.

I ordered supplies, amassed images from magazines, and advertised a workshop called SoulCollage® for Writers and other Creatives. Six people gathered at my home to make cards and share their images and experience in a supportive community.

This art form reinforces my belief that

- Art heals.
- Art is a tool for cultural exchange, education, and expression.
- Art is a way to make connections.
- Art addresses questions you haven’t even asked yet.
- Art helped me express my gratitude for my good health, the safety of my loved ones and the discovery of this new tool of expression.