

Creating a safe space...

The AWBW philosophy is grounded in the idea that the art workshops are a “Window of Time” – a safe, non-judgmental space where participants can authentically express themselves. During an AWBW workshop, whatever supports participants in expressing, connecting and attending to their needs and feelings is the number one priority.

Honoring this philosophy, one AWBW program facilitator witnessed a beautiful, unexpected transformation for a participant.



“Trapped Light” by Danielle

“It was so important to her that I let her decide what to do.”

This month something happened. I let go of all expectations. I went with the wind during this one workshop, and it really paid off! I “got out of my own way.”

I think my survivors felt extra in tune with their emotions and abilities; maybe I just was capable of listening to my intuition a little deeper this time too.

One of our participants, Danielle, during opening circle did not volunteer to share. She was quiet, and I let her go unannounced. I made sure to ask the group “If anyone wants to share and has not.... please let me know by raising your hand.” She did not raise her hand and I fully respected that choice.

Self-consciously I was worried Danielle didn’t like what we were doing at all. However, I still maintained and trusted her own choice to decide how to participate.

During the workshop, I noticed she felt more in control of her own choices. She picked up a colored pencil. She began to sketch on the back of our “Self-Care Wheels.” Before I knew it, she was creating this incredible artwork, and came up to me at the end to thank me for the most wonderful workshop.

It was so important to her that I let her decide what to do. She was able to express pain during this time, and perhaps felt a little more in control of it. This meant a lot to me, as the ones who are most guarded tend to need these workshops most!

To accompany her artwork Danielle wrote: “Layers and layers of every emotion through my difficult journey thus far is trapping my true self, the light that wants to shine through is stuck.”

Her art and words were so powerfully introspective. I was thankful to see such a transformation in expression.

Based on 3,508 participant evaluations submitted in 2017:

95% agreed the workshops helped them more easily express themselves

84% agreed the workshops helped them gain new insight into their lives