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Embracing Imperfections

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Embracing Imperfections

Abstract

A window into my meditation practice.

Keywords

STEAM, Art-science, meditation, art making

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Embracing Imperfection

Raja Gopal Bhattar

Growing up I was taught in school that art and science are about perfection and precision -- which fed perfectly into my insecurities – leading me to pursue subjects far from art or traditional sciences. It was not until I was well into my twenties that I learned to embrace my own creativity by learning how to breathe. While I’ve been breathing on my own since birth, it was through the work of Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk and activist Thich Nhat Hanh who taught me the power of mindful breathing. I was complaining to a friend about my struggle with meditation; silent meditation being extremely difficult for my hyperactive mind. She suggested I read and watch videos of this monk making art and I was hooked. I remember

reading about how he would spend time everyday meditating while making art, combining mindful breathing with calligraphy.

I took the nearest pen
I could find and started
doodling in similar fashion.
The simple act of breathing
became not just a science of
bodily coordination but an
opportunity to witness the
possibility of this moment.
Being aware of my breath
with each stroke of the pen
and allowing the pen to draw,
rather than leading from my
brain was a new experience. I

noticed the fear of making mistakes creeping in and my brain wanting to take over. Thankfully I kept breathing and meditating on one of my favorite quotes by Thich Nhat Hanh, “I have arrived, I am home. Being in this moment, I know this is a wonderful moment.”

Go ahead and take a moment to notice your own breath and repeat this statement. What do you notice around you when you slow down? What do you notice within you?

When I stopped to notice my breath, I realized that science and art spring from the same human desire for connection within and around us. As scientists, artists and educators, we embrace the world by making sense of what we perceive and creating the world we have yet to

envision. We are the
seekers of the best kind.

Seeking connections
and relationships with
everything around and
within us. Our world is
not made of perfections,
but by a series of
beautiful mistakes and
happenstances. And my
art has become my
conversation with what
perceive and what I
envision. Art has

become a new language of communicating feelings, ideas and experiences into a more universal language.

What began as a weekend doodling has become a series of coloring books grounded in mindful breathing and reflection helping others find the connection between science and art. In fact, I've discovered the best artists and scientists in my life are my nieces, nephews and nibblings (gender inclusive term) ranging from 2-7 years old. Their ability to find beauty in this moment, making art, breathing and discovering the wonder of it all is truly inspiring. From watching these young children, I've learned to not worry so much about coloring within the lines or erasing

imperfections from my artwork, in fact now I'm learning to embrace them as connections that bridge my creativity and the world around me.

Science and art are not about perfection. The most impactful scientific discoveries and artistic expressions have come from unexpected imperfections. Being open to these imperfections allows us to find joy in this moment and witness all the connections between science, art and the world around us.