



Vulnerability

CORAL Art Group
2020

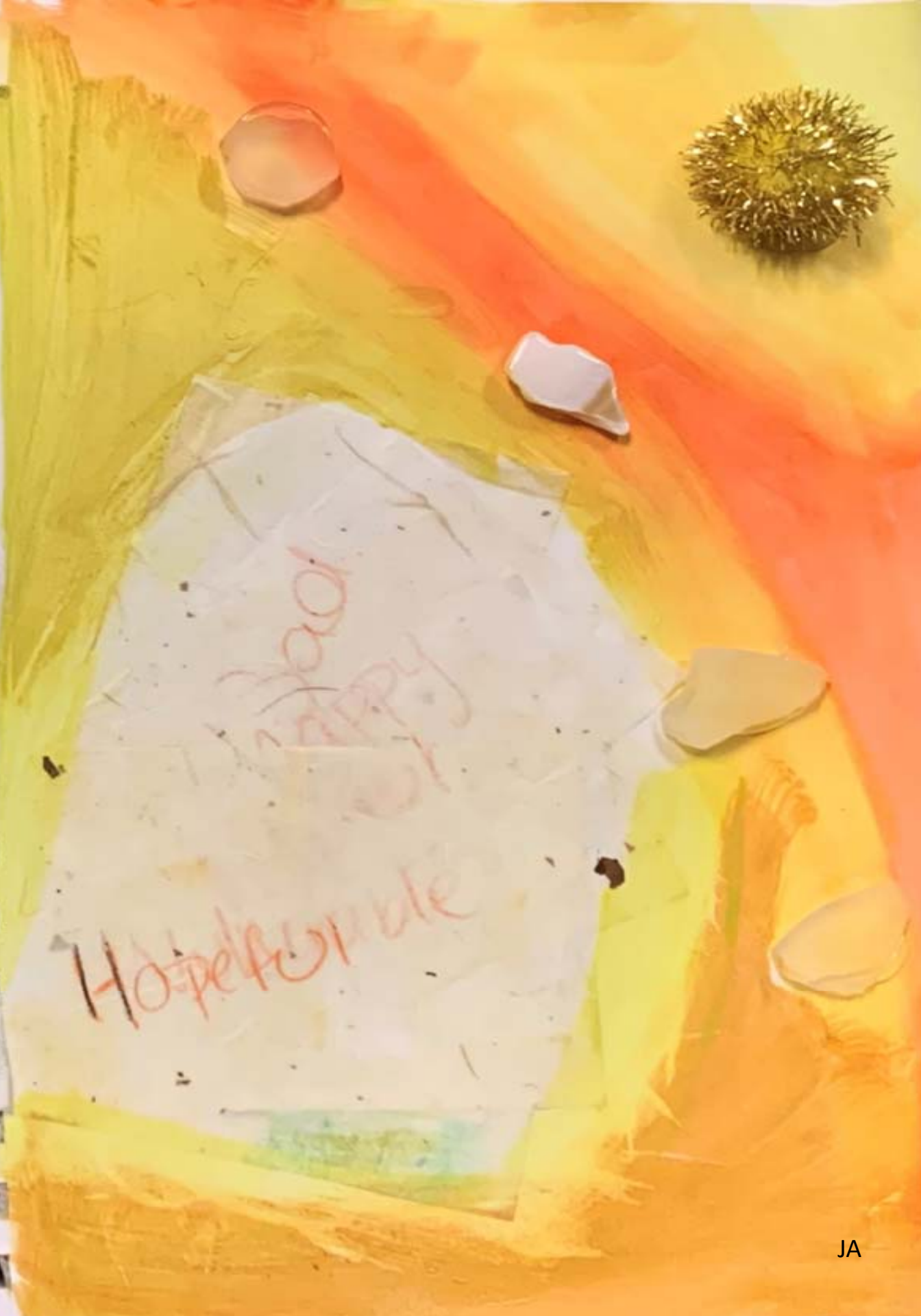
This book is dedicated to all the nurses
and other essential workers

WE SEE YOU!



stuck

stuck
stuck



Happy

Hopes & Dreams

Vulnerability to me means letting people see the 'not perfect' side of myself. I do not like showing emotion or getting into conflicts.

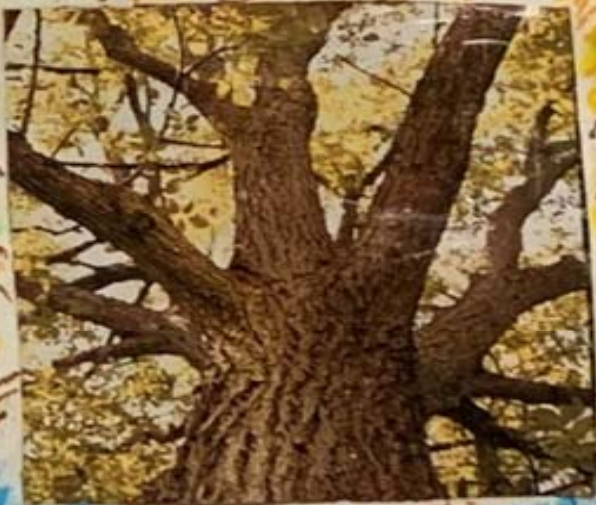
These pages helped bring all that out of me.

On the left side, you see green; that was intended to represent grass, which would bring life to the start of my journey throughout these 12 weeks of this art therapy program. The sea glass represents the individuals in this group, who all came and shared their own journey of vulnerability with me. The pool ball that looks like the sun represents our instructor, Katherine Reed, who served as a great guide through this process of building resilience. The different pieces of paper that are pasted down represent different emotions at the beginning and throughout this journey. To the left I pasted down feelings that I wanted to leave behind: feeling hopeless, lost and stuck. To the right I pasted down feelings that I wanted to grow into and take with me after these 12 weeks are over: hopeful, happy, sad, vulnerable, and fulfilled. I made the right side yellow and orange to represent light and new beginnings that helped me learn to become resilient.

Being vulnerable together is showing me what I am missing when I am so closed off. These pages are also the ones I feel the most vulnerable about sharing. By putting them out there, I am guiding myself through

the fears of vulnerability.

JA



Vulnerability

Setting aside pride to do what's best for yourself, your family and for the patients you care for. Letting others help when you need it and not feeling guilty or incompetent when caring for someone's life, with others support.





JW

Vulnerability

New
Fear
Quiet
Afraid
Naive
Inside
Secret
Closed
Protect
Discomfort
Feelings
Maturity
Brave
Open
Ease
Loud
Release
Renewal

JW





Vulnerability

To share our truest most honest selves. This to me is what it means to be vulnerable. But in order to share, we must first know. We must find the time to dig deep into our core, to understand who we are in our essence. To know myself and to make that self available to others through vulnerability, to me, is deeply connected and intertwined with my faith and spirituality. My faith helps me to see a true and clear vision of my essence, the essential pieces of me, the goodness that sits in the middle of my chest that does not change, regardless of the voices swirling around inside.

My essence is gold, something to be treasured, sometimes hidden, but best experienced through growth and sharing it vulnerably. It is held up and deeply rooted in the steadiness of Mother Earth, my bare feet grounding in the coolness of the green grass, reminding me of my deep connection to all people and species that call the Earth home. When I find the courage to share vulnerably my deepest, truest self with others, my vulnerability beams out and pierces the life of another, connecting us across time and space.

Courage and realness in one sparks courage and realness in another, the ripple effect of a stone dropped into a pond.

Vulnerability also draws the eye, whether it feels like we are being seen for the first time or as if we are in the spotlight.

Vulnerability allows others to see our essence, our truest selves. It also sometimes means allowing others to see or hear the voices that go on inside ourselves, the blame or shame or guilt that blankets ~~our~~ inner lives despite the shiny smiles we put on for the world. When we choose to vulnerably share we may be rejected and we may feel more intense pain. But this hurt can lift and fly away. The darkness does not last forever.

Every day we are asked to give of ourselves. How often do we share authentically? How often do we share vulnerably? How do we stay resilient and re-energized by the things/people/places/activities that build us up, so that we have enough left over to share those deepest pieces, those inner thoughts, our true essence? What does it mean to be vulnerable?





i am powerful

Vulnerability:

Opening up your heart and talking about the most
challenging moments in your practice
in order to help the healing process.

Asking for help when in need.
To be fully present and
aware.

Having the courage to talk about the hard
times rather than bottling it all up and letting it
sink..
and sink..
and sink.

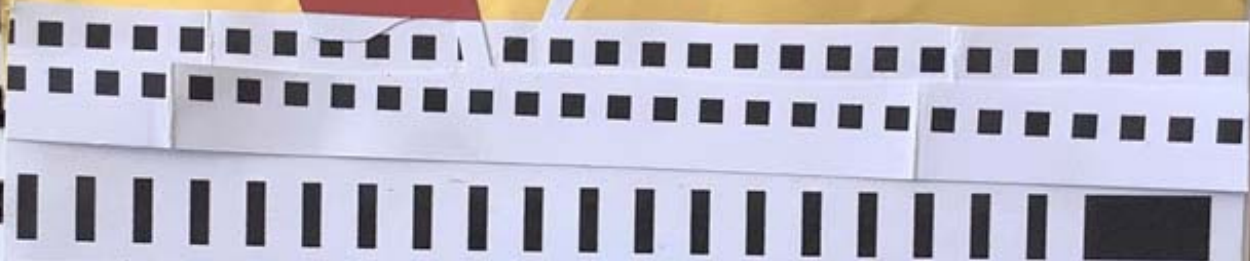
Really letting yourself acknowledge and feel your emotions.

Vulnerability is full of growth and life.
It can at first be scary
but then become real, delicate, and yet somehow
still so so beautiful.

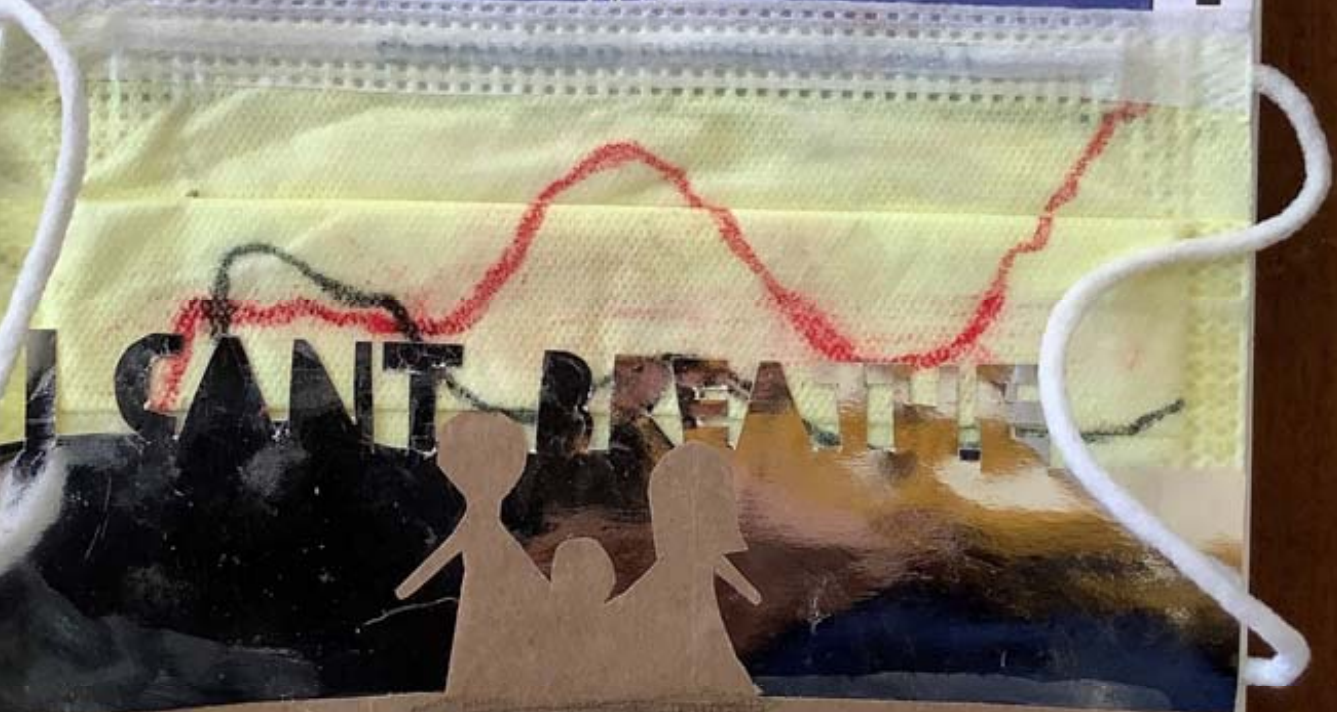
Vulnerability is letting your soul be set free
and your heart breathe.

JP

anxiety, depression, suicide, gun violence, homicide, substance abuse, food and housing insecurity, non-accidental trauma, intimate partner violence



tic Ballot / Boleta Democrática Oficial Denver Precinct: 1330816-D807



MF

In my head, this year's landscape is pseudoapocalyptic. To the east, there stand hospitals filled by patients, healthcare workers, hospital administration, environmental services all fighting Coronavirus. Streets are empty as families hunker down hoping to let the world catch up to an unknown virus. And the clouds of fear and uncertainty are thick and pervasive, taking shape among both the nurses walking into rooms of Covid patients hoping their PPE is enough, in the nursing homes, homeless shelters, and other places where vulnerable bodies are gathered. To the north, my attention is pulled by cries of collective anguish: "I can't breathe" - "we can't breathe". Eight minutes flash on the screens of our collective consciousness and we're left grappling with the chasms of both life-stealing racism and denials that injustice even exists. All around is the noise of rallying cries pierced by counter rallies and gunfire and shattered glass. And this is all echoed on the debate stages and floors of the senate as disagreement turns to hatred.

To the west, roaring wildfires tear through our mountain sanctuaries. Smoke moves in, burning our eyes and our throats, slowly suffocating us. This is very bad, so they say, but it almost seems to fit in with the rest of the landscape.

And all the sudden I notice that all along black vines have been creeping up the walls of this landscape (of which there are many). I see these vines twisting up, catching people and families and neighborhoods in their thickets of depression, violence, substance abuse, anxiety, food and housing insecurity. It seems that no one is untouched.

Finally, I look to the ground beneath my feet, dry and cracked like ground that used to be underwater. And there, right beside me are her little feet, learning to walk. Her hand reaches up to clutch mine. All the upheaval of this landscape before us is echoed in the systems and lawyers that determine her 'case' - her future. She knows nothing different than this 2020-world, her eyes take in the same landscape I do, yet what she sees is so different. She fixates on the bright colors of people's masks (as she laughs with glee at forever trying to rip them off). She bounces along to the rhythms of protests' "No Justice, No Peace" with wide eyes and clapping hands. And in her delighted laughter as she pretends to put on one of my masks, I'm reminded that despite everything, the good is still good, and it's not going anywhere.



Will it be enough?

As a critical care nurse, I ask this question daily. When I walk into a Covid patient's room, this question rears its head. In a community ravaged by inequality and lack of resources, this question grips my throat. As I hold my foster daughter with more fierce love than my body can contain, this question echoes in my core.

Will the best of me - of my love, my energy and effort, my time and expertise, my soul and contribution as a whole - will it be enough?

Will it be enough to heal, to stave off unnecessary death in a pandemic, to hold space for the unbearable, to bring light and life and joy?

A camellia is a symbol of vulnerability. It means 'my destiny is in your hands' - it is a sign of giving the best of oneself while surrendering how it will be received. To me, this is the essence of vulnerability - relinquishing control of the answer to my question of "will it be enough?".

Though it feels like an overhead surgical spotlight blinding me as I look for the answer in the deafening dark - I give the best of what I have to offer.

And the reality is that it may not be enough by some standards, but I'm finding that it is in wholehearted, surrendered vulnerability that there is peace.



It felt like starting out the new year in January as if a heavy, dark fog enveloped me. My anxiety was at its worst. Working night shift, being constantly short staffed, and being pushed to do more and more with less resources had finally caught up to me. Behavioral patients, phone constantly ringing, and no time to practice how I want to--only time to run from room to room and hope my seven patients are doing okay. I was slowly being crushed by the weight of all this. It felt like the fog was a boa constrictor. slowly tightening and tightening its grasp on me.

Until I exploded.

I went from "I'm fine" and being able to hide the stress and the tears deep down inside to sobbing uncontrollably and unable to get out of bed for work. I was a prisoner to the fog, unable to claw my way out. I called in to work several times, which for a split second pushed the fog aside to let a tiny bit of light in, but then the guilt would quickly take its place. "How could I leave my unit even more short staffed?" "How could I let my coworkers down like that?"

And then that last nagging thought: "Other nurses can handle this, why can't I? I must be a failure."

I realized I couldn't keep these feelings inside, and I couldn't keep calling off work forever. So, I turned to therapy to cope; something that had been helpful for me in the past. Although I felt trapped in my current position to fulfill my two-year contract, therapy had given me the tools to process my emotions instead of always stuffing them deep down inside. And, after enough practice, I was able to make it through my therapy sessions without crying the entire hour. Of course, I'm not magically fixed, and my anxiety does creep in at times. But realizing that these feelings don't last forever has been very helpful. I also switched to a different department which has been nice--being awake and working day shift is wonderful. I am grateful to have pulled out of this fog that enveloped me for most of 2020, and I am eager to see what next year will bring.



Vulnerability is for the weak. Always be strong. Always be in control. These were the values I was raised with, and have thought most of my life.

I MISSED OUT

Little did I know how much courage and strength it takes to be vulnerable. To have someone truly see your soul, and for you to see theirs, is the most idyllic space possibly created. What is life without this rawness & openness? Naked and so beautiful.

People ask what I like about being a nurse. My response: I feel so grateful to witness, and help people in their most vulnerable moments in life. While the outcomes aren't always ideal, their openness is the most gratifying and beautiful part of my job. For this, I feel lucky and honored.



Vulnerability to me,
is a terrifying and rewarding act of courage.
It's knowing that when you show your most authentic self
to the world,
you stand in the line of fire
of judgment, ridicule and rejection.

But,
the ability to be vulnerable in a world filled with
hate, ridicule, and judgment,
means you stand there as your truest self
with an impenetrable
and weightless armor.

Unafraid and free

NA

This book was created by nurses

from
Children's Hospital Colorado and
University of Colorado Hospital

with gratitude to
CORAL
Colorado Resilience in Arts Lab

September-November

2020