

CORAL Art Group
December 2022

Dedicated to Each Other for showing up and sharing so authentically,

And to anyone struggling in the Health Care world...

May you build your own Creative Community.

i just keep zwimming seems ersy enough

Can you even hear people calling for help they're underwater?



December 6, 2022

THE STORM MATRIX

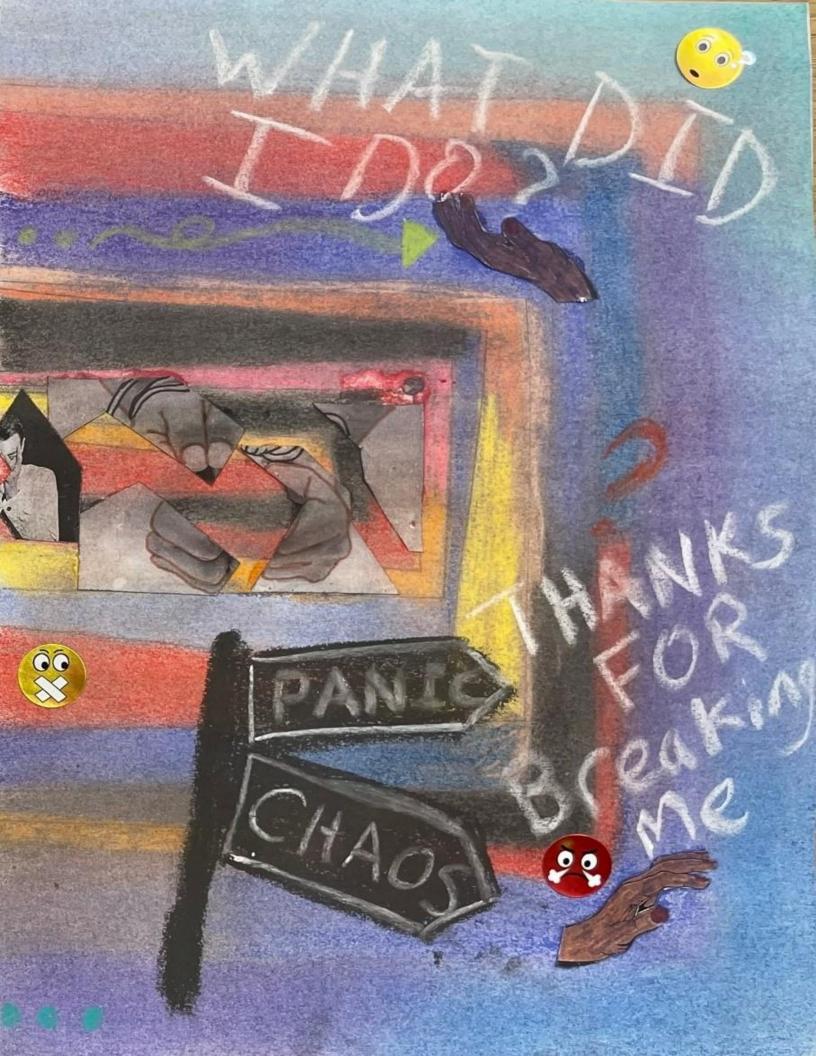
Where is your mind at? Who let your mind go to such a negative place? Do you mindlessly weather the storm? Which words hit hardest to knock you down? Do you continue on this destructive path? Should you let the trajectory change your mind, soul, spirit, and heart?

These words used to bring me down because I allowed negativity from those around me to bring darkness and crashing waves to define me.

I choose a different path that makes me true to myself, my beliefs, and the things/people that allow me to be me!

My Choice is to be a light in the world to shine bright enough that world to shine bright enough their uniqueness others may join me in their uniqueness with out fear of judge ment!





I peeled back the layers of discontentment to reveal beauty and love for myself and others. I allow your words to roll off my back to the floor and stomp on them if I need to. Only kind words will I allow in to my inner being !

I'm learning to respect my

boundaries and give grace to myself. Treat others with love and compassion. Listen don't rush to put your 10 cents in. I am made in God's image and it is real good! I'm a better health care provider by acknowledging each peason has individual needs.

Coral Fall 2022



Stormy skies and unscalable mountains. This feels like the everyday. A cycle that is wearing at my inner garden. Weathering my ability to flourish. Leaving me in strips and shreds.

I feel detached and fragile.

I want to believe the thick heaviness of the nonstop storm is strengthening my garden for clearer skies. But all that remains now are the slivers of myself. Narrow glimpses of light, of life, of color. I am forced to embed the darkness. Weave a net of both pain and hope. A net that could be a way forward.

Or maybe it's just another trap.



The Masks We Wear

Myth: As a little girl, I learned that keeping a smile on my face and an upbeat and cheerful personality at all times, would make people love and accept me and that I will furthermore be part of the "good people". Good people are successful and admirable. Successful people always make everything look good and don't get overwhelmed. I made the choice then to be successful. Successful people are professional people; professional people know how to separate work and "life" at all time. They are driven by achievement and their masks display a bright and perfect smile.

<u>Truth:</u> We live life as whole human beings; our personal and professional lives are inevitably intertwined and therefore difficult to fully separate, especially when adversity hits. Many professional development courses encourage us to be authentic in order to succeed. In reality, we are received and liked in our authenticity, when we can still get ourselves together and defy all odds and most importantly deliver without whining or flinching. Wearing a mask has been the unspoken expectation .Yes, in fact, our masks could be transparent, but it doesn't stop us from wearing them, and from expecting others around us to do so for the sake of politeness and professionalism; even if the process leaves a toll on us.

Conclusion: The truth is that duality conveys that every aspect of life is created from a balanced interaction of opposite and competing powers. These forces are not just opposites; they are complementary. These opposites simply balance each other like the dual wings of a butterfly. I am a spirit and a body, I cry and I laugh, I bleed and I heal, I am the teacher and the student, I am strong and I am weak, I breathe life but I also died a thousand times, I am kind and I am harsh, I fail and I achieve, I lose and I win, I am love and I am hate, I am peace and war.

I am thankful for this sacred journey of truth, support, love and vulnerability wrapped in colors and textures. I now know more than ever that my breakdowns will lead to my breakthroughs with the use of optimal tools.

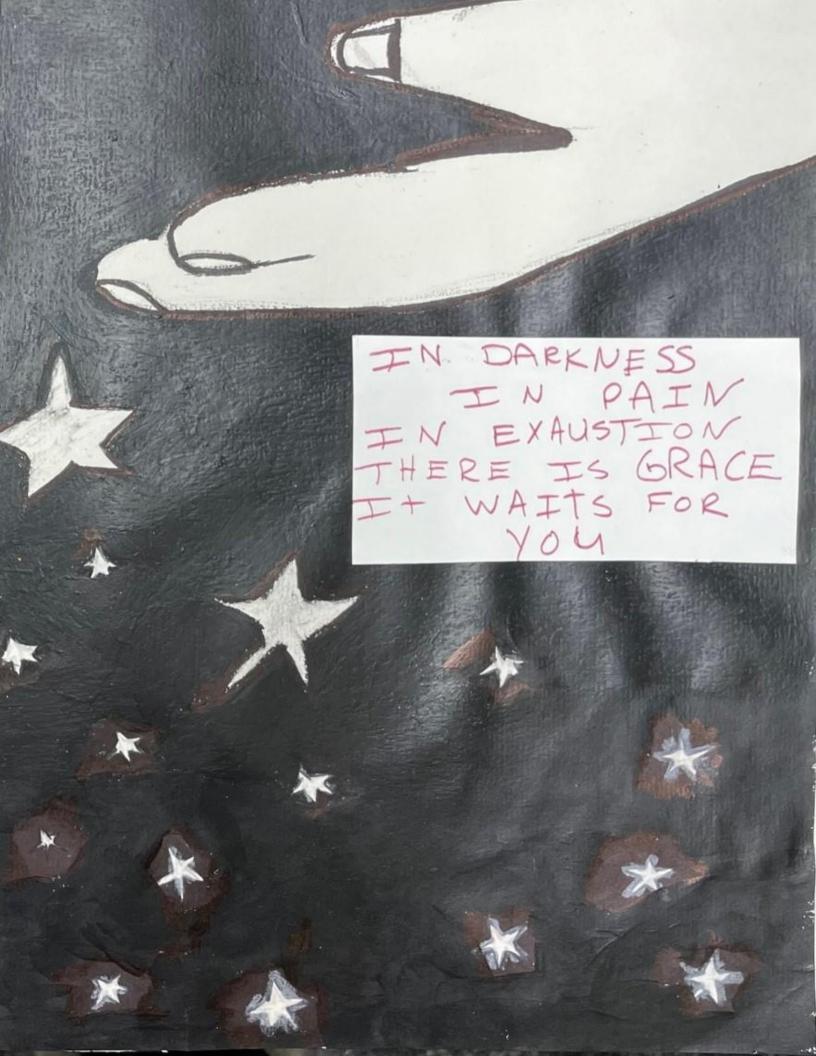
-An Unmasked Empath





Not enough
This is a message my ears hear often
Not enough workers
Not enough money
Not enough love
Not enough grace
Questions in my mind, am I enough
Workload increasing
Burnout Increasing
Giving all I got and its still not enough
People pulling on me from all directions
No end in sight
Anxiety rising
Driven to a panic attack
When will it be enough





In the darkness when all is still, it can be terrifying but there is grace.

When it's hard to accept and even harder to show it grace is there, it waits for you

Allow it to engulf you allow it to swallow you up until your light begins to rise from within just like the stars.

Open your eyes open your heart see that grace awaits.
When the sky seems to be falling all around you, Grace awaits

-Ophthalmic Tech receiving grace

Grace abounds



Enough. The toxic cycle that academia has reached will ruin public-funded science for future generations. The resilience and greed that all brag has pushed great scientists out of the field. I always wonder who is winning here. The respect for the field keeps declining almost as the speed as salaries while expectations and demands continue growing from our so-so *mentors*. CORAL has and will help me with the uncertain scientific career that we currently face. CORAL is my only time to slow down weekly for an hour and a half; and it has provided me with the clarity and the safe space to break through the inertia.

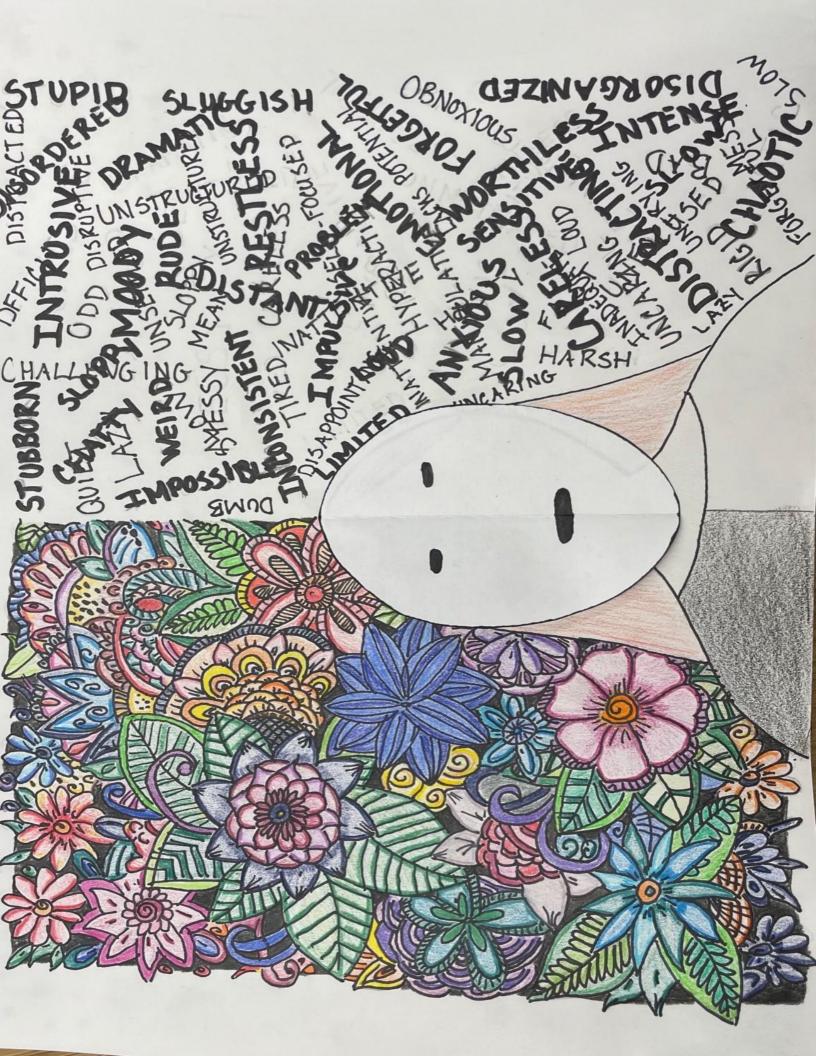
-A tired postdoctoral fellow

Steek stock Stuck Stuck Stuck We come into this world alone + we leave this world alone, but everything in between is about connection.

thank you for holding space for me.

- a nesearch coordinator





Scientific research means embracing the unknown and becoming accepting of failure. We push ourselves to the limits of knowledge to learn new mechanisms, targets, and therapies to enhance human health. The irony of this work is that this achievement often comes at the expense of our own physical, emotional, and mental health. It is expected that we can never take priority.

Experiments can falter, but we can't. Displays of emotion are unwelcome. We must adapt to relentless rejection and criticism without showing the hurt that is intrinsic to the process. We learn to suppress everything that makes us human so that we don't display anything that could be interpreted as weakness. We must never speak of the fear, anxiety, and uncertainty that exists when your career depends on whether you get the next grant... as pay lines continue to shrink.

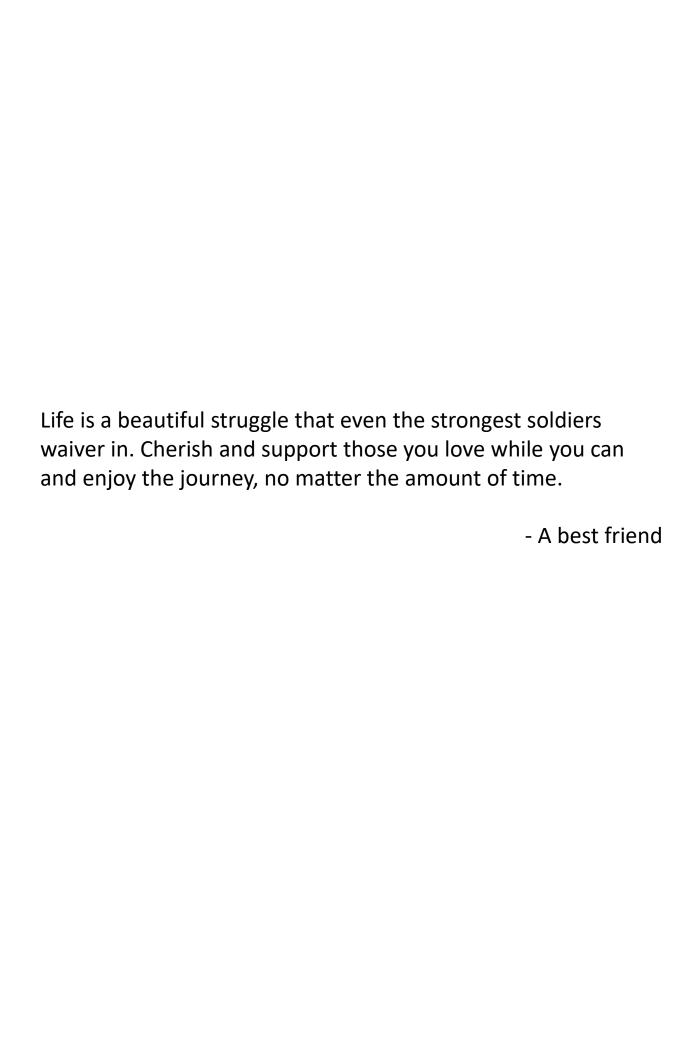


This has created a version of myself that I don't recognize. I learned to dim my own light. I learned to mask my emotions and internalize all the negative things that have been said to and about me when I have struggled. For years, I have believed that this is the version of myself that would be successful. Cold. Disconnected. Stoic. Never let them see you sweat. This version would pretend to be unbothered by the words that have been weaponized against me but would spend sleepless nights wondering if I would ever be enough.

But that version is unsustainable. I can't always be perfect and unaffected. I can't continue to doubt my successes and believe that I am only my weaknesses, but none of my strengths. When I am given space to unmask and show all sides of who I am, I am creative and engaged. I think more deeply and clearly. I am more willing to take the risks necessary to have breakthroughs. I am a better colleague, mentor, friend, partner, and scientist. When I feel safe and supported, I can be whole.

-A Principal Investigator







Where am il? Every where, No where Here There. This path is mine, Whether I believe, On Not. I move Forward Up Down Backwards Always. Even when I do not want to move, ulmove I create waves, turns, and paths. I am here, on my way to there.





A harsh world creates an armor you didn't ask for. When you're a kid, you dream of being the hero of the story, not the villain. Years of rage and silence lay down the foundation for layers of thick skin. Grief smolders like a lit flame behind your eyes. Hope of peace is forgotten – You believe that you deserve to survive in the burning house that you created.

Then a kind soul comes along and joins you in your burning house. They offer some water and company as the last of the flames snuff out. They don't cower from your rage.

Peace doesn't seem so foreign anymore. Flowers grow in a garden of ashes and life resumes.

~ A weary inner child that still believes in fairy tales



A glorious sunset. What a thing to stare at. Yet my eyes are blurred by tears. Heartbreak. Again. But this time with déjà vu. I don't want to tell her how badly it hurts. Not her. I don't want her to feel this pain, no. She is such a sweet soul.

It's a little too claustrophobic-sitting here in my car accompanied by this view. It is so beautiful. Could you see that when you stayed here? Did the beauty give you hope to stay...at least for a little while longer? Did you see it the fall day I was born here 22 years ago?

Now that you are gone, I walk these halls past where they took you-the ugly, cold, heavy text that says 'MORTUARY' on the wooden door. I carry a box filled with a virus that would have killed you. A virus we spent months terrified of together. And now I willingly risk my life to transport and process it. But I remind myself that the virus didn't kill you...you decided to leave. And now I work with the people who ran your tox screens...they know more than I do at this point. I've become the girl who works here because her dad killed himself.

And as I sit there, listening to the pain in the voice of my beloved friend, the space begins to feel tight...her dad is down the hall too now. He is in the same place mine was just months before.

"And I ran, I ran so far away
I just ran, I ran all night and day
And I ran, I ran so far away
I just ran, I couldn't get away"
-I Ran (So Far Away) by A Flock of Seagulls

No more. No more sadness. No more pain. No more tears. No more yelling. No more guilt. No more regrets. No more belittling. No more lies. No more mistrust. No more feeling unwelcome. No more unfair control.

After you died, home wasn't home anymore. It's a memory now.

So I left...into the great wide open. My body and subconscious knew what I needed to feel whole again before I even fully realized it.

Back to the basics. Back to one of the first activities we shared together. Back to the mountains. Back to steep slopes and deep snow. Back to taking the long way home. Back to meandering through green trees and deep powder. Back to gliding through the forest all while being kissed by tiny gusts of white powder.

It's moments like these where I find my pure joy. My mind is quiet, my soul content, my lungs full of cool air.

And I sit. I sit in the silence. I feel small gazing at the alpines. Small, yet safe. I watch as the snow pillows rest on the mighty branches, occasionally plopping down into a pile below. It is so beautiful here...I could stay for hours.

These are the moments that keep me here. They spark excitement for my future adventures chasing the scenery that awaits tomorrow and the day after.

"he lost his way, starin' down that barrel, thinkin',
"Not today"
fo'o as presions I and knows that life is as presion

Life's so precious, Lord knows that life is so precious"
-I Am Who Am (Killin' Time) by Mac Miller



It's still so hard. But I let the tree branches hold my pain. The snow picks up my negative thoughts and helps to drift them away. The healing comes from being present while climbing & gliding down these mountains.

"I believe in the person I want to become,
I believe in the freedom of the open road.
And when I'm at war with myself
I ride
I just ride"
-Ride Monologue by Lana Del Rey

Life is short. Too short to not fight for what you want most. I won't sit back...I use my time to live fully.

"Oh, no. To live...to live would be an awfully big adventure"
-Robin Williams

Don't be afraid to ask for help, tomorrow needs you. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-afsp.org

> -a Research Services Entry Professional/ the girl who sits in the trees



Dancing on a tightrope

Hiding my feelings behind a smile, moving through frantic emotions hoping to find something new, feeling scared of my own thoughts and how dark they've become.

My child is hurting, and so am I. Trying to understand, but it's too far away.

Life is hard when it seems you're lost.

My heart's full of sadness; although I want to talk about it and can't.

It's not easy to admit that you're broken.
You feel helpless and judged as a failure.
Depression overtakes you; confusion overwhelms you, frustration can fill your heart with fear.

I'm angry and ashamed for being tired and weak, dancing on a tightrope where it ends in defeat.

-Program Coordinator



Yes, I CHOOSE Happiness and peace for my life.

Thank you,
CORAL,
for showing me skills that I didn't know I had
to break through my sadness.

