

Finding The Creative Process: An interview with Cherie Ray

Zoe Tao: So how did you get involved at the Jung Center?

Cherie Ray: I originally came to the Jung Center for yoga, and took my first class in the 80's.

ZT: So what kind of classes do you teach at the Jung Center, and what motivated you?

CR: I teach the creative process. What motivated me to do that was that there was a quality of education, as well as a quality of content in the classes I took there that didn't match anywhere else. I'm happy to be understanding the creative process-it's very principles-based. One of my favorite classes I teach is De-mystifying Creativity, so really giving the operating principles on creativity so that some people start to see it as universal, versus our mental perceptions that some people have it and some people don't. So the creative process, the spiritual aspects of the creative process-that's what lights me up.

ZT: And so how do you go about teaching this to people-is it through art, or through lectures, or both?

CR: I do a combination-there is a conversational educational component to each workshop and there a creative portion, and then we come back together for a Q and A and to deepen our understanding about what they experience.

ZT: Do you feel like there's a there's a common thing that people seek from these classes, among your students?

CR: Yes-they have a call to explore their creative side, and are looking for a safe way to express it-they may not really be sure what it means. Too often-and I certainly had that perception that I needed some technical skills in the art arena to even be able to explore creativity-and that was truly my limited understanding at the time, because that's all I had to go on. I just know that I was wrong-like so many people, we really accumulate a massive amount of material. So I'd say they are really answering the call of something-they have something they long to express and they think art's the way to do it. Also, they have a desire to be more in connection with their intuition.

ZT: Do you think it's something that people suppress on a normal basis for purposes of work and daily life?

CR: I think we have-in my work right now it's like for gosh, 10 or 12 or 13 years, I've studied the creative process. So in the last five years I've really started to explore the impact of our state of mind on the creative process. So I have to say too many people have carried judgments about themselves and what their capabilities are when it comes to creativity, or maybe there was a member of the family that was the artist or writer or creative-well, that's the creative in the family, so maybe you'll do engineering or maybe you'll do-well, you know the creative process is life unfolding-it's every aspect of life. People tend to believe it's associated through making art or putting words together.

ZT: And so it's something that you found that everyone can do, and integrate into their lives.

CR: It's universal. And I kinda laugh when I have women in my classes and they swear they don't have a creative bone in their body, it's a little contrary-because as females our body is designed to create life, so at that base level we have what it takes. And even if you're male, you know, you have the mechanism. So it's what we're designed to do, so the idea that we're separate from it or lack something to participate-it's back to the state of mind aspect of it.

ZT: Do you feel like in a retreat setting or an enclosed community such as Esalen, these creative energies start to come out more?

CR: Yes, and I think that's why I like teaching at the center so much-because to me the center is imbued, there's so much of this energy of inquiry, energy of creativity, energy to explore.

ZT: Do you have a favorite instance in which you helped someone through the creative process?

CR: You know, it's happened so often but when someone internally sees something they didn't see before, or they give themselves permission to take a risk. I mean, it can be so miniscule in the creative process, but when they give themselves permission to take a chance and step forward. And they re-connect to that innate mission and the aliveness follows, and from that point they're kind of like, there's something new here. I'm not quite sure what, but they give themselves more permission to show up in the world and follow the great inspiration. It happens a lot and it's so individual-but when that spark hits, they're somewhere other than just their beliefs about who they are.

ZT: Do you think people have made major life decisions and changes based off of this new spark?

CR: Oh yes, I have had physicians change disciplines, professionals leave their track of engineering. I mean, just so many professional tracks that were safe at the time. I've helped many different clients make a transition. And they look back and can't believe it. There's no wrong choices, but it has to be a choice you have to support the rest of your life as you evolve as a human being.