

Letty participated in a weekly painting group I led for women coping with cancer.

## LETTY

Letty applied paint by the fistfuls. She had long ago stopped worrying whether her paintings looked like recognizable objects, people, or landscapes. She painted the interiors of herself, knowing that she didn't conform to any predictable images.

With hands protected by thin, latex gloves, Letty scooped big globs of acrylic paint from her palette or asked me to squirt tubes of purples, reds, and yellows directly onto her palms. For an hour or more she pressed paint onto her three- or four-foot-tall canvas, silent except for the occasional call, "More paint, please!" Chatter among other women in the cancer support painting group seemed to glide in an arc around her, never entering or disturbing the globe of creative focus that was temporarily her world.

In that world, Letty was in a state of abandon. A dental hygienist by day, confined to the tiny, careful, and regimented tasks she accomplished in people's mouths, Letty became a painting superhero once a week in our group. No stroke was too bold, no canvas too tall, no emotion too deep for Letty. Her super power was *Expressing Herself without Holding Back*.

Each week Letty would arrive exhausted from work, "I'm so tired I almost didn't come," and then fall into a state of creative reverie that was boundless. As she carried her completed painting out the door at the end of the evening, she'd say, "I knew I'd feel better if I came. I always leave here feeling better than when I arrived."

Whenever I asked Letty what her painting state felt like, she used words that I've heard other people choose to describe their most profound, spiritual experiences:

“Freedom, total freedom.” “No effort.” “Happy.” “Fun.” “I’m not thinking, I’m just experiencing.” “Exploring.” “It’s not a doing, it’s a happening.” “A bigger part of me comes out.” “There’s big space inside me.” “I feel all potentials happening at once.” “Beauty.” “Everything is okay.”

Breast cancer and a mastectomy had brought Letty to the painting group. She had come thinking, “I can’t paint,” only to find that that she simply hadn’t finished the sentence: “I can’t paint *anyone’s way but my own.*” When she did it her way, not only could Letty paint, she was set free.

Martia Nelson, life coach and author of "Coming Home: The Return to True Self," helps you reclaim your true self and a life that makes your soul sing. Get your FREE mp3 at [www.MartiaNelson.com](http://www.MartiaNelson.com). Copyright (c) 2008 Martia Nelson, all rights reserved.

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