



Atlantic Health Keynote

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B. Madeleine Goldfarb MA

Noah's Ark Institute

### **What is art?**

Art is a million of so different things to different people.

Britannica Online describes art as "the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others."

Now let's look at communication ...simply the activity of conveying information. Communication comes from the Latin word "communis", to *share*. Ah, communication and art are both the process of sharing.

Communication requires a *sender (that could be the artist)*, a *message (that could be the art medium)*, and an intended *recipient (all of us)*, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication. Communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender.

I think of the time I spent at The Musée de l'Orangerie which is an art gallery of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings located in the west corner of the Tuileries Gardens in Paris. This wondrous place (and I highly recommend going if you have the chance) is most famous for being the permanent home for eight Water Lilies murals by Claude Monet. I was transformed as I sat there in awe. I do not know if what the artist had intended was what I was taking from this experience, but it truly did not matter, as what I was taking from the art was what I was intended to take... regardless of the artist's intent. Therefore, the art becomes more than what the artist even envisions. The art has a power beyond the hand of the creator. This is what is important. This power is a singular elevating phenomenon, which is unlike all others we have found, and it is what connects us to our humanity...joy, sorrow, empathy, fear, love, longing, peace. Art is that most spectacular form of communication which can reach through time and space and touch us and transform our reality in a most profound way.

Richard Florida, the author of *The Creative Class* traces the growing role of creativity in our economy. Forty million Americans – over a third of our national workforce – who create for a living, make up what he has termed the "creative class" and are found in a variety of



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fields, from engineering to theater, biotech to education, architecture, small business and I would say most prominently in the healthcare field.

Think for a moment how the inclusion of the arts is at the forefront of a transformation. This transformation touches the key areas of our lives and permeates the way we live. Through the lens of the arts, you have determined how this place of healing is organized, how each employee interacts with this space and is enriched by the arts' impact upon each and every person.

As healers you are called upon to treat us at our most vulnerable. We are sick and weak and scared and needy. We are not our best selves. We are not the selves we wish to present to the world. We are at times belligerent and at times in pain and at times unsightly and stripped bare, raw and naked.

You must process, overlook, mask and absorb so much of our experience, while giving us hope and peace and dignity. You have a very hard job. How do you excise those demons and find your own humanity and peace and joy? As I have looked upon your exceptional examples of artistry before me, filled with every feeling and emotion, I know you have found the way. Art is that way, which frees the mind and spirit. For that moment of intense creativity you are not the healer or the doctor, or the nurse, or the one who brings the bad news of loss and tribulation. You are no more or no less than that profound creator.

You are an artist.

An artist...

You Draw...You Paint...You Sculpt...You throw Clay...You Sing...You Dance... You Write...You Quilt...You Take Photographs...You Act...You garden...You make films...You sew...You design...

You are engaged in the **communication** of ideas and emotions, thought and feelings.

See yourself for what you are... an artist...Repeat what you are with me...

"I am an artist."

Once again with conviction...

"I am an artist."