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FALL 2022

MAGAZINE



#HOMEMADE
Tips from DIY Pros

8 Projects
to Make
at Home





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Letter from the Editor



PHOTO BY VLADIMIR PROSKUROVSKIY

I'm a writer by choice, and surrounded by creative people who craft, blog, perform, and more. How they do it all, I don't know. What I've found is that they are talented but mostly they're passionate about their interests. However, they universally demur praise to say, "It isn't that hard, as long as you know what you're doing."

First, try not to downplay your skills. Imposter syndrome is real.

Second, most things really *are* simple as long as you have the knowledge and experience. The trick is, getting those things—and being willing to suffer looking foolish along the way.

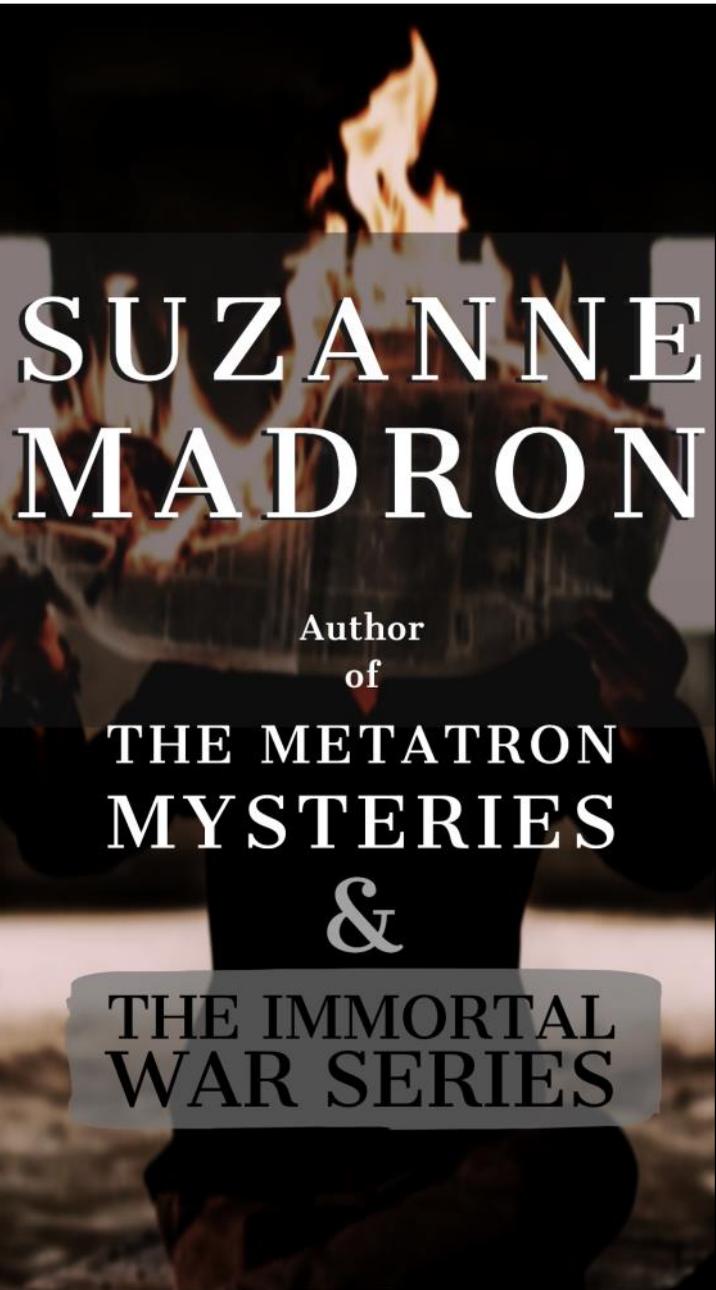
Sometimes, you want the luxury of being taken care of but, more often, you just want the job done. If you can get it done yourself, all the better! Who doesn't want to seem capable? Who wouldn't rather save money? So, when you're feeling the itch to build, create, and craft, check out *SEARCH Magazine* for inspiration.

In this #Homemade issue, read about exercising at home, making a pinhole viewer, and creating your own party decorations. Cook a meal from our amazing recipe, then write your thoughts in a gratitude journal—no matter how it turns out.

After all, most things just take a little practice.

Heather Roulo / *Editorial Director*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roulo". The signature is stylized and cursive.



SUZANNE MADRON

Author
of

THE METATRON MYSTERIES

&

THE IMMORTAL WAR SERIES

When the demons are the
good guys, you know the
world has gone to hell.



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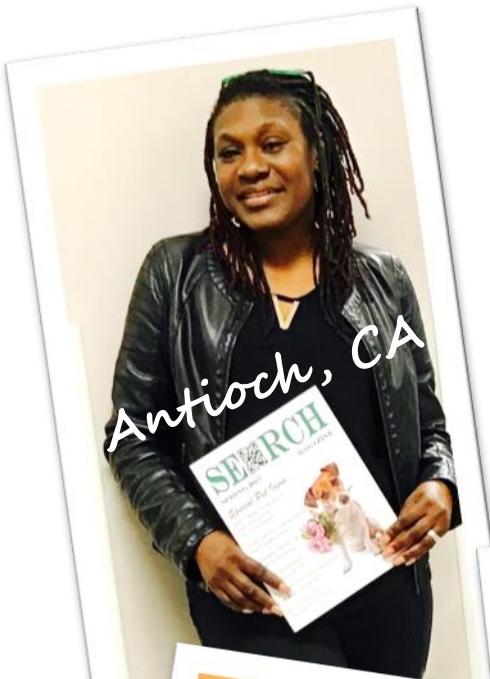
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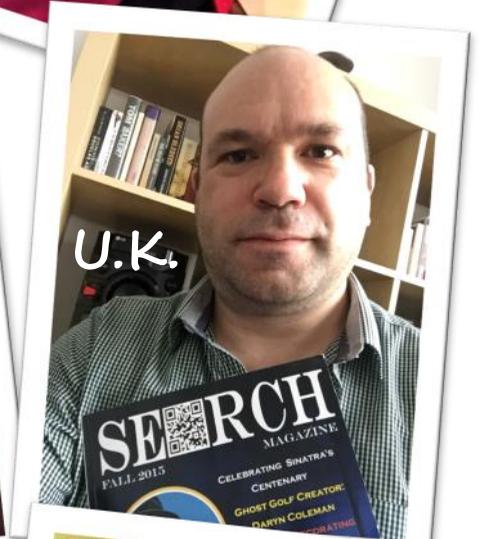
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I like sharing science that is easy to do, educational, and—at least to me—fun. I'm going to share some ancient technology, so get ready to make your own scientific instrument for under five dollars! A pinhole viewer will allow you to observe the sun, see an eclipse when it happens in your area, and maybe even catch sunspots, all while protecting your eyes.

With all the astronomical happenings these days, it is hard not to want to see some of the amazing sights. Lunar eclipses are easy enough, just go outside at the right time of the night and look up at the moon. However, solar eclipses are a bit more involved. Historically, from a science aspect, this device has helped us study the sun in a safe-for-your-eyes way.

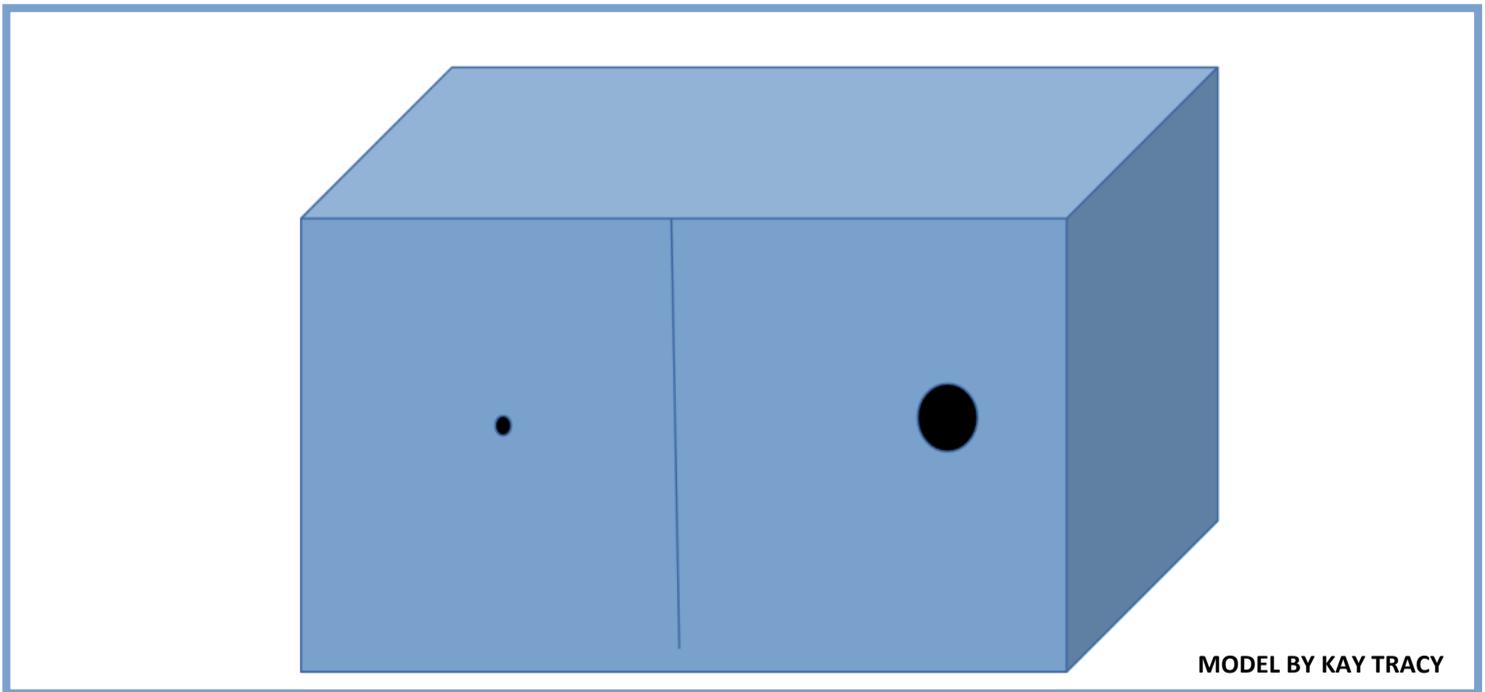
A “pinhole” camera, or viewer, is also known as a camera obscura. This device is thought to have been around since ancient times, although the earliest written description seems to be from China in about the year 500 B.C. In its earlier incarnations, the pinhole camera might be the size of a room where you could

sit or stand inside and “see” things outside of the room by way of a small opening that directed the light against a light-colored wall or table. It was used by artists to draw and sketch the world around them. It is a camera that does not use film or digital screens, but rather the human eye.

To Make a Camera Obscura You Will Need:

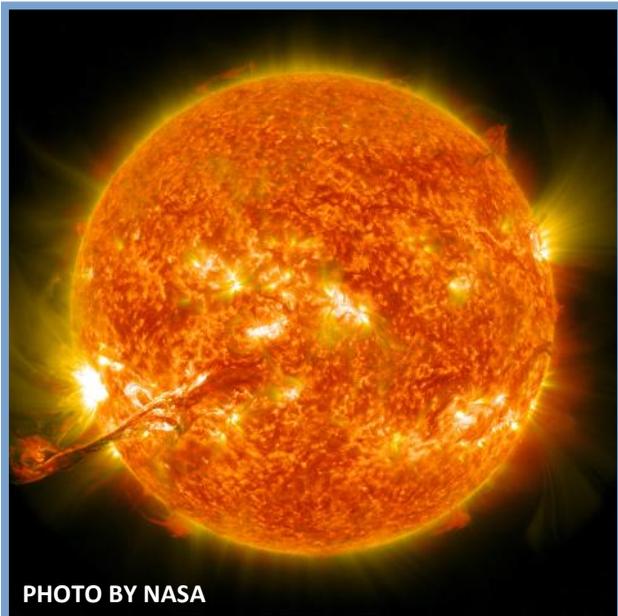
- *A cardboard box. You need a box that is large enough to place your head alongside the "pinhole" without blocking the light that will enter.
- *Tape
- *Paste or glue
- *A white sheet of paper
- *Pencil
- *Screwdriver
- *Scissors or box cutter

- ⇒ First, tape the sheet of white paper on the inside of the box on one of the sides. This will be the viewing screen. A bit of paste or glue might come in handy, just be sure to keep the paper as flat as possible.
- ⇒ Next, mark the outside of the box with a pencil on



the side opposite, or across from your paper. A simple mark on the side will work.

- ⇒ Close up the box and tape it shut. Be extra careful at the corners to block any flaps so that no light can get inside.
- ⇒ It's time to make the pinhole and viewing holes. If you divide the side of the box that you marked in half from the top to the bottom with a marker line, you can take a pencil, or other sharp-ended round tool, like a screwdriver, and poke a hole on one side of the marked line, about the middle of the box. This will let the light, and image, into the box. You can adjust the size later if you need to with some tape and paper. A smaller hole gives a sharper image, although it might be dim unless you are aiming the camera at the sun.
- ⇒ On the other side of the marked line, cut an open-



ing in the box about the size of a circle you can make with your thumb and first finger, like the "OK" sign.

That is it! All done. You are now ready to try it out.

Take your viewer outside and point the holes at the sun. Now, look into the box through your eye hole so you can see the image on the paper inside the box. It might take a minute or so for your eye to adjust to see the image of the sun, and even sunspots if there are any, which are dark spots on the round sun.

So, make yourself a camera obscura and go out there and have some science fun!

Hints and tips to make it work even better:

- ⇒ To help keep any extra light out, you might take an old black T-shirt or some black fabric and fasten it to the box around your eye hole, so that you put your head into the fabric covering to look into the box. This will help keep out extra light and let your eye adjust more quickly.
- ⇒ If you notice light sneaking into your box at the corners or flaps, get a paper bag—or other dark-colored paper—and tape it over those areas.
- ⇒ If your image seems blurry, or not easy to see, try making the pinhole smaller. Use some tape and a scrap of cardboard to make a smaller hole and tape it over the original one.
- ⇒ If you have a discount store nearby, then for under about five-dollars you can get some school glue, white poster board, tape, and a black plastic tablecloth to make a viewing wall and a dark cover. You can even ask them if they have a cardboard box they can give you to work with. ■

#Homemade | Explore Tatting

BY SUZANNE MADRON



favorites to use are ones still readily available and at a very reasonable price. Look for Starlit and Lacis brands, with the pick on the end, which is a very pointy curve that allows you to “pick” stitches through loops. My favorite tatting thread brand is Aunt Lydia’s.



Admittedly, when I first became interested in learning to tat, it was because of the cool antique tatting tools called shuttles. It was akin to the dice being my gateway to learning how to play *Dungeons and Dragons*, if we're being honest.

To begin the tatting process, wrap the thread in the shuttle. You'll see most shuttles have a hole in the center piece to put thread through. Put on enough thread that you'll be able to make a decent-sized amount of tatting. From there, make a loop with the thread and hold the ends between your first finger and thumb. The loop should be big enough to fit your shuttle through comfortably. You'll work a series of over-under style loops with your shuttle.

I had learned to make bobbin lace and I was looking for something more portable—even more portable than knitting or crocheting. It was hot that summer and I wanted to still work on making something but without the bulk and warmth of yarn. Enter tatting.

In case the term is not readily familiar, the finished product most likely is. Tatted lace edges are used on dresses and as decorative pieces in various ways. Tatting uses loops similar to crocheted lace but the technique is a bit different.

There are two types of tatting: needle tatting and shuttle tatting. I have needles as well as shuttles but have yet to learn the needle method. The shuttles seemed less likely to poke a hole in whatever I carried them in, and as it turns out, there is a whole Etsy community that makes carriers for tatting shuttles and tatting itself.

My finished product is a very basic tatted edge that tats up quickly, with minimal fuss. As with any fiber art, there are many more intricate laces out there.

To get started with tatting, first get a good shuttle that will do what you want it to and that's easy to hold. As I discovered with my foray into antique shuttles, there are some tiny, fiddly shuttles out there. My





The main trick to successful tatting is keeping the slipknots intact so the thread can slide over the main loop easily. You'll feel a kind of "pop" when the stitch will be able to slide on that loop. Check out my video to see a live demonstration.

Experiment with different types and sizes of loops, stitches, shuttles, and thread until you find one you like. Tatting is fun and extremely portable. It's also perfect for the warmer months. ■

Check out the video to see a live demonstration.



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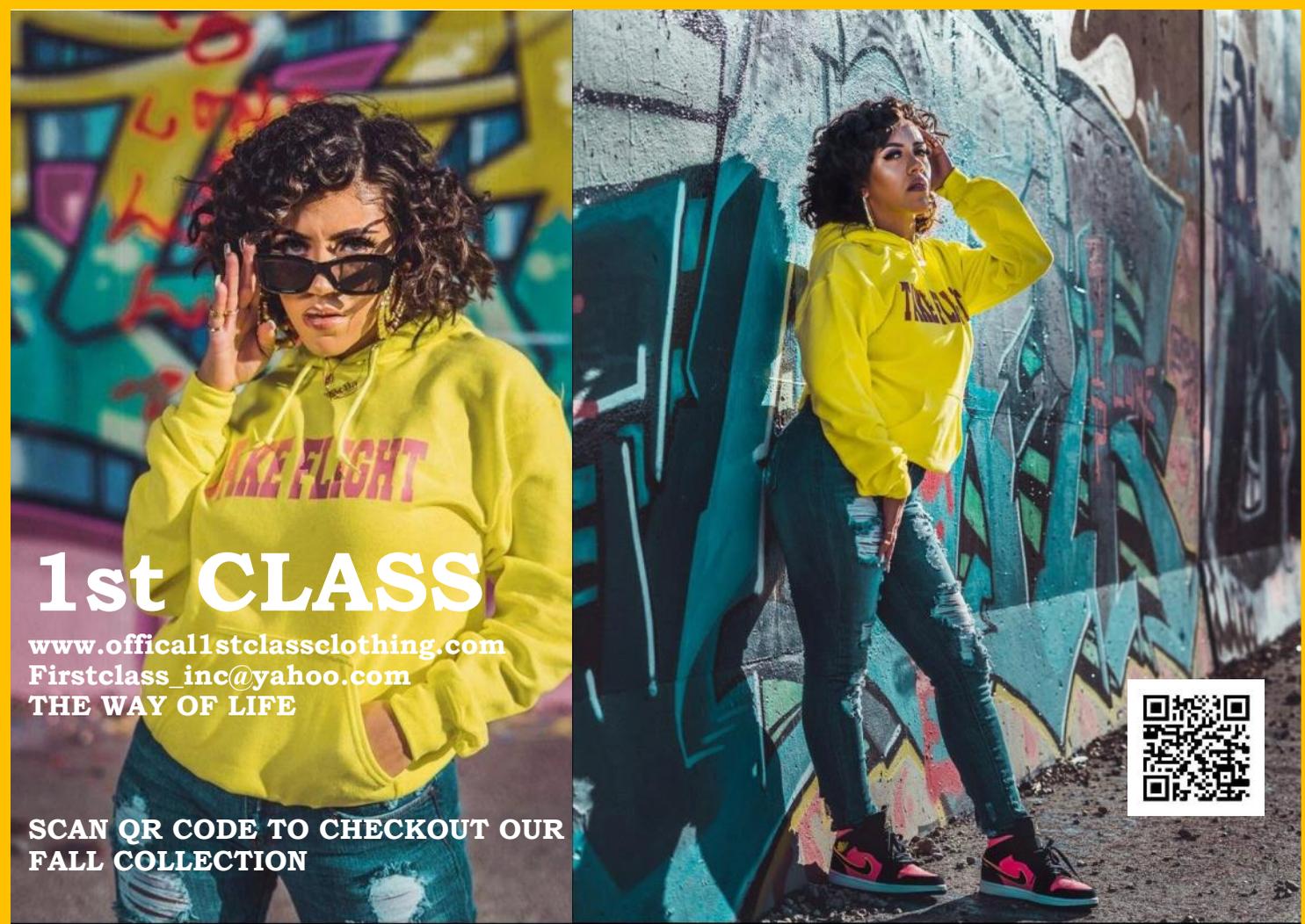


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on both sides of my mouth. Recently, one of my crowns decided it didn't like being where it was and separated itself from my jaw during lunch.

I can't do my own drilling, but if I rig the microwave to work even when the door is open and I use some old photographic film I have in the freezer, maybe I can do my own x-rays. Once I got that idea in my head, I realized that my Black+Decker tools weren't going to do the trick, so on to Amazon-the-Amazing I went and quickly found a set of proper, professional dental tools for less than the cost of a three-pound bag of chocolate-covered raisins. They even came in their own fancy leather-looking case so I can take them with me when I go to parties where there may be dental emergencies that a DIY Dork can help with.

It turns out I already had an x-ray from the last time the crown came out (and I had my phone handy for a photo of the dentist's computer screen). Out came the tools, safety goggles, and the crown with its steel post. My dentist and his assistant wear masks while they work on me, so I tried that, but it kind of got in the way. Mask set aside, I had light, mirrors, tweezers, crown, and... I forgot the cement. I had a choice of Crazy Glue or Gorilla Glue, but a quick check online told me they were bad choices, so I was stopped in my tracks. Damn.

I guess DIY dentistry isn't in the cards for me. Unless Amazon sells dental cement and those fancy paper bibs on a chain... ■

I'd like to say that I'm the Do-It-Yourself King, but as much as I like fixing stuff and solving my own problems, my skills often fall short of my needs for the project. Or, if not my skills falling short, then it might be the plan itself.

I've been at this since I was a kid when Dad would bring home a clean, empty wooden crate from work and I would convert it into lopsided shelves, or a battleship for G.I. Joe—complete with a dart board featuring Adolf H's evil face.

I have turned a discarded flooring store display into a wall unit bar, repaired a hole in my muffler with a soda can, and tried to make an incline table on the basement stairs but got stuck hanging upside down by my ankles while the dogs licked my face. More recently, I designed and built my own pergola on my deck. It's sturdy enough to hang a car from, but it's a little skewed, so my Do-It-Some-Day-Eventually List has one more project on it.

My old water heater started leaking last week and while I may think I'm handy, I'm not *stupid*. I brought in the professionals to replace it. Same with taking my animals to the vet. Leave it to the pros.

Where I HATE spending money, though, is on dental repairs. X-Rays, cleanings, scaling, fillings, impressions, crowns, repairs... I could replace ALL my appliances for what it has cost me to be able to chew

When a fantasy turns into a cold reality...

What will she do with her sexy cat burglar when she catches him?



Name: Elliot Thorpe

Location: Southend-On-Sea, Essex, UK

Tell us a little about yourself: I'm a father of two. I have a son in University and the other in the early years of her schooling. I own my own company that specializes in documenting people's life stories and experiences. I also oversee The Dean Martin Association, an organization that was set up in 1960 by Dino himself and my late father Bernard H. Thorpe.

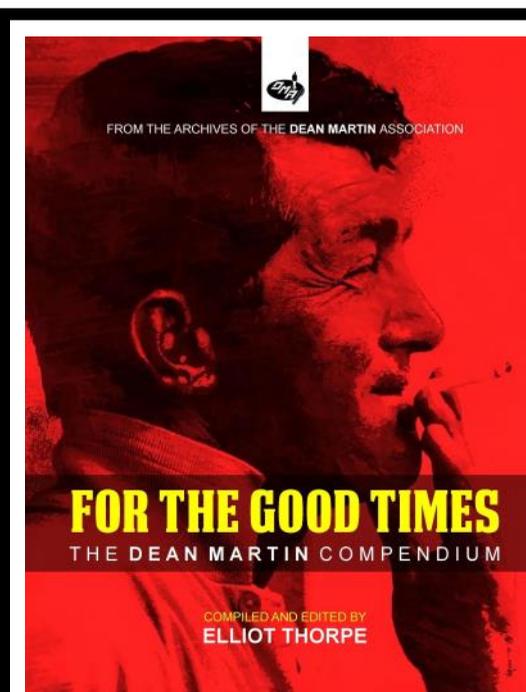
You've been with *SEARCH Magazine* practically since the beginning and written 26 articles for us! How does it feel to write for *SEARCH*? It's amazing

to think that I've written so many articles for *SEARCH* and I've enjoyed every minute! Emerian Rich, the then-Editorial Director, approached me to write a couple of articles, one being about Frank Sinatra. Emerian and I both like Gothic Horror and we both write for that genre so our working relationship came about as a result of that connection. *SEARCH* gives me the opportunity to write different types of articles. I enjoy the research and creation that goes into writing varying subjects. One of my favorite pieces I did was putting together the City Spotlight article about London. I had great fun creating the accompanying video for our YouTube channel.

What else do you write? I've written/edited four books about Dean Martin with more to come. I've written for the British TV shows *Doctor Who* and *Robin of Sherwood* and have short stories published across various volumes as diverse as Sherlock Holmes, Horror and children's adventure stories. My most recent novel, *World War When*, was published earlier this year and is available worldwide right now.

What would you like to share with us? It's worrying how quickly the world went back to its old ways once the global pandemic was over and it saddens me that we still may not have learnt anything from it. *Carpe diem*, as the saying goes. I think that's something we should all strive to. Enjoy life and be kind.

Where can readers learn more? Please visit my websites: memoryhive.co.uk and deanmartinassociation.com. ■



During its first 50 years, **THE DEAN MARTIN ASSOCIATION** published a phenomenal 415 issues of its regular journal, containing news, articles, features, opinions, reviews and more, all about Dean Martin, his career, his peers, his admirers and his life.

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PHOTOS BY MICHELE ROGER

A “live studio” mic for musicians to record live simultaneously.

It's been a challenging few years. The good news is that from it, some incredible talent and creativity has emerged. If recording your own music has become part of your life list, or if it's been a minute since you last recorded an album, there are a vast number of options. Here are three DIY ways to record your own music.

1. Garage Band

Garage Band has been around for years and is Apple's answer to meeting the needs of the recording artist—no matter your professional or amateur status. The bonus of Garage Band is that it's free and built into nearly every product Apple makes. If you haven't worked with Garage Band in a while, there have been some vast improvements.

⇒ The perks: Garage Band can save directly to a user's iCloud, making your work seamlessly sharea-

ble with other musicians and sound engineers. It's options for microphone capacity and differentiation between different instruments as well as voice is also a big improvement from the app's early days. Other improvements to the programming include seamless transfer to websites like Dropbox where large files can be uploaded and stored instead of taking up computer memory.

⇒ The drawbacks: Garage Band runs on Apple tablets, computers, and phones but it doesn't have the capacity to plug in a high-quality microphone without an adapter. Musicians know that the more technology used to bridge between an instrument and a recording device, the greater the loss of high-quality sound.

⇒ The summary: Like all things in life, you get what you pay for. Garage Band is easy and free if you have Mac products. If inspiration knocks on your door, an Apple user could have a song recorded in minutes, providing the musician has a quiet setting.

2. Audacity

Audacity is a recording piece of software that is free and open-sourced. It will work on a PC or Mac and provides a high-quality recording. It's probably the most universally used software with musicians and hence, there is an entire community on the web to support someone just starting out on their music recording journey.

⇒ The perks: Audacity works well with mixing boards attached to a standard PC. Less quality of sound is lost just by the sheer ability of a good mixing board. Since many musicians use mixing boards to enrich their sound systems in live performances, the Audacity+PC pairing makes sense for a lot of musicians.

⇒ The drawbacks: Audacity is not intuitive. If you are someone who understands a mixing board or has sound editing experience, this option is cost effective. On the other hand, if you are a complete beginner, research your options because while Audacity is free and there is a community out there to help, the process can be frustrating. No one likes technical hold ups when the Muse is calling.

3. Zoom

No, I'm not talking about the online meeting app. In the music world, a Zoom is a portable recording device. There are several models to choose from. Hand held versions can cost as low as \$200. “Studio-sized” models can cost anywhere from \$350 to over \$700.



The “studio-sized” Zoom recording device.

I’ve heard good things about the hand held versions but my personal experience lies in the studio-sized recording Zoom. Professional quality recordings can be achieved as these devices allow for instruments to be plugged in directly. Most models also have “phantom power,” giving the musician the ability to record live, (much like Garage Band) with a quiet background. I have recorded both live and plugged in directly with my instruments and microphones. The sound quality is higher than what is achieved in Garage Band.

- ⇒ The perks: Most Zoom recording devices are not out of reach of slightly more serious musicians price wise. They work seamlessly with Audacity.
- ⇒ The drawbacks: Operating a Zoom device takes a bit of time to learn. It isn’t “plug and play” like Garage Band. The studio-sized Zoom has a plethora of features—like the ability to record multi tracks as well as patch in sections of music—but the user manual will become your new best friend when setting out on your recording journey.

People who are technologically challenged should take a deep breath and see the recording adventure as a marathon and not a sprint.

I write this article with twenty years of recording experience. That doesn’t mean I’m experienced at recording. I’ve tried all of the options that I’ve written about today. They have all—in one way or another—helped me get where I am today. Where am I today? I’m at a friend’s home studio with one foot in the artist seat while the other dips my toe into learning to use a Zoom with the guidance of a friend. ■



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PHOTO BY DARLING ARIAS

For those looking to sustainably customize their wardrobe or add unique personality and alternative style compared to expensive, fast fashion, weighing the costs of supplies and the time it takes to actually sew may put one off this inventive hobby. Fortunately, sewing *can* be an affordable option if you know how to pool your resources. Here are a few tips to get you started on your sewing journey!

1. Freebies! Chances are, we all know a dear old granny or quirky great aunt who has a cookie tin full of notions and needles. There is no shame in asking for these sewing hand-me-downs! Raid grandma's attic for old linens for simple sewing like pillows or learn the basics on a borrowed sewing machine. Remove buttons or zippers off clothes that are being thrown away to begin your own supply stash or practice mending your clothes. Let it be known you are repairing, saving, and looking to sew more and say yes to everything offered—even if you don't know what

rick rack or a tailor's ham is yet. Try online marketplaces for giveaways or look into local libraries or civic groups and craft circles. Knowledge is free. Ask questions and utilize internet resources.

2. Thrift Shopping. Even if you intend to advance toward sophisticated garments, starting with second-hand supplies from thrift stores is a savings essential. For a few dollars, sheets and curtains can be repurposed in a variety of projects or costumes and altering thrift clothing helps you practice and discover your style without guilt or breaking the bank. One never knows what fabrics, notions, and craft items you may find at places like Goodwill. I've found giant button jars, entire bolts and rolls of fabric, boxes of jewelry beads, patterns, and much more. You might have to hunt or luck out, however, thrifting is an excellent way to obtain useful notions and inspirations.

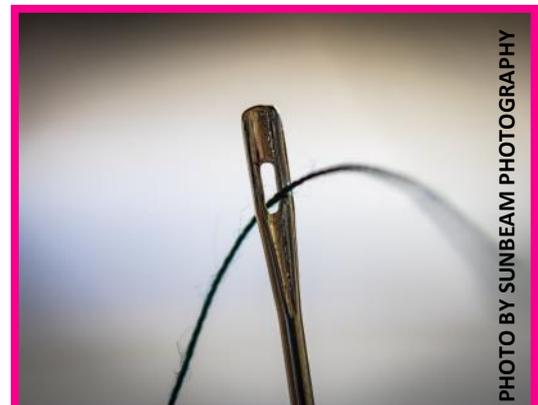


PHOTO BY SUNBEAM PHOTOGRAPHY

3. Space and Organization. In our condo I only had space for one trunk of supplies and a rolling cart for my machine. Don't rush out and buy before considering what sewing set up works for you. Is there an empty space you can reclaim or should you invest in mobile, hideaway, or multipurpose furniture? When starting out, you don't need a big space or expensive equipment, but staying organized is important. When you don't know what you have, little costs can add up if you buy unnecessary duplicates. Currently, I work in one side of my basement with repurposed secondhand furniture. Clear plastic storage drawers stacked along the wall are labeled and categorized so I can see what's in my supply closet.

4. Know Your Goals. Be realistic. Complex designs won't happen overnight. You can't buy everything all at once—especially if you don't know what you will make. Don't buy luxury fabric for children's pillows and don't expect thrift sheets to be the perfect prom gown. Make a chart of what you want to sew, your supplies on hand, what you need per project, and

where you can afford to spend or not. Practice with mock ups, for sewing is a cumulative hobby and it's okay to start small. Don't try something fancy if you aren't ready, but then again sometimes that's the only way to learn. Some projects can be overwhelming without the right tools or know how, but by going your own pace and focusing on outside the box ingenuity, you can become a sewist. ■



PHOTO BY MERVE SEHIRLI NASIR

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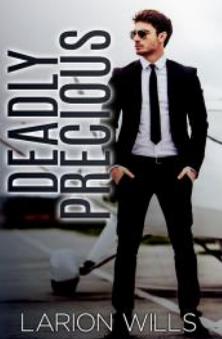


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DEADLY PRECIOUS



LARION WILLS

Drew's plan was to pay her expenses after the attack, walk away, and forget it. Nothing Letitia did made that easy. Her ex-husband shouted that she made bad things happen. Drew hadn't listened. The house burning down was an accident. So was the plane crash. No one was trying to kill him. She might be simple, but not dangerous. In no way could she know about his millions.

Or did she? Was Revenge her plan, not forgiveness?





You might think retirement is a signal you're out of the fast track, but increasingly retirees are finding ways to express themselves in ways that their life-long careers haven't explored.

Such is the case with retiree, Willz, of Willz Crafts. After spending thirty-five years in the service of others as a minister and counselor, Willz needed a break, and she took one. She went on a couple of cruises and road trips, but she hated being retired.

"Actually, at the time I was looking forward to it," Willz said. "But about two-to-three months in, I was done. I've never been a person who can sit in my house doing nothing. I got all these cards at my retirement service about being in my rocking chair and enjoying the beach, but that's not me. I need to stay busy. I believe if you slow down, you die."

For someone used to working twelve-hour days, six-to-seven days a week, slowing down doesn't exactly come easy, especially when COVID hit, traveling was no longer viable, and she found herself trapped in her home. A social butterfly at heart, she had to find a way to communicate with others and express her need to craft. "I just need something to do. Willz Crafts helps me explore my creativity."

Being a woman minister wasn't always fun and

games. There are stereotypes and some people interpret what the scriptures say about women differently.

"It was difficult, but I had extraordinary help from the Lord. It doesn't matter what people think I should be doing, as long as I am doing what I believe the Lord is asking me to do. I also think that God speaks through women in ways that he can't through a man." Willz was born in a religious household and was called to the ministry early in life. "I was eleven years old. I was in church and there were a group of ministers in training and they started talking about their calling and what God might use their lives for. I think they were talking to the older people, the teenagers and college-age kids in the crowd, but man, it stuck to my heart like glue."

There were times when people doubted her calling or told her she couldn't accomplish something because she was a woman. How does she react to negative comments like that? "It really gets me going. If somebody tells me I can't do something because of something I can't help, they better watch out because I will do everything I can to prove them wrong."

Her role models as a young girl were, her mother, grandmother, and her pastor. These women taught her to love, laugh, and be kind. "I think I probably get a lot of my spunk from my grandma because she was brought up in a very strict household in a very strict church and yet, I witnessed her do an Irish jig with her skirt pulled up to her knees. She loved music, she loved life, and she loved to laugh. My mom was different. She was a very quiet, sweet-tempered person.

If Willz could pass anything on to the women of today it would be to laugh and enjoy life. "My motto in life is...We're all going to die someday. Might as well go laughing!"

I was lucky enough to chat with Willz about crafting, what got her started, and what inspires her to create.

When did you start crafting?

I was born crafting. My mother was a crafter and my grandmother was a crafter. They were always having sewing parties or quilting or crocheting or something. I started crafting as a little kid.

Where did you get your crafting skills?

I think that crafting, painting, drawing, or writing are all gifts that we have that were given by our maker.

So, how come some people craft and others don't?

I think that has to do with exposure because I was totally exposed to crafts from birth and now I can't see something without thinking of what I can make.



If someone wants to craft and thinks they can't do it, what is your advice to them?

I would say, go to WillzCrafts.com and watch and see what happens. Get things and just try it. Use your own imagination.

What do you think is one of the simplest crafts for someone to start out with?

I think, get a glue gun and some flowers and stick them on a hat. Something like that is the easiest way to get started. You can buy books or watch videos, but if you just use your creativity and your glue gun, you got it.

What is a craft you tried that you absolutely cannot do or do not like doing?

I cannot knit and I can't do felting. Everything I felt doesn't look like it should and everything I knit goes around in a circle.



What gave you the idea to start Willz Crafts?

The pandemic. I belong to a group and I was trying to show them on Zoom how to do the craft and they couldn't get it and I had to keep going over the same thing again and again and they still weren't getting it, so my daughter suggested it might be a good idea to put it on video. I had already done some recipe filming, so I thought filming the craft would allow them to look at it at their leisure, without a lot of other people distracting them. I thought we could put the camera on my hand so they can see better how I was making it.

We put my first video on Facebook and it was picked up by an organization and sent worldwide to their crafters and all of a sudden it was like, "Well, I didn't expect that." I didn't expect it to go anywhere except my little group but when it was on Facebook, it took off.

Where do you get your ideas for crafts?

My life is an idea. I had an instructor who used to tell us, "Your ideas are where you find them." So, I go shopping. I go to craft shows and I browse Pinterest and YouTube to make something I saw into my own creation, the way I would make it.



My mother used to drag me to craft bazaars all the time. She was looking for ideas to use because she made things to take to the nursing homes. She would find something to make and get her whole church group of thirty or so ladies to make it to give to the nursing homes at Easter and Christmas. So, I learned early that you go where ideas are.

You collect samples into what you call a “sample box,” right?

Yes, I encourage you—when you find things that inspire you—to collect them so that when you do get the crafting bug, you’ll have something to start with. You can also take pictures, but just be sure and get every angle. Front, back, side, from above and below. And then when you’re at your crafting table, change the item to make it your own.

When you make your craft videos, what’s one of your main goals?

I want people to be able to do what I’m doing so I always try to explain it as clearly as I can and try to make it as simple as possible. I want people to know that I’m not just doing it because I’m a wonderfully talented person. I’m just me and if I can do it, they can do it.

You’ve made many crafts for your videos. What do you do with them after you’re done recording?

Some will be in an upcoming craft sale, but I also like to give them to people I think might enjoy them. When you give someone a homemade gift, they feel like somebody sees them. Like they are appreciated. Part of life is giving and if you can give what you make, you can afford to give a lot.

Do you have any crafting hacks?

Dollar stores. Thrift stores. Broken things. Don’t be afraid to buy a broken frame at the thrift store because you can use the pieces. I recently had to break a frame to get a part that I needed for a craft.

Do you have a craft toolkit? What’s in it?

I actually have a craft tool kit that I carry in the back of my car because I’m always going to conferences or going to decorate tables at church. I made this kit probably thirty years ago and it has wire cutters, wire, glue, hole punch, scissors, permanent markers, leather strap, ribbon, and I even have a candle sharpener. ■

Watch videos on Facebook, YouTube, or at WillzCrafts.com





WHAT IF THE ALLIES HAD LOST THE GREAT WAR?



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PLAGUE MASTER: REBEL INFECTION
BY H.E. ROULO



Trevor's return from the zombie infection makes him unique. It also makes him dangerous.

He's a hero on his homeworld, celebrated for finding a vaccine against the zombie virus, but the ruling Founders don't trust him and his low origins. When the revolution comes, Trevor is caught in the middle.

Despite his homeworld's troubles, a message from a Plague Master forces Trevor to seek reinforcements. He hunts for Kristin, the woman he left behind, and an answer to why the vaccine is failing.

He and his friends must fight on space stations and worlds overtaken with infected to discover the terrible truth about his cure.



PHOTOS BY ELLIOT THORPE

One part of the many facets of parenthood I love is all the gluing and painting and (not so much) glittering. It eventually branched out into the customary school projects for my children—among which we had an 'award winning' World Book Day costume, a scale model of one of the Giza pyramids (complete with sand and a tomb), and a tiny medieval castle (with a real water moat). Then along came those obligatory birthday parties.

With the saturation of kids' shows and movies, it's relatively easy for parents to think of a theme for such an event. It can be pretty basic. My daughter went to one last month that was "princesses and superheroes," so there were any number of little Auro-ras and Moanas running around, colliding with mini-Hulks and Spider-Men, all vying for the attentions of

the entertainer dressed as Elsa. While one can only decorate a church hall or other venue so far, making the most of what you have for your child and their friends is made worthwhile when you see their faces light up.

If you have an eye for a bit of design, or the ability to realize what your child wants as their party's theme, then it's those additional little touches that make all the difference. They can be relatively inexpensive to do if you have a tight budget.

Party bags, for example, are the items that the kids take home with them and can be nicely reflective of the theme. Yes, you can buy pre-printed plastic ones designed for the very purpose, but they increase the landfills and may very well end up in the ecosystem. So, opt for paper bags instead. Plain white bags are good, giving you a literal blank canvas to design them to suit.

Some searching online for appropriate images is the easier option if you don't have a flair for drawing or even the time. Because the project is private and the items you're producing aren't being sold commercially, downloading artwork to use doesn't break any copyright or ownership laws. You can even adapt the images you find to make the final creation attractive.



We're all animal lovers in our family and so the brief I was given was, simply, "koalas." Not much to go on, but the final results were appreciated by the party girl and her guests. The koala party bags are actually made from two separate drawings of a koala. The head was from one source while the torso another. Printing the head larger gave the nice look of the ears extending from the width of the bag. I did something similar with a *Frozen*-themed party a while back, making Olaf's twig hair poke out of the top of the party bag. Little touches like this give a visually interesting slant. It also personalizes what you're giving your child's guests.



Another way of adding a unique style is by adding a subtle thank you. In the case of the koala party (no koalas were in attendance, by the way), I bought a few bags of chocolate "coins" and added self-designed stickers to them. I find the guests' parents are of course more appreciative of these thoughtful touches.

Further, putting up signage here and there welcoming your guests or pointing them towards the refreshments and snacks can give a welcoming feel. Banners and garland are also a cheap way to brighten an otherwise dull venue wall. A bit of sizing and printing with an art design program on your PC and the possibilities are endless.

Cake design is also an expensive addition to the day. Some can command up to \$100 depending on what's required. I enjoy cooking but would never dare attempt to bake a cake, especially for a party! But a store-bought chocolate or sponge cake can be used, like the plain party bags, as a good canvas. Now, Koalas don't live on chocolate cakes—they live in eucalyptus trees—so some clean, reusable decorations can come into play. Little PVC trees and figurines make any cake topping something interesting to look at but don't need to be too elaborate. After all, the cake is brought out only for the candles to be extinguished and then removed again so it can be sliced and served.

Some children's parties are excuses for the parents to show off their huge gardens, their custom-made \$100 cakes, or their lavish lifestyles, but at the end of the day, it's simply *about* the children and *for* the children. These little home-made personalized additions to your child's party add a sense of love and attention and give more meaning to the day. ■



Romano Chicken and Italian Zucchini



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE DAKES

For a unique blend of flavors in a meal I would consider comfort food, we've taken traditional Italian ingredients and combined them with a bit of habanero, a pepper originally from South America. Just a few dashes of habanero powder in the recipe impart tremendous flavor. And, although, habanero chili powder may be hard to find, it is worth the effort. For some, even a small amount can be too spicy. In this case, we recommend substituting cayenne pepper or a small amount of crushed red pepper flakes as a less hot alternative. If any level of spiciness is too much, the habanero can be left out which would be an unfortunate loss of subtle flavor, but for some may be a required trade-off.

For comparison, a habanero pepper is hotter than a cayenne pepper. In fact, a fresh habanero pepper scores 150,000 Scoville heat units, while a fresh cayenne pepper only scores about 30,000 to 50,000. Crushed red pepper flakes are made from cayenne peppers. Chili powder, as an alternative, always has

Romano Chicken Ingredients

- *2 chicken breasts
- *Plastic wrap
- *1/2 tsp. garlic salt
- *1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- *2 to 4 dashes of habanero powder (hot)
- *1/4 wedge of a large lemon
- *2 Tbsp. olive oil
- *1/3 cup grated dry Romano cheese

Italian Zucchini Ingredients

- *4 garlic cloves
- *1 small, purple onion
- *1 small carrot
- *2 zucchinis
- *2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- *1 Tbsp. Knorr tomato-chicken bouillon powder
- *1 large lemon
- *2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- *Romano or Parmigiana cheese (optional)

less heat than a fresh pepper. Exactly how hot chili powder is, depends on how long it has been since it was ground, as it loses potency over time.

Whatever your acceptable level of spice, our Romano chicken can be adjusted to suit, and combined with our Italian zucchini with lemon side dish, makes an excellent meal for a chilly autumn evening.

Romano Chicken Preparation

- *Wrap the chicken breasts in a layer of plastic wrap and place them on a cutting board.
- *Using a meat mallet, pound the chicken breasts on both sides into a flat layer of mostly consistent thickness.
- *Cut the lemon lengthwise into 4 equal quarters.
- *In a flat-bottom dish, large enough to hold the chicken breasts, add garlic salt, black pepper, and habanero powder.
- *Squeeze juice from one lemon wedge over spices.
- *Add olive oil and mix.
- *Remove plastic wrap and place chicken in the flat-bottomed dish. Roll chicken in marinade until covered with oil and spices.
- *Adjust oven rack to be 6 to 7 inches from the broiling element.
- *Let chicken marinate for 10-15 minutes.
- *On a plate, place half of the Romano cheese and roll both sides of chicken through the cheese distributing it evenly. Repeat with remaining breast and remaining cheese.

Cook

- *Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
- *Spread the chicken breasts out on a broiling pan.
- *Place pan in preheated oven and bake for 20-25 minutes, until chicken reaches 145 degrees Fahrenheit.
- *Turn oven to high broil and cook 2-5 more minutes, until chicken browns.

Serve

- *Place on a dinner plate with a side of our Italian Zucchini with Lemon.

of the skin from the lemon. The tool we prefer is referred to as a "zester with channel knife." It's small, easy to store, and the "channel knife" portion can be used to cut strips of peel to garnish food or to use as the "twist" in your cocktail.



Preparation

- *Cut the ends from garlic cloves. Remove and discard ends and dry skin.
- *With an 8-inch chef's knife, cut the garlic into 1/8-inch cubes.
- *Cut both ends from the purple onion. Remove and discard ends and dry skin.
- *Dice onion into 3/8-inch pieces.
- *Wash carrot. Cut and discard both ends.
- *Cut carrot in half lengthwise. Cut each half into 1/4-inch, thick half-moons.
- *Cut both ends from the zucchini and discard. Cut each zucchini in half lengthwise.
- *Cut each half into 3/8-inch half-moons.
- *Rinse the lemon. Using a zesting tool, remove zest from lemon.
- *With the chef's knife, cut the zest into 1/8-inch pieces to produce 2 teaspoons of lemon zest.
- *Cut the lemon in half. Set aside one half for another purpose. Remove seeds from remaining 1/2 lemon.

Cook

- *Place olive oil, garlic, onion, Italian seasoning, and carrot pieces in a non-stick fry pan over high heat. Continue stirring to prevent the garlic from burning and until the onions begin to turn translucent.
- *Sprinkle tomato-chicken bouillon powder over contents of the fry pan, stirring until well blended.
- *Add zucchini slices and lemon zest to the fry pan. Stir to mix well. Cook for 5-8 minutes, stirring occasionally and turning zucchini pieces over as needed.
- *Squeeze the 1/2 lemon over the contents of the fry pan and continue to cook for 2 more minutes, stirring as needed.
- *Remove the fry pan from heat.

Serve

- *Optionally sprinkle with Romano or Parmigiana cheese. Serve as a side dish. ■



Italian Zucchini with Lemon

In this recipe, we use a zesting tool, a small handheld tool that removes the yellow skin from the peel of the lemon without taking the bitter white pith beneath. If you don't have a zester, use a sharp vegetable peeler and carefully peel only the yellow portion

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ADOBE

When the weather's bad, the gym is closed, or the world is shut down for a pandemic, it's nice to feel in control of your own health with an at-home workout. Obviously, purchasing the right equipment will simplify your task, if you know what you like and have the space.

Weights and a bench are great. Ellipticals, rowing machines, and stationary bicycles help you get in your cardio.

However, there are other ways to DIY your workout. Elastic workout bands are cheap, easy to store, portable, and give resistance. Don't have those? Cans of food can make for light dumbbells. Gallon jugs make for heavy ones. A set of stairs can get your heart pumping, and small children frequently demonstrate that it's possible to walk or run endlessly even in a small house. Figure out your loop, whether that's up and down every hallway or circling the kitchen island, and you can get your steps in. Safe and unobstructed at home, I sometimes grab my Kindle and walk my loop while reading or streaming a video. You can binge-watch several episodes while staying fit.

If you're not sure of your workout, the app store on your phone or computer would be glad to offer up a menu of classes and coaching. You can't really go wrong with the 7 Minute Workout app, which only requires a chair and takes—you guessed it—just seven minutes.

I have a group of friends who meet up on Zoom to work out together, which brings in the social element many people need in order to stay motivated. Their meetup sometimes follows an online video series, such as Yoga with Adriene, but can also range far afield to such topics as hula and tap dancing.

Like any workout, the key is to listen to your body and stay moving. ■

www.bodybymefitness.com



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ADOBE

Seaside, Oregon is an hour west of Portland. This cute town boasts beachy shopping, sandy beaches, and all the saltwater taffy a person could want. Its 1.5 miles of oceanfront promenade, built in 1921, is particularly distinctive. There is also the Seaside Aquarium where you can feed seals. The town is divided by the Necanicum River.

On days with nice weather, tourists can rent kayaks, canoes, and paddle boats shaped like swans to tour the waterways.

Seaside is proud of the historic visit by members

of the Lewis and Clark expedition over 200 years ago. There is a modest saltworks display marking the site where they built a furnace to obtain salt. Instead, I recommend a short drive north to the Fort Clatsop Interpretive Center and the reconstructed fort, where the expedition spent the winter of 1806. The trip would also offer the opportunity to visit the remains of the Peter Iredale, the most iconic shipwreck on the Oregon Coast. Its rusted bow and masts still jut out from the sand. Additionally, if you're fond of boats and history, visit the Columbia River Maritime Museum in nearby Astoria.

Like most seaside towns, shops and restaurants abound. Visit the outlet mall for deals, and keep in mind there is no sales tax in Oregon. They also boast the Seaside Carousel Mall, complete with a colorful carousel inside. Several arcades and unique shops will please the whole family.

South of Seaside are numerous beach towns, including Cannon Beach, so named for the cannon that washed ashore and was discovered in 1898. It is known for Haystack Rock and the sand castle building contest they hold in June. ■





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NORTHANGER

Emmy Z. Madrigal

Kat is a horror fan. She loves to read, watch, and listen to ghostly, frightening things most people shy away from. When she meets her perfect match, Henry, she knows he's made just for her, but finding out his father may be a murderer, puts a different spin on their relationship. Is Henry's dad out for blood or just a misunderstood introvert who has lost his wife? Only a trip to the famed murder house, *Northanger*, will reveal the truth.



“*Northanger* is a delightful story based on Jane Austen’s classic, *Northanger Abbey*, that will appeal to both Austen fans and lovers of the gothic novel.”
 ~ Kara Louise, author of *Pirates and Prejudice*



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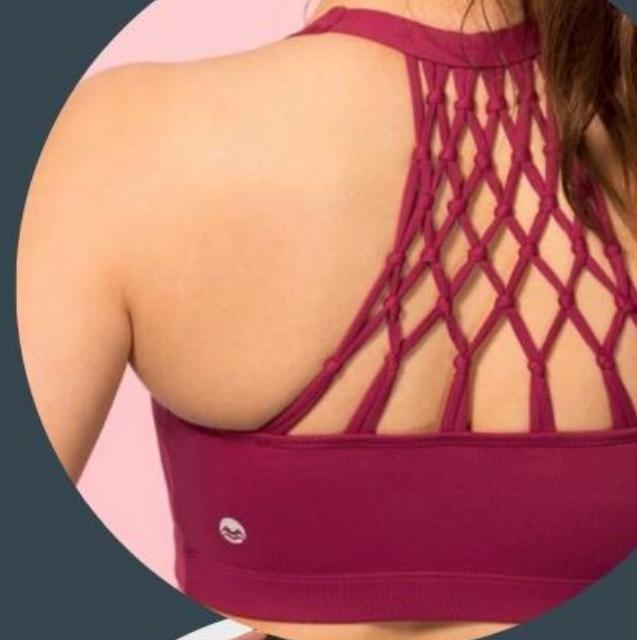
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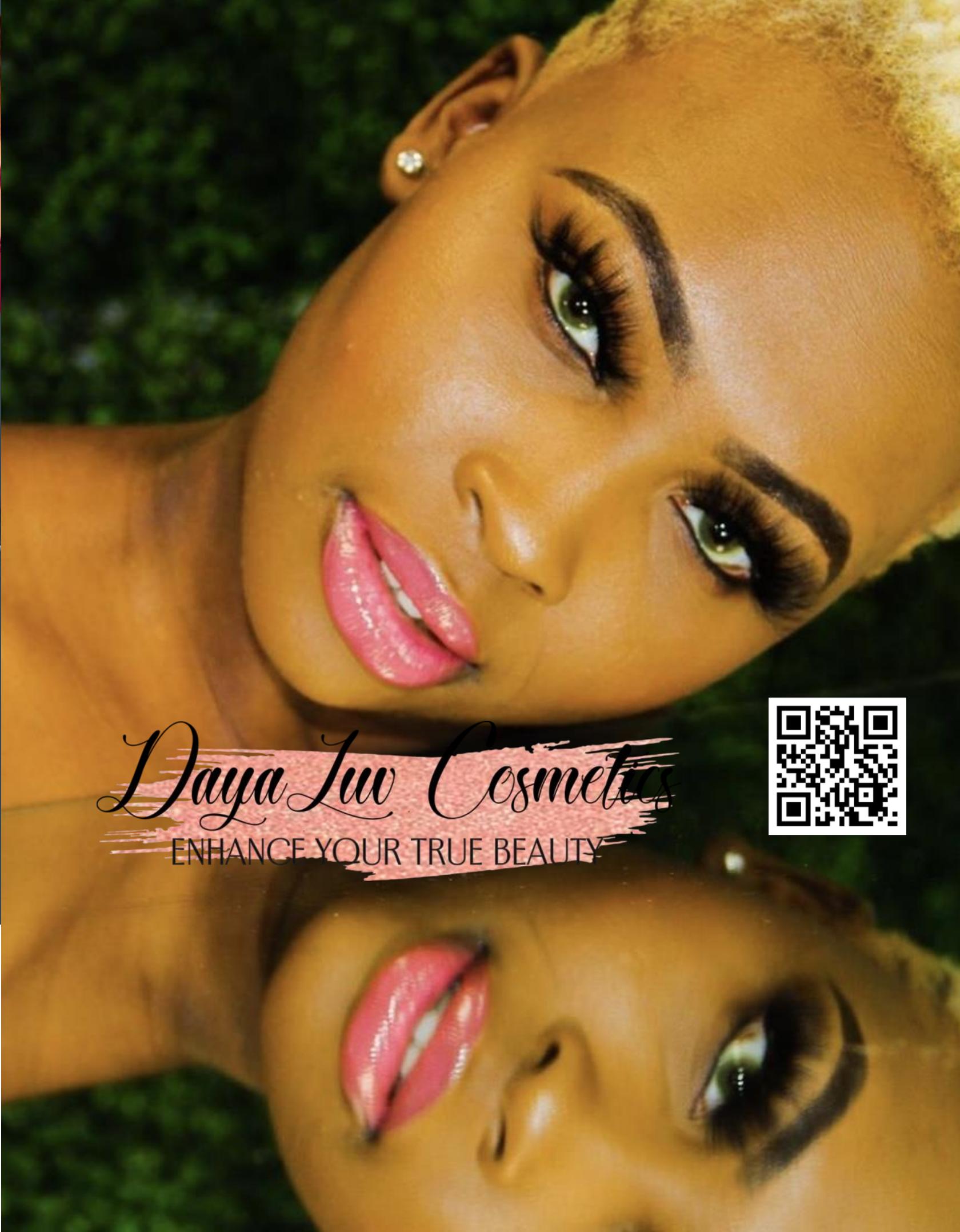


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Keeping a gratitude journal can become a powerful tool for promoting and protecting mental health. Now, more than ever, we need a simple, effective way to stay positive. A gratitude journal is both simple and effective.

According to Amie M. Gordon, Ph.D., “Using randomized controlled trial designs, researchers in two different groups found that people who kept gratitude journals or wrote gratitude letters to people they had never properly thanked, reported feeling happier and had significantly better health than those in the other treatment groups.”

MAKE IT SIMPLE

The phrase “gratitude journal” might conjure up intimidating images of a tooled leather cover, gold-embossed lettering, fine parchment, and perfect calligraphy. You don’t need the skills of a 13th Century monk to create your own gratitude journal.

Easy ideas to get started:

- ⇒ Use loose leaf notebook paper in a folder or three ring binder.
- ⇒ Try index cards to organize your ideas, which lend themselves to easy organization.

- ⇒ Choose a pen with ink of whatever color suits the feeling of gratitude you want to create.
- ⇒ Use a notebook or hardback journal. I use a 5x7-inch spiral notebook with lined paper and a black ballpoint pen. On the days when you’re feeling down and need to count your blessings, notebooks make it easier to flip back through all those positive moments.
- ⇒ Try a printable journal or worksheets available online. These are handy for getting started.

A gratitude journal can be as simple or as fancy as its user prefers. For small children or ASD kids who are nonverbal, stickers provide a way to keep track of memorable moments. With adult supervision, children old enough to use safety scissors might go through old magazines or calendars for pictures to be kept in their journals. The benefits to school age ASD kids could include improved motor skills, memory, and self-expression.

Am I suggesting people actually do this the old-fashioned way with paper and ink? But digital is so much faster, right? Slowing down is part of the gratitude process. “When you write by hand, you write more thoughtfully. Such mindful writing rests the brain, unlocking potential creativity,” says neuroscientist Claudia Aguirre. “Recent neuroscientific research has uncovered a distinct neural pathway that is only activated when we physically draw out our letters,” she writes.” And this pathway, etched deep with

practice, is linked to our overall success in learning and memory.

The psychological benefits of keeping a gratitude journal are considerable, and all the more so for ASD kids and adults who are on the spectrum. “There’s a growing body of research on the benefits of gratitude,” says Maanvi Singh. “Studies have found that giving thanks and counting blessings can help people sleep better, lower stress, and improve interpersonal relationships. Earlier this year, a study found that keeping a gratitude journal decreased materialism and bolstered generosity among adolescents.”

When it comes to children and adolescents on the autistic spectrum, the need for combatting depression could well be more urgent than parents, teachers, and even health care professionals realize. According to Elemy.com, “Depression and autism often go hand in hand, but in the past, depression has often been overlooked in the autistic community. Recent research is showing the overlap of these two disorders is much more common than was previously recorded. Recorded rates of comorbid autism and depression range from as low as 1.4% all the way up to 57%.”

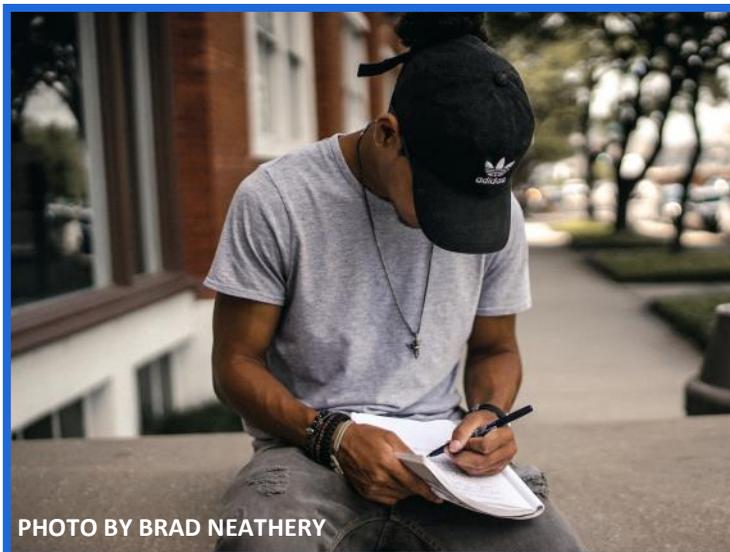


PHOTO BY BRAD NEATHERY

There are times when the world feels full of bad news everywhere we look. We can protect our mental and physical well-being by staying focused on the good things happening all around us. The more we practice looking for them, the more good moments we’ll find. This is a crucial life skill to pass on to our ASD kids. In Amy Seeley’s article, “Focus: Cultivating and Sharing Gratitude” she says, “For our loved ones with autism, teaching them to thank others can be the first step toward gratitude. When we thank people for what they have shared with us, whether that is an actual gift or the gift of themselves, we also are connecting with them and showing that we value them. This social skill is critical to helping our loved ones with autism make friends, get a job, and live a fulfilling life.” ■



PHOTO BY MAX VAN DEN OETELAAR

EFFECTIVENESS

Both children and adults with ASD are prone to physical problems such as high blood pressure and digestive issues. In her article “What Is Gratitude,” Kendra Cherry writes, “The practice of gratitude can have a significant positive impact on both physical and psychological health. Some of the benefits of gratitude that researchers have uncovered include:

- ⇒ Better sleep
- ⇒ Better immunity
- ⇒ Higher self-esteem
- ⇒ Decreased stress
- ⇒ Lower blood pressure
- ⇒ Less anxiety and depression
- ⇒ Stronger relationships
- ⇒ Higher levels of optimism”



I watch my baby
Take the paintbrush by storm.

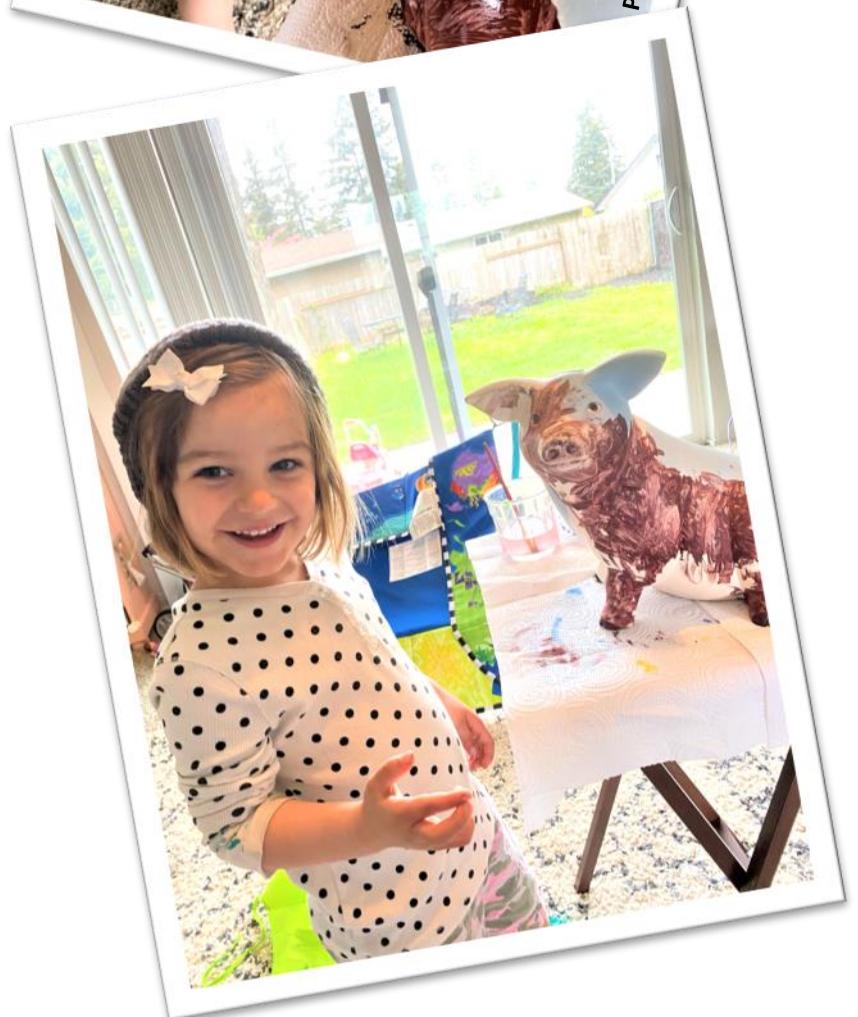
She does not think
About where it goes.

She lets the motion
Of her energy flow,
Like she already knows
This is not for a performance
Or to romance another.

It is purely for the feeling
Of a blissful summer color mix
Or dancing to the beat
Of a drummer
As the music sways
Her hand to switch.

How wonderful
If we could all be this open.
If we could all be this careless.
If we could all create
As freely.

What would our world
Be then,
If we saw it
From the eyes of a girl
This hopeful and naïve?



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