

FOREWORD by Mauro Zappaterra, MD, PhD
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Every living creature experiences pain. But how do we communicate about this totally subjective experience? The International Association for the Study of Pain describes pain as “an unpleasant sensory or emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.” But that hardly conveys its scope. The leading textbook *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* describes it as “a subjective and entirely individual personal experience influenced by learning, context, and multiple psychosocial variables.”

Your pain is totally unique to you. Pain cannot be measured with a tool, or by a lab value or some other objective standard. As medical professionals, we can say, “You have high blood pressure,” but we cannot say either “You are in pain” or “You are not in pain.” Margo McCaffery, RN, a pioneer in pain management nursing, describes pain as “whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever and wherever the person says it does.”

Because pain is an experience, many factors influence that experience, increasing or decreasing its intensity. The perception of pain is influenced by context, mood, sleep, meaning, conditioning, expectations, culture, incentives, past experiences, emotions, beliefs, attention, learning, genetics, and much more. What this means is that the amount of sleep you’ve had, or your mood, or the culture you live in, or your beliefs about pain, actually influence the pain experience you are having. As technology has

improved, we have learned more about the areas of the brain that are activated when a person experiences a painful stimulus. Surprisingly, many of those areas of the brain are important in processing emotions and attention. Therefore, the pain experience can be modulated—turned up or turned down, as if you were adjusting the volume dial on the radio—by working with your emotions and your attention.

Create to Heal for Pain is designed to do exactly that. It is an experiential book that helps you process your emotions around pain and shift your awareness and perception of the pain you are experiencing. Art is an extremely powerful form of expression for emotions, feelings, and beliefs, and can be used as a tool to focus your attention on healing and/or decreasing your pain. *Create to Heal for Pain* asks you to focus on the process of making images, which in essence means total concentration on the moment. This kind of focused concentration lessens the pain signals in the brain, and therefore decreases your suffering.

Eric J. Cassel, MD, states that “Suffering occurs when an impending destruction of the person is perceived; it continues until the threat of disintegration has passed or until the integrity of the person can be restored in some other manner. . . . Most generally, suffering can be defined as the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person.” Dr. Cassel observed that “people in pain frequently report suffering from the pain when they feel out of control, when the pain is overwhelming, when the source of the pain is unknown, when the meaning of the pain is dire, or when the pain is chronic. In all these situations, persons perceive pain as a threat to their continued existence—not merely to their lives, but to their integrity as persons. That this is the relation of pain to suffering is strongly suggested by the fact

that suffering can be relieved, in the presence of continued pain, by making the source of the pain known, changing its meaning, and demonstrating that it can be controlled, and that an end is in sight.”

Through *Create to Heal for Pain*, we hope to help you decrease your suffering as you come to feel more in control of your pain, as you find a meaning to your pain, as you come to the deep knowledge that who you truly are can never be destroyed and that however fierce the pain, your pure wholeness is eternal and untouched.