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Subject: Celebrating 20 years in practice: "Drawing Purple Trees" (Autumn 2012)
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"Drawing Purple Trees": Celebrating 20 Years In Practice.

"Living With Purpose And Passion"
The Dan Keusal e-newsletter

Autumn 2012

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my work as a
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Speaker, and
Workshop Leader,
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Quotes for Inspiration And Reflection.

* * *

*"For all that has been,
thanks.
To all that shall be,
yes."*

(Dag Hammarskjold)

* * *

"Live to the point

Dear Dan,



With Thanksgiving just a few days away, I find myself particularly thankful for an anniversary that just occurred: it was 20 years ago this autumn that I began my psychotherapy practice. I am thankful for the many clients who have trusted me to witness and support their journey. I am thankful for the community of colleagues that has supported me in this work. I am thankful for those who have shown up as teachers and mentors--in supervision, in workshops and lectures, on the web, in books and articles, and in myriad other ways.

In celebration of this anniversary, and in hopeful expectation of whatever the next 20 years may bring, this newsletter includes my latest essay, "Drawing Purple Trees," along with new installments of my usual features: Quotes For Inspiration And Action, 3 Good Poems, and Resources For A Richer Life. May your own life be quietly rich with possibilities as Autumn descends and deepens.

Peace,

~Dan

Reflections: "Drawing Purple Trees--Celebrating 20 Years In Practice."

When I was a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame, I found myself one day paging through the course catalog for the College of Arts & Letters, curious about electives and dreaming about majors other than my own. It was there I came across an essay by Professor Elizabeth Christman titled "Drawing Purple Trees," adapted from a talk she had given at the closing breakfast of Notre Dame's annual "Junior Parents Weekend."

Christman noted that "When students float from one major to another, dipping into courses which seem miles from any coherent life plan, parents get nervous." She then suggested, that such "floating" may be the norm, rather than the exception, that if we're honest, we'll admit that "chances and coincidences and serendipitous

of tears."
(Albert Camus)

* * *

"Perhaps everything
that frightens us is, in
its deepest essence,
something helpless
that needs our love."
(Rilke)

* * *

"You use a mirror to see
your face, you use the
arts to see your soul."
(George Bernard Shaw)

* * *

encounters and trivial events" have as much to do with shaping a life as does a clear plan, that all of us "first exist, and then define ourselves," to paraphrase Sartre.

She wrote that when children make drawings of "purple trees, and cows with both eyes on one side of the head," parents don't say "Trees are supposed to be *green!*" They simply "rejoice in their child's developing creativity." She then reassured those anxious parents that "Trees *can* look purple in certain rosy dawns and copper sunsets. Let the picture widen and develop. In the meantime, paste the purple tree fondly on the door of the refrigerator."

When a client tells me that their own "floating" has left them feeling lost, when they ask for my help in getting rid of some problem that is troubling them, I try to remember what Professor Christman wrote about purple trees. I try to make therapy the proverbial refrigerator, a safe place where the life a client has drawn so far can be fondly "pasted" up, and gazed at with wonder, reflection, and care.

It's the approach that Thomas Moore wrote about in *Care of The Soul* (which was published the same year I began my practice): "I understand therapy as nothing more than bringing imagination to areas that are devoid of it." Just as "trees can look purple in certain rosy dawns and copper sunsets," troubling problems can morph from dead ends into doorways when subjected to imagination's alchemy (a word that means "a power or process of transforming something common into something special").

Imagination can transform the pain of loneliness...into a solitude that brings clarity--and the courage to act on it. Imagination can transform uncertainty about your job...into awakening the part of you that feels a deep calling to follow a different path, but has been afraid to try. Imagination can transform the difficult tears that flow from sorrow and grief...into life-giving waters that provide unexpected nutrients for under-nourished parts of the soul (hence the phrase "I had a good cry").

I think that this way of bringing imagination to bear, this kind of alchemy, is akin to Professor Christman's advice to "let the picture widen and develop." In a world that constantly pressures us to narrow and define, to compartmentalize and diagnose, to constrict and control, the choice to widen and develop is a courageous act of soul-making.

I encourage you to make that choice, and to keep drawing your own purple trees. And if you find yourself in need of a "refrigerator," psychotherapy offers a few features you won't find on the models sold at Home Depot, Sears, or Lowe's.

-Dan

Resources for a richer life...

More than just "self-help," Resources For A Richer Life is meant to bring you music, movies, books, magazines, web sites, events, videos and more that will stir your soul, and awaken the deepest, most alive parts of you.

(video) "[In A Dark Wood--The Lure of Shadows](#)" (James Hollis). In this brief, two-minute collection of excerpts from a larger talk, Jungian Analyst Hollis speaks about the connection between finding meaning in our lives and "the degree to which we are willing to open ourselves to mystery, to the unknown, to the invisible that courses through the visible."

(video) "[If I Should Have A Daughter](#)" (Sarah Kay). A live performance at a "TED" lecture that begins with a poem addressed to Kay's imagined future daughter, and then continues with her own approach to making meaning of the past, and allowing it to feed dreams of the future. The standing ovation she receives at the end is, I think, an acknowledgment of the genuinely inspiring presence [Kay](#) brings to the stage--and to life.

(video) "[The Journey](#)" (David Whyte). In less than 2 minutes, David Whyte introduces and recites a poem "written for a friend who was going through a difficult time, but becoming ever more present as she was doing it, and I was just filled with admiration for her."

3 Good Poems

*"It is difficult to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack of what is found there."
~William Carlos Williams*

Click on the titles below to read the poems online; you can also access them by going to the "[Writings](#)" page of my web site, finding the link for my "e-newsletters," and then clicking on the link for the Autumn 2012 edition:

1. "[Clearing](#)" (Morgan Farley)
2. "[Kindness](#)" (Naomi Shihab Nye)
3. "[X](#)" (Wendell Berry)

Upcoming workshops & lectures by Dan Keusal

I've enjoyed an unusually large number of opportunities to speak and offer workshops this Fall, but nearly all of them have been "in-house" offerings for various organizations, lectures and workshops not open to the public.

For news about offerings that WILL be open to the public, watch future editions of this e-newsletter.

If you would like me to come speak to your group, please call me at (206) 523-1340, or [email](#) me.

On my web site, you can view a list of the [organizations](#) that have invited me to speak, and a list of my [recent workshops](#).

Psychotherapy for Individuals & Couples

*"The greatest and most important problems in life
can never be solved,
only outgrown."*

~C.G. Jung

I offer Jungian-oriented psychotherapy for individuals and couples. Whether you come to me with a problem (like depression, stress, anxiety, relationship issues) or simply the sense that it's time for a change, I help you look at how that starting point is calling you to grow, and how you can respond with creativity, vitality, and hope.

To learn more, visit my web site by clicking [here](#).

To schedule an appointment,
or if you have questions,
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That's it for this issue of "Living With Purpose and Passion." As always, I welcome your comments & suggestions. You can send me an [email](#) or you can call me at (206) 523-1340.

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