



The Art of Health: Ways of Creativity & Healing in America
A series for television

Health is a creative act, an ever-renewing balance of body, mind, and spirit. This state of peace is more than responding to the fact of existence, on it depends all life and sustenance. Healing itself, whether of a wound, a bone, or a psychic trauma is generally accepted as a mystery that takes place beyond medical treatment. Health care, then, is the sum of medical expertise and individual spiritual strength. How to evoke our innate healing ability is a question for the ages, a question that will guide our research and discovery.

In our first documentary, *Healing Words, Poetry & Medicine* (broadcast on PBS in 2008; directed by James Cavanaugh & David Drewry) we found that creativity is essential, that our health and welfare require daily renewal, that a resilient body and mind are not conceived once, but over and over again.

What is a body's **capacity** to be fully **engaged** in its own healing? Experience teaches that when the arts are applied to health **care** the patient reclaims a degree of authority over body **and mind**. The simple act of changing the role from "sick person" to "co-creator of health" is often the first step in transformation. In crisis, artistic expression is a gesture of life to challenge the forces of silence, suffering and intimidation.

"It is better to know the patient that has the disease than the disease that has the patient."
-William Osler, 1881

"We expect doctors to ask us if we smoke," says Jeremy Nobel, M.D. lecturer at Harvard School of Public Health. "Should we expect them also to ask us if we have a creative outlet?" More than any one modality, inclusion may be the most powerful catalyst toward life. Can patient participation reduce the disease burden on society?

It is not an exclusion of medical care, but an inclusion of creative thought, says Harvard Psychologist Ellen Langer, PhD.[Counterclockwise, 2009] that may lead us to re-conceive all experienced medical and physiological fact.

A rapidly growing collection of stories in print and television document a movement away from the 20th century tradition of the passive patient, and toward a new culture of healthcare user involvement. *Healing Words, Poetry & Medicine* tells of a program at the University of Florida that is modeling new behavior, for doctors as well as their clients.

Modern data on the power of the arts in wellness, as is gathered by the Society for the Arts in Healthcare, shows us to be more accomplished than we know but far less than we speak of.

The Art of Health will capture a diversity of stories from their source, revealing us at our best: Responding in time of need. Each story will contribute evidence of practice as well as proof, anecdotal and empirical, of our collective capacity. As Dr Langer's research reminds us, what one can do, all can do.

"The power of people doing things for themselves is very strong medicine." -Kate Long, Nurse coordinator of Stanford arthritis self-management program.

The Art of Health is planned as a ten-part national television documentary that will present emerging options in sustainable healthcare. Those who discover renewed quality and depth of life at the urging, even insistence of sickness or trauma are our expert witnesses, our pioneers in *The Art of Health*. Whether in cancer centers, pediatrics units, hospice, or even in the face of disaster, as in the Katrina shelters, here are stories at the nexus of creativity and healthcare in America.

We propose that "art" is any process that invites mystery – and original response – into the healing process. Healing is an art like any other; we will incline to it as our ability grows.

Today, a shift is needed so that we may take the first step. *The Art of Health* is that shift.

Everybody is an artist, meaning everybody can determine the content of life in his particular sphere, whether in painting, engineering, caring for the sick, the economy or whatever. All around us the fundamentals of life are crying out to be shaped... or created.
-Joseph Beuys