



Creating the Guardian

I think we have an added advantage being dollmakers. We can take words that describe a symptom, research the details about the system and turn it into a metaphor....and then using our creative toolbox engage with this knowledge through art making that mirrors back to us a new relationship we can have with our bodies. ...and when done we share the story of our lessons and learning that encourages our group to made new connections for themselves, explore deeper and make their own metaphors and images. All so creatively scientific.....

The Transformative Art of Healing Dolls

A Guided Process Making Art Dolls for Self Awareness, Discovery and Healing

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ONLINE COURSE
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The Guardian

Defender, Protector, Keeper

Purpose: *To protect, motivate, encourage, support*

This doll represents a witness who supports you through this process. It will reflect protection, guidance, hope, possibility, and encouragement. The Guardian will be a symbol of permission to do the work that follows. She will contain positive input and encouragement as you travel on this creative journey. Once she is completed, put her where you will be creating the other dolls, as she will be a reminder that you are moving through a healing process. Always keep her present.

Your Guardian holds all your inner healing tools:
Your ability to love unconditionally.
Your ability to support, cherish, listen, and understand.
Your ability to forgive, be kind, be joyful, and be playful.

If you study Tarot cards, the Guardian is the Magician, the one who is always focused on her intent before moving through a life process. You may want to a pocket on your Guardian doll to hold a written statement of your healing intention.

Here's what previous students have said about the Guardian:

The guardian is a constant reminder to me to look at the lighter side of life and she stands next to my bed so I see her first thing every morning.

The guardian doll, which is my favorite one, showed me the warmth that I am. It opened a place inside of me that I didn't know existed. She is beside my bed and provides much comfort and protection.

The guardian doll is showing me how to love myself. My little girl self. That she is always present and we have alot to give each other.

This doll is most often in the form of a guardian angel, a grandmother, an ancestor, a spirit guide, a totem animal, or a compassionate mother earth. She is often a nurturing and loving image.

Then again, Debi (pictured to right) came up with a guardian monster:

I remembered that I didn't play with dolls, that I had a ton of stuffed animals . . . my protectors. So my monster is composed of several animals, with human hands, holding my baby self. We are looking at each other with love and gratitude. Both emotions seem to be coming out of both of us. I'm so happy to get to keep him. He feels very protective and loving and is now so real. I can picture his smiling face whenever I need to. It almost feels a little silly to think that it matters but I feel so strongly that he is real. When I look at him I feel so emotional. The little_ hurt baby_ me is comforted and relieved. Relieved to be alive. Relieved to have made it into this world intact. Relieved to finally have somebody or something there for me always.



We hold our pain like a precious gold charm locked in the safe deposit box of our heart. Never letting it see the full light of day, it leaks out venom, pumping the poison through our arteries, into our veins and onto our lives, holding us hostage with its increasing power. You can let it kill you or you can kill it. I say go there – open that Pandora's box and set your artist free. She's dying (literally) to get out of the box. And she can't emerge unless you give her back her rightful pain. She earned it. Now let her feel it. And sob from it and sculpt from it and paint it and write it and sing it.

Nancy Slonim Aronie
WRITING FROM THE HEART:
Tapping the Power of Your Inner Voice



Erika's Guardian, Gurudevi. This doll helped her through a move from Connecticut to Washington, DC. It wanted crystal and to be wearable. It has the face of an eagle and chakra crystals along its spine. (Picture to right.)

When I thought again about what I needed for a guardian, I knew immediately what she was going to look like. I drew her image in pencil. She was going to have the face of a bird, and was meant to be worn with the harness over the shoulders. She has crystals hanging down to hang over the wearer's head. This time, though there were technical challenges, the whole process of making this doll went quickly.



I never allow anybody to make a shadow doll their first time. I believe that a student first needs to evoke the help of the Compassionate Mother or a similar positive archetype.
Cassandra Light
Way of the Doll



Jessie, an online member living with breast cancer, wrote about creating her Guardian:

Well, today my Guardian doll finally decided to make an appearance. YAY!!! Quilts and wrapping up were definitely part of her, as well as safety and security . . . so I went to my stack o' stuff and began to plunder. I'm very happy with her and I see a lot of symbols coming forth. The outside of her robe is a piece of crazy quilted material I saved from my absolute favorite shirt that I wore until the holes were just too big. The inside of her robe is lined with a starry sky material, for infinite possibilities that I have in my life. Her body is a piece of

wood from my family farm, back in WV. I made her face very peaceful and without hair. At the moment, hair represents something to hide behind for me, so I left it off. No hiding here. LOL No hair either! Well, there are a few tiny baby hairs beginning to make their appearance . . . Inside her robe, hugged up and safe is a green nest. Nests are safe places for fragile things and places for new beginnings. The nest is sitting on a moss covered rock, again from the family farm, a place where I have my foundation, but new things have grown from me since leaving, hence the moss. I'm sitting in the nest and I have room to put things that I need to call into my life or things that I need to work out. I do think this lady is something special and I have a lot of talking/ journaling to do with her.

It's so nice to be feeling human again. I am thinking much more clearly and I think there are big things ahead in the near future. I'm so happy to finally be getting immersed in the [healing] doll process. It is such a powerful way of being/ doing. And when things click, watch out! It's magic! So many things came up with my Guardian doll that I didn't realize until after she was almost complete. It was just WOW! Barb, I get what you meant when you said just follow the process and it will happen. Once I stopped trying to make things work, everything just fell into place. I am so loving this!

Jessie's Guardian picture



What does a Guardian look like?



What does a Guardian look like?



What does a Guardian look like?





CREATIVE ACTION

Do a mind map, writing the word guardian in the center of the page, then write words or draw images that come to you when you think about a Guardian figure. What qualities will you guardian have or contain?

Draw or collect images from magazines, then collage guardian images and symbols. Choose one that most resonates with you. Don't spend too much time on this. Usually the first image are thought is the best.

What body parts does a Guardian have to have? Look at the pictures of Guardians made by past members of online groups. What do they have in common?

What images and symbols will she/he be holding and wearing?

WHAT COULD BE A GUARDIAN

- Animals with guardian qualities
- Earth Mother or Mother Earth
- Angels
- Dragon, owl
- Sacred figures like a saint, person from a holy book—Buddha, Tara, Kwan Yin
- Maternal figures, perhaps a grandmother or wisdom figure
- Goddesses
- Images from nature, like a tree or rock
- Super Hero
- A healer, a shaman, a doctor or nurse

GUARDIANS CAN BE A:

- A three-dimensional doll
- A paper doll
- A mixed media figure
- A sculpture

Make your guardian doll when you're ready

It is best to make the guardian doll first.



Healing Doll Story

Patty's Blessing Way

Blessing Way is a ritual performed within a Navajo Changing Woman ceremony to ensure a blessed life of good health, emotional strength, prosperity, and a positive outlook.

I created Blessing Way for my cousin, Patty, who requested a healing doll from me after she was diagnosed with stage one breast cancer in 2011. I asked Patty to answer the 10 questions that I always ask be answered by the person who requests a healing doll. I use the answers to the questions to design the doll. The 10 Questions and Patty's answers are at the end of this article.

Patty was born and raised in Davenport, Iowa. She is a mother and grandmother. She and her husband lived in Arizona for a while and she fell in love with the colors and symbols of the Southwest. I used her favorite colors and colors of the elements on the doll: blue, orange, yellow and shades of red. I used the symbols she liked in the overall design of the doll: circles, round, curvy pottery shapes and sand painting figures.

The spirals on her breasts are common feminine symbols and are symbols used in Reiki. (Reiki is a hands-on Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing.) I used spirals on the dolls breasts because of Patty's breast cancer. Three figure symbols are around her large, female hips that are in petro glyph shapes and are similar to the shapes of the female sexual organs.

Patty said that the doll would be a symbol of the power of friendship and the circle of caring. The base of the doll's gown is circled by pockets that hold small flat dolls that have pockets behind them. Inside the pockets are messages from Patty's circle of friends; there are extra dolls for others to share their words of support and caring. There are small circles on her gown that have embroidery stitches through them with a bead in the middle; these symbolize the healthy, healing cells that are dissolving and removing cancer cells from the body.

Blessing Way wears a hat with a bandana; around the hat is a band of red roses. The hat symbolizes ongoing protection from harmful energies. Patty belongs to the Catholic Church and within the church the rose is seen as the queen of flowers, symbol of the Virgin Mary, representing romance, religion, and healing. I felt strongly led to put roses somewhere on Patty's Blessing Way.



At first, Patty's response to the question about her favorite fairy tale surprised me. I wondered what could be the meaning or metaphor contained in this story and how did it relate to the meaning of Patty's doll. Patty said her first, intuitive response to the last question was Pat-a-Cake, a very old and famous nursery rhyme. She had many, sweet memories of playing the hand game with her children and grandchildren. It wasn't until I read *MEMORIES OF OUR LOST HANDS: Searching for Feminine Spirituality and Creativity* by Sonoko Toyoda. I read women's hands express the wisdom and gifts of the body. Women's hands pick up and hold



things; they are secondary eyes. Hands connect one person to another, take care of another, love and heal. Blessing Way's hands connect her with the hearts and souls of her family and to life and when brought together they celebrate life, play, and prayer bringing serenity and calm.

THE TEN QUESTIONS

1. What colors are you drawn to? Do you wear often? Are your favorites? **blue, orange, soft yellow, shades of red**
2. What will this doll stand for, will be a symbol of? What will she remind you to think, feel and/or do when you see it? **healing power of friendship and the circle of caring**
3. What elements describe you? Earth, air, fire, water? **Earth, mountains, sky, water**
4. What symbols do you like? You collect these, spend time around them, are drawn to them like a magnet? **Circles, not peace or happy face, most of my Arizona stuff is some form of circle, pottery, figures on my sand paintings**
5. What part or parts of your body do you feel need healing? **Right now I would have to say my cells deep in my body that are attacked to cancer breast cancer usually comes back in the lungs or female organs**
6. If an animal with special powers were present in your life what would that animal be? **Cats**
7. When do you feel the most powerful? **In the company of my friends or church group mixed gender**
8. When do you feel the least powerful? **When I can feel free to give up my power to someone else it can be a good thing**
9. What does your heart yearn for? **Serenity and calm which is why I like yoga and classic music**
10. What is your favorite fairy tale? Explain how this fairy tale has meaning for you or how it is a metaphor for your life? I guess I don't look on my life in a fairy tale way I think in short spaces of time depending on the events in my life. Right now some of my favorites that would have meaning in my life would be Jack and Jill and especially **Pat a Cake , which is the first nursery rhyme I sang with my grandkids or my own kids for that matter.**