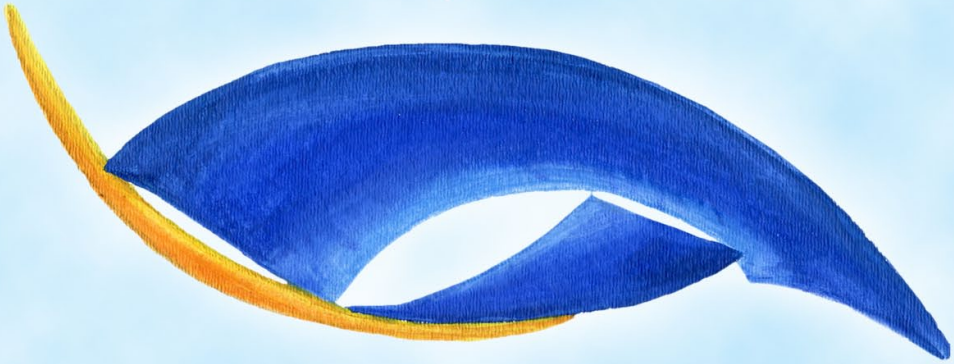
BRIDGE DESIGN JOURNAL

A TOOL FOR SELF-DISCOVERY AND PERSONAL GROWTH



BASED ON

Bridges in the Mind

An Artist's Handbook for Everyday Living

by Marianne Roccaforte, Ph.D.

2011 Benu Press, Hopkins MN

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The techniques, exercises, and resources presented in this supplementary journal, and in the book *Bridges in the Mind,* are intended as general recommendations only. They do not replace the individualized guidance of a mental-health professional.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Bridge Design Journal! This notebook is intended to help you record, explore, and synthesize your internal experiences as you read and work through *Bridges in the Mind.* Setting aside time to sit with your thoughts and let them simmer is an important step in self-discovery and growth.

Think of the journal as a creative "vat" in which to capture and store your reflections, wonderings, images, feelings, beginnings of creative works, even daydreams. You may want to date your entries, and remember it's a place for fresh, raw materials from your mind—so give yourself lots of freedom to explore.

At the start of each chapter of this journal you'll find abbreviated versions of the journal prompts (questions to explore through your writings, sketches, or other notations); these exercises are explained in more detail within the corresponding chapters of *Bridges in the Mind.*

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Jennie Whitmer, *Growth of Difference*, 2009 acrylic on canvas, 10″ x 8″

CHAPTER 1

BECOMING "BILINGUAL"

Questions for Reflection

How do you *naturally* find yourself communicating—what's your default mode? When have you felt *most at ease* talking to other people? In what kinds of situations have you found yourself *least comfortable* communicating with others?

OBSERVATION EXERCISE #1: Take your journal and go out in the world where there are people you don't know. Take a seat. Choose a single scene to focus on where individuals are interacting. Zoom in. Listen to how the people there speak, both in content and style. Write or sketch what you see and hear.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE #2: For the next three days, in your everyday interactions, be intentional about noticing how other people speak. When you have a moment to record your observations, jot down what you see and hear.

"BILINGUAL" COMMUNICATION EXERCISE: Consider the situations in your life when you've felt most out of step with other people. Select the one that you're most likely to encounter again in the future. Describe what happened: WHERE were you? WHEN did it occur? WHO was there? WHAT did you intend to do or say? WHAT did you actually do or say? HOW did it all turn out?

(A) Which aspects of those words or actions express *aesthetic beauty, abstract concepts, connotative associations,* or *a future orientation (imaginative possibilities)*?

(B) Which aspects reflect a focus on *basic function, concrete measurable facts, linear logic, literal meaning,* or *a present orientation (provable in the here-and-now)*?

Now *rewrite* what you actually did or said in your situation, this time focusing solely on (B) above. Experiment with different versions.

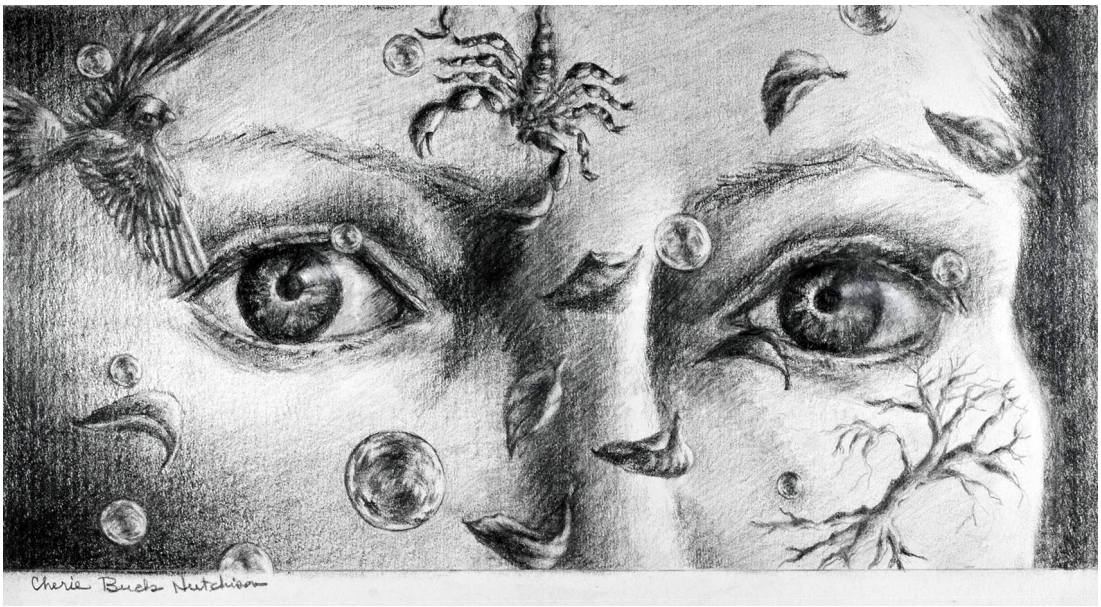
How did it feel to consciously shift between the two perspectives or frames of mind? What did you learn?

PERSONALIZE & APPLY

What points about becoming "bilingual" resonated for you the most? Which were most difficult to read and think about?

Select *one component* (the *functional, concrete, measurable, literal,* or *present-oriented* aspects of things) that you'd like to practice using in the next three weeks, in the course of your everyday interactions. Pick a target date, place(s), and people with whom you could gain some practice.

What happened? How did it feel? What new insights did you acquire?



Cherie Buck-Hutchison,
My World, 2009
pencil on paper, 12″ x 6″

FACETING: PROTECTING YOUR ARTIST SELF

AN IMAGINED DIALOGUE: To prepare for this exercise, choose five words (or short phrases) that describe you best in terms of personality, interests, talents, values, etc. For each descriptor, think of an *opposite* word or phrase, something that captures the antithesis of who you are. Write these words down. Now try synthesizing that *second* set of five qualities (the "opposites") into a single fictional character. (Use the prompt questions on pages 41-42 of *Bridges in the Mind* to fill out your character.)

1. List some places, situations, or people in your life where you feel safe to reveal your *private, artist self.*
2. Now list some places, situations, or people in your life where it would be helpful to present your public image, *a genuine but less vulnerable facet of yourself.*
3. Envision this outside self with your eyes closed. What are some *personality traits,*

interests, or patterns of communicating that might describe your chosen persona?

4. What are some *external attributes* (clothing, hairstyle, accessories, home furnishings, mode of transportation, etc.) that would reinforce this personality?
5. Compose a *dialogue* in your journal between *yourself from your newly developing public persona* and the character you invented above. Remember, your goal is to discover commonalities with your new character without necessarily disclosing or retreating into your private self.
6. After you've written your imagined dialogue, write about the feelings and thoughts you had as you worked on it.

PRACTICING FACETING: List some ways you could actively apply the strategy of faceting in your external life in the next few weeks. Allow your ideas to flow freely. Once you're ready to get specific, identify *where and when* you might practice actually interacting and speaking with other people from your public persona. (Remember to start small.)

SELF-PORTRAIT: Create one or more pieces of art through which you will capture or express your essential personal identity (what makes you *you*). Using any medium of your choice—musical composition, poem, painting, video, photograph, dance, etc.—create a work (or a series of compositions) that symbolizes who you genuinely are. You might make a single work in several "acts," each representing a facet of your true self. The piece could feature various parts of your identity interacting—in conversation—with one another.

Denisse B. Leon, *Design Ignites Change*, 2009 mixed media, 9.2″ x 7.0″

CHAPTER 3

MAINTAINING A REGULAR DISCIPLINE OF ART-MAKING

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS: What reactions or thoughts came to you as you read Chapter 3? Which aspects are you most excited about? What conflicts or barriers do you anticipate? What people or places could you tap into to help resolve these challenges? What knowledge do you have about yourself—your personality, work style, preferred environment, and current situation—that will inform and shape your plan?

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE—10 YEARS IN THE FUTURE: Take a moment to recall the images that rose up during your visualization (explained on pages 65-66 of *Bridges in the Mind*). Capture on paper whatever aspects of your scene that you wish to remember.

SHORT-TERM PLANNING EXERCISE:

1. Acknowledging any current limits of time or material resources, what do you want to have accomplished, learned, or experienced in your artistic life *in the next three weeks*?
2. Write down your three-week goal in your journal, and what the date will be three weeks from today. Remember to keep your goal simple and specific.
3. Consider the steps, or activities, that your three-week goal will involve.
4. Next, assess your challenges and resources. What sacrifices, changes, or lifestyle adjustments will you need to make? Who in your life will be your ally or supporter in making these changes?
5. Sketch out a reasonable plan to reach your goal within the next three weeks. What might be a feasible schedule for you? Outline your plan your own way. Visibly post it where you'll see it every day. Share your plan, and periodic updates, with a trusted friend.
6. Reflect on your progress: Was your initial three-week plan a feasible one? Do you need to make any adjustments? What are you discovering about yourself? Are you satisfied with how you're fulfilling your commitment to yourself as an artist? What unanticipated outcomes have you encountered? What might you do differently next time?

Rebecca S. Martos, *Whoosh*, 2009
still video image

CHAPTER 4

MAKING CHOICES AND CHANGING HATS

TRAINING YOURSELF TO TRANSITION: Describe some times in your life when you've been engrossed in thought—and then suddenly had to function alertly on a practical level. What did the shift feel like? Then list several concrete situations in your current life that require you to be oriented to the present moment and communicate with people in a concrete and linear way. Visualize making this transition comfortably and confidently.

COMMUNICATION TOOL KIT: Recall topics, words, phrases, and gestures that you noticed are commonly used by other people in everyday social or business settings. Pick five phrases and write/speak/practice them.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS: Review concepts and techniques from *Bridges in the Mind* related to making choices and changing hats. Which passages struck a personal

chord for you? Explore ways those ideas might apply in your life.

OUTSIDE-WORLD PRACTICE: After you've explored your reactions, choose *two strategies or tips* for making choices and changing hats. Write or sketch ways you could practice them during the next three weeks. As you try out these techniques, record your experiences and observations.

STORY-COMPLETION EXERCISE: Finish the following story in your way, experimenting especially with the techniques found in the Chapter 4 section "Training Yourself to Transition," and applying what you learned in Chapter 1 about becoming "bilingual." Feel free to write several different endings.

You walk into the supermarket to pick up a few groceries. It's 5:30 on a Wednesday evening in summer, and you've just left work. You enter the produce section first, and are immediately drawn to the berries: so many rich colors. You're reminded of those two weeks you spent as a ten-year-old visiting your grandparents in Detroit. On their basement kitchen table there was that big bowl of decorative glass deep-red grapes. If you stared into one grape long enough—and if the lighting was just dim enough—you could see your whole face in it, all curved and fat inside. I always forget which is which, you think… concave or convex. Convex. They say that at the focal point of a convex lens an object is mirrored infinitely… infinitely…Suddenly you feel a tap on your shoulder and you hear your name called. "Hey—how's it GOIN'!" It's your neighbor from the apartment below you. You're not quite sure what to say, seeing as the last thought on your mind just a moment ago was infinity.

T. Lynne Drury, *Inundated* (from the series "emote"), 2009
watercolor on paper, 17" x 14"

CHAPTER 5

REINING IN THE IMAGINATION

NOTE: As a foundation for all the following exercises, list some occasions when you've experienced sensory or emotional overload.

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE—WEARING AN IMAGINARY SCREEN:

1. Choose one of the real-life situations you listed. Describe specifically the kinds of sensory or emotional input that you experienced there.
2. Compose a *loose script* (a guided-imagery scene) set in that place. Refer to the guidelines for "wearing an imaginary screen" on pages 102-103 of *Bridges in the Mind.*
3. When you're comfortable with the script you've written, practice going through it several times in your own mind.

4. Once you're very familiar with your script, apply it in one of your current everyday situations. Record and reflect on your observations. (Remember to be cautious when you're applying mental imagery in daily situations; be sure to use "grounding" techniques to remain alert.)

FOCUSED-ATTENTION EXERCISE: From your list, pick a setting in the near future where you're likely to have a similar experience. Identify that setting and the date you expect it will occur next. Write a simple personal goal that you'd like to achieve there. When the date arrives, interact as you normally would but focus your attention on your stated goal, allowing *in* any input that helps you reach it, and filtering *out* irrelevant information. After the event is over, write or sketch about what the experience was like for you, and what you might do differently next time.

ONE-WEEK GROUNDING EXERCISES: In Chapter 5 we discussed three types of tools that can help ground you in the here-and-now: use of an electronic alarm clock for your commitments; scheduling a physical activity to follow a mentally absorbing session; and carrying a small portable physical-grounding item. Try using each of these three tools for one week. What did you discover?

AFFIRMATION EXERCISE: Develop your own personal affirmation (in words, pictures, music, or any other expressive form) with respect to *creating balance between your imaginative life and your practical life.* Record your affirmation here, and also post it in physical locations where it will be conspicuous to you. *Each day for the next two weeks,* repeat it to yourself (and/or view it, move to it, etc.). Explore what that experience feels like, any changes you notice, etc.

Valdemiro J. Vandik, *Friendship*, 2009 spray paint and acrylic on canvas, 36″ x 24″

CHAPTER 6

REPLENISHING YOUR ENERGY AND WELL-BEING (AND WHY YOU NEED OTHER ARTISTS)

SENTENCE COMPLETION EXERCISE: Complete these sentences with the first thought that comes to mind. Expand on each with some details: *Why, how, and where are these things most true for you? What are some examples from your past? How do you feel about what you've recognized in yourself? What actions have you taken (or not taken) previously to deal with these patterns? What have other people in your life said to you about them?*

1. For me, caretaking of the imagination means…
2. Based on past experiences, I know I'm healthiest when…
3. My biggest concern regarding maintaining my well-being is…
4. To be at peace, I need my environment to include…

5. One core aspect of my personality or way of being that's not likely to change is…
6. The habit of mind or lifestyle that's most threatening to my well-being is…
7. My bodily or behavioral warning signals that indicate I'm getting depleted are…
8. The worst thing I could do when I'm burned out is…
9. What I personally need to restore my energy is…
10. The emotional relationship in my life that helps me feel most grounded is…
11. One small adjustment I'd be willing to make in order to nurture myself more is…
12. I must safeguard my creative self by…
13. The people who currently are most supportive of my artistic identity are…
14. I think it might be fun to meet other artists by…
15. In order to expand my circle of like-minded people, one small risk I'm willing to take is…

SLIGHT LIFESTYLE-CHANGE EXPERIMENT: Choose one of the above statements. Now spell out *a reasonable three-week goal* related to that particular element—a technique or small lifestyle change you'd like to test out. (Here you could tap into some of the *other* statements you wrote about.) After you've implemented your experiment for three weeks, evaluate how it worked for you.

T. Lynne Drury, *Rest* (from the series "emote"), 2009 watercolor on paper, 14" x 17"

CHAPTER 7

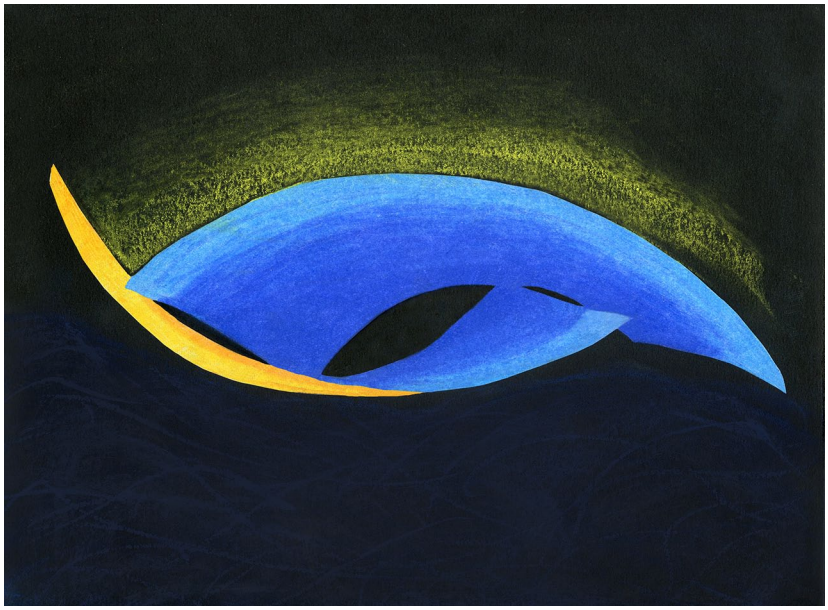
MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS: Did any personal experiences or memories come to your mind as you read Chapter 7? If so, what happened, or what do you find is the recurring pattern? What are your feelings or reactions? How have you explained those occurrences to yourself? How do the patterns play out in the various dimensions of your life?

PERSONALIZING THE STRATEGY: As you go through the following list of techniques for managing intense emotional experience (explained in detail throughout Chapter 7), identify any that you might want to practice in your day-to-day life in the next several weeks. Explore how you could personalize each one, applying it to your specific life situation.

1. Know yourself and your life patterns.
2. Reduce physical and emotional tension by working out strong feelings through your art.

3. Drain your brain: calm yourself by engaging in "mindless" sensory or motor activities.
4. Deduct 50 points:
   - talk yourself through the possibilities (of what may really be going on)
   - ask a dependable friend what he or she thinks
   - choose a simple metaphor from your art form (like a sound or color or gesture), imaginatively associate your feeling with that element, then adjust the sensory image downward to help modulate the level of your feeling-state
5. Engage in a thought-experiment to view the problem from lots of imagined perspectives.
6. Physically step away from the situation and take some slow, deep breaths.
7. Visualize in rich sensory detail a personalized container dedicated to "holding" your feelings temporarily. During intense emotional experience, briefly imagine placing your feelings in the container. As soon as you're in a psychologically and physically safe setting, allow yourself to experience and reflect on them.
8. List the names of people in your life whom you can trust to listen to you without judgment. Practice expressing your feelings to these people, and allow them to reflect back to you what they heard.



Cherise Briggs-Hand, *Bridges I*, 2009, mixed media on Bristol board, 11.5" x 8.5"

CHAPTER 8

A DIAMOND WALKING ACROSS A BRIDGE: A REVIEW

Go back and review your entries throughout this journal. Note especially any insights, decisions, or creative ideas you want to follow up on.

Chapter 1: Which component of mainstream "outside world" speech did you choose to practice in your everyday interactions? What are some things you said to people as you focused on that component? How did it feel to use this less-familiar language? How did others respond to you? What changes could you make in order to do it better?

Chapter 2: What genuine aspects of your personality have you decided to amplify into an external self? How would you describe your emerging persona? If you've begun to present this public image to the world, how have the interactions turned out? How might you further develop your persona in order to be even more accomplished and confident in your everyday life?

Chapter 3: How is your experiment with maintaining a regular discipline of art-making coming along? Was it hard to get started or to keep up with a routine of art-related activities? If so, what got in the way, and how did you respond? What do you now know for sure about your creative needs and your optimal rhythm and environment for keeping up an active artistic life?

Chapters 4 and 5: In these two chapters, you explored the nature of your own imagination, and how it plays a role in your everyday life. You also learned various techniques for managing mental absorption and strong sensory input. If you've tested out some of these techniques, what impact have they had on your life? Do you feel different?

Chapters 6 and 7: The final two sets of strategies were designed to help you attend mindfully to your physical and emotional health. Review your notes from the sentence-completion exercises, the techniques you practiced for managing strong emotion, and your "Visualization Exercise: 10 Years in the Future" (from Chapter 3). Now *compose a letter* to your truest, deepest artist self at 15 years of age. Offer your young self encouragement and guidance for remaining emotionally healthy and well grounded now and in the future (see also suggestions on pages 168-169).

Cherise Briggs-Hand, *Bridges II,* 2009, watercolor pencil on watercolor paper, 11.5″ x 8.5″

CHAPTER 9

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND FOLLOW-UP:

- What issues are most pressing for you in your life right now?
- What changes do you desire to make?
- What topics or activities in *Bridges in the Mind* resonated most strongly for you?
- What is your ideal vision for your future?
- How would you describe the current gap between who and where you are today, and who and where you wish to be?
- Which of the recommended books listed in Chapter 9 do you think might be helpful as you continue with your self-discovery, personal growth, artistic development, or career planning? List them in this journal.
- As you explore resources on your own, jot down the contact information for any that you may want to investigate more thoroughly. These could include books, magazines, journals, classes or workshops, support groups, mental-health providers, professional associations, local community events, performing groups, or online networking groups.

The Story of My Creation:

How I Came to Be a Person on This Planet, Just Like You

by Tonya Adamski

IT WAS LATE AUGUST and the summer had begun to show signs that autumn was coming. On a grassy bank next to a river, there was a giant oak tree. Every spring the oak woke from her winter's rest with new leaves and acorns that gave life to new trees and seeds.

This last spring, up high towards the leafy crown, there was a single golden acorn. She grew through the spring and summer just like all the others until one day in August, when there were dark clouds on the horizon. As the storm grew closer, the winds picked up. Suddenly, the golden acorn broke from the limb. Caught on the strong breeze, she soared through the air, traveling far from the tree where she was born.

Soaring over the land, the golden acorn finally set down and rolled for a short time until she bumped against the stem of a large fern. For several weeks, Fern's wide leaves provided shade from the hot sun and Acorn was warm, moist, and protected.

The weather changed and Acorn grew cold. One day a squirrel approached and noticed the twinkle of the golden acorn shell against the frost. Unable to resist, the squirrel popped the golden acorn into its mouth and carried her to a nest. Here Acorn began to change. Her inner seed grew larger and her glimmering cap began to detach from her shell.

With the spring came the rains. Squirrel awoke and began her work. One day, much to Acorn's surprise, she fell onto the soft pine branches below.

A crow landed on the branch next to Acorn and was thrilled at his discovery. Crow was quick to scoop Acorn into his beak and fly off into the dusky sky. Crow came to rest on a rock on the bank of the river. He marveled at his own image and at how clever he was. Crow dunked Acorn once in the river, twice, and on the third dip Acorn slipped from his beak and sank into the water. The stream tossed her in its currents.

A rainbow trout, swimming through the deeper waters, saw Acorn shimmering on the river bottom. Trout circled Acorn slowly before picking her up and delivering her to an inlet where the river met a small lake. There Trout made a shallow depression where she placed Acorn.

Nestled there, her inner seed split into several pieces and thin vines overflowed the edges of her golden shell. Eventually the vines became arms and hands that reached out from the gravel. Long stems became legs that pushed the young seedling up from her sanctuary. She twisted and turned in the water, willing the new arms and legs to push her out of the river opening and into the lake.

Slowly she began to feel a pressure in her chest. She struggled and strained until she came to a shallow site near the water's edge. There she placed her feet firmly on the lake bottom and forced herself upward. She took a deep breath. She stood for a moment while the sunlight dried her skin. Then, she stepped out of the water and onto the land breathing, walking, and strong.

Tonya Adamski, *The Story of My Creation*, 2009 creative writing

CHAPTER 10

A WORD TO TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, PARENTS, AND PARTNERS

Which concepts from Chapter 10 were most important to you? Consider:

- your own experiences and needs as a learner in school at various levels of education;
- how metaphor or artistic imagery could be helpful in a personal counseling situation;
- mentors you have had in your life and/or ways in which you have encouraged others' creativity;
- actions you can take (based on the POPP model for career planning) to consciously cultivate Passion, Opportunity, Preparation, and Perseverance; and
- ways you can create a living environment and lifestyle routine that will be healthy and satisfying both for yourself and for those with whom you live.

CHAPTER 11

YOUR SYNTHESIS: AN ARTISTIC RESPONSE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: Do you find that "bridges in the mind" is a real experience for you? Did any of the hypothetical examples or real artists' stories resonate with you? Did any personal themes or patterns come to your awareness? Did the exercises you tried produce any interesting results? Did you notice yourself shifting in even subtle ways?

- What word or phrase might best capture your internal journey through *Bridges in the Mind*?
- What gesture?
- What sound quality or rhythm?
- What color or shape?
- What texture?
- What fragrance or taste?

FUSE THESE COMPONENTS INTO A UNIQUE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: Allow your personal journey through *Bridges in the Mind* to incubate within you. Then, respond in an imaginative way by synthesizing your experience into a brand-new work of art. You may choose to work within your most dominant art form, or experiment in another expressive medium, or perhaps compose a multimodal piece. As you prepare, consider the principles for enhancing the creative process listed on pages 204-205.

About the Author

Photo Credit:
Cherise Briggs-Hand

Marianne Roccaforte, Ph.D., has been a counselor and educator for more than 25 years. Embracing the tradition of humanistic psychology, she specializes in working with artists across disciplines on issues of identity development, career decision-making, and interpersonal communication. A residential faculty member in Counseling at Paradise Valley Community College in Phoenix, Arizona, she also designs and teaches personal-growth workshops tailored to fine and performing artists and other creative individuals. Dr. Roccaforte is a lifelong musician.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit

http://benupress.everpub.com/books/Bridges-in-the-Mind

Praise for *Bridges in the Mind:*

Marianne Roccaforte has written an admirable roadmap for people who "see things differently," the artistic and creative individuals who find themselves somehow outside the mainstream of our modern life. *Bridges in the Mind* provides a marvelous metaphor and seven ingenious strategies for navigating and crossing over to a world that can be baffling to persons often lumped together as "artistic," or "impractical," or "unrealistic." With great empathy, the author explains the problems that imaginative and creative people too frequently encounter, and she invites her readers to work through their thoughts and dilemmas in a carefully structured "Bridge Design Journal." I can imagine a young, imaginative person finding in this book a mind-saving life raft in our current verbal, analytic, digital, and numeric cultures—especially our educational and business cultures. Moreover, friends and relatives of artistic, creative individuals will discover in this book paths to understanding and nurturing those imaginative spirits. *Bridges in the Mind* is a long overdue and badly needed prescription for rescuing some of our most valuable minds.

—Dr. Betty Edwards, author of the international bestseller *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* and *Color: A Course in Mastering the Art of Mixing Colors*