

A collective experiment in pure intention.

By Mackenzie Swenson

May 18, 2015

I have seen approximately three horror movies in my life and I was doing precisely the thing I screamed at the idiots in the movies NOT to do.

No... nonononono... don't walk towards the creepy glowing light in the basement!!

In my case, the smiling being that lead me to the light was not a ghost, but Joy-- an amazing woman, friend, and writer who had orchestrated a metaphor. It began with me feeling like Alice going down the rabbit hole. My rabbit hole, however, was a crooked landslide of steps into a spider-webbed basement cave illuminated by black light. Crossing the threshold of the bottom step revealed a ceiling littered with dangling test tubes of fluorescence. Suddenly I wasn't Alice. I was the Mad Hatter-turned-mad scientist.

Curiouser and curiouser.

Gulp

It was Sunday night and I was among the last participants in a long line of weekend Sub Terrarium explorers. But as soon as Joy said the word, "intention" and told me to don a lab coat, I knew why I was here.. or at least what this metaphor was for me.

I had just been fearlessly led to the deep, dark, scary basement within myself. In that basement, there are no goals, excuses, rationalizations, or blame. I can't hide behind feelings or ignorance. All I had to observe and work with were my pure intentions. These intentions tend to be kept hidden and locked away, but as a mad scientist I was suddenly empowered to look at these intentions not with fear, but an eye dropper and a lab coat!

My materials were test tubes and various colors of fluorescent liquid. As instructed, I quietly assigned each color my own personal intention. The dangling test tubes had already been filled with the intentions of those who came before me--different colors, some test tubes on the verge of overflowing and some were barely touched. The floor was spattered with spots from tubes whose contents had been dumped on the floor.

My first realization was that I had *no idea* what these tubes meant to the people that had filled them. How did they assign intentions to their colors? What would my contribution do in the mixture? Unless I dumped every single tube of liquid onto the floor and began again, I was simply one addition to a long line of intentions I was *clueless* about.

A collective experiment in pure intention.

By Mackenzie Swenson

May 18, 2015

I began with "Inciting curiosity." It's an intention I love to play with. I chose a pale, shimmering turquoise to represent this curiosity. I can't say it altered the color of the tubes I delicately dropped it into, but it expanded what was already there.

Then came an intense pink, which I chose to mean, "reminding of passion." This intention was best when added to colors already warm. This reminded me that passion applied to a noble cause is beautiful, but when channeled towards less desirable causes, it is not so lovely.

I then made the rounds with blue "Devil's Advocate" which created some lovely mixtures of interest. Too much, though, and some beautiful colors were darkened and muddied. *Hmmm...I do suppose I ought to be careful with that intention.*

There were one or two others we don't need to get into, but my intentions rarely had the impact I expected. Additions I thought would rock the little test tube's world often barely made a splash. But sometimes when I least expected, I drastically altered the color.

I left my intentions with the intentions of others in that deep dark basement. I also left behind the control of what those test tubes would become. No matter what my intentions are, the reaction they receive and the acceptance they get isn't something to fear.

The Sub Terrarium rabbit hole of our intentions may seem scary, but it turns out, it is also a fascinating place of experimentation and discovery.