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Creatively Capturing Structure and Energy

Zero Balancing's Essential Elements

by Lisa Bardarson

ZB Faculty, Dancer and Choreographer

Video collage of 90 coloring documents



The project I am reporting on here grew out of my Project of Excellence for my Zero Balancing Teacher Training. In selecting a topic, I was guided by the words of one of my program mentors, Mary Murphy, who suggested that we, “Choose a subject that makes our heart sing”. Her sage guidance helped me find my heart’s song whose notes were built on creativity. This was music to my ears and the project flowed right from the start.

Through coloring, my goal was to document Zero Balancing’s two foundational elements, structure, and energy, as well as the changes that occur from a ZB session. I was curious about clients using their creativity to draw how they were feeling on different levels of their being (physically, mentally, emotionally) and to have them depict this in their drawings before and after a ZB session. The synergies between the coloring activity and the ZB session were aligned and harmonious and so, the project was born.

Methods

The resulting 90 pictures, seen in the opening video, were the culmination of 45 sessions involving a group of nine men and women, ages 32 to 78 showing the aftereffects of a ZB session. Each client received five sessions over a two-month period. Session duration ran approximately an hour and a half and frequency ranged from weekly to every other week depending on the client’s availability. Of note, only two of the participants had experienced Zero Balancing prior to the project.

Two drawings were produced per session: a before and after. The discussion that followed each coloring exercise was an opportunity for the participant to talk in more depth about their rendering. The first one (A) tended to be more descriptive and map-like, offering clues for locating areas of tension, concern, or blockage, thereby creating an intention for the session. Exploration around the second drawing (B) showed distinct changes from the first. The B drawings often revealed qualitative shifts that were expressed in how lines were arranged; sometimes changing from jagged lines to soft curvy ones, for instance. Rhythm, texture, and commentary were typically quite different in the B rendering. From an energy-body perspective, it is interesting to note the frequent appearance of floating clouds, halos, and containment bubbles.

None of the participants were artists or familiar with this format. Some found it challenging, especially in the first session. I interpreted this like learning to use a new muscle and appreciated their willingness to remain open to the process. Standing as witness to the stories that came off the page, I was given an opportunity to learn more about the participants and the changes they were experiencing. It was a rich and gratifying process.

Each session began with a brief meditation. After completing the meditation, the client shifted to an area of the treatment room where supplies had been set with two pre-drawn human silhouettes, vertically oriented on a 19” x 24” paper. For efficiency’s sake, the B silhouette was taped below the A silhouette making for a quick transition. Each client was supplied with their own box of 64 Crayola Crayons that they used for the duration of the project.

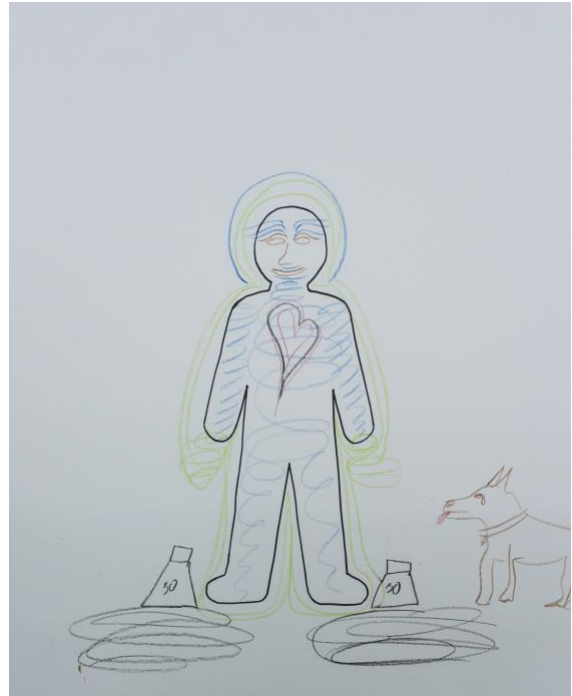
There was not much conversation following the ZB session as I didn't want to pull the participant out of their body and back into their head. I had them walk a bit to integrate the session and from there, they returned to the coloring area to produce their second drawing. In summary, each session went like this:

- a brief meditation
- up to 10 minutes for the creation of the first drawing (A),
- review and discussion of drawing A
- a short conversation to determine how the client wished to feel/release/transform at the body, mind, or spirit level (in ZB this is called *the frame*)
- a 40-minute ZB session
- up to 10 minutes for the creation of the second drawing (B)
- review and discussion of drawing B
- review and discussion of drawings A and B placed side by side

STEVE



Before ZB (Session 2)



After ZB (Session 2)

Before ZB

The before sample featured here was made by Steve*, who prior to this project, had never received a ZB. Steve is a Reiki master and guides people in plant-medicine ceremonies, so it is safe to say that Steve has an extensive background in transformative experiences.

Steve's drawing tells the story of the recent passing of three close friends. Notice how the 30 kilo weights are connected from his hands directly into his heart. The heaviness of his losses is almost palpable to the viewer and was certainly felt by Steve, as he shared in the session. The crying face in the upper right corner is Steve's departed and disbelieving friend who was taken in his twenties, before his time. Steve explained that the mushroom and flower were for the hope of a brighter future, a figurative light at the end of his dark tunnel. Through the creative process of coloring, he was able to tell me a lot about what was going on in his life. Witnessing and holding space for Steve's grief was important. During his session I was mindful to not impose an agenda by adding anything or take anything away from him energetically but to create an opening for whatever change Steve was ready to let happen.

* The name Steve is an alias

After ZB

In the after document, Steve has set down the weights and his tears are gone. Green shading extends beyond his body and a blue outline surrounds his head in a halo. However, not all the sadness is gone as there is now a crying dog in the picture. Steve explained the dog belonged to one of his deceased friends and that it would be coming to live with him. Despite the dog's tears, the picture gives one the feeling that with his burden lightened, Steve has a greater capacity to cope with his own pain and that of the dog's.

Conclusions

Many of the participants commented on how the process of combining coloring with ZB brought them greater clarity with their life issues. For example, a client who participated in the project came in for a session with a persistent migraine and experiencing a lot of anger. As she was familiar with the process, I suggested she start by coloring, and she eagerly agreed. Grateful for the added insight into the underlying source of her anger, she left the session relieved of her migraine, more grounded, centered, and in touch with her feelings. This simple exercise was a valuable tool for both the client and the practitioner.

When appropriate, drawing can be a valuable tool. For greater practicality I suggest reducing the silhouette size so that the drawing can be incorporated into the client's file.

The result of this creative study went beyond my original intention of simply documenting structure and energy and accomplished the following:

- created a possibility for deeper connection within the client
- encouraged embodiment in the client
- enhanced my own understanding of the client's needs
- the resulting 90 documents became valuable marketing and educational tools
- allowed me to bring more creative expression into my Zero Balancing practice

To see each drawing individually, I invite you to visit my website at:

<https://lisabardarson.com/blog/>

Biography

My professional experience as a dancer and choreographer were a glimpse into the transformational power of structure (the body) and energy (movement). I was a prominent member of the Philadelphia dance scene for many years and a writer for the on-line dance journal, thINKingDANCE. My love of movement led me gracefully towards a successful career as a massage therapist starting in the mid-eighties. Around 1990, my curiosity in Eastern modalities of healing drew me towards acupuncture but ultimately, to Zero Balancing (ZB) which integrates Western medical science with Eastern energy healing traditions. In 2015 I became certified in ZB and most recently as a teacher of ZB. Additional studies include in-depth study at the Laban Institute of Movement Studies and certification as a RYT500 (registered yoga teacher) with a specialty in Yin Yoga. During the pandemic I developed SloMoYo®, a curated movement program that utilizes my experience in the moving and healing arts.



Author giving a Zero Balancing session.

