



Drowning in the Dark
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A. Why did I choose this particular project?

When I saw that one of our Coursera courses was called “Healing with the Arts,” I found the timing a little strange because months before taking the course or receiving this GED108 requirement, I had already tried to use art in a very similar way. I did not make this illustration for GED108, and I did not create it because a course told me to make something emotional. It already existed as something personal. Because of that, I felt it was more fitting to use this piece than to force myself to make a new artwork on the spot and try to give it emotional value afterward.

I made the illustration during a period when I was going through grief. I would rather keep the details of that grief private, but the experience left me feeling lonely. I reached out to people, yet I still felt that no one really understood why I was feeling the way I did. It was not necessarily that nobody cared. It felt more like people did not know what questions to ask, while I was quietly hoping that someone would ask the right ones.

That feeling connected to something I have struggled with for much of my life. I often find it easy to understand other people, and people frequently come to me for advice. When the situation is reversed, I feel like I have to build the entire context for someone before they can understand me. The grief brought those older feelings back strongly. That was where the image of drowning came from. I felt like I was drowning in the dark again—not only because of one event, but because it reminded me of a much older feeling of being surrounded by people and still feeling alone.

Making the artwork gave me both a release and a distraction. I worked on it for around an hour, and that hour gave me a short break from everything happening in my head. It did not solve the grief, but it let me put what I was feeling somewhere outside myself. I think of it as “boxing” those emotions through artwork. The feelings were still mine, but they had somewhere else to exist.

I had originally wanted art to become a kind of journal for me. My plan was to create something every day, partly to improve my skills and partly to record what I was feeling or experiencing. Life became too busy for me to maintain that habit, so I eventually fell back on writing small notes instead. This illustration ended up serving the same purpose in a more visual way.

B. What did I do for my final project?

For my final project, I chose to present the original digital illustration exactly as I made it months ago. I have not edited, retouched, or completed it for this assignment. I only recently gave it the title “Drowning in the Dark.” I created the piece using Clip Studio Paint on my Samsung Tab S11 Ultra. I used a photograph of a person as a reference and traced mainly the head and facial angle because I wanted the figure positioned in a specific way. The rest of the composition developed around the emotion I wanted to express.

The image shows a person who appears to be drowning or partially submerged in darkness. Most of the composition is very dark, while teal appears around the figure. Teal is my favorite color, and when I was making the piece I chose it because I wanted something in the artwork that still felt like “mine” aside from all of the negative emotions. I did not consciously plan the teal as a symbol of hope. I only noticed that meaning afterward. Against the darkness, it looks like a small glimmer that is still visible even when most of the image feels heavy. Maybe that part of the composition was subconscious.

The piece was supposed to be a draft. I made it quickly while the emotions were intense and thought I would come back to finish it later. By the time I could return to it, however, the emotion had already passed. I could remember what happened, but I could no longer recreate the exact state I was in while drawing it. Finishing it started to feel less natural, so I left it as it was.

Now I think the unfinished state fits the piece better than I expected. It reflects the fact that my worries were not neatly resolved, but it also reminds me that things are not always as final as they feel in the moment. The person is still surrounded by darkness, but the teal is still there. The work is unfinished, so there is no definite ending to what happens next.

When I look at the illustration now, I no longer feel the same emotions. It feels more like a faint memory. I know what I was feeling when I made it, but I feel somewhat disconnected from that version of myself because my life has moved on to different concerns and a different kind of stress.

For me, that is where the “healing” in this project exists. Healing was not about drawing something and suddenly becoming okay. It was about giving myself a short break, expressing something I struggled to communicate, and containing those emotions in a form I could leave behind. The artwork reminds me of what happened and what I felt without requiring me to remain inside that feeling forever. Its unfinished state, together with that small glimmer of teal, reminds me that even when it is hard to see past what is happening, there can still be possibilities that I cannot see yet.

Screenshots

