No Pouting
When I was a child, I remember that beautiful new box of 64 Crayola colors. I would open the box and breathe in the waxy smell. Then I would try out every color, lightly pressing the tips as to spare each beautiful point. The crayons felt vast. Sixty-four was A LOT of colors!!! How many yellows! Greens! Blues! I would attribute each hue to a certain person in my elementary school classroom. It seemed that there were colors that were specific to each child: David B obviously was Cornflower, Tina was Magenta, Garth was Goldenrod, and I was Periwinkle, still my favorite color.

I loved to work in coloring books. I could not get enough of those big, stupid mass produced images: Disney, Barbie, The Flintstones, and if, at the market after our Sunday night dinner, I was not allowed to get another coloring book, I would pout BIG TIME.

One night, while my father was driving us back home, I was pouting in the back seat of our car and thinking nasty thoughts about how mean my parents were because they said, “No, you have enough coloring books!” I knew my parents knew that I was angry and I was relishing that moment. Suddenly, my father slammed on the car brakes. We had hit a dog. I had a horrible feeling that my negative thoughts had somehow made this event happen. That night, I found a coloring book page that had some blank space. I remember trying to draw that dog laying on the street, in the glare of our headlights. I was immediately dissatisfied at my drawing. I had been so dependent on drawing “inside the lines” that my confidence was poor.

When I had my own children, coloring books were not an option. My rules were simple: draw your own pictures. I always supplied big sheets of blank paper. I also taught my children how to mix new shades for colors and invent and name new ones. They never asked for coloring books (fortunately) and they never pouted about it. I think they always knew that if they felt they couldn’t draw something, the question to ask was, “what shapes could it be made of?” To this day, my daughters enjoy drawing and painting. They are confident and expressive artists.

I still struggle to draw, even though I have been teaching drawing and painting for 35 years. But my favorite aspect of making art is always mixing colors— especially ones one that feel like my own invention. I don’t pout anymore either. Never found out what happened to that dog.