



HOW ABOUT?

with Louise Howland

As any experienced embroiderer no doubt knows, the creative process runs both ways. Sometimes the activity has as great an effect on your psyche as your fingers have on the thread.

My husband is having an uneasy time. We've all had uneasy times, and worse. Maybe you're going through one right now, and if you are I'm very sorry to hear it.

I won't go into detail here but suffice to say that on a number of counts the man of our home is suffering.

I'm trying to provide some happy times, to put his mind at ease as best I can and also maintain a positive atmosphere for all our sakes.

He loves me and adores our daughter, and we can usually help him relax. We can frequently make him smile, or even laugh. Still, the worried or sad expression is too often present. But there is one place, involved in one activity, where I see him looking perfect.

Only in his shed, among his engines and tools, creating a car or a motor bike from a collection of both made and fussed-for parts, do I see his expression relaxed and concentrated, completely absorbed in the task at hand. To me at least, that look seems to represent happiness.

It's a similar expression to the one I see on my daughter's face as she draws, works on a school project, weaves a little woollen decoration, tends her bush garden or learns a new song. When I see her countenance so focused and serene, so intent on her part in the creation of the moment, I feel an

overwhelming sense of awe and love. There is a feeling of relief too,



Men's business

knowing that whatever difficulties or sorrows the future may bring, she is building her inner resources and resilience, gaining her happiness from within and developing an ability that will help to heal when it hurts.

What is it about human nature that makes us so fulfilled when we're engrossed in making something, composing or producing, inventing or arranging? Sometimes the task may be difficult, frustrating even, but still we persevere, even when easy options surround us.

I have been – and remain – a slow learner. But it strikes me that the things we sometimes think will make us happy – a trip, a weekend in a fancy hotel, a ritzy restaurant or a new relationship – often have little effect.

When we're immersed, participating in that mysterious secret of creation, making

something take shape or involved in forming anything, no matter how technically well, we're finding our way to the essence of life.

Creativity grows inside us like a plant. It's like a child growing within its mother.

As I watch I wonder whether it's my daughter who grows her flowers, or do the flowers help grow her? Is it we who create our embroidery, or our embroidery that helps create us?

Whichever it may be, and perhaps it's both, creating something seems to connect us directly to the deepest springs of life.

It's as though our fingers can resolve some yearning or need that we may have theoretically and subconsciously wrestled with to no avail.

Until next month,

Louise