

# KINTSUGI

## EXPLORATION GUIDE

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# 1

Kintsugi is a 15th century Japanese art form of mending broken shards of pottery. In the film, visual artist, Makoto Fujimura explains how the word kintsugi comes from two other Japanese words – ‘kin’ which means ‘gold’ and ‘tsugi’ which means ‘to mend’. So, with kintsugi you are mending pieces of broken pottery with a lacquer and gold in a way that makes the pottery even more beautiful and valuable. Mako also describes how we have a similar understanding of ‘mending’ the soil in a garden – restoring/repairing the soil in ways to enhance the nutrients needed for gardening.

**Were you familiar with the art form and concept of kintsugi before this film? Just as Mako compares this art form to ‘mending’ the soil in a garden, have you seen this concept implemented in other ways to repair things that are broken?**

# 2

The Kintsugi Master, Kunio Nakamura, explains how there was renewed interest in the process of kintsugi after the earthquake and tsunami in Japan on March 11, 2011. People were not able to fix the trauma or easily heal the wounds they had experienced from that natural disaster, but they were able to use kintsugi to repair some of their broken pottery. This brought them a measure of healing. In his reflections in this film, the Kintsugi Master adds “now I only buy bowls that are broken or chipped, it’s like I’m obsessed with the beauty in broken things.”

**Have you had any similar experiences in your life where you found something tangible that you could repair or restore during a time when you were experiencing loss or trauma? Did that activity contribute to your healing process? Like the Kintsugi Master, are you learning to see beauty in broken things?**

# 3

Mako describes how traumatic events or experiences have informed some of the most influential works of art and literature we have. He believes that without trauma we would lose 80% of the world’s art. This provides a significant way of understanding art, but Mako argues it is also an important way to understand the fabric of our society and the communities we live in.

**Think about some of the works of art, music and literature that have had a significant impact on you. Which of those were influenced by trauma, pain and/or conflict? How do you understand Mako’s observation that experiences of trauma also provide us with an important perspective on our communities and the broader society?**

# 4

At the end of the film, Mako describes how the concepts of kintsugi might influence our understanding of healing. He reflects on our “disposable culture” and our tendency to throw away something that is broken including past experiences that have wounded us. He suggests that instead of trying to “fix” something that was broken we should seek to “restore” it and turn it into a new creation which is more valuable than what we began with.

**How do you respond to this perspective on healing and Mako’s contrast between “fixing” or “restoring” something that is broken? Have you seen examples of this in your own life?**