

## Open the Box of Pain

*I saw your video about the healing power of music. As a musician I agree with that, but I'm having a hard time feeling anything but dread these days. I also read about your husband's health challenge. I'm glad he survived. My aunt died recently from COVID-19, and I feel weirdly numb about that and so many things. Any ideas on how to "come back to life" in these dark times?*

### Dearest Alive Inside,

Two weeks into the six weeks my husband was hospitalized, the new album by Nahko and Medicine for the People, called "Take Your Power Back," arrived in the mail. The lyrics of the first song were like an anthem for my journey, cracking the protective survival-mode shell I was in. The song "4th Door" addresses grief, suffering, prayer, the importance of mourning and a reminder that love is worth it all. I didn't think I was ready to scream and cry at that level, but the music knew.

The loss of your aunt is tragic. Together, we join millions in our human family who are traversing new — and old — territories around life and death. The word *overwhelm* may be overused, but it is a persistent player in our current reality. Your shut-down response is highly effective and has likely helped you through the darkest moments. But you must not stay there.

A wise sage entered our home in the form of an occupational therapist. He spoke of finding a safe place to open the box of pain, sorrow and anger, saying, "Pour it *all* out in the presence of a trusted friend, be it human, animal or the forest. After releasing that energy, put it back in the box, set it aside — don't try to discard it; it's a part of you — and move on with your life."

Invite your trusted friend, music, back into your heart. Pick up your instrument or go outside and listen to nature's music. Let it help heal and remind you that even in pain and darkness, life within you survives and thrives — always. ☘



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