What has Van Gogh taught Tate about Mental Health?

James Brandon (Diversity and Inclusion Manager)
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'What consoles me a little is that I’m beginning to consider madness as an illness like any other and accept the thing as it is, while during the actual crises it seemed to me that everything I was imagining was reality.'

Vincent van Gogh, 21 April 1889
“‘I am so angry with myself because I cannot do what I should like to do, and at such a moment one feels as if one were lying bound hand and foot at the bottom of a deep dark well, utterly helpless’”

Vincent van Gogh
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2. The impact of correlating creativity with mental health
3. Avoid conflating ‘mental health’ with ‘mental health problem’/’mental illness’
4. Think about the terms ‘Suffered’/’Victim’
5. Terms like ‘Mad’ or ‘tortured genius’, ‘madman’ and ‘insanity’ are problematic
6. The ear!
7. Linear narrative about mental health
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‘...my thoughts are absolutely normal and clear between times, and even more than before, but during the crises it’s terrible however, and then I lose consciousness of everything. But it drives me to work and to seriousness, as a coal-miner who is always in danger makes haste in what he does.’

Vincent van Gogh, 8 October 1889
‘I knew that one could break one’s arms and legs before, and that then afterwards could get better, but I didn’t know that one could break one’s brain and that afterwards got better too.’