

# Initial Consultation Packet

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**Congratulations** on having the courage to schedule an initial consultation with a Creativity Coach! I recognize that this is the kind of decision one does not come to lightly. The act of requesting this session required you to not only overcome your very human resistance to asking for help and support, but also to rise above any hesitancy you feel about publicly acknowledging your creative ambitions, or your confusion about the direction those ambitions should take. This represents an act of real boldness and a willingness to stand up for your creative life – both great portents for your creative success!

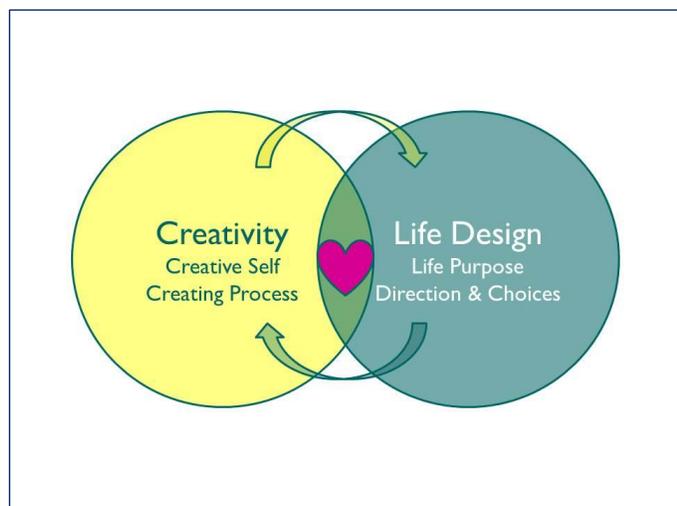
Please take some time to review the material below as you prepare for our initial consultation. If you find you have questions that are not answered here and that you'd like answered before we meet, feel free to email me at [sara@sarasaltee.com](mailto:sara@sarasaltee.com).

## Good Material for Coaching

I work with clients who are grappling with issues relating to their **personal creativity**, including: better understanding your creative self, and identifying and practicing the specific habits and mindsets that will help you make more continuous forward movement with your creative work.

I also work with creative people who want to **design a life** that supports your creative work, including questions of life purpose, direction, and choice-making. I am particularly passionate about working with people who are creative in multiple ways, and who are in a process of discernment about how to organize a life that expresses all of who they are in a satisfying way.

Personal creativity coaching is a new field. It's a bit different from mentoring and executive coaching and very different from athletic coaching and therapy. I see my job as keeping a clear



focus on your goals and progress so that, within each session, progress is reviewed, goals are refocused, and homework and/or some form of accountability are designed and agreed to.

## Questions to guide our initial consultation

Our initial consultation is a time for us to meet each other and assess how we might best work together. One of the most beautiful things about creativity coaching is that it creates an opportunity for you to put your creative life into the center of conversation, and this first session will be no different!

**PLEASE NOTE:** You do not need to prepare answers to all these questions before we meet! They are here just to “prime the pump” and get you thinking.

**If your current questions and challenges relate primarily to your creative practice as a writer or artist,** we might want to talk about things like:

1. Tell me a little about your creative life today – what kinds of projects are you engaged in right now?
2. In an ideal world, where would you be heading with your creative work? Do you hold any images of what success would look like or feel like to you? What future creative accomplishment would you be most proud of?
3. Are there particular reasons why now is the right time for you to give some is concerted attention to your creative life? What is goosing you to make this the time?
4. What are some of the obstacles that you feel have held you back, slowed you down, or prevented you from sustaining your momentum with your creative work in the past?
5. If you could pick one next step for your creative life, what would it be?

**If you are a multi-modal creative, and your current questions and challenges relate to issues of life-design and direction,** we might talk about things like:

1. Often, when people arrive at a stuck point, or a place of confusion about life purpose and direction, they experience a repeated cycle or swirl of thoughts that keep repeating, but don't lead to answers. Does this sound like you? Can you describe some of the elements of that swirl?
2. What are the two or three big questions you are grappling with?

**For all clients, I'm interested to hear from you about:**

1. What kinds of coaching support do you think would be most useful to you? Generally speaking, coaches offer three kinds of support, and you may be most interested in one or more of these modes:
  - a. Sounding board for sorting and discernment – we talk through together the choices you are facing as they come up
  - b. Accountability – you make commitments and I support you in honoring them

- c. Assignments and tools – I provide suggested activities to kick start your creative practice, offer tools to experiment with, or actively guide you in confronting obstacles or managing them differently
- d. What questions do you have about coaching? about me? about how we might best structure our work?

## Structuring Our Work:

**Your initial commitment:** I recommend that new clients make an initial commitment of three, one-hour sessions. This gives us an opportunity to get to know each other well, get clear on your goals and needs, and make some considerable progress. It also takes advantage of the fresh energy that can come from working with a creativity coach to really get things moving! You can choose whether to space these first three sessions one or two weeks apart.

**How we meet:** I most often meet with my clients on Zoom, which allows us to see each other while we talk, and share documents and images on the screen together. You don't need to download anything to use Zoom – I simply send you a link you can click on to enter our chat via your laptop, tablet or phone when the time comes. If you prefer to meet by phone, that is fine too.

**How often we meet:** After your initial commitment of three one-hour sessions spaced one or two weeks apart, we can shape any ongoing coaching relationship in a number of different ways. It is also very common for clients to shift the pattern and frequency of our sessions as their needs change over time. Some of the most common patterns are:

- 30 min session every week or every other week. (A great pattern for clients wanting ongoing support and accountability check-ins over the life of a creative project.)
- 60 min session every other week. (A great pattern for clients wanting opportunities for broader planning and self-discovery conversations with time for experimentation and testing and reflection in between.)
- 60 min session once per month. (A helpful pattern for working with issues that come up over the course of a life-design shift, or a long term creative project. Great for supporting you in staying on-course and tuned into your creative vision and goals over time.)

**Communication and confidentiality:** Our conversations are always confidential. You are in the driver's seat – please communicate with me if the kind of support you need changes, if you would like to steer us in a new direction, or if you have any feedback on ways of working together that would be more comfortable for you.

## Cost & Payment:

- You can purchase sessions one hour at a time, or in three-hour or six-hour packages.
- The cost is
  - \$125 for a single 60 min session

- \$350 for a package of 3X60-minute or 6X30-minute sessions (save \$25 over purchasing three individual sessions)
- \$675 for a package of 6X60 min or 12X 30 min sessions (save \$75 over purchasing six individual sessions.)
- You can pay by credit card directly through this webpage: <http://sarasaltee.com/purchasecoaching/> For the multi-hour packages, you can opt to pay in full up front, or in a series of monthly payments.
- Or, you can pay by check. Checks should be made to Sara Saltee and mailed to 6636 Anderson Rd. Clinton, WA 98236.
- Because you are paying for my time, including my ability to schedule ahead, I ask for 24 hours notice for a cancelled session. When that happens, we reschedule at no extra charge. When my schedule permits, I will reschedule the missed session during the same week so that the rhythm of our work together is maintained. If you miss a session without canceling, I reserve the option, after discussion, of charging your normal session fee for that time.
- If you choose to end the coaching agreement early, the balance of your fees, beginning the third week after you tell me, will be returned. This is done by crediting your credit card unless other arrangements are made.

## Coaching FAQ

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### I. How is Coaching Different from Therapy?

One of the most typical distinctions that people point to when answering this question is to assert that therapists work with “unwell” people towards emotional healing, while coaches work with basically “well” people towards higher levels of functioning and achievement of goals. Along with this comes an associated idea that therapists tend to work more with material from a person’s past and attempt to get at root causes of troubling issues, while coaches tend to work with material from the client’s present moment and support movement into the client’s desired future.

In my opinion, neither of these notions hold up very well under close scrutiny, as there are therapists who absolutely work with their clients to understand and remove obstacles to accomplishing their life goals, and there are some coaches who work at the level of emotional healing, and sometimes work with material from a client’s past as a way of gaining insight into fears and other blocks that may stand in the way of moving forward.

As a creativity coach, I can specifically say that I, unlike therapists from some schools of thought, tend to inquire into a client’s experience of a negative emotional state like depression with an eye toward the reality that a powerful source of depressive thoughts and feelings in creative people is an experience of being separated from a flow of

meaningful creative work. It follows that I will tend to see efforts by a client to cultivate a regular creative practice or to follow through on creative projects that hold personal meaning as a key step toward feeling less depressed.

As a creativity coach, I also understand that there are forms of anxiety that are absolutely part and parcel of the creative process. I view this “creative anxiety” as part of the material that all creatives must learn to manage as part of their creative life, and not as evidence of disorder or illness.

As a coach, I am not trained to diagnose or treat mental illness, emotional disorders, or substance abuse. As a professional coach, my responsibility is to communicate to you when I feel that issues you are reporting or experiencing are outside my competency, and refer you to practitioners more skilled in providing the kinds of help you most need.

Like a therapeutic relationship, the coaching relationship is a professional relationship but one of equality. You, as the client, set the agenda for your coaching, and your success will depend on your willingness to try new approaches. You can expect me, as your coach, to be honest and direct, ask straightforward questions and use challenging techniques to help you move forward.

## 2. Be honest – just how woo woo are you?

A splendid question to ask when you are trying to gauge whether a coach is a right fit for you! It’s hard to quantify woo woo-ness, but here’s what I can say that might help:

On the one hand, I have deep reverence for the mysteries of creativity. In my own life as an artist, I tend to experience creative practice as a form of communion where I enjoy deep connection to myself, the world, and something greater than all of it (The collective unconscious? God? Goddess? Source? I don’t personally feel a need to name it – I just know the difference when I feel connected to it or separated from it.)

I also have great appreciation for the voice in my head that tells me what color to reach for or that insists on putting a rooster where no rooster would ‘logically’ go. I also get a thrill from the inexplicable synchronicities that occur when I’m on the right track in my life – the people I run into, the books that cross my path, the ephemera that seems to “magically” appear on my work table when I need it, etc.

As a coach, however, I am pretty pragmatic. I’m far more interested in helping people create the conditions that support their joyful and effective creative work than in espousing any particular theory of where creativity comes from or how it works – whether that theory is mystical or scientific.

For example, I watch with both fascination and suspicion the ongoing scientific efforts to locate creativity centers in the brain. Our brains are awesome and the research is interesting, but I frankly don’t meet a lot of everyday smart, creative, multi-talented people who are super- frustrated by not being able to picture the precise neurons that are firing when they have a good idea – they tend to be exponentially more frustrated by not having cultivated a life that holds open the time and energy to translate that good idea into something real.

I see life and creativity as cyclical and as guided by deep internal forces. I don't spend a lot of time parsing whether those deep inner urges are conscious, pre-conscious, sub-conscious, measurable on an MRI or implanted by faeries, muses, or aliens. Human experience tells us that creativity exists, that art-making is a physical, biological urge similar to other basic drives and that art in all forms saves us, elevates us, and has the power to make life worth living.

So, at the end of the day, what matters to me is whether you have a positive relationship with the creative urges that have chosen you to move through, and whether you are feeling good about your ability to translate those urges into results that make you proud and satisfied. To me, that isn't woo woo at all. (But then I did spend 8 years living in Southern California, so perhaps my woo woo-ometer is a bit skewed.)

### 3. Do you ever meet in person with clients?

No. I coach exclusively by phone or Zoom, with email support between sessions. If you are most comfortable communicating by email only, that's fine, too. My first coaching clients were all email-only and we accomplished a lot! These remote modalities allow me to work with clients across geographic distances and at most-convenient times. Using these communication modes also allows me to live and work on my beloved Whidbey Island – an important part of the life design that works best for me.

### 4. What do you see as the biggest challenges that creative people face?

First, let me say what I think the biggest challenge ISN'T. Some creativity coaches, I've noticed, focus 90% of their attention on the inspiration phase of the creating process. They are specialists in helping people "jump start your creativity" or "generate 100 new ideas," etc. Which is fantastic if a surfeit of creative ideas is your actual challenge. But I bet it isn't.

My experience is that "lack of inspiration" is kind of a fantasy problem – one that is really fun to solve, but is actually slightly beside the point for the creatives I know. The folks I work with tend to have no shortage of ideas, projects, and inspirations. In fact, they have closets full of projects and buckets full of ideas for what they'd do if they could ever finish those.

In my experience, the challenges that creative people actually grapple with include...

- Figuring out how to combine the array of creative gifts we have in a way that is personally satisfying and has positive impact for others
- Designing a life that meets our financial needs AND supports our creative processes.
- Lining up the time and energy for focused creative work
- Prioritizing among an array of project possibilities
- Staging elaborate and exhausting inner battles with our grandiose or too-small ambitions, our fears and our inertia
- Making, then breaking, elaborate work schedules that leave us feeling exhausted and untrustworthy
- Managing the energy storms that can accompany the high points in our creative cycles

- Losing confidence with our projects and ourselves
- Getting hung up on perfectionist fantasies
- Forgetting we have permission to play
- Playing it small
- Feeling inadequate to the creative challenges we set for ourselves
- Confusing the hell out of ourselves by procrastinating on projects we swear we are committed to completing
- Getting close to finishing something really cool, then walking away and leaving it hanging at the brink
- Freaking out when it comes time to share our work with the world
- Freaking out when we think about maybe never sharing our work with the world

How's that for starters?

I look forward to supporting you in moving through any and all of the above challenges – or whatever fascinating new ones you may have to add to the list!