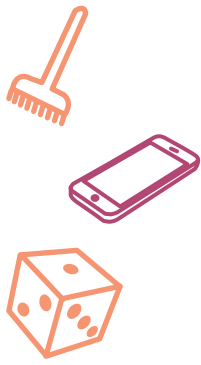


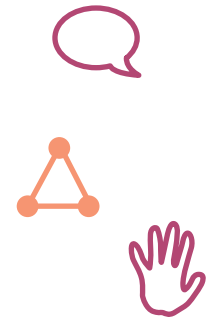


22 PRACTICAL TIPS TO CALM THE CHAOS OF THE CREATIVE MIND

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Creative people have curious, complicated and contradictory minds. This can be exhausting, frustrating and stressful. Use this first aid kit of 22 top tips to Calm the Chaos and begin to express your Creative Mind more consistently.



1. CARVE OUT TIME FOR SOLITUDE

Creatives absorb more, see more, feel more.

Step back from the constant flow of stimuli taking up too much brain energy and emotional space. Regular breathers for your mind to wander and daydream are essential for your sanity and will keep you more in touch with your genuine self.

You may need to overcome the fear of being alone or the addiction to a reactive existence, but you'll soon feel yourself tapping into a deeper source of more meaningful connection.



2. DIVERT YOURSELF

New experiences, different perspectives, a change of air - it's all inspirational nutrition to the mind of a creative.

Feeling as though life is on autopilot? That is hazardous indeed. Make time to travel to work differently, break little routines at work and mark time for 'research' purposes: your own time - however short - to regularly divert yourself from the tedium of 'sameness'. It will loosen up the mind.



3. KEEP A NOTEBOOK AT HAND

Flashes of insights, great ideas, resolutions do not come announced. They usually appear when you least expect them, like just before waking, under the shower, on a walk. 'I must remember that' doesn't work.

With a little notebook permanently at hand, you can log the thought, stick in the memento or draw something, and put it to good use later.



4. FIND YOUR TRIBE AND NURTURE IT

Being a creative can feel lonely and isolated at times. Look for people who share your interests and passions, who are intrinsically (self-)motivated like you, who are interested in process as well as outcome - and connect with them. Nurture the contacts, keep in touch and go out of your way to see them. They will be affirming and remind you regularly of what makes life worth living.



5. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS AND YOGA

The inner life of a creative can be a bit like a constantly revved up engine. There's plenty of research now on the huge benefits of mindfulness and yoga for a quieter and clearer mind - a more productively creative mind, in other words - and body. Find a teacher and establish a daily practice.



6. LEARN TO LISTEN

Listen more carefully and "zip up". Hard as it may be - try to wait for a few seconds before blurting out, jumping to conclusions, or cutting across speaking people. Try to summarise what you think you've heard before attaching to your own - strongly held - opinions.

It will help you see the world through other people's eyes a bit more accurately and enrich your relationships with others.

Be prepared for a confrontation with your own anxiety as you pace yourself more in this way. Allow yourself to ride the waves of adrenalin though, and they will subside in due course.



7. SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM YOUR DISTRACTIONS

Distractibility can feed the creative mind with unexpected ideas and observations. That's the upside. Consistent success though, also asks of us the ability to maintain focus when needed.

Whether at home or at work then, a few conscious decisions can improve your focus considerably. You might remove yourself physically from distractions, by choosing a quiet space to perform your task. Alternatively you might cut out the sound of the external world, by using earplugs, or turning off all the digital messaging feeds while you're busy.

Finally, well-set timeframes work miracles to focus the mind.

Since the quality of your life has everything to do with how well you pay attention, you can't start soon enough on sharpening your focus.



8. PLAN YOUR WEEK

Get an overview of the week ahead and what you want it to look like. You might do this each Sunday night, as you gather your thoughts and things for Monday.

Then spend 5 minutes every morning to re-orientate and remind yourself of your intentions. This will encourage you to be more proactive and plan for friends or activities that don't automatically happen.

Review each week to see how you're doing. These daily spoonfuls of conscious attention to intention will give you back more ownership of your life.



9. SLEEP WELL

Safeguard your sleep. Creatives need more sleep than others. Get into a bedtime routine allowing yourself to wind down at least 30 minutes before you go to bed.

Keep your bedroom as free from electronics as possible. Definitely use a real alarm clock and leave your phone in another room.



10. CULTIVATE GRATITUDE AND CELEBRATE

Learn to appreciate small things: a hand-made object, a friendly gesture, the smell of damp earth, a good meal, special people in your life, and you will feel significantly better. Notice how what you focus on, is what you get.

Science now confirms that practicing gratitude makes people feel more alive and sleep better; their immune systems become stronger and life satisfaction increases significantly.

Celebrate your mini achievements every day and watch your creativity flourish!



11. RECONNECT WITH YOUR INTUITION

Perhaps you've become dependent on others for their opinions - not always trusting your own judgment. Creatives must stay close to their own gut feelings. Overruling deeper instincts eventually ends in tears. Practice living out the courage of your own convictions.

It may take time to reconnect with your inner voice but persevere until you've discovered the path back to yourself.

Malcolm Gladwell warns us that intuition is not like a light bulb, but more like a flickering candle that is all too easily snuffed. Perhaps regular 'alone' time, in nature or involved in a creative activity will keep the flame burning for you.



12. DON'T TAKE THINGS PERSONALLY

Things happen. Trains get cancelled, journeys delayed. Friends move, computers crash and people act in curious and sometimes incomprehensible ways. Chances are the behaviour didn't have very much to do with you at all. You just happened to be there to offer the last straw that broke their camel's back.

By maintaining a bigger perspective and casting your eagle's eye down onto your life, you'll see that things come and things go. Life doesn't conspire against us, even if at times it does feel as if the odds are stacked against us.

By changing your perspective in this way and cultivating patience rather than drowning in personal feelings of self-pity, you will feel yourself much liberated and freed. After all, you may not be able to control the weather but you can learn to pitch your sail.



13. PRACTICE KINDNESS

Start with being kinder to yourself. Listen to your self-talk and change the growling tone. Rather than beating yourself up, be more forgiving - the way you would be to a child or animal or endearing friend.

It helps to occasionally reread cards, emails or other messages sent to you in appreciation. Genuinely feel the sentiment.

Cultivate kindness to others as a habit too. It will create a measurable difference to your own sense of wellness.



14. DON'T LOSE THE 'ME' IN THE 'WE'

With their everything-or-nothing attitude to life, creatives can get so absorbed by their relationships with other people that they lose themselves, their individuality and even sight of their own horizon.

They can get so sucked into any social gathering too, that time disappears, intentions evaporate and the creative is the last one to go home, without ringing home to inform of a change of plan.

Notice your tendencies and work on them!



15. USE A (CENTRAL) MESSAGING BOARD

Put a conspicuous, easy to access whiteboard or notice board in a central position.

Write messages, stick post-its, use colours and make a habit of checking in regularly. Not only will it help you organise yourself better, but it can help communication between you and anyone you share your life with.



16. COUNT YOUR SUCCESSES REGULARLY

The nervous energy of the creative's mind propels her constantly forwards. Alternatively, she can stagnate in a quagmire of self-doubt. Either way, she is inclined to forget the advances she has made.

Make time, at least once a month, to reflect on smaller, as well as larger successes. Look for patterns too, in the things you are doing and trying to achieve.

Connect with accomplishments that gave you pleasure. This activity will keep you close to doing things you are good at and enjoy.



17. EXAMINE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHANGE

Creative minds have an uneasy relationship with change.

Some of them dread change, holding onto situations and people well beyond their sell-by date. This rigid and at times controlling attitude can stifle their own growth and renewal that comes with the fluidity of change.

On the other hand it may not be the newness itself that people fear, but rather the turmoil of the transition, when the old is dissolving and the new not quite yet materialised. You cannot tidy a cupboard though, without creating a mess first.

When looking at people's attitude to change you also see those that become addicted to the constant dopamine-laced thrill of novelty or change. All too easily bored, they never absorb or complete anything, already focussing on the next horizon, before they grasp what they were initially after. This restless, disconnected life can easily become lonely or depressed.

Examine your relationship with the natural movement of change. Does the idea distress you? Do you dread the chaos of the process itself? Or, does the adrenalin rush make you into a 'change-junkie', leaving you with little to show for life's efforts?

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Maya Angelou



18. TIDY A ROOM

Are there tasks you dread, or that will put off until a crisis looms?

I used to be like that whenever there was bookkeeping or an administrative job on the horizon. Other people respond like that when they have to write an essay or sit down to study or do homework.

Tidying a room or even just a shelf in your bookcase, or the surface of the table you are about to work at - can be hugely settling to your mind. You know when you're done because the results are tangible and visible. Unlike the task ahead, tidying can be well within your control. The sense of achievement and order can help calm your mind and prepare you for the important job ahead.

One small tip though: set a timer, before you go about tidying...just in case you get carried away and forget all about the job you intended to do in the first place.



19. GET TACTILE

I have noticed a growing trend of people embarking on second careers. They leave their office jobs to become carpenters, gardeners, handyman, potters or they go sailing. Well done them!

The fact is that in general we ignore our hands and our tactile senses at our peril. Children -and in particular creative children - learn through using all of their senses: touch, taste, smell, and so on. When we learn through touching and doing, the process becomes an experience. In other words, it affects our feelings. When we rely on being told, the learning does not become embodied. It does not become part of us, in the same way.

Using your hands connects you to yourself and to the physical world you are shaping. It slows you down and we now know, it makes more neural connections in the brain than just being told.

Discovering and shaping the world with our hands then, is utterly satisfying and in keeping with the learning style of most creatives. For some, it might be the only way to stay sane.



20. CULTIVATE IMPORTANT CONNECTIONS

In our fragmented and disconnected world, we need our tribe of soulmates, as discussed in tip 4.

We also need our family members and very old friends as markers on our emotional landscape. These are the people upon whom we can rely to be there when the chips are down. They are also the ones we most take for granted and to whom we pay the least attention in our search for excitement and novelty elsewhere.

Make a habit of investing in those familiar connections. Make time for them, be interested and generous towards them, for they are the bedrock in a shifting world. Their reassuring presence is worthy of regular attention.



21. KEEP AN ENERGY GRAPH

Creative minds often manifest an intensity that easily exhausts others. They are too present, too eager, too enthusiastic. They plunge into activities, pour all their energy into them and only after the event do they plummet into a pit of exhaustion.

By keeping an energy graph - scaled from 0 - 10 and measuring hour by hour of a day - you will notice the extremes of the oscillating energy. Such a graph can be very revealing.

Once you notice the trend, decide to regularly check in and take your foot off the accelerator, metaphorically speaking. Use your breath to let go of physical tension. It even works when sitting behind a computer.



22. NUTRITION AND EXERCISE

Look after your body. This is the only one you'll ever have to inhabit - your only true home.

Feed yourself well. Eat fresh fruit and vegetables, and a small amount of protein three times daily. Avoid processed foods. Cut down on caffeine and sugar. Top up on Omega 3.

Take plenty of regular exercise outdoors. Connect with the sky above and the horizon beyond and be reminded that you are part of that bigger world!