

The Artist's Way

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- Creativity is the natural order of life. Life is energy: pure creative energy.
- There is an underlying, in-dwelling creative force infusing all of life—including ourselves.
- When we open ourselves to our creativity, we open ourselves to the creator's creativity within us and our lives.
- We are, ourselves, creations. And we, in turn, are meant to continue creativity by being creative ourselves.
- Creativity is God's gift to us. Using our creativity is our gift back to God.
- The refusal to be creative is self-will and is counter to our true nature.
- When we open ourselves to exploring our creativity, we open ourselves to God: good orderly direction.
- As we open our creative channel to the creator, many gentle but powerful changes are to be expected.
- It is safe to open ourselves up to greater and greater creativity.
- Our creative dreams and yearnings come from a divine source. As we move toward our dreams, we move toward our divinity.

To-Do Weekly

- Daily Morning Pages
- Weekly Artist's Date
- Weekly Check-In
 - How many days this week did you do your morning pages?
 - Did you do your artist date this week? What did you do? How did it feel?
 - Did you experience any synchronicity this week? What was it?
 - Were there any other issues this week that you consider significant for your recovery? Describe them.

Week 1: Recovering a Sense of Safety

TASKS [OBJ]

- Time Travel: List three old enemies of your creative self-worth. Please be as specific as possible in doing this exercise. Your historic monsters are the building blocks of your core negative beliefs. (Yes, rotten Sister Ann Rita from fifth grade does count, and the rotten thing she said to you does matter. Put her in.) This is your monster hall of fame. More monsters will come to you as you work through your recovery. It is always necessary to acknowledge creative injuries and grieve them. Otherwise, they become creative scar tissue and block your growth.
- Time Travel: Select and write out one horror story from your monster hall of fame. You do not need to write long or much, but do jot down whatever details come back to you — the room you were in, the way people looked at you, the way you felt, what your parent said or didn't say when you told about it. Include whatever rankles you about the incident: "And then I remember she gave me this real fakey smile and patted my head."
- Write a letter to the editor in your defense. It is great fun to write this letter in the voice of your wounded artist child: "To whom it may concern: Sister Ann Rita is a jerk and has pig eyes and I can too spell!"
- Time Travel: List three old champions of your creative self - worth. This is your hall of champions, those who wish you and your creativity well. Be specific. Every encouraging word counts. Even if you disbelieve a compliment, record it. It may well be true. If you are stuck for compliments, go back through your time-travel log and look for positive memories. When, where, and why did you feel good about yourself? Who gave you affirmation? Additionally, you may wish to write the compliment out and decorate it. Post it near where you do your morning pages or on the dashboard of your car.
- Time Travel: Select and write out one happy piece of encouragement. Write a thank - you letter. Save it for yourself or send it to the long-lost mentor.
- Imaginary Lives: If you had five other lives to lead, what would you do in each of them? I would be a pilot, a cowhand, a physicist, a psychic, a monk. You might be a scuba diver, a cop, a writer of children's books, a football player, a belly dancer, a country singer, a performance artist. Whatever occurs to you, jot it down. Do not overthink this exercise. The point of these lives is to have fun in them — more fun than you might be having in this one. Look over your list and select one. Then do it this week. For instance, if you put

down country singer, can you pick a guitar? If you dream of being a cowhand, what about some horseback riding?

- In working with affirmations and blurts, very often injuries and monsters come back to us. Add these to your list as they occur to you. Work with each blurt individually. Turn each negative into an affirmative positive.
- Take your artist for a walk, the two of you. A brisk twenty-minute walk can dramatically alter consciousness.

Week 2: Recovering a Sense of Identity

TASKS

- Post the Basic Principles somewhere you can see and read daily.
- Where does your time go? List your five major activities this week. How much time did you give to each one? Which were what you wanted to do and which were shoulds? How much of your time is spent helping others and ignoring your own desires? Have any of your blocked friends triggered doubts in you?

Take a sheet of paper. Draw a circle. Inside that circle, place topics you need to protect. Place the names of those you find to be supportive. Outside the circle, place the names of those you must be self-protective around just now. Place this safety map near where you write your morning pages. Use this map to support your autonomy. Add names to the inner and outer spheres as appropriate: “ Oh! Derek is somebody I shouldn’t talk to about this right now. ”

- List twenty things you enjoy doing (rock climbing, roller - skating, baking pies, making soup, riding a bike, riding a horse, playing catch, shooting baskets, and so forth). When was the last time you let yourself do these things? Next to each entry, place a date. Don’t be surprised if it’s been years for some of your favorites. That will change. This list is an excellent resource for artist dates.
- From the list above, write down two favorite things that you’ve avoided that could be this week’s goals. These goals can be small: buy one roll of film and shoot it. Remember, we are trying to win you some autonomy with your time. Look for windows of time just for you. and use them in small creative acts. Get to the record store at lunch hour, even if only for fifteen minutes. Stop looking for big blocks of time when you will be free. Find small bits of time instead.

- Dip back into Week One and read the affirmations. Note which ones cause the most reaction. Often the one that sounds the most ridiculous is the most significant. Write three chosen affirmations five times each day in your morning pages; be sure to include the affirmations you made yourself from your blurts.
- Return to the list of imaginary lives from last week. Add five more lives. Again, check to see if you could be doing bits and pieces of these lives in the one you are living now. If you have listed a dancer's life. do you let yourself go dancing? If you have listed a monk's life. are you ever allowed to go on a retreat? If you are a scuba diver, is there an aquarium shop you can visit? A day at the lake you could schedule?
- Life Pie: Draw a circle. Divide it into six pieces of pie. Label one piece spirituality, another exercise, another play, and so on with work, friends, and romance / adventure. Place a dot in each slice at the degree to which you are fulfilled in that area (outer rim indicates great; inner circle. not so great). Connect the dots. This will show you where you are lopsided.

As you begin the course. it is not uncommon for your life pie to look like a tarantula. As recovery progresses. your tarantula may become a mandala. Working with this tool. you will notice that there are areas of your life that feel impoverished and on which you spend little or no time. Use the time tidbits you are finding to alter this .

- Ten Tiny Changes: List ten changes you'd like to make for yourself, from the significant to the small or vice versa (“ get new sheets so I have another set, go to China, paint my kitchen, dump my bitchy friend Alice ”). Do it this way:

I would like to _____

I would like to _____

As the morning pages nudge us increasingly into the present. where we pay attention to our current lives. a small shift like a newly painted bathroom can yield a luxuriously large sense of self - care.

- Select one small item and make it a goal for this week. Now do that item.

Week 3: Recovering a Sense of Power

DETECTIVE WORK. AN EXERCISE

A little sleuth work is in order to restore the persons we have abandoned — ourselves. When you complete the following phrases. you may feel strong emotion as you retrieve

memories and misplaced fragments of yourself. Allow yourself to free - associate for a sentence or so with each phrase.

1. My favorite childhood toy was...
2. My favorite childhood game was...
3. The best movie I ever saw as a kid was...
4. I don't do it much but I enjoy...
5. If I could lighten up a little. I'd let myself...
6. If it weren't too late. I'd...
7. My favorite musical instrument is...
8. The amount of money I spend on entertainment each month is...
9. If I weren't so stingy with my artist. I'd buy him / her...
10. Taking time out for myself is...
11. I am afraid that if I start dreaming...
12. I secretly enjoy reading...
13. If I had had a perfect childhood I'd have grown up to be...
14. If it didn't sound so crazy. I'd write or make a...
15. My parents think artists are...
16. My God thinks artists are...
17. What makes me feel weird about this recovery is...
18. Learning to trust myself is probably...
19. My most cheer-me-up music is...
20. My favorite way to dress is...

TASKS

- Describe your childhood room. If you wish, you may sketch this room. What was your favorite thing about it? What's your favorite thing about your room right now? Nothing? Well, get something you like in there — maybe something from that old childhood room.
- Describe five traits you like in yourself as a child.

- List five childhood accomplishments. (straight A's in seventh grade. trained the dog. punched out the class bully. short - sheeted the priest's bed). And a treat: list five favorite childhood foods. Buy yourself one of them this week. Yes. Jell - O with bananas is okay .
- Habits: Take a look at your habits. Many of them may interfere with your self - nurturing and cause shame. Some of the oddest things are self - destructive. Do you have a habit of watching TV you don't like? Do you have a habit of hanging out with a really boring friend and just killing time? Some rotten habits are overt (drinking too much. smoking. eating instead of writing). List three obvious rotten habits. What's the payoff in continuing them? Some rotten habits are more subtle (no time to exercise. little time to pray. always helping others. not getting any self - nurturing. hanging out with people who belittle your dreams). List three of your subtle foes. What use do these forms of sabotage have? Be specific.
- Make a list of friends who nurture you — that's nurture (give you a sense of your own competency and possibility). not enable (give you the message that you will never get it straight without their help). There is a big difference between being helped and being treated as though we are helpless. List three nurturing friends. Which of their traits serve you well?
- Call a friend who treats you like you are a really good and bright person who can accomplish things. Part of your recovery is reaching out for support. This support will be critical as you undertake new risks.
- Inner Compass: Each of us has an inner compass. This is an instinct that points us toward health. It warns us when we are on dangerous ground. Morning pages are one way to contact it. So are some other artist - brain activities — painting. driving. walking. scrubbing. running. This week, take an hour to follow your inner compass by doing an artist - brain activity and listening to what insights bubble up.
- List five people you admire. Now. list five people you secretly admire. What traits do these people have that you can cultivate further in yourself?
- List five people you wish you had met who are dead. Now. list five people who are dead whom you'd like to hang out with for a while in eternity. What traits do you find in these people that you can look for in your friends?
- Compare the two sets of lists. Take a look at what you really like and really admire — and a look at what you think you should like and admire. Your shoulds might tell you to

admire Edison while your heart belongs to Houdini. Go with the Houdini side of you for a while.

Week 4: Recovering a Sense of Integrity

BURIED DREAMS. AN EXERCISE

As recovering creatives, we often have to excavate our own pasts for the shards of buried dreams and delights. Do a little digging, please. Be fast and frivolous. This is an exercise in spontaneity, so be sure to write your answers out quickly. Speed kills the Censor.

List five hobbies that sound fun.

List five classes that sound fun.

List five things you personally would never do that sound fun.

List five skills that would be fun to have.

List five things you used to enjoy doing.

List five silly things you would like to try once .

READING DEPRIVATION, AN EXERCISE

Reading deprivation casts us into our inner silence, a space some of us begin to immediately fill with new words — long, gossipy conversations, television bingeing, the radio as a constant, chatty companion. We often cannot hear our own inner voice, the voice of our artist's inspiration, above the static. In practicing reading deprivation, we need to cast a watchful eye on these other pollutants. They poison the well. Take the next 7 days off from reading and outside chatter.

TASKS

- Environment: Describe your ideal environment. Town? Country? Swank? Cozy? One paragraph. One image, drawn or clipped, that conveys this. What's your favorite season? Why? Find an image of this or draw it. Place it near your working area.
- Time Travel: Describe yourself at eighty. What did you do after fifty that you enjoyed? Be very specific. Now, write a letter from you at eighty to you at your current age. What would you tell yourself? What interests would you urge yourself to pursue? What dreams would you encourage?
- Time Travel: Remember yourself at eight. What did you like to do? What were your favorite things? Now, write a letter from you at eight to you at your current age. What would you tell yourself?

- Environment: Look at your house. Is there any room that you could make into a secret. private space for yourself? Convert the TV room? Buy a screen or hang a sheet and cordon off a section of some other room? This is your dream area. It should be decorated for fun and not as an office. All you really need is a chair or pillow. something to write on. some kind of little altar area for flowers and candles. This is to help you center on the fact that creativity is a spiritual. not an ego. issue.
- Use your life pie (from Week One) to review your growth. Has that nasty tarantula changed shape yet? Haven't you been more active. less rigid. more expressive? Be careful not to expect too much too soon. That's raising the jumps. Growth must have time to solidify into health. One day at a time. you are building the habit patterns of a healthy artist. Easy does do it. List ongoing self - nurturing toys you could buy your artist: books on tape. magazine subscriptions. theater tickets. a bowling ball.
- Write your own Artist's Prayer. Use it every day for a week.
- An Extended Artist Date: Plan a small vacation for yourself. (One weekend day. Get ready to execute it.)
- Open your closet. Throw out — or hand on. or donate — one low - self - worth outfit. (You know the outfit.) Make space for the new.
- Look at one situation in your life that you feel you should change but haven't yet. What is the payoff for you in staying stuck?
- If you break your reading deprivation. write about how you did it. In a tantrum? A slipup? A binge? How do you feel about it? Why ?

Week 5: Recovering a Sense of Possibility

THE VIRTUE - TRAP QUIZ

1. The biggest lack in my life is _____.
2. The greatest joy in my life is _____.
3. My largest time commitment is _____.
4. As I play more. I work _____.
5. I feel guilty that I am _____.
6. I worry that _____.

7. If my dreams come true. my family will _____.
8. I sabotage myself so people will _____.
9. If I let myself feel it. I'm angry that I _____.
10. One reason I get sad sometimes is _____.

FORBIDDEN JOYS, AN EXERCISE

One of the favored tricks of blocked creatives is saying no to ourselves. It is astonishing the number of small ways we discover to be mean and miserly with ourselves. When I say this to my students. they often protest that this is not true — that they are very good to themselves. Then I ask them to do this exercise. List ten things you love and would love to do but are not allowed to do. Your list might look like this:

Go dancing. Carry a sketchbook. Roller - skate. Buy new cowboy boots. Streak your hair blond. Go on vacation. Take flying lessons. Move to a bigger place. Direct a play. Take life - drawing class.

Very often. the mere act of writing out your list of forbidden joys breaks down your barriers to doing them. Post your list somewhere highly visible.

WISH LIST, AN EXERCISE

One of the best ways we can evade our Censor is to use the technique of speed writing. Because wishes are just wishes. they are allowed to be frivolous (and frequently should be taken very seriously). As quickly as you can. finish the following phrases.

- 1 - 19. I wish _____.
20. I most especially wish _____.

TASKS

- The following tasks explore and expand your relationship to the source. The reason I can't really believe in a supportive God is... List five grievances. (God can take it.)
- Starting an Image File: If I had either faith or money I would try. .. List five desires. For the next week, be alert for images of these desires. When you spot them buy them, photograph them, draw them, collect them somehow. With these images. begin a file of dreams that speak to you. Add to it continually for the duration of the course.
- One more time, list five imaginary lives. Have they changed? Are you doing more parts of them? You may want to add images of these lives to your image file.

- If I were twenty and had money. .. List five adventures. Again. add images of these to your visual image file.
- If I were sixty - five and had money. .. List five postponed pleasures. And again. collect these images. This is a very potent tool. I now live in a house that I imaged for ten years.
- Ten ways I am mean to myself are. .. Just as making the positive explicit helps allow it into our lives. making the negative explicit helps us to exorcise it.
- Ten items I would like to own that I don't are. .. And again. you may want to collect these images. In order to boost sales. experts in sales motivation often teach rookie salesmen to post images of what they would like to own. It works.
- Honestly, my favorite creative block is... (TV. overreading. friends. work. rescuing others. overexercise.) You name it. Draw yourself indulging in it.
- My payoff for staying blocked is. .. This you may want to explore in your morning pages.
- The person I blame for being blocked is... Again. use your pages to mull on this .

Week 6: Recovering a Sense of Abundance

MONEY MADNESS, AN EXERCISE

Complete the following phrases:

1. People with money are _____.
2. Money makes people _____.
3. I'd have more money if _____.
4. My dad thought money was _____.
5. My mom always thought money would _____.
6. In my family. money caused _____.
7. Money equals _____.
8. If I had money. I'd _____.
9. If I could afford it. I'd _____.
10. If I had some money. I'd _____.
11. I'm afraid that if I had money I would _____.

12. Money is _____.
13. Money causes _____.
14. Having money is not _____.
15. In order to have more money. I'd need to _____.
16. When I have money. I usually _____.
17. I think money _____.
18. If I weren't so cheap I'd _____.
19. People think money _____.
20. Being broke tells me _____.

TASKS [OBJ]

- Natural Abundance: Find five pretty or interesting rocks. I enjoy this exercise particularly because rocks can be carried in pockets. They can be small. constant reminders of our creative consciousness. Now pick five flowers or leaves. You may want to press these between wax paper and save them in a book.
- Clearing: Throw out or give away five ratty pieces of clothing .
- Creation: Bake something. (If you have a sugar problem. make a fruit salad.) Creativity does not have to always involve capital - A art. Very often. the act of cooking something can help you cook something up in another creative mode. When I am stymied as a writer, I make soups and pies.
- Communication: Send a note to five friends you would love to hear from.
- Favorites: List your “ favorites ” in the following categories.
Cars Dogs Flowers Trees Fruits Vegetables Desserts Entrées Musical Groups Colors
- Reread the Basic Principles *and* your Artist's Prayer from Week Four. Do this once daily.
- Clearing: Any new changes in your home environment? Make some.
- Acceptance: Any new flow in your life? Practice saying yes to freebies.
- Prosperity: Any changes in your financial situation or your perspective on it? Any new — even crazy — ideas about what you would love doing? Pull images around this and add to your image file .

Week 7: Recovering a Sense of Connection

RISK EXERCISE

QUESTION: What would I do if I didn't have to do it perfectly?

ANSWER: A great deal more than I am. We've all heard that the unexamined life is not worth living. but consider too that the unlived life is not worth examining .

THE JEALOUSY MAP, AN EXERCISE

Your jealousy map will have three columns. In the first column. name those whom you are jealous of. Next to each name write why. Be as specific and accurate as you can. In the third column. list one action you can take to move toward creative risk and out of jealousy. When jealousy bites. like a snakebite it requires an immediate antidote. On paper, make your jealousy map:

WHO	WHY	ACTION ANTIDOTE
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

ARCHEOLOGY, AN EXERCISE

The phrases that follow are more of your sleuth work. Very often. we have buried parts of ourselves that can be uncovered by some digging. Not only will your answers tell you what you missed in the past ; they will tell you what you can be doing. now. to comfort and encourage your artist child. It is not too late. no matter what your ego tells you.

Complete these phrases.

As a kid. I missed the chance to _____.

As a kid. I lacked _____.

As a kid. I could have used _____.

As a kid. I dreamed of being _____.

As a kid. I wanted a _____.

In my house. we never had enough _____.

As a kid. I needed more _____.

I am sorry that I will never again see _____.

For years. I have missed and wondered about _____.

I beat myself up about the loss of _____.

It is important to acknowledge our positive inventory as well as our shortfalls. Take positive stock of what good you have to build on in the present. Finish these phrases.

I have a loyal friend in _____.

One thing I like about my town is _____.

I think I have nice _____.

Writing my morning pages has shown me I can _____.

I am taking a greater interest in _____.

I believe I am getting better at _____.

My artist has started to pay more attention to _____.

My self - care is _____.

I feel more _____.

Possibly. my creativity is _____.

TASKS OBJ

- Make this phrase a mantra: Treating myself like a precious object will make me strong. Watercolor or crayon or calligraph this phrase. Post it where you will see it daily. We tend to think being hard on ourselves will make us strong. But it is cherishing ourselves that gives us strength.
- Give yourself time out to listen to one side of an album, just for joy. You may want to doodle as you listen, allowing yourself to draw the shapes, emotions, and thoughts you hear in the music. Notice how just twenty minutes can refresh you. Learn to take these mini – artist dates to break stress and allow insight.
- Take yourself into a sacred space — a church. synagogue. library. grove of trees — and allow yourself to savor the silence and healing solitude. Each of us has a personal idea of what sacred space is. For me. a large clock store or a great aquarium store can engender a sense of timeless wonder. Experiment.
- Create one wonderful smell in your house — with soup, incense, fir branches, candles — whatever.

- Wear your favorite item of clothing for no special occasion. Buy yourself one wonderful pair of socks. one wonderful pair of gloves — one wonderfully comforting. self - loving something.
- Collage: Collect a stack of at least ten magazines, which you will allow yourself to freely dismember. Setting a twenty - minute time limit for yourself, tear (literally) through the magazines collecting any images that reflect your life or interests. Think of this collage as a form of pictorial autobiography. Include your past. present. future. and your dreams. It is okay to include images you simply like. Keep pulling until you have a good stack of images (at least twenty). Now take a sheet of newspaper. a stapler. or some tape or glue. and arrange your images in a way that pleases you.
- Quickly list five favorite films. Do you see any common denominators among them? Are they romances. adventures. period pieces. political dramas. family epics. thrillers? Do you see traces of your cinematic themes in your collage?
- Name your favorite topics to read about: comparative religion. movies. ESP. physics. rags - to - riches. betrayal. love triangles. scientific breakthroughs. sports. .. Are these topics in your collage?
- Give your collage a place of honor. Even a secret place of honor is all right — in your closet. in a drawer. anywhere that is yours. You may want to do a new one every few months. or collage more thoroughly a dream you are trying to accomplish .

Week 8: Recovering a Sense of Strength

EARLY PATTERNINGS, AN EXERCISE

Although we seldom connect the dots. many of our present - day losses are connected to our earlier conditioning. Children may be told they can't do anything or. equally damaging, be told they should be able to do absolutely anything with ease. Either of these messages blocks the recipient. The following questions are aimed at helping you retrieve and decipher your own conditioning. Some of them may seem not to apply. Write about whatever they trigger for you.

As a kid, my dad thought my art was _____.

That made me feel _____.

I remember one time when he _____.

I felt very _____ and _____ about that. I never forgot it.

As a kid, my mother taught me that my daydreaming was _____.

I remember she'd tell me to snap out of it by reminding me _____.

The person I remember who believed in me was _____.

I remember one time when _____.

I felt _____ and _____ about that. I never forgot it.

The thing that ruined my chance to be an artist was _____.

The negative lesson I got from that, which wasn't logical but I still believe, is that I can't _____ and be an artist.

When I was little, I learned that _____ and _____ were big sins that I particularly had to watch out for.

I grew up thinking artists were _____ people.

The teacher who shipwrecked my confidence was _____.

I was told _____.

I believed this teacher because _____.

The mentor who gave me a good role model was _____.

When people say I have talent I think they want to _____.

The thing is, I am suspicious that _____.

I just can't believe that _____.

If I believe I am really talented, then I am mad as hell at _____ and _____ and _____.

TASKS OBJ

- Goal Search: You may find the following exercise difficult. Allow yourself to do it anyway. If multiple dreams occur to you, do the exercise for each one of them. The simple act of imagining a dream in concrete detail helps us to bring it into reality. Think of your goal search as a preliminary architect's drawing for the life you would wish to have. I am indebted to Barbara Sher and Shakti Gawain for the inspiration for these tasks.

The Steps

- Name your dream. That's right. Write it down. "In a perfect world, I would secretly love to be a _____."

- Name one concrete goal that signals to you its accomplishment. On your emotional compass, this goal signifies true north.

(Note: two people may want to be an actress. They share that dream. For one, an article in People magazine is the concrete goal. To her, glamour is the emotional center for her dream ; glamour is true north. For the second actress, the concrete goal is a good review in a Broadway play. To her, respect as a creative artist is the emotional center of her dream ; respect is true north. Actress one might be happy as a soap star. Actress two would need stage work to fulfill her dream. On the surface, both seem to desire the same thing.)

- In a perfect world, where would you like to be in five years in relation to your dream and true north ?
- In the world we inhabit now, what action can you take, this year, to move you closer?
- What action can you take this month? This week? This day? Right now?
- List your dream (for example, to be a famous film director). List its true north (respect and higher consciousness, mass communication.) Select a role model (Walt Disney, Ron Howard, Michael Powell). Make an action plan. Five years. Three years. One year. One month. One week. Now. Choose an action. Reading this book is an action.
- New Childhood: What might you have been if you'd had perfect nurturing? Write a page of this fantasy childhood. What were you given? Can you reparent yourself in that direction now?
- "Gain disguised as loss" is a potent artist's tool. To acquire it, simply, brutally, ask: "How can this loss serve me? Where does it point my work?" The answers will surprise and liberate you.
- Style Search: List twenty things you like to do. (Perhaps the same twenty you listed before, perhaps not.) Answer these questions for each item:
- Does it cost money or is it free? Expensive or cheap? Alone or with somebody? Job related? Physical risk? Fast - paced or slow? Mind, body, or spiritual?
- Ideal Day: Plan a perfect day in your life as it is now constituted, using the information gleaned from above.
- Ideal Ideal Day: Plan a perfect day in your life as you wish it were constituted. There are no restrictions. Allow yourself to be and to have whatever your heart desires. Your ideal environment, job, home, circle of friends, intimate relationship, stature in your art form — your wildest dreams.

- Choose one festive aspect from your ideal day. Allow yourself to live it. You may not be able to move to Rome yet. but even in a still - grungy apartment you can enjoy a homemade cappuccino and a croissant .

Week 9: Recovering a Sense of Compassion

BLASTING THROUGH BLOCKS

In order to work freely on a project. an artist must be at least functionally free of resentment (anger) and resistance (fear). A word of warning: this is a very powerful exercise ; it can do fatal damage to a creative block .

1. List any resentments (anger) you have in connection with this project. It does not matter how petty. picky. or irrational these resentments may appear to your adult self. To your artist child they are real big deals: grudges. Some examples: I resent being the second artist asked. not the first. (I am too the best.) . . I resent this editor. she just nitpicks....
2. Ask your artist to list any and all fears about the projected piece of work and / or anyone connected to it. What matters is that they are big scary monsters to your artist. Some examples: I'm afraid the work will be rotten and I won't know it... I'm afraid the work will be good and they won't know it... I'm afraid my ideas are ahead of their time... Get it out on the page.
3. Ask yourself what you stand to gain by not doing this piece of work. Some examples: If I don't write the piece. no one can hate it... If I don't write the piece, my jerk editor will worry. . . . If I don't paint, sculpt, act, sing, dance, I can criticize others knowing I could do better.
4. Make your deal. The deal is: “ Okay. Creative Force. you take care of the quality. I'll take care of the quantity. ” Sign your deal and post it.

TASKS

- Read your morning pages! This process is best undertaken with two colored markers. one to highlight insights and another to highlight actions needed. Do not judge your pages or yourself. This is very important. Yes, they will be boring. Yes, they may be painful. Consider them a map. Take them as information, not an indictment.
 - Take Stock: Who have you consistently been complaining about? What have you procrastinated on? What blessedly have you allowed yourself to change or accept?

- Take Heart: Many of us notice an alarming tendency toward black - and - white thinking: “ He’s terrible. He’s wonderful. I love him. I hate him. It’s a great job. It’s a terrible job. ” and so forth. Don’t be thrown by this.
- Acknowledge: The pages have allowed us to vent without self - destruction. to plan without interference. to complain without an audience. to dream without restriction. to know our own minds. Give yourself credit for undertaking them. Give them credit for the changes and growth they have fostered.
- Visualizing: You have already done work with naming your goal and identifying true north. The following exercise asks you to fully imagine having your goal accomplished. Please spend enough time to fill in the juicy details that would really make the experience wonderful for you.
 - Name your goal: I am _____.
 - In the present tense, describe yourself doing it at the height of your powers! This is your ideal scene. Read this aloud to yourself.
 - Post this above your work area. Read this aloud. Daily! For the next week collect actual pictures of yourself and combine them with magazine images to collage your ideal scene described above. Remember. seeing is believing. and the added visual cue of your real self in your ideal scene can make it far more real .
- Priorities: List for yourself your creative goals for the year. List for yourself your creative goals for the month. List for yourself your creative goals for the week .
- Creative U-Turns: All of us have taken creative U-turns. Name one of yours. Name three more. Name the one that just kills you.
 - Forgive yourself. Forgive yourself for all failures of nerve. timing. and initiative. Devise a personalized list of affirmations to help you do better in the future.
 - Very gently. very gently. consider whether any aborted. abandoned. savaged. or sabotaged brainchildren can be rescued. Remember. you are not alone. All of us have taken creative U - turns.
 - Choose one creative U - turn. Retrieve it. Mend it. Do not take a creative U - turn now. Instead. notice your resistance. Morning pages seeming difficult? Stupid? Pointless? Too obvious? Do them anyway.
 - What creative dreams are lurching toward possibility? Admit that they frighten you.

- Choose an artist totem. It might be a doll, a stuffed animal, a carved figurine, or a wind-up toy. The point is to choose something you immediately feel a protective fondness toward. Give your totem a place of honor and then honor it by not beating up on your artist child.

Week 10: Recovering a Sense of Self-Protection

TASKS

- The Deadlies:
 - Take a piece of paper and cut seven small strips from it. On each strip write one of the following words: alcohol, drugs, sex, work, money, food, family / friends. Fold these strips of paper and place them in an envelope. We call these folded slips the deadlies. You'll see why in a minute.
 - Now draw one of the deadlies from the envelope and write five ways in which it has had a negative impact on your life. (If the one you choose seems difficult or inapplicable to you, consider this resistance.)
 - You will do this seven times, each time putting back the previous slip of paper so that you are always drawing from seven possible choices. Yes, you may draw the same deadly repeatedly. Yes, this is significant. Very often, it is the last impact on the final list of an annoying "Oh no, not again" that yields a break, through denial, into clarity.
- Touchstones: Make a quick list of things you love, happiness touchstones for you. River rocks worn smooth, willow trees, cornflowers, chicory, real Italian bread, homemade vegetable soup, the Bo Deans' music, black beans and rice, the smell of new-mown grass, blue velvet (the cloth and the song), Aunt Minnie's crumb pie...
 - Post this list where it can console you and remind you of your own personal touchstones. You may want to draw one of the items on your list — or acquire it. If you love blue velvet, get a remnant and use it as a runner on a sideboard or dresser, or tack it to the wall and mount images on it. Play a little.
- The Awful Truth: Answer the following questions. Tell the truth.
 - What habit do you have that gets in the way of your creativity? Tell the truth.
 - What do you think might be a problem? It is.

- What do you plan to do about the habit or problem?
- What is your payoff in holding on to this block?

If you can't figure out your payoff, ask a trusted friend. Tell the truth.
Which friends make you doubt yourself? (The self - doubt is yours already, but they trigger it.) Tell the truth.

- Which friends believe in you and your talent? (The talent is yours, but they make you feel it.)
- What is the payoff in keeping your destructive friends? If the answer is, " I like them. " the next question is, " Why? " Which destructive habits do your destructive friends share with your destructive self?
- Which constructive habits do your constructive friends share with your constructive self?
- Setting a Bottom Line: Working with your answers to the questions above, try setting a bottom line for yourself. Begin with five of your most painful behaviors. You can always add more later. If you notice that your evenings are typically gobbled by your boss's extra assignments, then a rule must come into play: no work after six. " If you are working too many jobs and too many hours, you may need to look at your billing. Are you pricing yourself appropriately? Do some footwork. What are others in your field receiving? Raise your prices and lower your workload.

Bottom Line

1. I will no longer work weekends.
2. I will no longer bring work with me on social occasions.
3. I will no longer accept business calls at home after six. etc...

- Cherishing:
 - List five small victories.
 - List three nurturing actions you took for your artist.
 - List three actions you could take to comfort your artist.
 - Make three nice promises to yourself. Keep them.
 - Do one lovely thing for yourself each day this week.

Week 11: Recovering a Sense of Autonomy

TASKS

- Buy yourself a special creativity notebook. Number pages one through seven. Give one page each to the following categories: health. possessions. leisure. relationships. creativity. career. and spirituality. With no thought as to practicality. list ten wishes in each area. All right. it's a lot. Let yourself dream a little here.
- Working with the Honest Changes section in Week Four:
 - Inventory for yourself the ways you have changed since beginning your recovery.
 - List five ways you will change as you continue.
 - List five ways you plan to nurture yourself in the next six months: courses you will take. supplies you will allow yourself. artist's dates. and vacations just for you.
- Take out a piece of paper and plan one week's nurturing for yourself. This means one concrete. loving action every single day for one week: please binge!
- Write an encouraging letter to your inner artist. Remember that your artist is a child and loves praise and encouragement and festive plans.
- List ten examples of personal synchronicity that support the possibility of a nurturing creative force .

Week 12: Recovering a Sense of Faith

TASKS

- Write down any resistance, angers, and fears you have about going on from here. We all have them.
- Take a look at your current areas of procrastination. What are the payoffs in your waiting? Locate the hidden fears. Do a list on paper.
- Sneak a peek at Week One Core Negative Beliefs. Laugh. Yes, the nasty critters are still there. Note your progress. Read yourself the affirmations here. Write some affirmations about your continued creativity as you end the course.
- Select a God jar. A what? A jar. a box. a vase. a container. Something to put your fears. your resentments. your hopes. your dreams. your worries into.

- Use your God jar. Start with your fear list from Task 1 above. When worried, remind yourself it's in the jar — “ God's got it. ” Then take the next action.
- Now, check how: Honestly, what would you most like to create? Open - minded, what oddball paths would you dare to try? Willing, what appearances are you willing to shed to pursue your dream?
- List five people you can talk to about your dreams and with whom you feel supported to dream and then plan.