

YOUR CREATIVITY SURVIVAL KIT

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Experts write that creativity is a timeless flow of peak experiences where fulfillment, generosity, and enlightenment abound. In it we get plugged into the splendor and fulfillment of our authentic nature. So why not just be creative all the time?

Flying monkeys.

Flying monkeys are my term for the evil thwarters of the creative process. We encounter them as we attempt to take creative steps down the yellow brick road to the land of Awes. - the "awes" of creative results. Flying monkeys block our path of good intentions with their pranks and distractions.

I facilitate workshops around the country to the creatively eager and ask people to share what flying monkeys stand in the way of their creative progress. This question resulted in a study of obstacles we commonly encounter in our attempts to be creatively productive:

1. Not realizing that the creative process is not always quick and easy and therefore giving up too quickly.
2. Applying creativity and ingenuity to procrastination strategies rather than to art.
3. Believing there is never enough time.
4. Feeling ideas are drying up; that projects look exactly the same.

As for flying monkey number one: M. Scott Peck taught us in *A Road Less Traveled* that once we understand that life is difficult, for some reason it is not so difficult. When we surrender our delusion that life is supposed to be easy we can use that energy to find ways to be at peace.

The same thing happens in the creative process. When we get an idea, we feel an electric exhilaration and a drive to bring it into existence, but as T.S. Eliot says "Between the idea and the reality falls the shadow." Creative manifestation is not always easy. When creative individuals hear that the creative process can be inherently difficult and encountering obstacles do not point to some character defect, their attention can shift from the discouragement of "I'm just not cut out to be an artist" to "It is time to activate my arsenal of solutions."

A Creativity Survival Kit (arsenal of solutions):

1. Procrastination Busters.

First it is important to realize that procrastination is a symptom. If you label yourself a procrastinator is it like calling yourself a sneeze rather than saying you have a cold. Scan this list of procrastination *causes* and see if any sound familiar. When we know what the problem is, we can more easily implement the solution:

- **The petrifying path of perfectionism:** You think you should be great at art immediately. The truth is that when we start a project we are NOT supposed to be good at it yet. We are beginners.
- Tools: Awareness, permission and surrender. Be aware that perfectionism does not work at the beginning of a creative endeavor. Give yourself permission to do bad or mediocre stuff so you will begin a project at all without such heavy pressure. Surrender your high standards for the joy of the process, the satisfying evolution of practice, and the unexpected happy discoveries that are guaranteed when rigid expectations are released. Some good news to perfectionists: You probably already are doing wonderful things - you just may not be able to see it because you have a rigid ideal you are not meeting. Ever not like a project you did only to like it when you saw it again? You forgot your expectation and saw the result with appreciative new eyes.
- **You have other unrealistic expectations:** You see someone else's work and you think you should do, in the next hour, that which probably took that person years to master. Or you are overwhelmed by how much needs to be done so you end up doing something unrelated or nothing.
Tool: Realize that mortals have a tendency to unintentionally expect too much of ourselves which often results in doing very little. Lower your expectations in order to get started. Starting can be the hardest part and giving yourself permission to do less than you are wanting can ignite a creative flow which then leads to excellence. Break projects down so small it is hard not to do it. Start by asking yourself just to look at an idea or to spend just 10 minutes starting it. Feel free to go longer if the process seduces you into it, which it often does.
- **You are stuck in a habit of watching TV, checking e-mail, playing computer games, of not doing everything but the art you want to be doing.**
Tool: Do not underestimate the amount of energy it takes to free yourself from a habit. A force of will, a daily reminder of not wanting to regret how you spent your time on the planet, taking a class, forming a creative support group, enlisting a creative pal or coach will help yank you out of that habit that makes you lose respect for yourself. But be gentle with yourself. Compassion will summon creative action more than beating yourself up will.
- **You fear you will be wasting time. That your art will not come out as you envision it.**
Tool: Understand that engaging in the creative process is more than creating a singular art project. The process makes us better people - the fringe benefits are individuality, resourcefulness, patience, being more magnetic as a person, and problem solving that positively impacts every other aspect of your life.

2. Making More Time

Everyone can engage in a project for just 15 minutes a day. This will start a momentum that will *inspire* you to make time for your craft. If you are a parent, rolemodel the importance of creativity by making time for it. If you are a creative person, making time to do your creativity will make you a better person in every other area of your life.

3. Coming up with New Ideas

Take the subjects you have used before and think about them differently. For example, butterflies Exaggerate a butterfly's wing so big that it becomes an abstract or get small and multiple: combine and make a sunset or a seascape out of butterflies , close your eyes and draw butterflies.

Associate from these words for new images: doodle, blur, dot, scribble, deviate color, subtract, add, confuse, mix, break the rules, forget perspective.



Break the rules...Forget perspective!

Scan a photo into PhotoShop and modify with an artistic filter. This can inspire a new design for your art.



Blur your eyes for new ideas!

Look in a magazine, tear out images, combine three of the images and see what happens.



Replace Objects with Like Shapes for New Ideas.

Write a list of what you are in awe of .. pick one or two and depict through art even if it is an abstract concept.



Play with images and see what cliché you can modify to caption it. This piece is called "There's An Angel in My Salad", which is a play on "There's a fly in my salad"

Flying monkeys can be tamed by clever creative survival techniques. The most powerful form of defense against quitting or discouragement is your strength of desire. If you want the dream badly enough, desire opens up your reservoirs of passion. Desire can create a creative flow so forceful that it subdues anything that stands in your way. Be fueled by the voice of your creative potential.



Surrender to the Process of Creativity, It is Filled with Happy Detours.

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