



My Creativity Workbook



Living a Creative Life

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Movement Magic
Wellness



Creativity is part of wellness. We are all artists and creators of and in our own lives. For some, being creative is writing a novel or a screenplay or working towards an exhibition of fine art or sculpture. For others, it's baking bread or creating a new recipe or taking interesting photographs on the cellphone. For some it's composing a new melody or a new symphony, or choreographing a new ballet. For others it's brainstorming how to improve systems in the workplace. Being creative can be rearranging the furniture in the sitting room, planting a vegetable garden, or figuring out the best way to engage the children in doing chores. Coaching is a highly creative process, for both coach and client. We are all constantly creating, and we can all improve how we do it.



Notice your Avoidance Strategies.

Do you procrastinate and put off a new project because you need to tend to the cat or the garden, catch up on the news, write a Facebook post, sweep the driveway, call your sister, read up and consult some more before you start... etc .etc. My avoidance strategy is to keep prioritising urgent matters, and then never get to what's really important to me.

"Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task." William James.

"The most regretful people on earth are those who felt the call to creative work, who felt their own creative power restive and uprising, and gave to it neither power nor time." Mary Oliver.



*What are my avoidance strategies?
What is the cost to me of
procrastination?*



Figure out your Fears and move through them.

What is it that holds you back from starting or getting down to a creative project? Is it because you are afraid that what you do will not be good enough? That you will "fail"? Are you afraid of rocking the boat and getting pushback? Are you scared of new technology? Steven Pressfield, in his book, "The War of Art" writes that, "The more fear we feel about a specific enterprise, the more certain we can be that that enterprise is important to us and to the growth of our soul". We are all afraid of change, of failure or of disapproval from those around us. Take the first step. Experiment and see what happens. Paralysis is crippling. Change and movement is life-enhancing.

"Everything you want is on the other side of fear." Jack Canfield.

"Fear is boring". Elizabeth Gilbert.

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." Nelson Mandela.



What are my deepest fears? What happens to them when I begin?



Connect and Collaborate.

Collaboration can be enormously creative and energising. I once worked in a very creative team at the University of Cape Town. We created academic literacy materials for our students, and we discussed and gave feedback to each other on everything we created. It did mean that it was a time-consuming process, but it was often very exciting, clarifying and energising. We created intellectual crackling and sparking! We all feed off each other. Bounce your ideas off your coach or the people around you - as you talk, your thoughts crystallise and take shape.

"None of us is as smart as all of us," Ken Blanchard.

"As coaches, we enter into a process of discovering with the coachee... We expect to be amazed." Kimsey-House.

"It takes two to speak the truth - one to speak, and another to hear." Henry Thoreau

"Politeness is the poison of collaboration." Edwin Land.



What collaboration was successful in the past? What made it work? Who can I collaborate with now?



Disconnect.

In order to tackle a creative task we need to clear away distractions. For many people, the mobile phone is an endless distraction. Emails, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube. All social media is designed to keep you engaged as much as possible. If they can keep you scrolling, keep you coming back, spending as much time as possible on your screen, they are making money. Your every move, every click is monitored in order to direct advertising at you. Watch "Social Dilemma" on Netflix if you want to know more. And then limit Netflix too! Try to block off periods in your day when you do not look at your phone, or social media on your computer, if this is possible. Turn off all notifications, so that you are not being constantly distracted. Set aside a time in the day to deal with emails. And then choose some days or weekends to disconnect completely. This will restore your creative juices!

"An addiction to distraction is the end of your creative production." Robin Sharma

"Attention is the beginning of devotion" Mary Oliver.



What are the things that distract me from what I really want to do? How can I limit them?



Find Solitude.

For some, solitude is a luxury and not always available. If you are able to, make solitude, even for short periods, a daily ritual. It might mean taking yourself out for a walk, or closing a door so that you can be alone. Just as we all need social connection, we also need to be alone sometimes. Solitude allows for reflection and recharging. It allows for the ideas that have been swirling around to sink and solidify.



What does solitude mean to me and where can I find it?

"Silence is essential. We need silence just as much as we need air, just as much as plants need light. If our minds are crowded with words and thoughts, there is no space for us."

Thich Nhat Hanh

"Solitude and silence are invitations to our deepest self."

Gabrielle Roth.



Go to the Source.

There are differing views about the source of creativity. For some, suffering is a source, conflict is a source, rage is a source. But do we have to be tormented and distressed to create? For many artists, suffering and sadness can be utilised to create. For them, this is a way out of the pain, to transform it into a thing of beauty. However, the idea that suffering is the *only* source of profound creativity is a myth that persists in the minds of many a writer or artist. Don't buy that. What about nature as a source of inspiration? What about beauty and joy as the source? What about stillness?

Here is a haiku about creativity by
Nicholas Rowe:

"Rebalance"

Clean air

Calm

No rush.

Family.

Friends.

Time.

Nature.

Creativity.



What have been the sources of my creativity in the past? What new sources can I access?



Vulnerability is essential for creativity.

All learning, all growth, all creativity requires feedback. The hardest thing for many people is often putting that idea, that hypothesis, that painting, that manuscript out into the world. It takes courage to be vulnerable. The small child that asks a question in school is taking a risk - how will this be received? Will this be seen as stupid? Will I be mocked by the other kids? The same risk is there in every creative act. How will this be received? There will always be people who give feedback thoughtlessly, even destructively. We need to learn to not care endlessly what other people might think of our work, but at the same time, to learn from constructive feedback. Brené Brown calls it a tightrope. The world is full of unborn creative possibilities, never put out into the world, because the creator was afraid to risk being vulnerable. The courage to live a creative life means risking vulnerability, learning from feedback and building resilience to criticism.

"When we stop caring about what people think, we lose our capacity for connection. When we become defined by what people think, we lose our willingness to be vulnerable. If we dismiss all the criticism, we lose out on important feedback." Brené Brown.

"Vulnerability looks like truth and feels like courage." Brené Brown.



*What does vulnerability mean to me?
In what way does my current (or future)
creative project demand that I be
vulnerable?*



Allow.

Sometimes we think that in order to be creative we need to be thinking and thinking. But many of us know that some of our best ideas come at unexpected moments, when we are running or walking, driving in traffic, in the shower, or moving to music. Sometimes our dreams evoke inspiration. For some people it's when they're in the water surfing, or drinking coffee and staring into space.

"Don't think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It's self-conscious, and anything self-conscious is lousy. You can't try to do things. You simply must do things". Ray Bradbury.

"I believe we each hold a spark of the original light of creation within us. I've seen it light up people's faces and bodies when they dance. In a thousand ways it has been revealed to me that God is the dance and we need only to disappear in the dance to liberate the sexual, creative, and sacred aspects of the soul." Gabrielle Roth.

"Creativity doesn't wait for the perfect moment. It fashions its own perfect moments out of ordinary ones."

Bruce Garrabrandt.



Where and when do my best ideas surface? How can I capture them?



Go to your body when you're stuck.

There are many ways of knowing. Your body can tell you a great deal. We can access this knowing or intuition in order to figure out what's keeping us stuck. Sometimes it's helpful to pause, take your hands to your heart or your belly, breathe, wait and listen. You may sense tightness or discomfort somewhere in your body. Be curious. What could this be? Allow the sensation to speak, in images or ideas.

"These pains you feel are messengers. Listen to them." Rumi.

"Breathing in and breathing out is a practice of freedom." Thich Nhat Hanh

"You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves". Mary Oliver.



*What do you feel right now in your body?
Breathe and connect to your sensations.
Be curious. What might they say to you?*

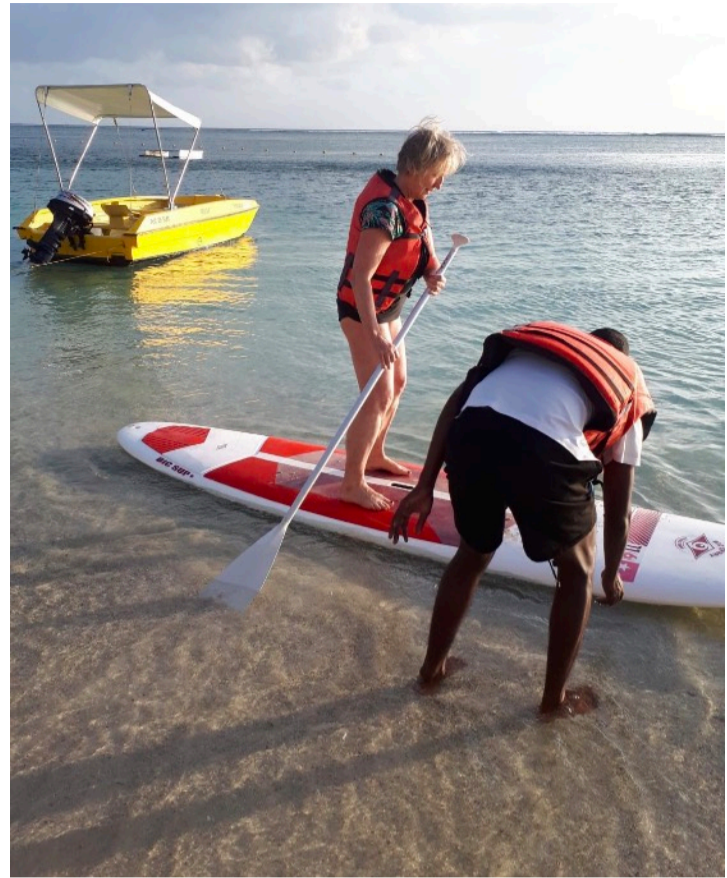


Do something you've never done before.

Change is enlivening and invigorating. Write a poem, learn to windsurf, change your route to work. Be a tourist in your own city. Take funky photographs with your cellphone. Walk around your garden and watch the birds and study the shapes and textures of the stones. Change might be as simple as taking your computer to a coffee shop, placing a new cloth on your desk, or inviting someone you hardly know to dinner.

"By changing nothing, nothing changes." Tony Robbins.

"When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge." Tuli Kupferberg.



What change or adventure might enliven me and enhance my creativity?



Pay attention through your senses.

Inspiration is all around you if you are present to it. If you're out on a walk, in the street or in nature, look and see. Notice colours and textures, light and shade. Listen to the sounds of the city or the sounds of nature. Maybe water, birds, children laughing. Take it in. Be like a puppy seeking new smells - what smell is this? how does this leaf smell? Taste and savour your food. Feel your feet on the ground, the touch of your clothing on your body, the breeze on your skin. Being in your senses allows you to be present. Being present allows you to listen and receive.

*"Instructions for living a life.
Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell
about it." Mary Oliver.*

*"The quality of life is in
proportion, always, to the
capacity for delight. The capacity
for delight is the gift of paying
attention." Julia Cameron.*



Which senses do I use mostly in my creative projects? What happens when I mindfully use all my senses?



Listen and receive.

Many creative people talk about the essential quality of listening to receive. They feel that they are a channel. The idea that the creative product already exists, but you are the one who “gets it down”, who “makes it happen” is all over in writing about creativity. It’s a very liberating concept. You don’t have to think something up, or make something happen. Your newly designed kitchen, your choreography, your presentation, is already there, waiting for you to start. You just have to listen.

“We are the instrument more than the author of our work.” Julia Cameron.

“Feel yourself being an opening through which energy flows from the unmanifested Source of all life through you for the benefit of all”. Eckhart Tolle.



*What does it take for me to listen?
What does it take for me to receive?*



Banish Perfectionism.

This has been a long journey of recovery for me - and I'm still working on it! If you continually create and recreate and revise and redo, because you're seeking perfection, you will never move forward and it will never be finished.. A creative project cannot be perfect. It is never complete, either, until you choose to make it so. Part of creativity is letting go. Deciding that "This is good enough."

"The wise among us know that creation is not perfect and that we are all prone to mistakes." Credo Mutwa.

"Perfectionism is a 20 ton shield that we lug around, thinking it will protect us, when in fact it's the thing that's really preventing us from being seen." Brené Brown.

"To the perfectionist, there is always room for improvement. The perfectionist calls this humility. In reality, it is egotism." Julia Cameron.

"Perfectionism may look good in his shiny shoes, but he's a bit of an asshole and no one invites him to their pool parties." Ze Frank.



What is my perfectionism protecting me from? What do I need to let go of in order to move forward?



Practise.

Creative ability in a particular area is not necessarily a talent you are born with, it's something you develop through practice and persistence. Research indicates that creative practice can reduce stress levels and improve your ability to problem-solve.

I have a client who loves to bake sourdough bread. Every day she is in her kitchen creating the next loaf. I have learnt from her that sourdough is an art, and that each time she makes a loaf she is learning something new. She finds it immensely satisfying. I have a dear friend who is always in his workshop designing and creating surfboards. My sourdough client finds joy in each loaf, and my surfer friend is never more at home with himself than when he is creating a new board. The joy is not only in the product but very much in the process, and yet each new product is an improvement on the last.

"The professional respects his craft. He does not consider himself superior to it. ...He knows that by toiling beside the front door of technique, he leaves room for genius to enter by the back." Steven Pressfield.



Photo Johnathon Pielmayer Unsplash

What have I learnt from practising my craft? How much do I value practise?



Be curious.

Elizabeth Gilbert wrote "The Signature of all Things", which I think is her best book, by starting a garden. She became curious about the flowers she was planting, and where they came from. She then started to read up about botanical history. Her curiosity became a passion, which became a wonderful book. Every child, when allowed to be, is curious, and creative. Every child is continually observing, noticing, questioning. Allow yourself to follow a thought, a sensation, an idea, with curiosity. See where it takes you. See if your interest grows and develops.

"I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious." Albert Einstein.

"Remember to look up at the stars, not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious." Stephen Hawking.



What am I curious about now in my life? Follow the trail....



Jump in and do it!

The most important thing about living creatively is probably just to do what you want to do. To create that play, to begin that project, to be at your desk/in your studio/kitchen/workshop and to get to work. I was lucky enough to have a father who was always doing. He loved to work with his hands, and spent all his free time creating. He built a caravan, which took us on many holidays, and a sailing boat which he sailed with boundless enthusiasm. He built my childhood bunk bed and our kitchen. He made beautiful wooden clocks and coffee tables. There was always a new project on the go. If he couldn't sleep at night, he didn't mind. Because he was envisioning his next project. This is creative living. The key seems to be to just do it. Just begin.

"Begin to weave and God will give you the thread." (German proverb)

"Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is merely day dreaming, but vision with action can change the world." Nelson Mandela.

"As you start to walk on the path, the path appears." Rumi.



*What stops you from jumping in?
What can you choose to begin today?*



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