

Secrets from a Creativity Coach
WORKBOOK



Secrets from a Creativity Coach WORKBOOK

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Part I:
CLARITY FOR CREATIVE PEOPLE

MAKING A LIFE IN THE ARTS

Claim the life you desire. Proclaim your intentions. Live your dream.

Questions:

What do you need to restore your enthusiasm for your creative life? A weekend away from your family to write, season tickets to the opera, an art workshop? What activity would rejuvenate your creative life?

What current obligations or commitments are blocking your enthusiasm?

List specific ways your current schedule energizes you or depletes your energy?

Name three activities that energize you.

Name three activities that deplete you.

In what ways is your body physically prompting you to make a change? Headaches? Tight shoulders? Stomach upset? Sleeping too much or too little? Eating too much or too little?

Name three ways you could free up some time in your schedule in the coming week.

1.

2.

3.

Name three commitments you could drop in the next six months to free up more time for your creative pursuits.

MAKE IT MATTER, MAKE IT HAPPEN

Only you can decide your creative goals matter. Claim meaning in your life and take action.

Questions:

What important desires in your life have you pushed aside?

How do you feel today about that decision?

What goal do you claim for your life today?

List three action steps to reach that goal.

1.

2.

3.

THE PUZZLE OF “BOTH/AND”

Your everyday life and your creative life exist side by side. There’s always time and space for both. Overlap your interests and efforts to create a win-win.

Questions:

In what way can you “both/and” your time or energies?

Think about new interests or activities that you’ve enjoyed. Have any of these new interests sparked a creative idea you may want to pursue?

How could you rearrange your work day to allow time for your creative pursuits?

How could you rearrange your weekends to allow time for your creative pursuits?

BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF “GOOD ENOUGH”

Make progress toward your goals every day. A “good enough” effort for today will release you from fear of rejection and perfectionism.

Questions:

Think of a time when a high need for predictability derailed your creative dreams.

Do you look for a guarantee of success before you invest your time? In what ways could this tendency be self-sabotaging to your creative dreams?

Think of a person in your field who seems to be a risk-taker and has been successful. What steps has this person taken that you could take?

List ways a “good enough” thinking style could free your creative energies.

DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB

Having a “real” job is no excuse for not doing your creative work. Reframe the way you view your job.

Questions:

In what ways have you abdicated responsibility for your own creative progress? Have you blamed your family, spouse, or your job for your lack of productivity?

If you're feeling less than positive about your job, make a list of all the things that are right about your job. What are the plusses? The pay? The hours? Co-workers? The commute?

In what ways does your job feel purposeful?

The ability to focus your attention on what's right instead of what's wrong could enhance your job satisfaction. In what other ways could a change of attitude improve your life?

CREATIVE BUSINESS PLANNING

Fed up with fancy calendars and elaborate time management systems? Try a right-brain approach to goal setting or redesigning your life.

Questions:

What planning strategies have you tried in the past? Was it successful or unsuccessful?

Being willing to commit to a business plan is a good first step. What would be the second step?

How do you think you will feel as you build momentum?

What do you hope will be the results of having a plan and working a plan?

Part II:
STRAIGHT TALK FOR CREATIVE PEOPLE

TALKING TO YOURSELF: SELF-COACHING BASICS

If you can form a question, you already know the answer. Use a fifteen minute self-coaching session to gain clarity.

Questions:

What is your “Why?” question that will begin your first self-coaching session?

Where would be the best place for you to conduct your self-coaching session?

If you are reluctant to coach yourself, what could be stopping you from taking this step? Are you too self-conscious or embarrassed to talk to yourself? Do you not trust your ability to be honest with yourself? Are you afraid of what you could discover about yourself or your dreams? Are you unwilling to take that much responsibility for your future?

Choose a date and time for your first appointment with your inner coach.

TIME OUT

A digital timer can become your best tool for greater productivity.

Questions:

In the past when you have felt overwhelmed or discouraged by the responsibility of reaching your creative goal did you abandon your goal or revise your plan?

Set a timer and take twenty minutes to actively work toward your creative goals. How did you feel after your first twenty minutes?

Think of a task you want to start. Name a starting and ending date.

Does this decision to make a commitment to take action fill you with anticipation or anxiety?

List tasks in your life could be done in twenty minute increments?

RIGHT ACTION, RIGHT TIME

Do your creative work when your body's energy levels run high. Be aware of technological time thieves.

Questions:

What time(s) of day do you feel most energetic?

What activity would be a fit for this time slot?

What time(s) of day do you feel most confident?

What creative project of yours could benefit from this state of mind?

What time(s) of day do you feel most positive?

What task would be the best use of your positive energy? Business phone calls? Query letters?

What time(s) of day do you feel lethargic and slow?

What activity would best fit your low energy level?

How could you quickly transform a lull in energy into productivity? Take a walk outside to get some fresh air? Go to the gym? Listen to some energetic music? Call a friend?

Which technological distractions are taking too much of your time? Computer? Internet? Instant messaging? Text messaging? Video games? TV?

What could you begin doing today to reclaim your time?

BE OPEN TO NEW POSSIBILITIES

There's no reason to feel guilt over lost opportunities. Forgive yourself and move forward to new possibilities.

Questions:

Recall a time when you were willing to set aside your original idea to consider a completely different idea?

What was the ultimate result of that decision?

What new creative experience is calling you to action? A shift from non-fiction to fiction? A turn from representational to abstract painting? A literary shift from poetry to a family memoir?

Recall a time in your own life when regret, remorse or guilt held your creativity hostage. What was the result?

Feeling stuck? What are you holding on to that may be holding you down?

When you come to a dead end on a creative project, force yourself to brainstorm at least seven different solutions to your problem. List a current problem. Can you think of seven solutions?

Name a time when you limited your creativity by being unwilling to enlarge your boundaries.

DON'T LET YOUR EMOTIONS RUN AWAY WITH YOUR CREATIVE LIFE

Your emotions control your actions. Do what makes you feel better and become more productive.

Questions:

How do you feel about a current task? How could you reframe your thinking to change your feelings from negative to positive?

Can you think of a time when you set aside immediate gratification to achieve long-term satisfaction? How did you feel during the process? How did you feel when the task was completed?

Are you more likely to focus on what you want or focus on what you don't want?

What important desires in your life have you pushed aside because you weren't willing to do the work?

What was the emotional and financial cost of that decision?

Take a few moments to visualize the future you want. Dream really big! What are the physical and emotional outcomes you desire?

WORK BETTER UNDER PRESSURE

Use contests or exhibitions to jumpstart your creativity and create some activity in your creative life. Self-imposed pressures work.

Questions:

What connections have you lost since your college years? In what ways has this loss impacted your creativity or productivity?

Name three things you could do to create a structured support system to nurture your creativity?

List the names of associates who might benefit from a support group for creative people.

Think of a time when you “thought” an idea to death. What was the emotional result of your action?

How can you rearrange your expectations to accept a “good enough” product so you can move on to your next venture?

KING ARTHUR'S ROUNDTABLE

Create a team to help you reach your long-term goals. Working together builds momentum and accountability.

Questions:

A major project takes time, energy, clarity and focus. What is your big project?

How could a short-term “roundtable” help you stay on track?

Which skills are out of your area of expertise?

Who could you ask to help you?

Think of a time in the past when you allowed frustration or disappointment to derail your dreams. How did you feel when you abandoned your goal? Relieved? Defeated?

DON'T LEAVE YOUR CREATIVITY AT HOME

Build in time for your creative work while you're at work. Reframe your day job.

Questions:

Reframing your work day can change your attitude about your job and increase your creative output. How can you add creativity into your work day?

List professional magazines or books you could read on your breaks?

How do you think adding twenty minutes a day of writing or drawing time into your work day could increase your job satisfaction, your general mood?

Name five things you appreciate about your job.

Be honest, how much time do you estimate you spend watching TV or talking on the phone in the evenings?

What would you rather do with a half-hour to one hour every evening?

Part III: PROTECTING YOUR TIME AND TALENTS

APPROACHING ELEPHANTS ALWAYS ARRIVE ON TIME

Saying “Yes” when you really mean “No” only leads to frustration down the road.
Protect your time and creative energies for your projects.

Questions:

In what ways have you allowed people to take advantage of your creative talents or services?

How could you be more assertive regarding your interactions with others?

What situation or individual will be the most challenging for you to confront?

Name some time-wasting tasks you agreed to do in the past.

For future reference, what are the characteristics of a time-wasting task?

Are you currently in a situation or relationship where you've stayed longer than is advantageous for your career?

What would an exit strategy look like?

In what ways are you willing to be in control of your future?

BE A PLATE SPINNER

Keep several creative ideas spinning to avoid creative block.

Questions:

If you know you're hanging on to one project, try turning your one idea into multiple ideas. Which of the following ideas appeal to you?

Write a short magazine article about the subject of your book. What could be the title of your article?

Give your characters a different audience. Turn one of your chapters into a short story. Enter the new short story in a writing contest.

Write the information blurb for the back of your book. This will save time later when your publisher asks you for one.

Write your own book review. Yes! Write your own review. This will prove useful later when your book is carried on Amazon.com.

An exercise: Name ten writing ideas or art ideas. Record each idea on a separate note card. Turn the cards upside down, shuffle them and turn one over every day. Take a twenty minute action on that new idea. This exercise will give you permission to "play" with your work and keep fresh ideas coming.

BE HAPPY, ENHANCE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY AND CREATIVITY

Good-feeling thoughts will keep your creative ideas flowing and enhance your productivity.

Questions:

In general, are you more often in charge of your emotions or are your emotions more often in charge of you?

When you feel your emotions pulling you down how do you usually react?

Are you more apt to go with the flow of negative thinking or positive thinking?

What would give you the courage to take charge of your emotions so you could redirect your course?

Think of a time when you devoted too much time to a negative emotion. What was the cost?

A gratefulness journal could turn your thinking around. Make a list of ten things for which you are grateful.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

GATEKEEPER BASICS

Successful people in your field can help you reach your goals. Get what you want by being prepared and confident.

Questions:

Who are the gatekeepers in your field?

What are the names of the professional organizations, clubs or affiliations in your field?

What professional meetings do you attend? What meetings does your gatekeeper attend?

In what ways could you offer your services or skills to your professional organization?

When faced with a problem, what makes you less willing to ask for help?

How could it work to your advantage to solicit the input and advice of a gatekeeper?

In what ways could you offer your help to a gatekeeper?

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF LEAP FROGS

Creative ideas are like leap frogs. Let your frog jump. He's your ticket to creative adventure.

Questions:

How could you improve the balance between your financial needs and your creative needs?

When you're at a loss for a new idea, do you begin work believing that good will come from your efforts or do you wait and hope inspiration will strike you?

If your life feels out of balance what actions could you take to nurture your creative side?

Do you have an idea where your leap frogs are leading you?

Where is your left jumping frog leading you?

Where is your right jumping frog leading you?

Describe a time when you followed one idea to the next. What was the end result?

Part IV: GOOD SKILLS FOR LIVING

CENTER YOURSELF

Like clay on a potter's wheel you can feel grounded. Center yourself to avoid anxiety and indecision.

Questions:

When anxiety and nervousness descend, what do you usually do?

What self-soothing options have you chosen in the past which were helpful?

What self-soothing options have you chosen in the past which were unhelpful? Food? Alcohol?

How would you coach a child to a state of calm when he or she is feeling anxious?

OPTIMISTIC VISUALIZATION: FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANT

Look inside and awaken your creativity. Visualization can help you gain clarity and solve your creative problems.

Questions:

When you feel stuck what do you usually do?

If you feel panicky or full of self-doubt, how long do these feelings usually last?

What strategies have you used to relieve your feelings of anxiety?

Rather than looking something outside of yourself for calm, could you breathe your way through your feelings of inadequacy or discomfort? How could you remind yourself that these feelings are temporary and will pass?

When confronted with a challenge what is your typical thinking pattern? Do you see your problem as a temporary situation that will work itself out over time or do you view your problem as permanent, as an omen of things to come?

When you feel stressed and rushed take a few minutes to calm your inner spirit. Write a phrase that could help you achieve your goal for today.

Some suggestions:

- Today I am happy, creative and fulfilled.
- I am ready and willing to take action.
- The spark of creativity is inside me.
- Today is full of hope and possibility.
- I enjoy the flow of my creativity.
- Every situation I face is an opportunity to learn more about my inner power, skills, creativity and talents.

TIME AND SPACE MANAGEMENT

Are you continually behind on your projects? Does your work space contribute or hinder your productivity? You may need a time management tune up.

Questions:

Which chores and errands interrupt your most creative and productive hours?

Do you feel compelled to answer your home phone or cell phone anytime it rings? How could you approach this problem in a new way?

Do you compulsively check your e-mail during the day? How could you change your habit? What would be the benefits?

How could you reorganize your home to be a more inviting work space for your writing or art?

NOW AND LATER

Overloaded with too many ideas and don't know where to start? Play the Now and Later game to sort out your options.

Questions:

What minor decision would you be willing to trust to the Now and Later Game?

What major decision would you be willing to trust to the Now and Later Game?

How could you use this game in another way in your life? Could you use the Now and Later game to get your children to do their household chores or homework?

The Now and Later Game employs your intuition. It takes time to build confidence and trust in your intuition. Recall a time when you trusted your intuition.

Have you experienced a time when your inner knowing was on target? What physical or emotional prompting helped you trust your intuition?

“SOMEDAY” NEVER COMES

Procrastination and perfectionism are two sides to the same coin.

Questions:

When you think about the creative work you want to do, are you more often a procrastinator or a perfectionist?

How have procrastination and perfectionism derailed you from achieving your goals?

Name ten things you would really like to do but never seem to get around to doing.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Remember a time when you put off doing something for so long that the opportunity passed. How did you feel when there was nothing you could do to change the situation?

How do you think it would feel to be in a position of power and action more often in your life?

What actions could you take this week to move you in the direction of your dreams?

WHEN THE STUDENT IS READY, THE TEACHER WILL APPEAR

Mentors teach, encourage and open doors. Be a willing student.

Activity and Questions:

Create a timeline charting your progression as a creative person.

Draw a horizontal line on a piece of white paper. This is your time line. Begin at the left end of the line with your earliest childhood memories. The right end of the line is for today. Find a quiet spot and think back. Try to remember all the times in your life when you practiced your creativity or learned a new skill. Chronologically move from left to right. Make a mark on the horizontal line for each memory or event in your life in which your life progressed forward as a result of that experience. Have you had “wilderness” times in your life when you did not use your creativity for long periods of time? Label each mark with brief details of the event and name the feeling you associate with this creative activity.

When you used your talents or skills how did you feel? Appreciated? Embarrassed? Confident? Insecure?

What talents did you practice as a child that you no longer use?

Did anyone ever discourage you about your talents? How did you react?

Are you allowing this discouraging word to control your actions today?

What talent from your childhood would you like to pursue again as an adult?

Who are your mentors? Have you thanked them?