

# Rise to the Top

How to conquer with creativity

By Amber Kane



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# **preface**

Throughout my years in school, I was an awful writer. My thoughts were all over place. The belief that I didn't know how to write, hung with me for quite some time, in fact it still rears it's ugly head once and awhile.

However my desire to share my work with the world was stronger than my fear of being judged for my writing skills. So I started writing everyday, and with time and practice my writing improved.

I started this workbook, I don't know how many times, feeling that it was something that needed to be put into the world, but questioning why I was the one being asked to put it together. Then I realized that I already had most of it done. From teaching online and offline for 7 years, I've created a ton of content, and I mean a ton. I just need to organize the content, and pull out the best bits and share them with you.

Fear, negative self talk, and the voices that we hear throughout our lives so often hold us back, from doing exactly what we need to be doing. Those negative voices are amazing blinders. Blinders that kept me from realizing that I have workbook after workbook saved on flashdrives. Flashdrives full of content that I know works, as I've used it on students and seen the results.

It's also important to challenge the way that you define your work. I felt that I couldn't write a book, because I was defining a book as a 200 page novel. Then I realized that I could make a book be, whatever I want it to be.

Enjoy this collection of stories, words of encouragement, and activities, put together to form a book.



i”m an educator, textile designer, entrepreneur, and stellar day dreamer.

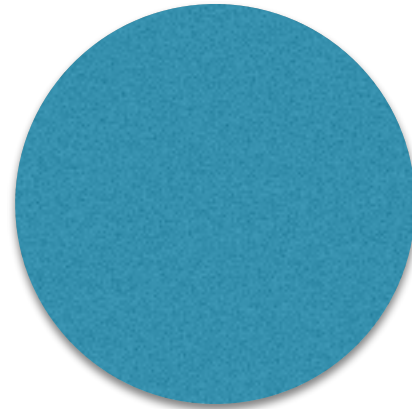
i received my Art Education degree from Messiah College, and earned my masters in Creativity Studies from Union Institute and University.

i’ve taught high school Art for 7 years, while running my textile design business on the side. while teaching I’ve learned that our schools are teaching creativity and dreams right out of our students, while developing an obsession for empty standards. my love for teaching, learning, and creativity spurred me to create this workbook.

i believe that you were born with amazing gifts, and I want to help you uncover and realize your true talents. a world full of people that know who they are and why they are here, is a world full of peace and purpose.

*PS: i’m not a big fan of capital letters, typing them feels like a waste of time*

# What Creativity is



# and what it isn't

creativity is important

creativity is a legitimate career path

creativity is painting, drawing and basket weaving, it's also a part of everything around you

creativity is what creates new jobs

creativity solves problems

creativity asks questions and challenges social norms

creativity is hard

creativity must be practiced

creativity can be taught

creativity is for everyone

creativity is not a direct path to misery, starvation, and homelessness

creativity cannot easily be tested on a standardized test, but it can be tracked and assessed

creativity is not a waste of time

creativity is for people of all  
intelligence levels

creativity can be relearned

creativity is not less important than  
reading, writing and math

and creativity is not important  
because of it's connection to  
reading, writing and math

While I've been a maker my entire life, it was not until I began teaching creativity that I began to understand it. And it was not until I studied my own creative process that I was set free to truly create.

in school we learn how not to be creative, we get in trouble for daydreaming and doodling, and we're always searching for the right answer, with little room for error.

you're rewarded if you color inside the lines, follow the directions, and are neat and tidy.

These messages make it difficult to be a creative adult, as in order to do so , you must have such a strong desire to create that you are willing to go against the system, you are willing to get it wrong, to make mistakes, and to color like you don't even know that the lines are there.

To be creative you must be willing to:  
challenge the system  
get the answer wrong  
ignore the line

The fact that you aren't creating has nothing to do with your talent or your time, it has everything to do with your fear.

You're afraid of failure, that you aren't good enough, that it won't work, that someone will laugh, that people won't get it.

You also aren't creating because it's always at the bottom of your to do list, which means that it's always getting bumped by other things. This needs to stop.

You're here because you want to live a more creative life, so let's first determine what a creative life is. What does it feel like, what does it look like.



**doubt is part of the  
creative process.**



When you hear the word creative write down the first 10 words that come to mind.  
Really don't think too hard, just write.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

When you hear the word art, write down the first 10 words that come to mind.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now go back and look over your words, circle the ones that really ring true for you, and fill in the following sentence.

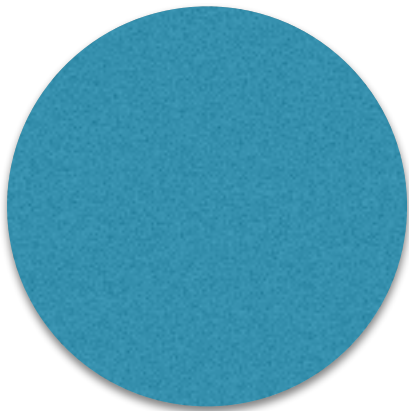
The word creative means to me:

The word art means to me:

# What's holding you back?

Most people are held back from making their best work not because they don't have the ability, but because they lack the confidence to do so. Making art can be painful, as good art is made outside of our comfort zone. It asks us to be vulnerable, it begs for us to go where we have never gone, and requires us to challenge the world around us.

Confidence means different things to different people, and you'll find that you have your own understanding of what makes you feel confident. We're first going to find out what those things are and then look at how you can bring more of that into your life.



what's holding you back: read over the statements below and circle those that resonate with you.

1. i believe that i'm creative

2. i'm able to tell other people that i'm creative

3. when people tell me that i'm creative i say thank you

4. when people tell me that i'm creative, i respond that I'm not

5. when people tell me that i'm creative , i'm embarrassed

6. people tell me that they wish that they were as creative as me.

7. i spend time creating everyday

**8. i spend time creating once a week**

9. i spend time creating once a month

**10.i think about creating, but i never have time**

11. i think about creating, but i don't have the supplies or the talent to create what i want to

**12. i think about creating often, but i can't seem to start**

13.when i create something i never finish it

**14. i almost always finish what i start**

15 i finish the projects that i start and i share them with my friends and family

**16 i'm very uncomfortable with the idea of charging money for the things that i create**

17 i charge money for what i make, but i'm just trying to cover the cost of my supplies

**18 the thought of charging more than \$50 for something that I create makes me uncomfortable**

19 i want to make money from selling my art, but no one can make money from selling art

**20 i have an idea of something to make, but i'm sure that someone else has already done it**

21. i don't share my work on any social media platforms because i'm afraid that someone else is going to steal my ideas

**22. i believe that my work adds value to the world**

23. i believe that my work is worth more than i charge

24. i wish that i could spend more time creating, but something else always comes up

25. i call myself an artist

26. when people ask me what i do , i boldly tell them that i'm an artist, designer, writer

27. when people ask me what I do , i quietly tell them that i sort of makes things, but it's just for fun, and it's just on the side

**Count how many of the negative comments you circled.**

**count how many of the positive comments you circled.**

**Take time to reflect on the above information.**

Like many of you, when I look back on my life I don't remember a time that I wasn't creative. As a child my days were filled, experimenting, drawing, creating and teaching, that's just what I was drawn to. My parents and friends supported me, and i was often told that I was a great drawer and talented artist, which was wonderful fuel to my young creative fire.

While studying art in college, i no longer felt good enough. there were students in my class that were far more talented than i, and for the first time i was really struggling. i wasn't so sure that i was good at art anymore. i lost my confidence, and with that i lost my voice.

while working on my senior show, i worked for 8 hours a day, alone, weaving, playfully creating, and wonderful things started to happen. my work was good, it was interesting, and once again i was getting great feedback. i surprised my professors, i surprised myself.

creating after college is a journey back to the freedom of creating like a child. the freedom of making because you don't know any better, or being playful, of making mistakes and knowing that it's okay.

While i , just like any artist, still have my days where I feel that I'm not good enough and, have conversations where I have trouble telling people that i'm an artist. the journey to becoming confident in my work again, allowed both the work and myself to grow.



**It takes courage to grow  
up and become who you  
really are.**

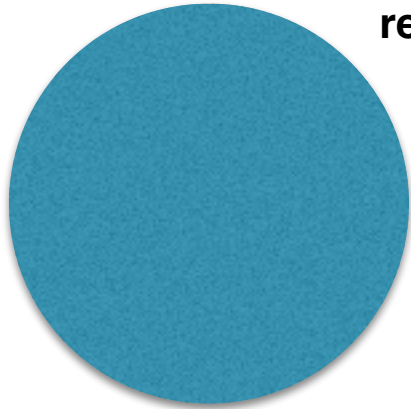
EE Cummings

It's time to tell your creativity story. Look back at your life, think about when you felt the most creative, the things that people said to you about being creative, and how it felt. See if you can pinpoint that time in your life when you went from feeling great about creating, to thinking that you weren't good enough.

Most of the time it's our own thoughts, experiences, and beliefs that are holding us back. If we are able to step outside of ourselves and gain a new perspective we are able to move forward. So for a moment you are going to leave yourself, and pretend that you're the person that you want to be.

This exercise is easier and more effective if you pretend that you are actually a real person, instead of someone that you made up.

**Pretend that you are a famous artist, or writer, someone that you really admire.**



**Get into the mind of this person, how do they dress, talk, walk. What does their day look like. How do they get themselves into the studio. What makes them create great work. Embrace the qualities of that person as you make decisions throughout your day.**

**Name of person:**

**Where do they buy their clothes?**

Where do they go for dinner?

**What does their creative work space look like?**

What does their daily schedule look like?

**Where do they go to when they need inspiration?**

How do they get their creative work into the world?

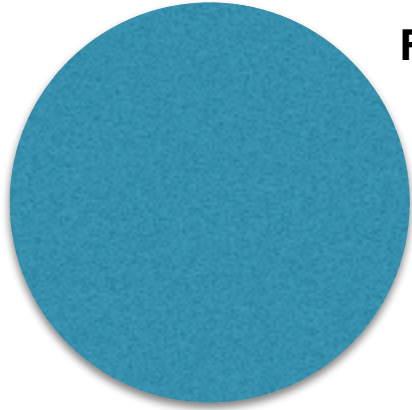
**How do they talk about their work?**

What do they do when they have a big problem that they need to tackle?

**How do other people talk about them?**

Why do people buy their creative work?

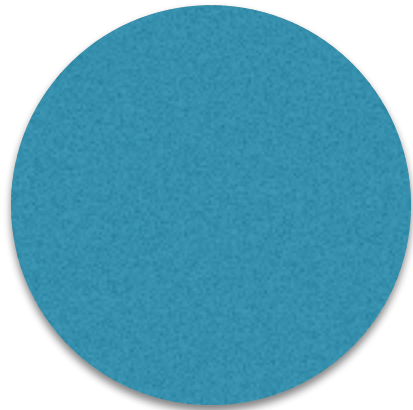
A lot of our thoughts about creativity and being an artist come from the things that we've heard others say . you may have heard about the starving artist, heard people say that they aren't creative, they can't draw and the like.



**Free write and create a list of all of the voices that you've heard throughout your life about creativity and being an artist.**

Until I started studying my creative process, I didn't know that there was anything wrong. I was unaware that I could make changes and have a better more enjoyable process. Often we don't change because we don't know how, we don't know what needs to be changed, or we're unaware that there even is a problem.

In order to determine what needs to change, you need to determine what the problem is, what's frustrating you.



Complete this sentence, what frustrates me the most about my creative process, or lack there of is: \_\_\_\_\_



# Uncovering the problem

The most common excuse to not creating art is saying that you don't have time. However, deep down rarely is that the problem. We all have time for the things that are important to us. Through this exercise you're going to dive deeper and deeper into what is truly the reason that you aren't creating.

## First an example:

*Excuse: I don't create art because I don't have time*

*I don't have time because I put everything else above creating*

*I put creating last because I've learned to believe that it's not important from the things that people around me say:*

*I think that my creating isn't important, because I just do it for fun, I could never make any money from it.*

*I just do it for fun because I'm not an artist*

*I'm not an artist because I'm uncomfortable calling myself an artist*

*I'm uncomfortable calling myself an artist because that would mean that I would need to produce work on a regular basis and share it with the world and they might not like my work.*

**So the real reason that you don't create is out of fear of rejection,  
not because you don't have enough time.**

## Your turn....

**I don't create art because:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(a)**

**(a)** \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_ **(b)**

**(b)** \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_ **(c)**

**(c)** \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_ **(d)**

**(d)** \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_ **(e)**

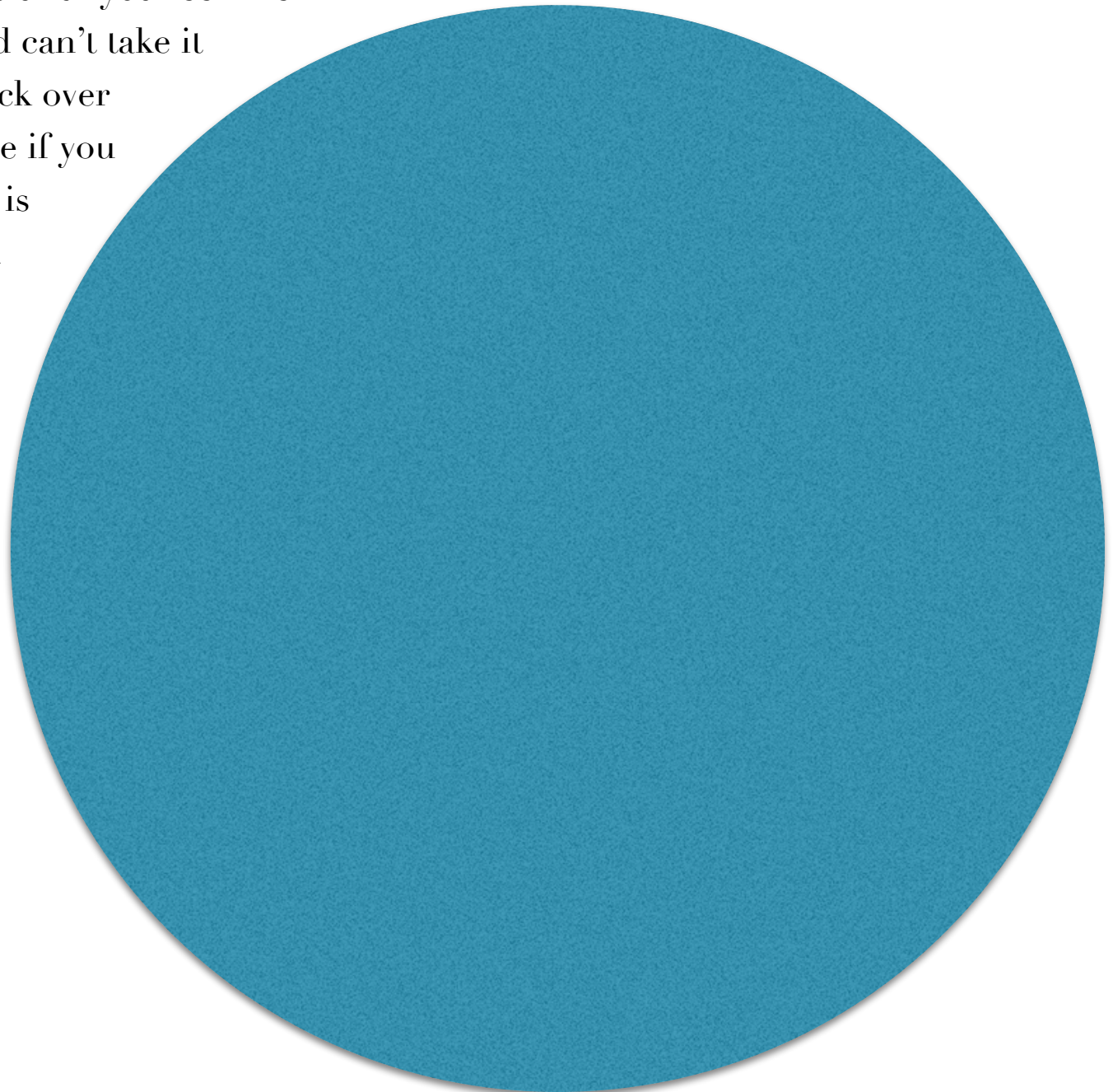
**(e)** \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_ **(f)**

(f)

because

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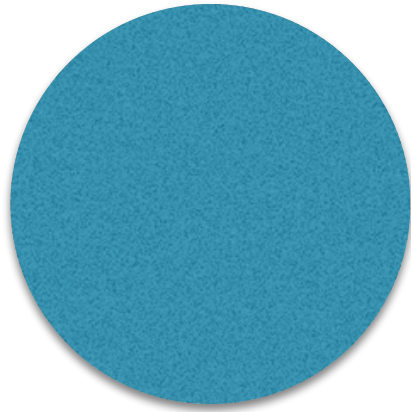
Continue going down the line and through this process until you feel like you've hit a wall, and can't take it any farther. Read back over your answers and see if you can determine what is actually holding you back from creating. It's rarely the first thing that you wrote down, or what you actually thought it was.



Creativity isn't easy, which is exactly why many people avoid it. It takes confidence, passion, drive, and determination. It also takes a lot of self reflection, and peeling back of the layers that were built over the years. That took you from a free and curious child, to a reluctant adult.

Creativity will ask you to leave your comfort zone over and over again, and no matter how many times you do it, or how much you practice, it will also be uncomfortable.

**It's time to learn to get comfortable with discomfort.**



**Take some time to free write  
using the prompts below:**

what do you like about yourself, what are you good at.....

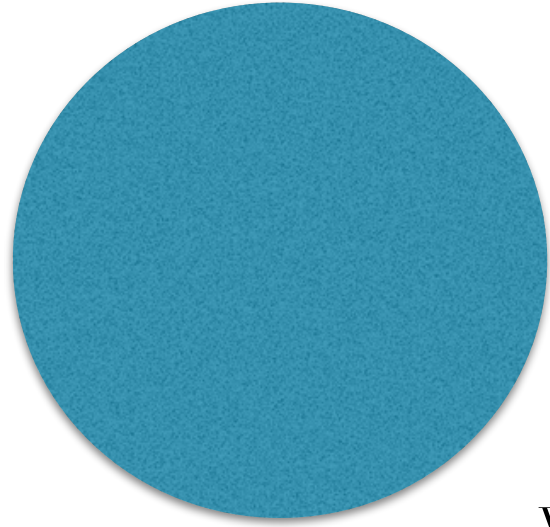
calling myself an artist makes me feel.....

making money from my artwork makes me feel.....

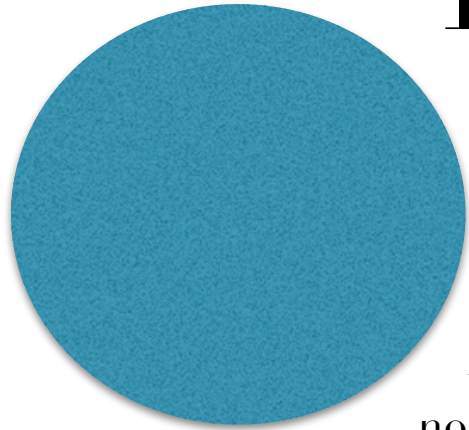
**saying no to the lunch, babysitting, cooking dinner, cleaning the house and instead creating makes me feel.....**



The reason that I don't make time to create is.....



**T**here's a misunderstanding out there that all great artists, are wandering around without a plan or a care in the world, creating whenever the mood strikes. Not true, anyone that produces good work, and a lot of it, is creating a schedule, they're doing the work even when they don't want to. They have a plan.



**I**t's time to start carving out slivers of time in your schedule to create. Pull out your calendar. Look at your schedule for the next week, and put in 15min of creating each day. Maybe you have to get up 15 min earlier or stay up a little later, maybe you watch your favorite show while you're creating. Maybe you get take out for dinner one night, or you commit that one day a week you're not going to get on facebook, or you're only going to check your email once. Whatever it is that you need to adjust, do it, and write down that you will draw, sew, paint, weave, write... whatever your craft is, for 15 min each day. It's likely that you'll find that once you get started that 15min will grow. But we're taking baby steps.

**Let's do some more free writing on your thoughts about creativity. Choose 3-5 of the prompts below to respond to or get crazy and do them all.**

- when I think about creativity I.....

- artists are...

- something is a work of art when....

- the most that I could ever charge for my art is....

- When I think about charging enough money for my art to pay all of my bills I feel

- growing up , taking the time to make art was viewed as...

- when I think about people that are making money selling their art I

Write down three stories of when there was something that you really wanted to create, but you gave up your time to create to do something for someone else.

You probably tell yourself that you're going to start making art when. maybe it's when the kids move out, or when the grandkids get a bit older. Maybe it's when your spouse retires, you hit the lottery, or you get a maid. Whatever it is, you first need to acknowledge it.

**Complete this statement: I'm going to start making art on a regular basis when:\_\_\_\_\_**

**E**veryone has the same amount of time in the day, however some people are far more productive than others, that's not because they have super powers, instead it's because they use their time wisely. I have some big, lofty projects that I want to pull off, creating this workbook was one of them. At times, it just didn't seem like I could fit anything else into my schedule. I decided to take some time and pay close attention to what I do throughout the day, and see what things I could cut.

- I checked email way too often, Now I check three times a day, and only when I actually have time to answer the emails. before I was going on and checking, without even having enough time to answer the emails, this was a waste.

- it's easy to spend way too much time on social media. Now I set a timer, 15 mins, and then get off.

- Next I pulled out my calendar and started making a schedule and everyday I wrote, workout 15 min, read

15 min, write 30 min, I then build my schedule out from there. And yes I pull out a timer and set it. I'm able to stay super focused on my list and the task at hand, and plow through a lot of work in the day, allowing me time to play in the studio in the evening. If you struggle with writing, but want to make it a practice, don't just write down write, it's less likely that it will get done. Don't just write down workout, choose a reasonable amount of time and write that down. Even when I'm busy, I can see how I can squeeze a 15 min workout into the mix. In fact I know that I'm more likely to workout if I do first thing in the morning, so I put my workout clothes on before I go to bed. Yes, this might seem a bit extreme or crazy, but it works for me, and is one less outfit change that I need to make. I wake up, and am ready for my workout.

Two I wanted my workout clothes to be fun, and make me feel good about my body. So I designed three pairs of leggings. Once again, I'm not saying that you need to design yourself workout clothes, (I've already done that for you). But find ways to make the experience fun.



Create a list of things that you could remove from your day, or that you could do for less time, then add up how much time you could save.

IE: facebook for 15min a day instead of 45 ( extra 30 minutes)

*Some tools that might help you through this process:*

*focus at will: a music station that helps you get into and stay in your flow state*

*stay focusd: this site allows you to block sites for certain periods of time, and will also kick you off of a site after a set amount of time*

**Art** requires you to leave your comfort zone, it asks you to be vulnerable and brave, and there are no guarantees. Part of starting and continuing to move forward is understanding what's holding you back.

when I think about creating art I feel \_\_\_\_\_

creativity is \_\_\_\_\_

art is \_\_\_\_\_

being creative makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ because

\_\_\_\_\_

the one thing keeping me from making art is \_\_\_\_\_

**it's hard for me to make time to be creative because:**\_\_\_\_\_

when I see other people being creative I feel:\_\_\_\_\_

**I'm afraid of creating art because:**\_\_\_\_\_

I would love to see my artwork on display:\_\_\_\_\_

Take some time to read over and reflect on your answers, is there is a common theme, or word that you see come up over and over. What answers do you want to change and which do you want to stay the same?

What is the one thing that you're afraid of doing right now?

It's time to break down this big fear that is sitting in front of you. And when I say break it down, I mean into the smallest little steps that you can think of. When I'm working on a new line of scarves, I don't write down weave 40 scarves, that would seem daunting, I wouldn't get the joy of crossing lots of things off of my list, and since as human beings we suck at estimating, I might put the task off for too long and end up having to stay up several nights in order to get it finished.

Instead I look at when I need to complete the line, count out the days and divide. However, I still don't just write weave two scarves each day. I go even farther, I write , warp yarn, dress loom, weave scarf, add tags, and the like. It makes that huge project much more doable. Now I'm going to get it finished on time, maybe even ahead of schedule, and I'm not going to be stressed throughout the process. You'll also be able to note if you're falling behind and ask for help before sheer panic comes into play.

I want you to think about the week ahead of you, and write down anything that you could take off of your to do list that would allow you one extra hour to create. Here's a list to get you started.

- *no TV this week*
- *only check email once each day*
- *take a week off of social media*
- *get up 15mins earlier/ stay up 15mins later*
- *do you really have to go to that meeting?*
- *order out one night instead of cooking dinner*
- *putting your laundry away can wait ( trust me, I've put it off for a month already and life still went along just fine)*
- *choose one day a week, where you won't babysit the grandkids, run people to appointments and the like unless it's an emergency, and I mean a REAL emergency*
- *don't answer the phone, they'll keep calling back if it's serious*

*After you've written down everything that you can remove I want you to be honest and look at how much time you could create in your life for creating, by making a few slight shifts in your schedule.*

Now that we've taken the time to look at what's likely holding you back, we're going to focus on moving forward and creating. However anytime that you start to feel pulled back, go back through some of the previous activities, or take some time to free write and see if you can identify where the resistance is coming from.

## **It's dream time!**

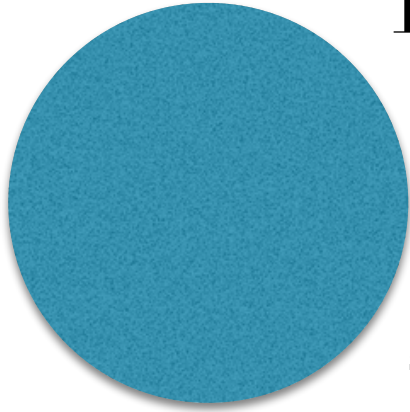
My husband is used to it now, but he thought it was a bit strange when we first got married. I like to crawl into bed before

I'm ready to fall asleep. This is my dream time.

While I get a lot of ideas during exercise, there's something magical that takes place when I lay my head down on the pillow, close my eyes, and just let things bounce around. I also keep a notebook by my bed so that I can quickly jot down any great ideas.

Sometimes I just lay down and see what happens, but a lot of the time I try to guide my dreams, or at least attempt to get them started in the right direction.

What I mean is that I lay down with a question in head, something that I want to solve.



**D**uring dream time, don't censor your thoughts, meaning no ignoring an idea because you think that it's too hard, or too big. That's the point of dreaming right. So let's go. Get comfortable. Light some candles. Pour some wine. Put on your favorite outfit, whatever does it for you. Grab some paper, and something to write with, and write down your dreams.

Here are some prompts to get you started if you're having trouble.



What's your dream job feel like?



Describe your dream studio space, what does it look like, what does it feel like?





If you could make anything what would you create?



**If you could have any tools in your studio, what would they be?**



If you could be any artists, writer... who would you be?



**If you could have your work on display anywhere, where would we see it?**



**If you could charge any amount of money for your work, what would it cost?**



**Describe how it feels to sell your first piece, 10th piece 1,000 piece.**

Dreams do come true. You're going to choose one of your dream statements and break it down to small actionable steps. Yup, that's right, you're going to figure out how to make your dreams come true.

*An Example:*

*My husband and I would like to travel to Italy over the summer, but we feel like we need to bring in some extra money, so that we can really make it the trip that we want. Here's how we broke it down.*

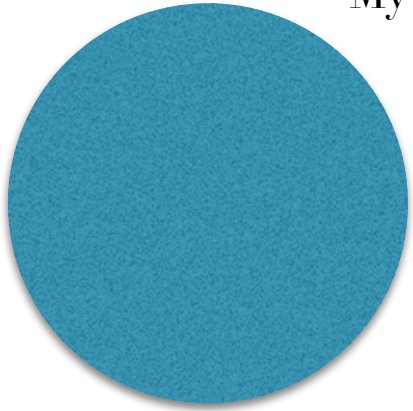
*We first determined how much our dream trip would cost. Then broke that down into how much we make each month, and much money we are able to put into savings each month. The trip was going to cost us 2 months savings. Which is doable, but not what we wanted.*

*Next we created a list of all of the ways that we could bring in extra cash for the trip. Then we put on the calendar when these things could happen.*

*After putting them on the calendar we created a check list to getting each thing accomplished. It's a long list so I'm not going to write it for you, and some of the items on the list didn't end up working. But that's okay. It gave us a tangible way to move towards our goal.*

# You're turn:

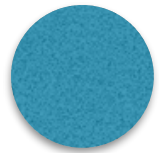
My dream is:



I need to take the following steps to make my dream happen. ( make sure to also put each step on the calendar)

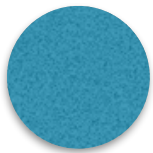
Now we're going to look more specifically at your creative work, and your dreams for what that looks like and feels like.

While you're responding to the following statements, remember you're still in dream mode, no censoring yourself, or saying that's not realistic.



1. Do you want to make money from your art? If so how much do you want to make?

**Really don't hold back. Dream big. If you want to make \$60,000 in a year say so. After you've set your yearly goal, break it down.**



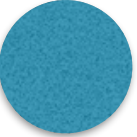
How much would you need to make in a month?

How much would you need to make in a week?

How much work would you need to create in order to even have a chance of making that much money?

How much work are you currently producing?

If the numbers aren't matching, what are some things that you could change in your schedule that would allow you to create more work?

 2. How much work do you want to produce in the next 5 weeks. (try to strike a balance between dreaming, and reality.) For example in a dream world I would love to make 200 scarves in the next 5 weeks, in reality, if I set my mind to it 15 to 20 is a more reasonable goal.



3. What big projects have you been thinking about doing, but haven't started?



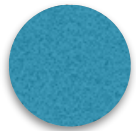
4. Now take your goal, and write it in the form of a question. Take that question and write 10 questions off it. This helps you to look at the problem in a variety of ways, and sometimes get you to ask a better question. (*so you are going to rewrite your problem/question, 10 different ways*)

5. Select 2 of these questions that you think are the closest to your goal, and go through the process of asking why.

Money is always a hard thing to talk about, and can bring up a lot of emotions. Don't feel bad about wanting to make money from your art. And right now, don't worry if you realize that the amount of art you would need to produce is impossible.



6. What do you want to be known for?



7. What are you hoping to achieve through your work? Do you want to entertain, solve a problem, inspire, teach. Do you want to have a hobby, a way to relieve stress, or express yourself?



# Idea Generation Chart

You're going to create a chart that helps you solve one of your problems, or answers one of your questions. The purpose of this chart is to help you to generate new ideas and combinations that you might not have thought of before.

My question: How do I make the perfect scarf?

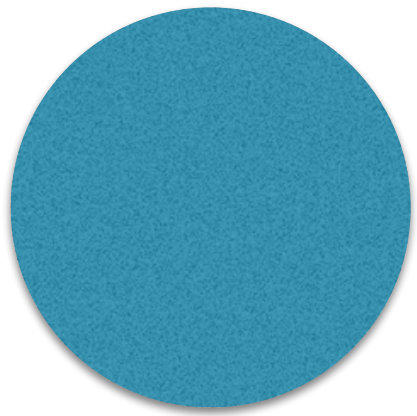
The top row (blue) is where you are going to come up with different categories that fit with your problem. Yours may or may not be the same as mine.

material	size	technique	extras	occasion
thin cotton	long and wide	plain weave	grommets	keep warm in winter
wool	long and skinny	free form weave	leather	wear to work
silk	short and wide	crochet	embroidery	wear to yoga
tencel	short and skinny	pattern weave	tapestry in lay	for spring
thick cotton	squre	knitting machine	zippers	for a gift

To come up with your combinations you're going to take one idea from each section, here are some examples.

thin cotton + long and skinny + crochet + leather+ for a gift  
tencel + short and wide + pattern weave + zippers + for spring

You don't have to take the time to write down every combination, that could take awhile. But play with some of the combinations and see if new ideas begin to emerge, or combinations that you're excited about seeing what would happen.

Notes/ ideas from your chart:

A big part of being creative is asking the right question, or even just the act of asking questions helps to get the creative process firing. Here's another way for you to look at the problem that you're trying to solve.

*Example problem: What other things can I make from the textiles that I create for scarves?*



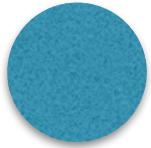
1. Why does said problem need to be solved?

*ex: It needs to be solved because I want my business to scale, and in order to do so, everything can't be a 1:1 ratio.*



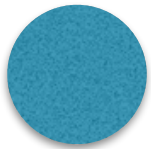
2. What benefits come from solving the problem?

*ex: more time and freedom to play in the studio, more sales, more income, more people gaining access to my work*



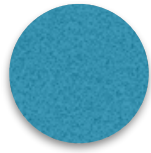
3. What don't you understand yet?

*ex: how to get fabric digitally printed on both sides, how to do this , but keep the amount of inventory that I have to carry down*



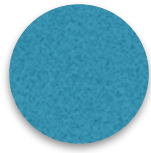
4. What information do you have? Is it sufficient?

*ex: I know of some places to get fabric digitally printed, I know where I can get leggings, and phone cases created. It's enough information to at least get me started.*



5. Put a boundary around the problem. Be clear about what isn't the problem.

*ex: creating the patterns for the fabric, ideas of what to turn the fabric into*



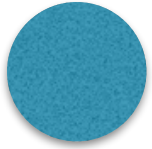
6. What are the various parts of the problem?

*ex: fabric quality, shipping cost, inventory cost, producing the products from the fabric*



7. What cannot be changed about the problem?

*ex: shipping cost*



8. What's another situation, or who is another person that has a similar problem?

*ex: front row society does a lot of digital printing, and they know who to get it printed on both sides and keep the price down*

# Leaving your comfort zone

Yesterday my photography class was taking photos using action figures. This is always one of my favorite assignments, not only because the photos turn out well, but because the students have so much fun. I teach high school, so they don't spend much time outside, let alone outside playing with toys. As I sat and watched them, it reminded me of how important play is to creativity. While there's a lot of work involved, there should also be a lot of fun!

It's time to have some fun, go out of your comfort zone, and start creating. You all have a lot going on and were already having trouble finding time to create, so I'm guessing that adding the course content into your schedule, has you creating even less. Well that's no good. This course is about creativity, which means that you need to be creating.

One of the best ways to really hone in on your creative process, is by creating... A LOT , and reflecting on the process.



Take some time this week, and create, have fun, be playful. After each time that you create take a few minutes to reflect on the process.



How did you feel?



What time of day was it?



When your idea worked how did it make you feel?



If your idea wasn't working, how did that make you feel?



If you got stuck, how did you respond?



What made you decide to start making?



What made you decide to stop creating?



Have fun, and I can't wait to see what you create!

# Be inspired

In order to prepare for your next creative thinking building activity you need to get some ideas about the people and artists that inspire you.



1. Write down 3 to 5 artist or makers that inspire you. (*imagine what life would be like as the following people*)

1

2

3

4

5



2. Write down 3 to 5 people/ artist/ writers that you wish you could meet. (*What would you talk about?*)

1

2

3

4

5



3. Write down 5 to 10 blogs or websites that you love. (*why do you love them?*)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



4. Write down 5 to 10 magazines that you enjoy reading or looking at. (*why do you like them?*)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

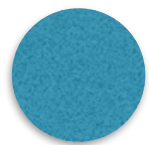
10

# Try something new

It's time to try something new. I stumbled upon weaving, because it was a class that fit into my schedule. I started adding metal to my scarves because I was told that I was going to teach a jewelry class, which forced me to start learning about jewelry making.

Sometimes the perfect solution is there waiting for us, we just need to make space for it to come in. So put down what you're used to, put down what you always create with, and try something new. It doesn't have to be pretty, it just needs to be new and fun.

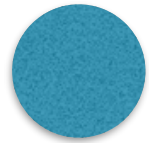
Spend an hour or two playing with a new material and then take some time to reflect.



how did you feel when you were creating with a new material?




how could you bring this new material into the work that you already creating?



how often do you just take the time to play?

# Confidence and making

We looked a lot at fear and resistance in the beginning, but I'm guessing that it might be starting to creep in again. Let's stop it before you get too far down the path.



Over the last two years I've become borderline obsessed with helping women to feel more confident. Perhaps it's because I discovered my own confidence and it made a huge positive shift in my life.

The number one thing that pushed me over the edge from fear to confidence was a year long adventure of taking classes that took me out of my comfort zone. I wish I could take credit for this lovely experiment, but I more stumbled into it. I purchased a group pass for yoga, discovered that I was super nervous about going, but didn't have any friends that wanted to go, so I sucked it up and went on my own, and guess what, everything was fine.

It was a month long pass, so I kept going and kept trying new classes, and with each hurdle I

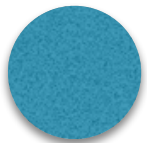


felt better. So I decided to start doing it with intention, never knowing that it would spill over in to everything, but it did.

I developed a whole new level of confidence, a new perspective on fear, that allowed me to have more fun and freedom in my day job, and grown my creative business.



1. What kind of fear holds you back?



2. After you identify what fear holds you back, break it down, what is the worse thing that could happen?



3. Create a list of 5 things that you've wanted to do , but fear has been holding you back.

1

2

3

4

5

Schedule a time to do each one of these things.

4. Talking about your work. What are the benefits of the work that you create... there are some I promise.

5. What value does your work bring into the world?

6. What makes you feel confident?

7. Tell a story of a time that you felt very confident.

# Time to take action

Before we dive head first into new content, it's important that you take time to reflect on where you've been and where you still want to go.

1. Previously you filled out a goal sheet, pull that out and write down each one of your goals and answer the following questions. (pg 49-53)

a. What steps have you taken to accomplish your goal (s)?

b. What do you still need to do?

c. What tools would help you to accomplish your goal? Feel free to dream big here, don't hold back. Write down everything that would be helpful, even if you don't think that you have access to it.

2. While you're looking at goals, I want you to take some time to dream. I drive my husband crazy asking him what he would want to do if he could do anything. I'm the dreamer in the relationship and he's the realist, both have their time and place, but right now I want you to dream as big as you possibly can.

think about what type of art would you want to create if there were no limits.

who would you want to sell your art to?

where would you want to see your work displayed?

3. We've done several practices to develop ideas:

asking questions

asking why

CIA questions

Idea generation chart

pretending that you were someone else?

Which one of these did you find the most helpful and why?



4. Write down 3 ways that you can make some of these practices a regular part of your creative process.

1.

2.

3.

5. You have 2 weeks left in the course, choose one of your goals, make it one that's super important for you to finish, but that you're struggling with. Now make a schedule, to accomplish that goal, or at least make good headway in the next 2 weeks.

pull out your calendar and write down at least 1 action step for each day, include when you're doing it and for how long you're going to work on it.

# Media Outreach

1. Dream media. You're going to start by thinking big. What are the top 5 places that you would most want to see something that you created?

1

2

3

4

5

2. What are 5 local publications that your work would fit into? As you chose each publication fill out the information in the chart below. The more specific you are about where you want to be featured , and who you need to reach the better.

publication	section of publication	author/ editor of section and contact

3. What are 5 blogs that you think your work would be a good fit with? Note as you're looking at blogs look to see if they accept guest posts. A few ways to tell: You'll see that there is more than one person writing for the site. click on the contact, FAQ, or about page, and it will often tell you if they accept guest posts.

blog	section of blog	contact

create a list of the types of your work that you would like to see on these sites, and then create a schedule to share your work with the sites. See below for a sample pitch email:

*Hey (insert person's name), Thank you for taking the time to curate such informative and inspiring content for Biz Ladies.*

*From talking to a lot of ladies in business and examining myself, I've noticed that the number one thing holding people back is confidence.*

*Would love to share a story and some tips on bringing confidence into life and business.*

*If you're interested, let me know and I'll send it your way.*

*Best*

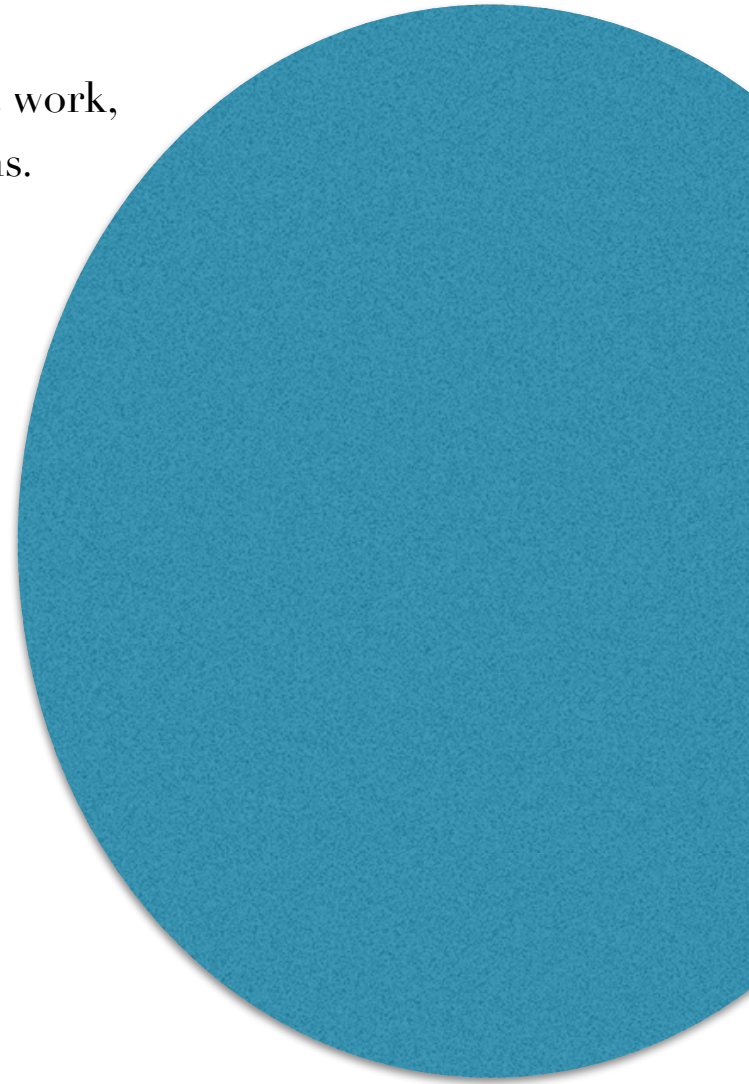
Over Thanksgiving my husband and I spent a few days in Chicago, whenever we're traveling I always find myself asking a lot of questions. Sometimes they're related to art, often times they seem a bit random, however they end up feeding into things that I'm

working on. But only if I take the time to write them down and actually remember the questions.

The people that make the biggest impact and create the most work, tend to be the people that ask the best and the most questions.

**I want you to take 3 days and write down every question that crosses your mind.**

**5 Things that hinder creativity**



1. **focus:** How do you define your work, what solution are you trying to find?

2. **Distraction:** What is the thing that's always taking away your focus from your work?

3. **Energy:** How do you manage your energy?

what takes energy away from you?



what type of things give you more energy?

4. **Stimuli:** it's important to pay attention to what you put into your head, you will create what you take in. Write down what you're doing each week that adds stimuli and ideas to your mind.

5. **Hours:** It's important to make time in your schedule for unnecessary creating. Make time in your schedule to create just because you want to.

*This week I want you to carve out 1 hour, during that hour create whatever you want to. Don't worry about the finished product just have fun. Then pay attention to how what happens in your play time, starts to show up in your work.*

**6. The hard question of the day:** Why should anyone care about what you create?

# Playful activities for more creative ideas:

Write down your problem:

ex: mine is , How do I make the perfect scarf?

Now you're going to reframe your problem, by connecting it to an environment that you usually wouldn't associate with it. Choose one of the below ideas, and connect it to your problem.

deer hunting

bread baking

modern dance

being a doctor

designing a motor boat

So I might connect making the perfect scarf with modern dance. I would take some time looking up and watching modern dancers. Now the perfect scarf might be about movement, or I might think about designing it for a different body type.

Your turn.

## Design under constraints

Most of the time we're taught that art has no rules, but that isn't actually the case. Most people are able to be more creative, and come up with better ideas if there are some guidelines in place.

When creating you will naturally have some guidelines like, time, perhaps materials, and space, but if you're stuck on a project, try making your guidelines more specific or work in a series.

## A few examples:

I spent a year working with a very limited amount of yarn. I started out by placing a big order, and wasn't allowed to purchase more yarn until I had narrowed my collection down to less than 7 cones. This forced me to come up with a lot of new color combinations that I probably wouldn't have tried otherwise.

I created another series of scarves where I had to use some chenille, discharge paste, and embroidery. These types of rules, help to focus and guide my designs.

What are some of the projects that you're currently working on? How can you add new guidelines or constraints to your project?

# Some fun facts on creating a lot of work

Pablo Picasso produced about twenty thousand pieces of art

Albert Einstein wrote more than 240 scientific papers

Johann Sebastian Bach composed a cantata every week

Thomas Edison Filed over one thousand patents

Richard Branson started 250 companies

Joyce carol oats published forty five novels, thirty nine story collections, eight poetry collections, five dramas, and nine essay collections

Studies show that the best creative works are made by those that are the most productive. This may sound obvious. But it's important to note, that they weren't working on the same piece for years on end, they got an idea, produced it and moved on. Often creative thinkers spend too much time waiting to get it perfect. Don't wait for

perfect, just begin creating.

If you're starting a project, think about what type of rules you could create for yourself. Maybe you'll limit your materials, your time, or your color palette.

# What type of creator are you?

In order to be highly productive, it's helpful to understand what makes you feel the most productive and how do you get the best use out of your time. There are 3 main elements that play into being productive: On a scale of 1-5 ( 5 being the strongest) Circle where you fall in each category.

**Planning:** This is focusing on, how much you time you spend planning out your creative work. Do you develop a strategy, do you create sketches, or do you dive head first into creating?

**1 2 3 4 5**

**Creating:** This is the time that you're spending doing the creative work.

**1 2 3 4 5**

**Life/ feeding your mind:** What's taking place during all of the times that you aren't creating.

**1 2 3 4 5**



How are you spending your time and energy?

**Planning + creating without much of life:** If you find that you're all about making and implementing plans, but don't allow for much free time, playing , or experimenting, this is where you fall. People that are great at planning and creating can get a lot done in a short amount of time. However, they aren't great at coming up with new ideas because they aren't taking the time to feed their minds. If this is you, you need to create space in your life for some curiosity, or you need to surround yourself with curious friends that will naturally feed ideas, information, and inspiration to you.

**Planning + Life/**

**feeding your mind without creating:** If this is you, you love to come up with ideas, talk about ideas, and are curious. However, you're not so great at follow through and getting things done. If you're great at coming up with ideas, but not implementing them, you need to hire a coach, get a mentor, or set strict deadlines that make you create your ideas.

## **Planning + creating + life/**

feeding your mind: This is what we're all shooting for, but not likely where anyone falls naturally. In this space you're great at planning out your ideas, creating them, and at the same time taking in information around you.

If this isn't where you fall, what are you lacking and what can you put into place in your life to make that area stronger?

# **Interviews with creatives on their creative process**



I first met Jordan, the brains and beauty behind Ramshackle Glam at Simply Stylist event in NYC. She's had a wonderfully interesting career and has one of those jobs, that everyone wants, writing her own blog, a book, and working with fashion brands. I asked Jordan if she would be willing to share her story. Keep reading... it's a good one.

*From hearing you speak and looking at your education background, it's clear that you didn't take a straight path, you instead took a lot of zig zags. For so many, once they have "that degree" and a job that matches, they have trouble leaving, even when they aren't happy. What gave you the courage and space to make the choices to continue to adjust?*

You know, I don't know that I'd call my evolution (by which I mean the series of seriously bizarre career detours that eventually landed me in a place that I genuinely love) courageous, necessarily; it felt much more like what I "had" to do than any conscious decision. I simply couldn't wrap my mind around the idea of being trapped in a career that made me frankly miserable; even if it made things "harder" in some ways for me to make a change, it would have been impossible not to. I very much believed that there

were things that I would love to do and that I'd be good at, so I just kept trying and trying until I found that thing...which ended up not being any one "thing" at all, but rather a collection of interests that came together into a career.

*Creative people tend to have a lot of interests, and also struggle with knowing which to focus on, which to keep as hobbies and which to monetize. It looks like you're able to have your hands in a lot of places, writing, photography, sponsorships, and speaking. How do you focus your curiosity?*

When I was a teenager, I remember saying to a relative that I wanted to be a writer and a chef and a fashion journalist and work in TV I wanted to do all those things and she said to me that I would have to pick if I wanted to do any one of them well. And that's true in most careers: you do have to focus your energies in order to keep things moving forward. But I think the key here is that while it does appear that my job consists of a lot of different "branches" styling, hosting, writing, speaking, etc it's more consistent than it appears; there's a through line of consistently producing content, and it's that consistency that has helped enormously in terms of establishing a perspective...mostly because when you're putting your work into the world every day, you can't really help being truthful; your "real voice" just comes out.

When I started out as a blogger, all that I knew was that writing was something that made me happy enough that it was something that I wanted to do every single day, as much as I could, and I've been very fortunate to be able to watch my work sort of spin off in unexpected and very exciting directions. I think what made that possible (besides a healthy dose of luck) was a willingness to say "yes" when those opportunities did come around, to work as hard as I possibly could to take full advantage of them, and to be consistently grateful both for those opportunities and for the (many, many) people who have helped me over the years.

*I was recently read this quote: "We do not know what we do not know. We cannot see how possibilities are constricted by our current beliefs in what technology offers, nor in what it tends to take away." (Realizing Empathy)*

*How did you become aware that you could make money from blogging, and more importantly how did you begin to do sponsored collaborations with brands?*

When I started blogging I had never read any blog other than Perez Hilton; I literally quit my job and started blogging the very next day with very little other than the sincere belief that I would be able to transform it into a career (not necessarily advisable; just the truth). I started by blogging alongside a couple of women who had been working to transition

their site into a monetized platform, and when I ended up leaving to start Ramshackle Glam I used some of the lessons I had learned in that previous venture (what worked, what didn't) while developing my vision of what I wanted RG to become. Above all, it was important to me to be transparent about my relationships with companies. I write often about my work life and what it entails, the same way I write about my life as a parent or my adventures in the kitchen; it's all just different parts of the same story.

I started working with brands in 2010, which I think coincided with a general growing awareness on the part of brands of the value and importance of leveraging the online space. Within about a year, my business grew to the point where it made sense to bring in a team to help manage it. I've been working with Digital Brand Architects since the fall of 2011, and their work has been invaluable in terms of growing Ramshackle Glam and opening up opportunities which have included a show, a book deal, speaking and hosting engagements, and the opportunity to style and curate collections for various fashion and beauty brands that I don't know that I would have even dreamed of without their support and encouragement.



Amber Savage is an illustrator, artist, designer and blogger who creates work for the fashion industry.

She graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology with an AS degree in Fashion Design and from John Brown University with a B.Sc. degree in Organizational Management. While in college she interned for Helmut Lang, Dolce and Gabbana and Katherine Shackleford. After college, she worked as an Assistant Designer for the couture house Randi Rahm in New York City. After almost four years in the city Amber moved back to the south to live closer to family.

She worked for the marketing company, New Creature, for the next six years where she had the opportunity to work with larger companies and brands such as Wal-Mart, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Danskin Now, and Johnson & Johnson. She styled and produced many fashion shows for

Wal-Mart and their suppliers between 2006 and 2009 including a show at the 2008 Wal-Mart Shareholders Meeting.

In 2008 she decided to venture out on her own and open The Studio, LLC. She now works as a freelance illustrator, artist and designer.



### **I get the best creative ideas when I'm....**

I get the best creative ideas when I'm by myself and totally relaxed. Usually first thing in the morning when I'm getting ready or at the end of the day right before bed. I will usually jot them down in a journal or on my phone so I don't forget them.

### **My favorite space to create looks like....**

My favorite space to create is in my studio. I have worked hard to keep it light and airy. It is filled with natural light, which I love. The walls are white and sparse and the other colors in the room are soft. I have found that I just can't work in a studio with too much visual stimulation going on.

### **My top 3 sources of creativity are...**

First, I'm addicted to magazines and always have been. They instantly "transport" me to other places which is very helpful since I work in a small southern town. Magazines give me access to environments I don't have access to right now. Second, I love to get out with a sketch book or camera and just start drawing or photographing what speaks to me. I think getting out of your studio and into the "real world" is very important for finding new ideas. I would say my third source is travel. My husband and I try to travel as much

as we can. It's so refreshing to go somewhere new and I always come back to the studio with loads of ideas.

### **When I need a new idea I.....**

When I need a new idea I try to create the ugliest thing I can. This was a trick I learned in college. First you draw something really ugly and then you try to make it beautiful. This technique seems to take the pressure off constantly trying to create something that is modern and beautiful. Sometimes you just need to take the pressure off your brain and have fun with it.

### **I know that a piece is finished when...**

Ha! Chuck Close once said in an interview that his work is never complete. He was noted to take a paintbrush to one of his paintings after it had been purchased and was hanging in a gallery. I think as artists we can be very critical of our own work and depending on the day look at it in a whole new perspective. I usually know a piece is finished when it conveys the emotion I am looking for. If I'm struggling with a piece, sometimes I just

have to give in to the due date and call it a day. I have learned that the more imperfect a piece is the more beautiful and unique it becomes. Perfect can be boring.

### **When something isn't working the way that I planned it to I...**

When something isn't working the way I planned it to I take a break. I'll take a walk to get some fresh air or get a snack. Just getting away from the problem for a while and clearing your head can give you a clear perspective.

### **I create because...**

I create because its fun! I have always been a creative person. When I was very young I was making paintings and designing fashion. No one told me I should do it. I did it because it was fun to make something beautiful and that is why I still do it today. I also love the challenge of bringing something that is in my mind to life. It's so fulfilling to see something you've imagined become reality.

### **My work is about...**

My work is about creating beauty for an audience. I can appreciate really avant-garde art that represents just the artists emotions but I have found that, for me, I need an audience to appreciate what I am making. I still create what I want to create but I need a consumer

for me to really feel good about it. I want people to see and purchase my art and for it to bring joy and beauty to their lives.



## **Megan Eckmen: Rekindle your wonder**

I'm Megan, the artist behind Studio MME. I believe that the world is full of wonder and if you look for it, you can find joy and magic everywhere! I also believe that YOU feel that same wonder, though it may just be a small ember. I believe my work can rekindle your wonder and make your world more magical.

Studio MME started because of a promise to my parents. I would get my degrees in art and creative writing AND I would start my own business. Partly I wanted to prove that I could be in that 10% of graduates who make a living from their artwork. But even more so, I was on a mission to help people like you take back their imagination. You need magic in your life to be happy, healthy, and enthusiastic about the world around you and my pen and ink illustrations can provide that magic.

**I get the best creative ideas when I'm....**

Out for a walk. Whether it's in the wilderness on a backpacking trip or just a jaunt round the block, I always get my most creative ideas when I'm out moving.

My favorite space to create looks like....

A white-walled studio with dark wooden floors. The walls are covered with brightly colored Chinese lanterns, windsocks, art prints, and pennants. The windows are enormous and there's a big drafting table set up just for me.

**My top 3 sources of creativity are...**

Old atlases

Antique fairy tale books

The woods

### **When I need a new idea I.....**

Generally stop trying to think of one. The harder I try to force a new idea, the worse it comes. Instead, I bake cookies or go for a walk. Anything to stop thinking about how I need to be thinking about a new idea. Then it just pops into my head fully-formed.

### **I know that a piece is finished when...**

I've slept through the night and wake up in the morning and feel that it's done. I always let a day go by before I clean my pens and proclaim something finished.

When something isn't working the way that I planned it to I...

Acknowledge that I'm in the nasty, battle part of creation and rally my mental troops to keep on plodding forward. I always end up winning.

**I create because...**

I don't know what else to do with myself. I've tried the retail world and I've tried the non-profit. I simply cannot work for anyone but myself and if I don't draw every single day, I become a very cranky person.

**My work is about...**

Fantasy and wonder. I'm always asking myself, 'What if?' and that's what I strive to make my viewers do as well. With every piece I create, I'm on a mission to help people rekindle their wonder



## **Sue B Zimmerman**

High Energy. Passionate. Serial Entrepreneur.

That's how I am described by my peers!

I was born to start businesses and to hand sell to customers that morph into friends.

I started my first business at the age of 13. I was selling hand-painted rainbow, ice cream and heart patterned barrettes on the schoolyard at recess. It was exciting and rewarding to sell to friends who thought they were fun and fashionable. That excitement and reward still exists today.



**I get the best creative ideas when I'm....**

in the woods walking my Cockapoo Cody and just being one w nature or... when shopping with my twin 17 year old daughters, looking at all the eye candy that teens are attached to.

**I always have my entrepreneurial antenna up!**

My favorite space to create looks like.... any place with good lighting and a lot of space. I work in chaotic chaos.

**My top 3 sources of creativity are...**

Retailers: Apple, Lulu Lemon, Nordstrom

New York City

Experts who are passionately sharing their gifts with the world

**When I need a new idea I.....**

I never NEED a new idea....my problem is I have too many!

I know I'm finished when... I have delivered everything I promised in the time frame I set.

**When something isn't working the way that I planned it to I...**

reach out to others who can help me. If I know I have a good idea I never quit...my gut instinct has always been right.

**I create because...**

I am a creator...always have been always will be. From hand-painted barrettes at age 13 to an online Instagram course called Insta -Results and the 15 businesses in between. I create because I want to connect with as many wonderful people as possible.

**My work is about...**

waking up everyday doing what I love. Sharing my positive energy and contagious passion with the world.



Tegan M Brozyna, a Philadelphia area native, splits her time between Brooklyn and Philadelphia. She received a B.A. in Painting from Messiah College, and recently completed a Post-Baccalaureate Fellowship at New York Center for Art and Media Studies in Manhattan. She has exhibited throughout the northeast at such institutions as LGTripp Gallery in Philadelphia, PA and Porter Contemporary in New York, as well as internationally in Orvieto, Italy. Tegan was a recipient of the Daniel Vollmer Art Scholarship from 2003-2007.

Drawing from both her painting and textile background, Tegan's current work focuses on the relationship of place and boundaries. By dissecting and reconfiguring old landscapes in the form of paper maps, Brozyna examines everyday borders while also creating new spaces and terrain. In 2014, three of Tegan's pieces will be on exhibit at the Philadelphia International Airport.

**I get the best creative ideas when I'm....**

simply observing the world around me. I love finding small but beautiful objects from nature, seeing how light changes in the leaves of trees depending on the time of day, and observing how scraps in paint or cracks in the sidewalk create amazing abstract compositions. You never know what you will find and that fuels me.



**My favorite space to create looks like....**

I currently work out of a small home studio, but regardless of the size of space it needs to be clean, calming and organized (perhaps a rarity for many painters). Often you will find ideas, lists and inspirational images taped to the wall along with small paintings and mockups.

**My top 3 sources of creativity are...**

A. Observing my habitat/the world around me

B. Figuring out color palettes especially those in textiles

C. The act of making. Process is important to me, and while I am working on piece I often get ideas for other works or other techniques.

**I know that a piece is finished when...it feels balanced.**

Although it's not necessarily a conscious effort my work tends to strive for a sense of peace. Even if a piece is organic or asymmetrical it needs to have a sense of visual balance in its composition and coloring.

**When something isn't working the way that I planned it to I...let it go.**

I think art making is as much about learning what works as it is about discovering what doesn't. If a piece is not working sometimes I put it aside and tackle it again months or years later. Sometimes time and distance gives you new perspective and a work can be saved or incorporated into something else. If all else fails I think it's important to accept defeat, learn from it, and either whitewash a painting or chuck it!

**I create because...**something in me needs to.

Picasso once said that all children are artists, and I think perhaps there is something in me that never quite grew up; I still maintain a certain type of curiosity with the world around me. I am constantly asking questions and seeking answers and art making helps me to make sense of the world. It makes my world more vivid and beautiful.

**My work is about...**seeing the world in the round.

I want to see how things connect and I am particularly interested in how cellular forms come together to form a larger whole. I love creating and exploring relationships between

place, form, and color. In my currently body of work I am particularly interested in how humans dissect the world around them. Mainly working with maps, I am exploring boundaries and creating new landscapes and terrain.

**When I need a new idea I.....**

go outside and explore! I have an inquisitive nature and if my internal environment feels a little constrictive or dry I like to go for a walk, look at other people's artwork for inspiration and/or I sketch in my sketchbook. You never know where ideas will come from so I think it's important to be open and take things in. Since youth I've kept a folder of inspiration full of magazine clippings, show cards and other images from nature and art I love.



Ellen Lubin-Sherman got her start in business feeding gossip items to Liz Smith, the esteemed former gossip columnist at the New York Daily News. Those early days of name-dropping were the perfect foundation for her later work in cultivating and branding identities for some of the country's most luxurious products. Today she uses that expertise to coach corporations and business leaders in the art of creating a polished presentation.

Today, in addition to executive coaching and consulting, Ellen is a sought-after speaker for companies and groups that are desperate to know how they can become fabulous.



## **Creativity is important because....**

Creativity comes in many different guises. For some people, it's cooking. Or interior design. Or gardening, personal style, writing and performing. Creativity is a wonderful gift but it must be cultivated and protected from negative influences. Creativity is important because it lifts your spirits, enhances your force, brings pleasure to others (as well as yourself). Creativity can only thrive when you make it a priority. ( [click to tweet](#) )

\_\_\_\_\_ **is killing creativity**

I've said it many times. Stephen Sondheim (the great composer) could not have written "Sweeney Todd" (his masterpiece) if he was looking at his email, sending a text message, or looking at his Facebook. Social media is marvelous but creativity requires flow. Flow is the ability to lose track of time because you're completely engaged with whatever you are doing. I'm also a big champion of daydreaming. I like to listen to my head instead of someone's voice. I like to fantasize, observe, create imaginary narratives of people I'm watching.

**I get the best creative ideas when I'm....**

I am especially productive and deeply creative when I'm ironing or driving my car. I keep a pad and pen in my laundry room. I have a pad and pen in my glove compartment. If the muse alights when I'm driving, I'll pull over and write down what I just heard in my head. In fact, I've written at least fifty percent of my blogs in my head before I touch the keyboard. I don't listen to music or talk radio. I listen to my inner voice, the writer's voice.

### **My top 3 sources of creativity are...**

I read a lot. And I'm not a snob. I'll read the tabloids while on the supermarket line as well as The New Yorker. I'm always reading. My three top sources of creativity are personal observations, the New York Times, and listening to friends talk about their lives in a deep and meaningful way. My most recent blog was about cluelessness about money. A friend lamented she knew nothing about her family affairs. That spurred me to write about it.

### **When I need a new idea I.....**

I read humor because it loosens me up. I'll pick up a favorite book and just open to a page and read it. Laughing out loud is the antidote for a temporary creative block.

### **When something isn't working the way that I planned it to I...**

I used to get wild and nervous when things didn't work out and I realized I was writing myself into a corner. Now I know to step away from the material. I'm hyper-critical of my own work so I'm always tempted to delete material because I feel "it isn't working." Some of my funniest pieces were in the "something isn't working out" category. Not everything works and not everything has potential. I stop what I'm doing and move to a new topic.

### **I create because...**

I don't play tennis. I don't golf. I didn't like to take my children on "play dates." The truth is I have very few hobbies. I know how to write. I know how to write the way I speak. I know how to be conspiratorial with my readers. I love creating stories.

### **My work is about...**

Entertaining people with my observations. Motivating people to keep going and believe there's something out there for all of us and we cannot stop until we find it.

Psychoanalytically speaking, I grew up as a lonely child and relied upon my imagination to keep me company. Writing is a balm for me. Yes, it's hard work. But it's not lonely because I'm enjoying my own company.