



Five Tools for Your Creative Practice

By Laurie Lamson

1. Accept and embrace your own uniqueness: your unique voice, style, and outlook on life.

This can help shift you out of comparing yourself to others and coming up short.

Your creative work might have a smaller or bigger audience than your creative heroes – and that’s okay! I might not be the next Charles Dickens, but I can do a great job of being Laurie Lamson, *if* I accept myself and become the shepherd of the creativity that wants to come through me.

Years ago I was in a writing class where I read a short story out loud and it got trashed by the class. That was rough, very hard not to take it personally. Of course, I did take it personally. I couldn’t help but ask myself, *Why can’t I write as well as the guy who read last week?* Everyone seemed to love his story.

But when I got all the written feedback notes, I saw that about 20% of the class really got it and loved it, even though they didn’t speak up in class. A friend pointed out that my story might not be for everyone, but I should appreciate my audience rather than worrying about those who aren’t. And it’s true – you don’t have to be a blockbuster. If you have something to create, it’s your responsibility to give your audience a chance to experience it. I’m grateful for that friend helping me see more clearly.

2. Omit the words “good” and “bad” in describing your own work.

Get creative and find other ways to talk about it. One of the biggest gifts I got from *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron was to understand that as an artist or creative person, your job is just to do the creating and leave the judging to others.

This is not to say that you shouldn't edit your work. Editing/selecting/tightening/refining is part of the process of taking something from good to great.

It does mean that if you have the burning desire to create or perform, it's your responsibility to your soul to take steps in that direction, without cutting yourself off at the knees with undue judgment and criticism.

Another key to get into your creative groove is to:

3. Give yourself permission.

If you will grant yourself permission to be yourself and to express yourself, to allow the creative work that desires to be born through you, it will make your soul very happy. You don't need anyone else's permission, period. We live in a free society, so don't censor yourself - you can make adjustments and edits later. Recognize that you're free right here and now. If someone else doesn't like what you create, they're free to look the other way! ***It's part of the artist's job to demonstrate what freedom of thought looks like in action.***

4. See yourself as a student of your artistic discipline.

If you can replace a goal of “perfection” with a goal of “mastery and excellence” then you remain a student who is on an artistic life journey, ever growing and improving. Even an artistic master can continue to find new and deeper ways of looking at life and human nature, and expressing it through their work. With this focus, you can more easily access the creative spirit of a child who plays and enjoys the process rather than being overly focused on the outcome. If there's always more to learn it can keep you from feeling stale and stagnant about your creative process.

5. Trick yourself.

Tell yourself you're just going to read one scene, type up what you wrote before, explore color combinations or whatever is something that is related, but not the direct creative work. A light, un-invested attitude or "hobby" approach, without making a commitment to the actual work helps free your mind to let creative inspiration flow. Regardless what occurs, celebrate that you spent five minutes on your art.

BONUS:

6. Honor your inspiration.

When you feel inspiration, act on it. Take a baby step toward expressing it or realizing it. It doesn't have to be perfect! It just wants to come out and play.

Be aware, you may become overwhelmed with ideas once you prime your creative pump. If you honor them by thinking them through and/or noting them down for the future, having an inspo board, and/or a treasure box of ideas, they will continue to flow.

"Energy flows where attention goes," so if you maintain focus on a particular project, your creativity will show up to support you. Pay close attention when you first wake up in the morning because helpful answers and creative solutions will pop into your mind.

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