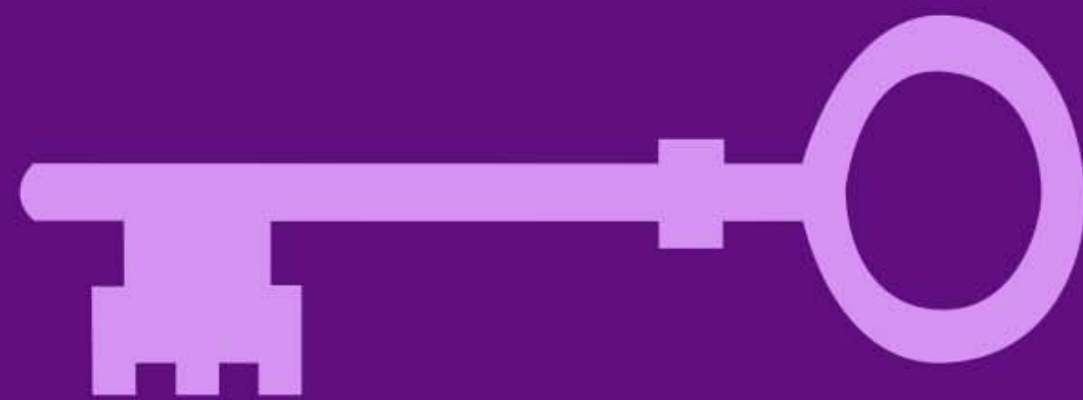


Volume One

**27 Brilliantly
Creative People
Share the Secret
of How to Stay
Motivated**



Thought Row
Publishing

Thought Row LLC

Dedication

This e-book is dedicated to all of the creative people that we were proud to have as guests on the Thought Row podcast. Each and every one of them were generous enough to agree to participate in providing their thoughts and ideas on how to stay creatively motivated.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude by thanking every one of them for their contributions to this e-book.

Stay beautifully creative,

*Rod & Inci Jones
Thought Row Podcast*

Introduction

Rod and Inci Jones, hosts of the Thought Row Podcast decided to create this anthology from the answers they received when they asked the seminal question...

What keeps you motivated when you simply do not feel motivated to create?

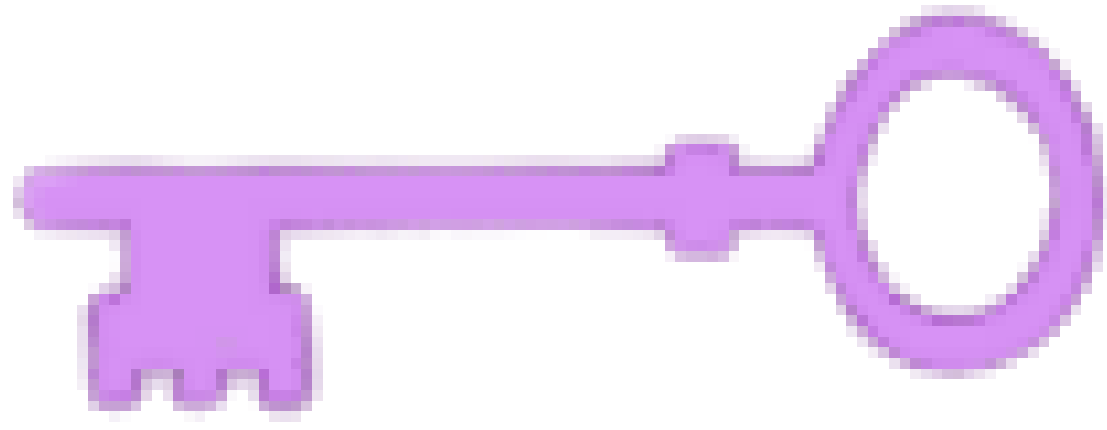
The guests they selected to answer this question live in various parts of the world and practice different forms of creative expression.

The answers from these talented people were very insightful and genuine. Both Rod and Inci made the decision that they would like to share what these people had to say. The Thought Row show guests agreed to participate in this effort. They were eager to share what they learned to help others stay motivated when the creative muse has left you.

As you read this book you will discover that each of these creative and talented people were open and honest in the way they answered the question that was presented to them. Their answers were very personal, and most revealing. Each of the participants drew from their own personal creative journeys. Exploring their creativity in many different ways, through mistakes, side-tracks and life. As you read each of their writings, you may find that your own creativity and inspiration are illuminated in subtle ways.

Exploring a difficult subject that all creatives have to contend with like: What keeps you motivated when you simply do not feel motivated to create? It is a difficult dilemma to face. But in this book you will have the opportunity to benefit from the opinions and real-world experiences that this collection of talented people were willing to share.

All of the participants in this e-book have provided a brief bio and their contact information. Please take the time to check out their websites and social media. You will discover some amazing creative talent, and if you like what they had to say - let them know.



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Duke Windsor

Master artist

Art is Courage.

What sets the high achievers apart from the also-rans is motivation. I'm not sure where this comes from, but it is in all of us when we least expect it. It's that invisible force that makes us do something for the first time or the fortieth. It is what makes us better at a skill, finishing a deadline, interviewing for a job, cleaning the house or completing a painting.

What keeps me motivated?

As an artist, I view motivation as a non-stop messenger to tackle my creative thoughts and what drives me to have the courage to launch a new project. I view my motivations as the muses looking over my shoulder and

Asks, "why haven't you started yet?" or pushes me to "get going, mister, you have a deadline!" Though I have worked through my projects with little or no motivating reason, sometimes motivation does have to be a nag.

"If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced."

– Vincent van Gogh

Final Thoughts

My creative process takes hold, and it begins with a specific intent to just make marks at times. By just being present, I can gather the forces to create. I have a studio that is without distractions, and it motivates me to do something—anything.

Some motivations in art are making money, buying new supplies, getting an exhibition, winning an award, being interviewed, being asked to speak about your work, etc. Where these are all external motivations even, I enjoy, I do hold to my own internal motivation.

Motivation is a more tangible feeling of passion and excitement. This is Self-Motivation with no outside influence. I stay motivated because there is so much I need to create. I know if I couldn't do this, I would be completely undone. I love the fear.

I embrace uncertainty, and I laugh in the face of doubt which keeps me motivated.

--Duke Windsor

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Mary-Ann Prack

Sculptor

I am a Canadian abstract sculptor and painter with an art practice spanning over thirty-five years. My home/studio/sculpture garden is located in the idyllic Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

My appreciation of art and the creative process developed from an early age; I grew up in a very creative environment surrounded by artists, architects, engineers, and great art. This part of my life continues to influence how I see the world, appreciate and respond to it. I watched my father design beautiful buildings utilizing architectural drawings, renderings, and models. My mother created a fabulous environment for our family to enjoy. She introduced me to sculpting in clay as I modeled for her as a child. From this, I realize that it is most important to discover the 'essence' of who I am in this life and feel blessed to be able to connect with mine every day through my art. Life as an artist is not always easy, and there are many challenges. Yet, to me, there is nothing more powerful, joyful, or satisfying than doing what I love ... creating art!

"WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED WHEN YOU SIMPLY DON'T FEEL MOTIVATED TO CREATE?"

What keeps me motivated is the process of 'creating' itself, as well as the anticipation of seeing my finished sculpture or painting. There is nothing more exciting and energizing to me than the process of creating art, so unless I am physically or mentally exhausted, motivation to create is, fortunately, not an issue.

I work intuitively with an innate personal understanding of design, color, tools, materials, and the seemingly endless possibilities, as well as limitations as the creation process unfolds.

I have an inner confidence while sculpting, painting, or doing anything creative that does not seem to exist to this extent in any other area of my life. It would be amazing if it did! Inspiration happens while I'm working, it's not a sit back and wait to be 'inspired' process. My creativity is an integral part of my life, and I am extremely grateful for this fact. I believe part of what prevents me from having creative blocks and what keeps my artistic experience fresh is that I have multiple art forms to choose from; beginning with sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, and in more subtle forms; the presentation of my sculpture and paintings, living spaces and even how I dress ... to me it is all art!

My figurative sculptures express the spirit, energy, and singularity of the human form. I am fascinated by the process of turning raw clay into individual works that convey human qualities and emotions. Each figure has a unique personality and is a source of curiosity and joy for many who experience them. My colorful, multilayered, abstract paintings fuel my creative spirit. I can be spontaneous, wild, gentle, precise, or create unusual life forms and habitats; anything is possible. My sculptures and paintings share common qualities; physically in the architectural influences of my past and emotionally in their shared strength, depth, and energy.

Sculpting is a process of discovery, technically and aesthetically. The creative process for sculpture is much like life itself, with beautiful moments, frustration, synchronicity, insecurity, love, happiness ... and ultimately joy!

Mary-Ann Prack

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Jennifer Moore-Tymowska

Artist, Creator & Lover of Color

In Search of the Creative Spark

Creativity, like any activity, requires active input. If that spark is gone, however, it gets harder to find it again, so perhaps we can always try to keep a small pilot light on. Easier said than done, right? I would say that if the big spark is not there – go for the smaller ones. In other words – I try to be aware that all our daily activities require a form of creativity to make life more interesting to keep us from too much routine and regularity. Of course, a certain amount of repeated daily activities is simply a part of our lives. Still, we can make ourselves more aware of the little pleasures that accompany them.

For example, I just finished a cup of morning tea. I try to vary the combinations I put together to make the tea more interesting and a bit of a surprise. Some days it is a blended English breakfast while tea today it was Irish Breakfast tea combined with Kenyan Tinderet and rather delicious. You might say, just give me something to get me started with the day. Sure. But even that can be creative and can give you a lift.

I began painting on a near-daily basis some years ago and became a full-time artist. I generally paint in series, so that way, there is an ongoing flow that can go on as long as it feels 'right.' When the time comes that the series feels finished, it often signals a time of dormancy. However, as a modern-day artist who has to manage her own career, there are a lot of side-jobs that are a part of being successful. I have to be my own manager, promoter, IT expert, archivist, shipping director, and the list continues. In the quieter period between series – time to focus on the other parts of being an artist.

In doing this, I am moving my art business forward and not focusing on the fact that my painting has stopped. Because it hasn't. I might go to my Strathmore mixed-media cards that I create in between bigger projects. I love to have a supply of hand-painted cards ready to send off to family and friends. Sometimes, I will select one and get it printed so that I have my 'card of the moment' that will accompany a painting that has been bought, along with a hand-written message from me. But then there comes the time when I need to go back to really painting. When the thrill of a new series is needed. In this 'other time' of focusing on the side projects, life goes on, and something will spark off a new direction. It might be a walk in the park where the light suddenly comes through the trees and the shadows play, and I feel the spark ignite. And when I get to the easel, there it is again.

Although I consider myself primarily an abstract artist, I do love to return to certain subjects that have always inspired and got me charged up again. Flowers, for example, and trees. And sometimes, here I go back to a familiar style that is more impressionistic than abstract. Initially, from this starting point – anything can happen!

Color! Color has always been important to me, way back when I wrote a prize-winning essay at the age of eleven on how color impacted my daily life. I am pretty sure I still have that essay, although I can also visualize a part of it and recall the paper I wrote on. I had excellent hand-writing skills in those days, an art I wish we still valued today in our children.

As the decades pass, and sometimes we question our own relevancy, perhaps a time of reflection is called for. Think back to the milestone moments. To the first group show ... to the first paintings sold ... to the first article about your work ... to your first solo show! Find a way to feel relevant. With our changing world circumstances and the forced times of isolation that may still occur, we need to be grateful for technology (that sometimes overwhelms us) and connects us to others. I belong to an online community of international artists. We meet regularly online and support each other by words of encouragement, by cheering someone on who is in need of it, and by inspiring each other with our current successes. It is also a marketing program that guides us along in the steps needed to promote our work online.

To return to the start of this essay – back to that word 'routine.' Often, I follow the simple step of going into my studio (which at times may simply be a corner of the living room – and begin a cleaning up process.) This nearly always works! I get immersed in the process of reorganization. I often come across an earlier painting that was not completed, or a new color I had forgotten about, or a new artist tool that I had been planning to try out ... little steps that can lead to bigger ones.

Try to keep the clutter of life, both in the material and mental sense – in an acceptable order that works for you. Otherwise, the distraction of messages that pop into your head regarding uncompleted points of life administration (bills paid, deadlines to meet, family needs) can block the feeling of freedom that goes with creativity.

Again, easier said than done, but a sense of order can bring a sense of calm, and with that – off you go into your world of creation!

Jennifer Moore-Tymowska

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Ayelet Amrani Navon

Interdisciplinary Artist

Muses are overrated.

And I don't mean to say it isn't wonderful when the muse visits my studio. I myself am always surprised by the artwork that just seems to flow and flow in the wake of her visit. It is delightful. One of life's little gifts.

But we mustn't be tempted to wait around for a muse. Creativity is a journey. It's comprised of many little steps taken over time: you extend one foot and put it down and then the other. You take out your paintbrush regularly and make a mark. That's it. Some days that one step can seem insignificant or pointless. Mundane. Some days (often!), you will seem to have other priorities. And on the most difficult days, the little voice inside your head will tell you that you are not good enough; and that since you are not good enough, you shouldn't be on this journey anyway.

But if you do stick with it and make your marks regularly, you will see those marks growing into a body of work, a narrative. You will start to see you have a voice and that you are making something that is meaningful to yourself and to others. Obviously, I am not talking only about painting and visual arts. The principle applies to any creative pursuit in any medium. So how do you stick with it? How do you stay motivated to create when you just don't feel motivated? Frankly, it's a challenge that never ends, but here I have tried to look back and articulate things that worked for me personally. And I put together a few notes for you.

The Space. On a day when you're feeling motivated, and energetically create a space to work in. Make it as pleasant as possible and inviting. Your dedicated space will be waiting there for you even at those times when you are not in the mood. It will be easier to get going when the setting is ready: you just slip into your working position. Your workspace may even come to feel like a companion. It has for me. Familiar and comfortable and filled with some of my favorite materials, objects, and tools, it can remind me of other days in the past when I couldn't get going. It can remind me that I've re-started before and therefore I can do it again.

When I just can't get started, I sometimes go to my studio and sit. I don't paint. I simply sit. I might go on to clean, organize the space or have a cup of coffee; until (hopefully!) something starts to flow.

The Medium. Learn your medium and go deeper and deeper. Take pleasure in the particular paper you love or learning how to handle wood or master a new tool. Study the history of your medium and go see other creative people in the field and observe their work. This is the trick, you see: the more invested you become, the more of an asset you possess, the harder it will be to disengage. Your identity might shift. Someday you might be able to say, "I am an artist." So that even if you find yourself in a creative slump, you will eventually come back to the proverbial drawing board.

A Teacher. Yes, you would do well to find yourself a teacher. It could be a literal teacher from your old school days or a craftsperson whom you admire and keep in touch with. Or it might be old masters that you converse with through the books and work they left behind. A teacher is someone who, in some way, has been down the path you are planning to walk. There is something you can learn from them related to your creative journey.

When you feel unmotivated, you can share that feeling with your teacher. I personally keep in touch with one of my Art School teachers, whom I turn to regularly (not always often, but quite regularly over the years). I also keep books in my studio with the work of artists I respect, biographies, and letters. I often treat these artists as teachers, which I've internalized, and I can have 'discussions' with them when I need to. Lastly, I have been fortunate to find an artist friend who is older and more experienced than me, and I consider her a mentor. Which brings me to my next point.

Community. At the end of the day, even solitary artists are motivated by human relationships. Creativity is a conversation. We could and would not be able to create if it weren't for the 'other.' The 'other' who witnesses our work, our journey. That is the real true core of our motivation. Surround yourself with others who enjoy your creative work, who get it, who are willing to invest time in it. Also, surround yourself with other creative people who can open your mind and heart. Creative people grapple with similar issues, including creative slumps and changing moods. I have a friend who has been an artist for forty years, and I was astonished to discover that she, too, questions her journey from time to time.

That discovery literally got me back into the studio one day when I was feeling completely discouraged. The human community that accompanies us on our creative endeavor is absolutely critical. And these are the people we can turn to when we need to get motivated.

A Final Note. Creativity. Anyone can and should take part. Creativity is a comfort. It can lift us up from the mundane and the pointless, make sense of pain and connect us to others. Watch how a child naturally finds delight in creating. In all stages of life, making marks can give us a sense of purpose and a sense of vitality. So, my final note is this: when you want to create but feel unmotivated, read these words of mine, which are an attempt to share my experience or find some other voice that inspires you. It's a reminder. It's even a conversation. A conversation with another person in the same boat. And it just might get you back on track.

Ayelet Amrani Navon

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Candy Yeldham

Makeup Artist

Firstly, when unmotivated, my first instinct is to reach out to music. Music is my natural inclination, and it helps me process. I love many different genres of music, and it is my passion. I have helped a sound engineer friend DJ sets, and this is my natural process.

For as long as I can remember, I have been interested in creativity. At school, at eleven years old, I loved pottery and t-shirt design. I loved the art classes. I made a ceramic sign at my parent's home and felt comfortable creating it. Later at my secondary school, I made some pottery and a lamp in the shape of a green plant. My processing has always been through texture and colour. I attended a sculpture course with John Skelton and created a stone Dove out of bath stone. My general motivation is to be creative. I have faced moments in my life where I have felt overwhelmed and challenged and not feeling myself. Normally when not feeling creative or attempting to do a job, that does not sit with who I actually am as a person.

I attended East Anglia University and studied Drama and Film studies. I really loved costume design and make-up in my course. Creating giant wire sculptures for plays and designing the make-up for plays.

When I am not motivated, I try to work out where the light is in life, and the enjoyment is. I am a food lover, so if I focus on good food, there is motivation there. I love yoga and find it helps to sort out nervous energy and to re-align. I was working in a fine art gallery and actually had a very difficult time. I decided to go for a short make-up course with the famous facialist Linda Meredith. This was the start of a fascination. I loved the textures of the powders and the technique of shading. How do I keep motivated? A good question. I do, at times, feel very unmotivated. My modeling career helped me find confidence, and I really have enjoyed all the shoots. My diary motivates me, as do my family and friends.

Going to Glauco Rossi School of make-up. It gave me excellent training in make-up artistry. I was definitely not top of my class. However, I am fascinated by make-up. After studying at Glauco Rossi, I called up a journalist friend of mine. She gave me some jobs on some shoots, and she gave me some jobs on shoots, and I started to work regularly on shoots. After being signed to Minx Agency, I began to work for magazines and travel around the world. Mainly working in London. I met a fantastic make-up artist who showed me a few techniques.

I felt that I needed more discipline, and I sent my CV to Shu Uemura. They hired me to work in Harvey Nichols. I had the support of the very dear James Dove, who gave me the confidence to go for the job. This was a firefly for my life. I was coached by the best make-up artists in the world. I then went to YSL and learnt so much. I was proud to be part of their team and loved my colleagues so much. Being part of a couture brand was so important to the development, and I was grateful to my colleagues and how I was treated. The exciting part of YSL was their training and their discipline. The trunk shows were fantastic, and I believe it is a brand that looks after its employees.

My lifetime motivation is creativity, and I am so looking back it is all about make-up artistry and colour. I love going to galleries and seeing creativity in flowers and plants. I love to see and appreciate creative work.

Candy Yeldham

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Tuija Nyrönen

Ikebana artist, creative thinker & plant aficionado

What keeps me motivated to keep on practicing Ikebana

I've been practicing Sogetsu ikebana for about six and half years now and still consider myself a beginner. The road has been slow, slippery, and rocky. I remember the very beginning when someone in the Ikebana class got her teacher's certificate. She got very emotional, started to cry, and in between her sobs said, "I can't believe I did this. The first five years were really hard".

Me, back then, thinking: FIVE YEARS! What the **** is she talking about? I'll be a black belt Ikebanist in just one, wait and see. The arrogance of the novice has somewhat leveled down as the years have passed.

Obviously, one reason, and maybe the only reason, for the fact that I didn't become a worldwide known Ikebana star within a year, is lack of motivation. But still, I've kept going on. Just barely and extremely slow on some days. But just enough that I can say "Ikebana" when someone, most often an elderly cleaning client, asks me what I do in my spare time.

So, what keeps me hanging in there? I just mentioned my job is house cleaning. Definitely a big motivator in many aspects. First, because it's so monotonous in nature, I've got loads of unused creative energy that just has to burst out somehow. When you spend most of your working hours vacuuming floors, your brain starts to develop visions of colors and shapes to balance the deprivation. It's called daydreaming. Of course, most of the ideas never turn to designs in real life because, at the end of the day, you're just too tired and need to sleep a few hours to be fit enough to also vacuum the next day.

As a cleaning lady, I'm trained to spot what's all ugly, smelly, and dirty, because it's my job to eliminate it. Even in the cleanest and most beautiful houses, I must concentrate on finding the filth. Because if I don't find it, the customer will find it after my visit when checking after the quality of my job. And what we have then is an unhappy customer. Having a day job, which can be aesthetically somewhat unpleasant, certainly has motivated me to study and create Ikebana. In fact, that's what pushed me to start Ikebana in the first place. I was at the point when I was seriously thinking there must be more in life than cleaning feces from bathroom walls and unclogging floor drains. There must be something pretty and fragrant for everyone. No human can live by filth alone.

And then I met Airi, a lady with Japanese connections. Her house was filled with Japanese nick- nacks, so Land of the Rising Sun was always the theme of our small talk. My imagination started to run wild. I saw myself in a kimono, walking by the riverside under the blossoming cherry trees, on my way to Ikebana class. For Japanese women, their lives are all about aesthetics, and mine is all about gross. But surely, I could have some of their lifestyle too. Certainly not the kimono, which is way too expensive, and I would consider it a cultural appropriation anyway. But maybe the Ikebana part?

So, I started looking for a Sensei in Finland and found one. I changed my employer and lost contact with Airi. Still, a couple of years later, while in a supermarket with my daughter, an elderly lady tapped on my shoulder saying: "Hello, do you still remember me? Do you still do Ikebana?" It was Airi. What could I do but promise to go on and dedicate my life to the art?

And later, there was Pekka, a gentleman who asked what other interests I have except mopping floors while I was mopping his. "Ikebana," I said. Throughout these years of practice in Ikebana, I've only met a few people in person who have some sort of connection to the art. They are all senseis or students living far away from me, in a bigger city. Little did I know when I was mopping Pekka's floor in my hometown. Mentioning the i-word fired him up. He had lived in Japan for decades.

A close member of his family had been a high-ranking Sensei. And according to him, Ikebana was the most important and valuable thing anyone could ever study. I gave him a lift to the town center as I was done with the cleaning. While sitting next to him in Toyota Aygo, I had no option but to promise to go on with Ikebana as far as I can get. And I've never met him since. But meeting him made an impact, just like meeting Airi. The promises I made to them haunt me when I notice I've neglected Ikebana. Meeting someone who sees the importance of what you do means a lot. On those days, I've started to work on a new arrangement, maybe after several months.

Inner motivation doesn't always seem to be enough to go on in the artistic path. At times, on a path, that may not seem to lead anywhere but only to go around in a circle. Just when you think you go forward, you are right back at the starting point. At times I come to my senses and see my urge to create - to build something from twigs, branches, and flowers- as an addiction that only costs time, money, and space I suppose could be used for more beneficial purposes.

I sit back from the art, maybe for months at a time. Until my Sensei calls and reminds me of what should be the number one priority in life. And for a moment, it's crystal clear again. I just tend to forget when I'm on my own for too long. If I should name just one motivator while pursuing the black belt in Ikebana, it would be my Sensei. She'll motivate the hell out of anyone.

Tuija Nyrönen

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Deborah Czernecky

Plein air artist capturing nature in art

What motivates me to create when I am not in the mood to do so? An interesting question to ponder. Hmmm... It went round and round in my head for several days after the amazing team of Rod and Inci asked me to share my coping mechanisms.

My first thought was...golly G, it is not hard to be inspired to create when I live in a beautiful location by the Salish Sea with amazing views ranging from old-growth forest to coastline, including the Olympic mountain range in Washington state across the water.

What more can a gal ask for? However, that black hole of lack of creative motivation raises its ugly head every so often.

I am happy to say those dark moods are few and far between as I do try very hard to keep myself moving forward.

When that lack of motivation does sneak into my head, I know my cure to get back on track. To quote John Belushi - "Road Trip!" It is time to "Hit the Road, Jack." I start to look forward to being "On the Road Again." (Shout out to Ray Charles and Willie Nelson, although I do plan on coming back.) It is easy to get pumped when you have classic R&B and country refrains bouncing around in your brain. Speaking purely in terms of artistic stimulation, a painting trip provides a change of scenery which, in turn, challenges me to explore new landscape formations and colour palettes. So, what other things happen? I think the challenges of trip planning include transportation, accommodation, figuring out what paints to take, and packing them. Trust me, this is important when you go to a place with no art stores (e.g., the arctic). It's not a problem if I'm driving. I can take the "kitchen sink." However, the weight and space limitations associated with flying, not to mention the difficulties of getting paints on board, even when I pack them with the applicable regulations showing them to be acceptable, present additional challenges.

Anyway, trip planning and the associated anticipation of upcoming adventures, discovering what is around the next corner (e.g., a washed-out bridge, a big bear or peacock/other wildlife, that gas station I nearly need, etc.) send some type of chemical serum to my brain that makes me happy. There are a few downsides to this "let's hit the road attitude" that are beyond my control to varying degrees. Will the weather be good? How are my digs going to be? Most importantly, who is going to feed me? Lol!

But, overall, who doesn't like a road trip? Perhaps, the hardest decision is where to go in Canada. As I live in an amazing huge country (5,000 km/3,000 mi from west to east and 3,500 km/2,200 mi from south to north), the possibilities are endless with the gift of time to explore.

In addition to the direct stimulation, a painting trip provides, what other factors help the creative juices flow? I think the biggest benefit is the absence of the usual distractions of normal life (e.g., Cleaning, yard work, shopping, etc.).

Because I am away, I have a schedule of moi and can focus primarily on applying paint to canvas. In saying this, I have what I call Painters Down Time. I can only paint on location for a limited amount of time, depending on light and whether or not the weather gods smile upon me.

How do I fill the rest of the time? Sketching in my car if the weather is bad and listening to great tunes with coffee and NO wifi. Bringing a stack of art magazines and books that I now have time to read, or at least glance at, in the afternoon or after supper when the light is gone because usually there are no screens to watch. Best of all, if I am with other artists, the gift of their time in having a great chat regarding our paintings of the day, art in general, or art history provides tips, tricks, and intellectual stimulus. Gathering with musical instruments for a night of jamming is an added bonus. Yup, these new friends are an important part of the journey.

When I return home with a new appreciation of my local area, rejuvenated by my recent experiences. I am eager to get back into the natural surroundings and my studio to create with fresh eyes and extra energy in that brush. In summary, painting trips are full of adventures that keep me from getting stuck in a creative rut!

Deborah Czernecky

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Barbie the Welder Metal Sculptor, author and skilled trades advocate

I have to admit, I'm truly working in my dream job! I've sculpted my business the same way I've sculpted metal, removing anything that isn't a masterpiece. Today I do only what I want to do, but that still doesn't mean I'm always motivated to work! I get tired, I get bored of grinding for the 8th stinking day in a row, or I get frustrated a piece isn't moving along as fast as I would like it to. On days like these, the motivation just isn't there. I start thinking about playing hooky and riding my motorcycle, going kayaking, or lying in bed, and binge-watching Netflix, anything other than being in the shop creating art.

My unmotivated days are awful. They drag. I constantly look at the clock to see if it's "quittin' time" yet, and I'm met with all kinds of resistance. I have to go into hostage negotiation with myself just to get myself into the shop. When I finally do get in there, I have to pull art out of myself instead of it flowing from me naturally like it does when I'm motivated. When I'm forcing my art, I usually end up having to go back later and undo the work I did, which means it takes longer to finish a sculpture, adds extra unnecessary work, and causes frustration, further compounding my situation.

Over time I have learned that I won't always be motivated to work in my business. When these times come, I start by finding out where my lack of motivation is coming from. For me, it's usually because of one of two reasons, either I'm working seven days a week and forgot to give myself a break, or because of the repetitive nature of some of the work I do. (I totally thrive on change, each day being different and loving the problem-solving of sculpting. When I'm on day 8 of grinding to capture details, I'm ready to tell my boss to go to Hell, and I'm the boss!)

For you, there may be other reasons, but figuring out where your lack of motivation is coming from will allow you to know how to combat it! Be honest with yourself about why you're unmotivated. You may find out you're not in love with what you're doing, and it may be time for a career change, or it may be simpler than that. You may just be overworked and underappreciated! Once you've found the cause of your lack of motivation, you can then create a game plan to overcome it!

If your lack of motivation comes from not being in love with what you're doing utterly and completely, then it's time for a change. Life is too short to be unhappy. After reflecting on your reason for being unmotivated, you may realize that it's being caused by you working in a career that your parents wanted for you, or a teacher thought was best for you but not what you really wanted to do. Is there a career path you wanted to do but feared judgment, or did you take a career because the money was too good to say no to? Unapologetically go after what makes your heart happy, and everyone else be damned! With all due respect, it's YOUR life! Money is cool, and all, but have you tried happiness? Happiness is the new wealth!

If your lack of motivation comes from not being in love with what you're currently doing, for example, when I'm still grinding on day 8, but you love the results it brings, then it's simply a matter of imagining the end result and FEELING what it will feel like when it's done. How amazing will you feel when this project is completed to your standards of excellence?!?! How will you celebrate? What new opportunities will finishing this project bring? Think and feel into the future with vivid details!

If your lack of motivation is coming from being overworked and underappreciated, whether it's by a boss or you're the boss, then it's time to honor yourself and your hard work by doing something nice for yourself. Something as simple as a 15-minute coffee and cookie break can totally rejuvenate your motivation! I personally love taking myself out somewhere nice for a meal. The action of getting dressed up fancy, going to a nice restaurant, and ordering a special meal in celebration of my dedication lets me know loud and clear that "I see your hard work, and you deserve to be honored for it." Waiting for someone else to recognize our hard work may take a while, and in the process of waiting, it grows resentment which leads to our lack of motivation.

Take the initiative and celebrate yourself! When you do something for yourself, claim it as a celebration, say to yourself, "to celebrate my hard work and dedication, I am taking this 15-minute coffee and cookie break," or whatever it is that you're doing to celebrate you! Feeling appreciated does wonders for your motivation!

On a super rare occasion, I'll have a lack of motivation, and I can't find a good reason for it. When this happens, I sweep the shop. Sweeping the shop has become a meditation for me. It gets me back in the arena of my work without the pressure of working on something that I lack motivation for. I sweep the floor, clean, and organize the shop. I know I trick myself in this way, but it still works every time! I know that once I get in the shop and sweep, I'll start organizing. The next thing I know, my creativity just naturally goes to work. Before I know it, I'm sculpting on my sculpture, back to work playing with metal, and joyfully making progress.

Sweep your shop. When you feel a lack of motivation for no good reason, just get into your arena and clean it. Being around your work without the pressure of having to work on it eases you back into your arena. Before you know it, love and motivation comes flooding back!

You're not always going to feel motivated but having a plan for how to combat your lack of motivation will help when the mood doesn't strike! Play around and try different strategies until you find what works for you!

With love,

Barbie The Welder

Website: <https://www.barbiethewelder.com/>



C.M. Curtis

American Western author and historian

I knew a man who told me he had once asked his next-door neighbor to lend him his lawnmower. The neighbor said he couldn't because it was raining in London. Mystified by this response, my friend said, "But we live in the United States." The neighbor replied, "when you don't want to do a thing, one excuse is as good as another."

There are times when I can't wait to get to my keyboard and start writing the things that are in my head while they are fresh. The juices are flowing, I'm motivated, my mind is a veritable wellspring of ideas. They tumble forth like legos being poured out of a can, fighting each other to be next to find expression in print.

And, then . . . well, then there are times when the eye inside my head gazes upon a desert; a flat, barren plain; featureless, unyielding, blurred. I find I have other things to do -- no time to write. It's too late, or it's too early, or I'm too tired or not tired enough, or it's raining in London -- any excuse will do. I'll write later.

And thus, lack of motivation becomes procrastination, that great enemy of productivity, the murderer of the creative spirit. This happens to all of us at one time or another. And to some, it is an ongoing blight that results in permanent stagnation. Because of it, how many books were never written, paintings never painted, sculptures never sculpted, degrees never attained, gardens never planted, etc.

I have a rule for myself: 'Just say no to procrastination.' Do I always obey the rule? Not always, but usually. And at least I recognize what is happening when I do procrastinate. I don't make excuses. I accept the fact that I am procrastinating, and I try to stop it. I don't care if it is raining in London. I go to work.

I am a writer. You may be a painter or a sculptor or a quilter or a person who turns swords into plowshares or whatever. The nature of the endeavor is immaterial. The operative concept is the same: Go to work.

In an online writing course I recently wrote, I referenced a scene in the classic novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. One of the characters, Mrs. Byles, is giving some advice to Oliver, who, for some time, has been trying to decide how to start writing a book. Here's what she tells him:

"The way to write a book is to write one sentence and then write another, and keep on doing it every day, rain or shine, sick or well! . . . The way to write a book is to write a book! . . . Don't let me hear any more about how you can't write a book, Oliver Twist! Just you step right back upstairs and put something on paper. It won't be what you want to say, of course. No writer ever writes a thing decently the first time."

She goes on to tell Oliver that her husband always said, "The way to get a sentence written properly is to write something, and then keep changing it . . . You can be mighty sure of one thing. If you don't write anything, you won't have anything to change." You can apply Mrs. Byles' advice to any task or endeavor. You can apply it to cleaning the garage, or starting an exercise routine, enrolling in that online course you've been thinking about taking, or . . . you name it.

I have found that the best remedy for lack of motivation to do a thing is to begin the thing. It works very well for me when I need to become motivated to write. After I have written a few paragraphs -- sometimes even sooner -- I find the pump has been primed, the ideas are flowing. Suddenly, I'm motivated, and I don't want to stop.

There are certain principles of physical health, as well, that relate to the concepts of creative capacity and incentive. After all, it's no secret that physical health affects the mind and mental health affects the physical self. Generally speaking, a sick person is less creative than a well person.

A good athlete will avoid ingesting substances that weaken the body and diminish performance. People who wish to maintain their creative mental capacities at peak levels should do likewise. Toxic substances like sugar, artificial sweeteners, caffeine, and alcohol have negative short and long-term effects on mental and physical health and diminish creative potential. Many prescription drugs do the same. The damaging effects of habitual marijuana use on the brain (and body) have been well researched and documented. A painter takes meticulous care of his paintbrushes. A writer tries to protect her computer from harm. The sculptor would never do anything to damage the chisels and other tools with which his/her works of art are created.

As important as these tools are, they can be replaced. But we only get one body and one brain. Reliance on stimulants and other substances to increase alertness or otherwise enhance creative performance is like using a credit card. Sooner or later, payback is always required -- with interest. Credit cards do not magically produce money from thin air, nor do the body and brain produce energy and performance out of nothing.

Far better to provide the body with beneficial, health-promoting substances that will add to its reserves, rather than depleting them, and to engage in healthy activities such as regular exercise. Drinking plenty of water is another must for optimal health of the body and brain.

I have found that as long as I pay attention to these natural laws and act accordingly, my body stays active, and my brain remains clear and alert. And then all I have to do is begin writing, and motivation is there like a parked car just waiting for the key to be turned and the gears to be engaged.

C.M. Curtis

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Ruth Davis

Abstract floral artist

Have you ever had one of those days where all you want to do is stay in your PJs, watch junk on tv, and eat chocolate? I get those days a lot! But after an hour or two and a chocolate bar or two, I remember that being creative, even if I am feeling unmotivated, is a form of relaxation. Painting and creating for me clears my head. It's just me, the canvas, and a whole bunch of beautiful colours (maybe the occasional cat will come to help me). When I paint, I relax completely, lose time, and my head is cleared of various thoughts. What inspires me is that I can have my own time, not feel any pressure but just create something. Painting heals, being creative heals, allowing yourself your own time to relax.

I paint and create beautiful, bold, and bright floral abstract paintings for my wonderful Grandparents Carmen and James, who passed away.

The motivation to start creating for them began about a year after they had passed away. I struggled greatly after their passing. I needed to find something to help me cope with a distraction from the real world, I suppose.

From a young age, as far back as I can remember, they both had always encouraged me to paint or do anything creative. I have some of the best childhood memories of drawing and painting in their conservatory, which overlooked their stunning garden, which was jam-packed with amazing, beautiful flowers in all different varieties and colours.

The memories I have of them keep their memory alive. They brought so much laughter, joy, and colour to people's lives, and I want to carry that on, and art definitely does that. Every piece of unique and personal artwork I finish has their initials, so every artwork is as much mine as theirs.

Without them, I do not know if I would have had the motivational push to start creating the artwork in which I do.

Creating anything, allowing yourself to express your emotions in your own unique and personal way is an amazing thing.

It can do wonders for your mental health. It has for me 100%.

So many other talented artists have been "saved" by being creative.

That outlet is the feeling of happiness and contentment you are rewarded with when you have finished a piece you cannot get from anywhere else. Your source of motivation can change over time through the varied stages of life. I started my creative journey to help me through a dark time in my life, to help me.

Now I create because it brings me so much happiness. I adore creating unique pieces for other people to enjoy. When a piece you have created genuinely connects with someone, it makes it all worthwhile. If something I make can bring someone some type of joy and help even help them out of their own dark place, that makes me want to create even more!

Inspiration for my work can be found almost everywhere. In any case, this can be a huge help when I am feeling blocked or unmotivated. Going through old childhood photos, remembering the colours, the smells, the smiles that have inspired my artwork. Going on walks and being surrounded by all the beauty in which nature has to offer. And of course, I get inspired by other talented artists admiring how they create and the colour combinations they use.

Being motivated to create doesn't mean that you have to finish a piece of art either.

You can just get it started or write down some ideas, doodle a little! Just thinking about creating something is its own form of creating the start of the process, the start of the journey.

Ruth Davis

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Jennifer Mazur

Mental wellness artist

I've got to be honest here. Sometimes I can't create.

I have struggled with clinical depression since I was a teenager. And sometimes, when I catch it soon enough, I can control it with medication, art practice, and meditation. But there are plenty of times that I don't catch it soon enough, and then it takes me to a really dark place. The sort of place where answering my phone is impossible, showering is a challenge, and creating art is simply out of the question.

While most of the time, my head is full of ideas and colors, and different mediums. Sometimes I even wake up in the middle of the night and have to get my thoughts down on paper. There are times where it is a struggle. Those are the times I try to push through and be kind to myself. And I have found a couple of key things that work for me. Sometimes it just takes one, and sometimes it takes several.

First of all, music is so important. I don't work well in silence. Never have. I can still remember the vinyl my mom played every single Saturday when it was time to clean the house. To this day, that album gets me off my butt and headed for the vacuum. That music, however, doesn't get me creating. I have created several playlists on my Spotify account to evoke certain moods- some super upbeat, some mellow. Then the ones I know help me get into a creative space.

So- I turn on the music, and I head into my studio. And sometimes that's all it takes, but sometimes not. And in those cases, there is another trick I use. Straightening up. I am messy when I create. I often have paints left out (closed, of course!) and different mediums scattered here and there. Ripped paper on the floor and a sketchbook or two on the table. And who knows what else, but it is generally a mess. So I start to put things away. It isn't the clean studio that inspires me, but rather the looking at things- holding the mediums- moving things around. Sometimes as I am holding a posca pen, paint, and some inks in my hands and I happen to notice what a gorgeous palette they might create together. I can't help but try it straight away. But sometimes not. Sometimes, nothing is sparked at all. But at least my studio is cleaner :)

Speaking of color palettes, that's another thing that can get the juices flowing. I might start by swatching out some new paints in a sketchbook. Or painting a tiny blob of paint from each of my paints onto the lids, so I can see the colors from above. It seems small, but it is enormous. It means the paints are being opened and a brush is in hand, and I am getting involved. And one step further is coming up with different palettes altogether. Looking at the way different colors react to one another and what emotions it evokes. I try to push myself towards things that I don't typically work with. Then sketch booking my findings. Sometimes I come across pure gold- and save it for a future piece.

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There are times that I want to create but feel 100% out of inspiration. In those cases, I turn to Pinterest and start pinning. I have several boards that inspire me. It can be old paintings from the masters to something I saw in a magazine. Even new mediums and techniques. Pinterest has a wonderful algorithm for suggesting other pins, and that is where I find a good 90% of mine. When lacking my own ideas, I try to recreate a piece I admire but in my own style. This is something that is quite controversial among artists, but I have always felt that if you aren't selling it and you are giving credit to your inspiration, it is a great way to learn and explore and spark creativity.

The last tip I have may sound small, but it is actually enormous. Joining a studio group either in person or online. Having live art studio sessions with friends has been my lifesaver. (I run some virtually for people around the world as Covid has limited our in-person options). I know that every time I am around other creatives, my energy grows and grows. Something about creating in the same space, having similar interests, inspiring and encouraging others with a similar mindset. So very valuable.

When I am in a good place, I don't have to push myself. It comes naturally, but life isn't always that simple. Throughout the years, I have realized that the key to my mental wellness is maintenance. Taking my medicine, meditating, and creating. As often as I can. Pushing forward and knowing that sometimes it may feel that I don't have a creative cell in my body, but in reality, I just have to tap back into it and watch those creative cells multiply.

Jennifer Mazur

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Sonia Bublaitis

Abstract Artist

I wish I could say that I run to my studio filled with ideas to paint each day, but I can't.

I have a bubbly nature and find there is a lot going on in my brain. I start the morning with 2 cups of coffee, which is an absolute necessity to help me get focused! I go into my studio, and I put on some music and happily prepare my paints and start working, OR it can be the opposite!

When I am stuck and can't create, I tend to read books about art to get inspired. I have recently started leaving a sketch pad near my bed in case I wake up with a good idea. If I don't notate it, it will surely be lost. I also doodle with coloured pencils in whichever room I feel is best at the time. The days of waiting for the inspiration to return make me feel more upset than anything!

What I truly find frustrating are annoying thoughts that pop into my mind to say, "you can't paint anything worthwhile today, so why bother?" That really bugs me. Insecurities like "It will not be good enough." Then I compare myself to other artists and feel as though my talent is lacking. It's like having an annoying parrot sitting on my shoulder, uttering these words loudly in my ear, and I can't block it out. So, if the parrot is squawking away, I have to remove myself from my studio and go for a long walk-in nature.

No matter what the weather is like, I will always see beauty in something. As I walk, I try to blank out thoughts of what I should be doing, and it is through nature, giving me breathing space to think without pressure. Sometimes a walk won't change my mood, so I stand up and physically say, "Right, time to work" out loud. It's almost a physical as well as an emotional way to break past all insecurities. I guess I get really angry with myself for letting the doubts stop me from producing art. The parrot has wasted a lot of my valuable time.

I go to my studio with a spring in my step. I put on uplifting music. I look at my canvas, and the parrot has gone! I've stilled its beak, and I am ready to start working. I have given myself permission to play and have been rewarded by feeling free to create again. Armed with a smile on my face and a sweet determination to start painting. Before I know it, it is halfway finished, and I have a feeling of accomplishment. I am so grateful to be lost in a painting again. Inspiration finds you working!

Sonia Bublaitis

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Gene Sasse

Founder and director of the Sasse Museum of Art & commercial photographer

What keeps me motivated when I do not feel motivated to create? That's an interesting question, and it's going to involve some deep soul searching. Being a professional photographer for almost fifty years, I'm paid to be creative on demand, solving problems and delivering a product on time and usually with no opportunity to reshoot the project. Most of my work is on location photographing objects or people for marketing and advertising. You're never sure what problems may arise.

Motivation for me comes from the inside. Something that touches that spot deep inside of us causes a spark that turns into a flame and then into a fire. Motivation, creativity, and drive are all intertwined to help us dig deep inside ourselves to find the inspiration to create. Art, business and life is all about being creative or, to put it another way, problem-solving.

The short answer to this question is a change of scenery, a challenge, a deadline, or maybe just a change of music. Once that spark is lit, who knows how long it will last, a few hours, days, or maybe a new direction altogether. The tools I use are photographing something for myself, whether it's a flower, a piece of architecture, starting and developing a book project.

I may be a little different than a lot of creatives in that, I have my hands in a number of different pies, photography, designing books, along with planning, developing, and executing art exhibits, and being an adjunct photography professor... These four things help feed each other and give me the motivation to keep being creative.

Gene Sasse

<https://genesasse.com/>

<https://sasseartmuseum.org/>



Maurice Quillinan

Artist, curator & teacher

For me, Art is a language I use to form a dialogue with a viewer/listener; thus, Art engages an audience, some known, others mostly unknown, the people we have never met or are unlikely to meet. This is important because an artwork has to be competent enough to make sense when I am not there to explain and rationalize and decode the heavily nuanced symbols embedded within a piece.

'Zone blanche' periods happen fairly regularly. I need to engage with something or someone in a conversation, and it is through this engagement that a drawing or painting begins to evolve. If the subject is stimulating there follows what can be multiple works, as unforeseen issues and possibilities are parsed and evolve into various sized canvases and drawings, always contingent upon the level of engagement and stimulus.

We have all been to gatherings where we exit multiple passionate conversations hugely stimulated and are energized for weeks at a time. Sometimes a tiny insight can remain in one's thoughts for years. Similarly, we can meet the same group on another occasion and have absolutely nothing to say. There is simply nothing we wish to engage with or contribute.

This is just reality. I personally need to be moved by something to begin to form a conversation with, for example, an artwork. I need to feel I can contribute and add to the process of engagement. If I can't be excited about something, I'm making. Then I cannot possibly expect an audience to be enthused by what I've made.

I personally don't believe there is such a thing as 'Inspiration' or, for that matter, 'Creativity.' (I say this because there is a much-quoted misconception that making an artwork is the result of the fairies waving a wand and artists just sit around waiting for the universe to send them ideas, sort of like FedEx from the fairy world.

The reality is that Art is a job, nothing more, nothing less, just like any other) To quote the painter Balthus, 'God is the only person who creates, the rest of us are craftspeople.' Making an artwork is simply the result of experience and muscle memory. This is important because this is all it is. A 'zone blanche' is clearly a fallow period when we have nothing to say. The English writer Evelyn Waugh when asked why he had written so few works, simply stated that 'everyone has a certain amount to say, and when this is said the conversations have concluded.

Self-doubt, like any emotion, is a very natural state. It should be considered as a retrospective time and not a debilitating period of introspection. Art akin to all conversations is strategic. So, a period of self-doubt/introspection should be considered a time to reflect upon our previous conversations/artwork. We should take the best of these and hold them until we find something we wish to form a new visual dialogue with these viable elements.

I think it is also important and useful to look at one's work/production history. Some artists produce hundreds of works per calendar year, others maybe one or two. Unfortunately, we do, in the petri dish of our anxieties, culture our perceived failings by thinking we should be in the studio twenty-four hours a day making dozens of works when we might consider that just one or two works will say all we have to say. There can be long fallow periods when there simply is nothing to say/make. Actual physical making time is invariably very short.

The rest of the time, I am gathering information. For me: I believe everything that ended up in the ball of gas that formed our planet is trying to reform to become whole with whatever or whomever it originated.

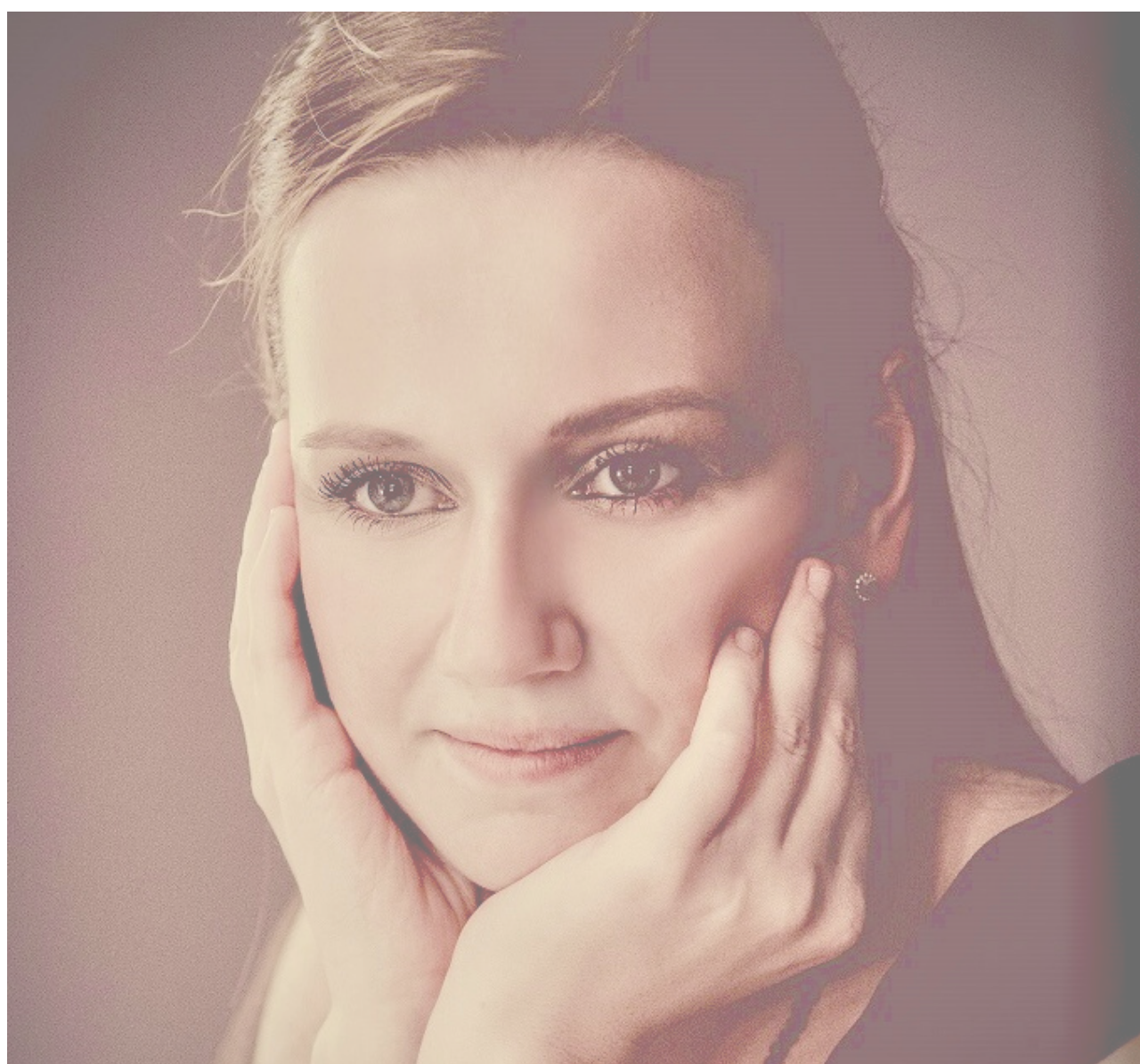
This is what my work is engaging with. Thus, anything I feel will give me a clue to this issue. I will research until I am ready to make a drawing or painting based around my research.

Music to me is God's glue which holds the physical universe as we understand it, in place.

Especially plainchant, choral and operatic compositions. My Faith is the structure upon which my work and life are formed. One only has to experience a group of monks singing the Psalms to realize that there is something way beyond our human egos. Maria Callas also is particularly influential for me. I feel she mistakenly ended up in the wrong place, but through her phenomenal dedication to her craft, she got out to where she should have been. Fortunately for us, we have her recordings which in recent years coupled with Renaissance choral works have provided me with multiple conversations to make drawings and paintings.

Maurice Quillinan

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Ivana Mišić

Concert & Solo Flutist

Motivation for me is like Heraclitus Logos: an eternally living fire that never burns because it is lit with measure and extinguished with measure. In my case, it really is. The intensity of the motivation I have to create music is hard to describe in words. For me, music is a transcendental experience in which there is a magical connection with intangible matter through sound. The very fact that such a thing is possible always makes me explore new sounds, possibilities, and colors through which I will better and more vividly convey to the audience.

At the time when the corona started, unfortunately, due to the lack of concerts and the opportunity to share my experiences live through music, I had a drop in motivation in which I had no goal in the form of a concert through which I could express my creativity. It was a difficult period for me, and I fought with all my might to overcome the obstacles that came my way.

When I realized what was happening in the world and that this period would not pass so quickly, I decided to tackle myself and start looking for new goals and challenges that will help me maintain motivation to create music and thus continue to do what I love.

First, it took me a long time to even understand and accept the fact that I had a drop in motivation. It seems to me that this is the first and most important step: to understand and be aware that something is happening that requires change and action. I began to analyze the situation I was in and look for ways to better accept the change in order to learn something about myself. I tried different forms of action: I recorded a lot of improvisation on the flute because it's something I express myself naturally. The music just flows the way it is, without preparation and filters.

That was one of the goals I set for myself then, I remember because it seemed to me that I would easily achieve it. When I saw that this was feasible, I started looking for online competitions and auditions that I could prepare for because the most important thing for me was to stay in musical form and not fall out of the flute practice routine. Little by little, forgetting how difficult it was at first, I realized that I had somehow accepted this new situation and learned to live with it.

Although nothing replaced my happiness that came to me when I started performing live again, what I can say now with a step back is that I realized from personal experience that getting out of that situation was simply discipline. Sometimes in the life of a musician, as I believe in other artists, there is a drop in motivation, the search for some new meaning, and the need for a fresh look at one's own creation of art. And only if we have the discipline to step out of that comfort zone to the point of forcing ourselves to perform our art every day no matter how much we may not be given or would like to do something else at that moment, can we bring our art to an even higher level, because the further and deeper we go in exploring our art, the further we go, the more difficult it becomes, but that is why this obstacle is well worth it.

Ivana Mišić

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Cris Santos

Content Creator, Blogger & Photographer writing about travel, fashion and lifestyle

Founder Luna Blue Girl Online Store

I am not a person who gives up easily. If it is my true passion, nothing or anyone will stop me. A journey is not always easy and beautiful. In fact, it is full of ups and downs, learning to persist, get up and keep going, apply trial and error, and suddenly there are moments of feeling down, so down that I feel lost. Then I remember why I started, where I want to be, so I think, what can I do next to keep heading towards where I want to go? I remind myself where I want to be, and I can do it. I think of new ideas to boost my business. Creativity is a wonderful tool. One small new idea keeps me moving forward, and it brings back hope. I hold on to what I believe. There is no other way than moving forward step by step.

However, there are days when you really do not feel like getting up and facing the day. When this happens, I must be kind to myself. I make sure to talk to myself like I talk to someone I love. It is easy to tear ourselves down and so hard to lift ourselves up. So I think of words of encouragement, and I don't let the little voice in my head become too loud. I have learnt to shut up anything that holds me back.

Also, I listen to my body, sometimes exhaustion is the problem, and the best thing is to have a break. I move away from everything, take some time for myself, I recharge, and it helps me to see things clearer. This helps me to come back refreshed, happier and stronger. I regained my motivation in this way.

There was a story when I was going through a divorce. There was one day I was so scared I had no money. I could not work that day for several reasons, so I tried to fix the problems fast, and the more I tried, the more things were going bad, and the more I panicked, so I gave in to the situation. With my heart pounding, I let it be, and I moved away from everything. I got up and went into my room. I chose a gorgeous dress, put makeup on, and got my camera. I went outside and took pictures for my Instagram. I gave my problems to the universe. It was now in God's hands. I felt at peace for a moment. I then went inside the house, and with a clear mind, I tackled problem by problem until I could move forward again. I then felt safe.

I could keep moving forward. In one of the most distressing moments where I could have given up and not done anything about it, I created motivation to create something beautiful in the middle of chaos. Instead of throwing the towel and crying forever because that is how I felt like doing, I decided to do the opposite.

Here is the image of that day that I will never forget.

https://www.instagram.com/p/BwbYtI3BMww/?utm_medium=copy_link

Cris Santos

Lunablue Girl Store: <https://lunabluegirl.com/>



Linda Winter

Freelance writer, stories about Italy, Illustrator & Artist

For me, creativity is a response to the world. It is the point at which all of the wonder, colour, and beauty of life spills over and escapes. Containment is no longer an option. All you can do is respond. This washes over you like lust. It is heady, intoxicating, and consuming. In my heart, pictures form and grow until there is a point when, like caged animals, they need to be set free. Everything stops until the moment when the image or the words are complete. This is a heady, adrenalin-fueled rush...

Unsurprisingly these words read like the thoughts of an addict, which I guess is what I am. Everything's the rush. But what happens when it stops? Why do dry spells come? Is there ever a point at which I cannot see or crave creativity? For me creating is breathing. This is how I define myself. It is who I am. However, this is the product of what has been a long and somewhat tortuous journey. I have traveled a long way to start to touch the hem of the God of mastery. Now I can surf the wave where once I would have been tossed around like a piece of driftwood until I landed bruised and battered on a beach.

There was a time when the experience of creativity was similar to being lost and alone in a desert. At that moment, the urge to create had been drained by a misplaced sense of responsibility. The words "why can't you get a proper job" have been uttered once too often. The small flame that burned within me was nearly extinguished. However, creativity finds a way. To understand why we need to be creative is an elusive beast. It was a way of escaping a world that was oppressive and dictatorial. When I stood in front of my easel, I could escape. In the early days, this was often a struggle.

I lacked the skill set to make what my heart saw real. There were points when the connection between my hands and my soul was weak and fragile. The marks on the paper were frustratingly inadequate.

People will often say I wish I could do what you do, as if creativity is something that just exists. Skill and satisfaction come with the hunger to feed your need. Creativity can be squashed if you allow your life to be too full. However, making things will always be there. If it's not making art, it will be making cakes or lesson plans (my day job is being a teacher). Creativity creates neural connections in the brain. Once they are there, they do not leave you. If not art, something will grab them.

Nevertheless, you do have to be self-aware. Writing this, listening to the cicadas as they chirp in the trees, I know I am now too tired to paint. My brain is drugged with the need to sleep. This is a product of the Mediterranean heat. I live in Italy. My hand drags across the canvas, and focusing becomes difficult. Once, this would have terrified me. Now I know I just have to wait. Tomorrow I will rise early. Instead of attacking my all-consuming trees in the meadow, which was this morning's task, I will paint.

The question is, how do I stay motivated? I suppose it is a combination of self-discipline and knowing myself. I now know I will always paint, even if I have to do it on the back of envelopes. The search for a better image will continue.

Sometimes a loss of motivation to be creative comes from trying too hard. Sure, we would all like to be able to paint the Sistine chapel but maybe today needs to be restricted to making perfect zucchini fritters using the eggs and produce from the woman next door. If we learn to take baby steps, then creativity will grow with satisfaction.

Harsh judgments are at their worst when delivered by ourselves. Maintaining creativity needs us to be kind to ourselves. Saying well done, today you tried, tomorrow will be better.

Linda Winter

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Sixtine Crutchfield

International fine art collections management & developed the MBA program for the Geneva School of Business

When I am asked where I get my energy from, I really do not know what to say. I sleep well, try to stay healthy, multitask, and am curious all the time, and question everything.

I am a project developer – once a dream has become a reality – I move on to the next one.

However, I am motivated by the intelligence of others.

I love meaningful art in any shape or form. I appreciate hard work and effort but relish in the outcome. For example, the hours of training for a ballet, a concert, an art show, a play, a sports competition; the time spent on research, preparing a business deal, saving lives, whatever it is, always culminating in a rewarding sense of satisfaction in the end, however long it takes.

When that feeling disappears, in my case, I stop and focus.

Sometimes, it happens during my sleep, and I wake up with an answer and renewed energy.

If I land in a deeper rut if I can't seem to get ahead, let alone catch up. I just stop and focus. It may mean isolate for a few days in a different environment. See different people who know nothing about me and my activities, start irrelevant new less important projects like gardening, sewing or knitting, baking. I find sport helps a lot too. This is never the time to start a new diet because I need healthy, hearty comfort food when I am trying to regain control.

I am a creative person in many ways, even if I am no artist. I enjoy pushing my creativity out of my comfort zone, and that is what has led me my whole life to handle new ambitious projects all the time.

In college, I worked in the theatre, from light and sound to costume and set design, makeup, and graphic art. The acting was never my favourite, but I enjoyed directing. In Art School, I loved to work on paper. Still, I preferred to learn art history, why artists evolved in the direction they did, what other artists they influenced, and how art moved crowds and instigated historical, social moments.

If I were to return to college today, I would study art law. The art market has been leading over creativity for a quarter of a Century without much governance. This is changing as the millennials are coming of age, and technology is facilitating the way.

My curiosity is almost louder than my motivation at the moment because I do not quite understand what is going on. Still, I am bursting with ideas and questions. I think I need to sleep, sleep, sleep and sleep some more until I wake up with some answers.

Then, I'll be motivated to find new ways of creating projects. Will they be digital, or will we return to former traditional ways? I hope not, yet I am afraid to lose track. I think what motivates me most is seeing artists not giving up. In fact, since Covid has relented a little, we experienced their cooped-up creativity bursting at the seams. It is fantastic! Production was at an all high in the digital world during lock-down.

New innovative ways to communicate are being developed at the speed of light. It is creativity galore.

Yet the world is not well, so where are we going wrong? Our efforts to slow down climate change have not proved successful so far. There are more and more wars, violence, poverty, and hunger everywhere, and we cannot resolve these social disasters. It is demotivating, to say the least.

I wish I knew what to do... I don't think that even a deep sleep will help me this time.

In an attempt to try to understand, I question younger people or friends who are in contact with the generations XYZ. They tell me about gender fluidity, woke culture, sustainability... They also tell me about sexual violence, harassment, and being vegan...

Well, I was born in the 60s and was too young to really understand the free hippie way of life. My parents were not a part of it. However, I believe it was all about peace and love.

Today, I feel the debates are similar but loaded with accusations towards us, the older generation. Demotivation...

Ok, so we need to be creative, but how?

I say, "Believe in yourself"!

Practicing art is therapeutic – that's a fact! So, do your best at all times, and the answers will come. Can one get any more cliché? No, but I do believe that one should believe in oneself.

If you have an idea for a project, just begin at the very beginning and keep going step by step. I have seen Aboriginal Artists in the Australian Tanami Desert paint their dreamings on a very large canvas spread out on the ground. They start with a background, often monochrome. Then, they begin to apply dots of different coloured acrylic paint at one corner (the starting point of the story). They move across the "country" from North to South and East to West, one dot at a time on the canvas laid out in front of them until the final work looks totally balanced and harmonious.

It looks like they were painting the landscape from the air up above (even if most of them have never set foot on a plane, and my recollection dates prior to the public use of drones). The colours are absolutely true to nature and perfectly blended, almost like pointillism. The artists are motivated by their elders, their traditions, and the wish to pass on their history to the younger generations.

I suppose that is what motivates me most; the younger generations. If you think of them and what they will have to face during their lifetime, you can only admire their enthusiasm and creativity, finding innovative ways to improve their lives in the future. We might all be living at home and experimenting in the metaverse.

There is still so much left to do.

That is motivating enough for me, at least!

Sixtine Crutchfield

Geneva Business School - registration link to the FAIM (Fine Art International Management) MBA programme

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Gary Spangler

Voice-over artist, audio marketing consultant for video producers, creative directors, and marketing managers

The Rhythm of Motivation

The phone on the table by my bed wishes me a good morning with its colorful and repeating tones. I look at it. It looks back at me. A decision has to be made. But then a reprieve in the form of the phone asking me if I want to 'snooze' for 5 minutes or do I start my day. No, I turn off the alarm, sit up and place my bare feet firmly on the floor. I think of three things that I am grateful for. These are the things that will carry me throughout the day, but most importantly, they make me smile. And hum one of my favorite tunes as I do a mundane task that only serves to give me a quick win to start my day: I make my bed!

I have found that making my bed is so therapeutic that it makes me wonder why I railed against my parents about doing this task as a child. What does this have to do with rhythm or motivation? Everything in my mind. It's a technical undertaking, as I learned while going through basic training in the military. Yes, you truly learn how to make a bed in the military from sharp and even hospital corners. Spreading the sheet and blanket so that it is even on both sides with the pillow set squarely in the middle. Why is this important when it comes to motivation? Everything I accomplish can be broken down to the sum of its parts.

Even my passion as a voice artist is not just speaking into a microphone. It is no longer the same as it used to be where you might be walking into a studio, reading the lines, getting several takes to land it just right. Nope, now it's just me in a small room with acoustic foam all around me reading from my screen. Then I have to listen and be my strongest critic and re-record until it is just right. In the case of an audiobook, I let the author listen to a sample of what I have recorded to see if what I have produced meets the criteria of what she has written. When the author feels I have captured the tone and pacing of the narrative and the essence of the characters (if it is fiction), then off I go to record the rest of the book. But this is not the end of my work.

I have recorded the entire book. Now comes the hard part, which is post-production. This is my challenge because I am a theatre guy who loves to perform. I am not the guy who loves to listen to his own voice and remove unnecessary breaths, mouth clicks, and the dog barking next door that rears its ugly head in the recording. What comes next is the rhythm and pacing of the recording. Is there a consistent space between narrated sentences? Can I tell the difference between two characters so that the listener is aware that separate people are engaged in a conversation? Should my delivery be less theatrical? Could I have stressed that line better? Would I enjoy listening to this description? Shoulda', Coulda', Woulda'! A nap sounds really good right now.

However, it is time to go back to what I am grateful for and one of which is that I was selected by the author out of hundreds of other narrators. Another is that I am grateful for my wife and the rest of my family. They all have my back in this passion of mine, so I imagine that while I am editing that they are sitting in the room with me. How would I make them proud? It certainly wouldn't be by hitting 'snooze.' I am even grateful for the drama teacher who said that maybe I should choose a different occupation.

I see now that it came from a place of caring for my future. So ultimately, and in different ways, my rhythm of motivation springs from a place of receiving love which I carry into every project that I do.

Gary Spangler

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By Dominique Nancy & team members of All Fashioned by Nature
An eco-conscious shop started by three friends that love nature and fashion

Creativity is an amazing thing. But trust me when I say I understand that being creative isn't always easy. Having the daily inspiration to create can sometimes feel like squeezing water out of a soaked towel—it takes too much effort, and all you have to show for it is some dirty water.

There are many days when I simply do not feel motivated and feel like skipping creation that day. But that's not what I do. I've learned a thing or two over the 23 years I've worked as a journalist. After all, when it's time to dig up that next story and put all the pieces together, you can't just give up. You have to persevere and get the piece done.

Over time, I developed a few tips that help keep me motivated when I don't feel motivated. I realized that I could use those same tips from my journalism in other areas of my life. Nowadays, I lean on these tips to help me in my creative and entrepreneurial journey whenever I don't feel inspired.

I thought you might find these tips helpful as well, especially during those moments when your brain just doesn't seem "on" or you don't feel like you have anything to say ... or maybe when words don't even seem very important that day.

I invite you to see if my methods help you the next time you feel stuck like me. Here they are:

1. I follow a morning routine.

I established a routine to carry out each morning before I start my day. I find that it structures my days. Ultimately, it gives me a good start to my workday and keeps me focused on my entrepreneurial goals. Best of all, I realized that simple lifestyle changes had a significant impact on my life. Honestly, it's not difficult to implement this kind of routine into your own life, whether you try the same steps as mine or adopt your own.

Here's my simple morning routine:

a) I get up early and take my tea in silence near the living room window

b) I do 30 minutes of yoga

c) I have breakfast and shower

d) I hop to my work

2. I plan my day.

Hopping to my work may vary day by day. Maybe I'm working on the realization of a writing project, the development of a design or a product, or content for social media. Regardless of the type of work, I plan my daily tasks, and I set myself goals and deadlines.

I try as much as possible to start with the most difficult or urgent task first thing in the morning. It feels rewarding to get the toughest one done rather than having the stress of thinking about it build as the day goes on. Once I have that task accomplished, everything else on my list feels much easier. I'm able to be more productive and get more done throughout the day.

3. I schedule breaks.

I've realized that it's just as important to schedule breaks as it is to schedule my to-do list. So I add a break between each major project or goal for the day. This gives me transition time to wind down from one task, clear my mind and have the focus and energy for the next task.

Plus, it's just plain nice to have some "me time" for a while. For example, I take a walk in the cemetery near my home at lunchtime to recharge my batteries.

Sure, I realize that not everyone feels inspired and invigorated by headstones. So, find whatever works for you.

4. I surround myself with inspiring people.

There's a lot I can do myself to keep my day on track. But what inspires and motivates me the most is other people, believe it or not. Maybe it's like one of those accountability groups or just the excitement of bouncing ideas off one another.

Whatever the reason, I'm constantly inspired by my two partners and friends, Lisa and Darren. I highly recommend everyone gets people like them in their lives.

Why?

Lisa and Darren inspire me every day. And because we constantly share our ideas, there is an energy that produces a creative flow. Have you ever had that happen? I recommend finding the right people to bounce ideas off. It's amazing what you can come up with together! But if you really can't find anyone, maybe try an online community.

5. I nurture my creativity like a friendship.

Overall, I personally see creativity as a best friend. It will always be by your side if you are loyal to it. You have to care about it, nurture it, respect it ... you get the idea. If you neglect the friendship (by not spending time together regularly, for instance!), then your friend Creativity will have to move on and find a new friend to hang out with.

My personal creativity, and therefore my motivation, benefit when I focus on friendship—a collaboration with friends and treating creativity like a best friend.

Once again, I invite you to give these methods a try. I hope they work for you as they inspire and motivate me. If not, keep the habits that you find rewarding and adjust the ones that aren't the right fit until you have a system that works for you too.

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BIO OF THE TEAM MEMBERS

Dominique Nancy

Scientific journalist, sustainable fashion blogger, and author from Montreal, Quebec, Dominique is like a mini wheat. There are two sides to her. One is serious; she reads a lot of scientific articles and cooks healthy meals. The other one is sugar-coated & artsy.

For the past 23 years, she's been working for a French newspaper. Still, she enjoys writing children's books, nature photography, yoga, and scuba diving. Dominique is also the social media guru for the All Fashioned by Nature Team because she drew the short straw.

She also takes great pleasure in creating vases made from recycled ropes and spreading color on whatever comes her way; clothes, walls, vases ... One day, she will probably try to paint on something more traditional, like canvas...

Darren Sleep

Full-time lab rat. Part-time artist, plantsman, gardener, naturalist, sci-fi geek, gym bunny, musician, comedian, blogger, photographer, caffeine addict, recovering depressive, and wannabe gigolo.

Darren refuses to be pigeonholed and aims to be a Renaissance Man for the 21st century, but without the family money that made it so easy for the original Renaissance Men.

He was born in 1966 and is still thinking about growing up.

After 30+ years of marching to other people's drums, Darren recently started prioritizing the things that are important to him.

Lisa Lawrence

Lisa grew up in Fenton, MI. Her love for art, medicine, and vintage items was a seed that was planted early in her life. She is fortunate to be born to a long line of gardeners, farmers, and crafters.

Lisa has been working as a graphist designer for the past 20 years. She also enjoys creating art from pressed flowers and items that have a vintage feel. She has a bit of an ephemera obsession. She honed her skills by dabbling in pen & ink, watercolor, and spending time amongst the flowers and by the lake. As a former firefighter and paramedic, she loves medical art and vintage anatomy. warts

She often works in her Hogwarts pajamas and is a proud Gryffindor.



Rose Bishay

Beauty entrepreneur & formulator

Being motivated as an entrepreneur can be challenging. Oftentimes as a new entrepreneur, you are a team of one. A lot of time is spent working towards big goals; most days consist of chipping away at the big goals and little steps that ultimately lead you to the big successes. Some of these little steps are fun and invigorating.

They make you feel confident in your business and your dream. Other tasks are frustrating and leave you contemplating if you should move forward or not. In my experience, I've been able to construct a few habits that help me stay positive and motivate me when I'm just not feeling motivated.

The first step I take is quite preventative. I always start my morning with a positive routine. Before I even get my coffee, I meditate. Some days it is for a couple minutes, and others for 20 minutes. After this, I write down things I am thankful for and a few goals and manifestations I'm working towards. After this practice, I get my earbuds on and listen to something positive while I make breakfast, usually an episode of the Thought Row podcast or a motivational speech by Arnold Schwarzenegger. These small tasks really help pump me up for the day and position my mind to be positive even when it is not feeling like it. I find setting the tone for the day prevents me from going down an unmotivated path; preventative care is the best care!

Another thing I do to feel motivated is walk. Whenever I feel stuck or anxious about a situation, I find walking really clears my mind. I am a very kinetic person. Moving helps me come up with new solutions and generally feel more positive and motivated about a situation.

The third thing I do when I'm not feeling motivated is NOTHING or...something fun. Sometimes, if I feel unmotivated and stuck with a certain business problem, taking a break, and distracting my mind leads me to the right answer. I find it beneficial to do something that lights me up on the inside, like reading a book I like, calling a loved one, running an errand, or even getting my nails done. Doing something that just makes me happy often re-invigorates me to return and work even harder and later.

I hope one of these tricks helps you to stay motivated on your journey. Everyone's journey to success is different, but one thing is for sure, staying as motivated as possible leads each one of us to be the best person we came to be. When you are motivated, your body and mind are operating at their best because it is your natural state. Listen to your body. It is naturally programmed for motivation and success!

Rose Bishay

Website: <https://thesehandslotion.com/>



Madison Marie McIntosh

Mezzo-Soprano

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to make a career out of the thing that is also my passion – singing. Singing has been a huge part of my life since I was a very small child. I sang around the house, in the car, on the playground at school, and in church choirs. When I was in Kindergarten, I fell in love with the sound of the operatic voice and started to imitate opera singers. That must have sounded horrible, but it brought me joy! I never had to wonder what career I should choose. By the time when I was ten years old, I knew that I wanted to be an opera singer.

Singing itself was not the only thing that I loved, though. I loved portraying characters, communicating to and interacting with audiences, and, I admit, getting applause! When I started to sing roles in productions of operas, I especially loved acting with my colleagues. I never felt a lack of motivation to sing because I usually managed to keep busy. I had rehearsals, performances, lessons, coachings, and music to learn for upcoming projects. There were many projects to which I could look forward.

Of course, that came to a screeching halt at the beginning of the pandemic. My upcoming engagements were postponed indefinitely, and my schedule was completely blank. For the very first time, I lacked the motivation to practice. I had even lost all interest in listening to opera because it reminded me of what I longed to be doing again. I still sang a bit each day to keep my voice in shape, but my mind was pervaded by a constant sense of worry. What was going to happen? How long would this pandemic last? What did the future have in store for performing artists?

I joined Instagram to increase my professional visibility during this complete dearth of performances. Perhaps, even though I was no longer working on repertoire for upcoming performances, I could somehow keep working on my career. A sense of productivity was a must for me – even if it came from singing opera snippets in wacky social media videos that I hoped would catch people's eyes. I had to do something more, though, but I didn't know where to start. As a worker bee, I had not usually been the one to come up with ideas for musical projects, but this now had to change.

I had the idea to record virtual premieres of songs, arias, and micro-operas by contemporary composers. I had already worked with a few composers in person and became acquainted more through social media. I got in touch with some of them, hoping that at least a couple might be interested. The number of positive responses that I received was truly heartening. The composers shared so many wonderful pieces, some new and some previously composed, that the project later evolved into a virtual concert of all world premieres to benefit The American Prize.

As adventurous opera companies such as Fort Worth Opera started to host virtual events through Zoom, I participated in as many as possible. I was exceedingly grateful to be performing again – even if the audience in front of me was an iPad. This provided much-needed motivation to keep singing. We performers are communicators, so singing only for ourselves is not enough.

As in-person collaborations began to resume, I let people know that I was ready, willing, and able to travel. I definitely got a lot of driving practice (and tried not to speed way too much) when I traveled between New York and Florida for various projects and drove out to North Dakota to work with Fargo Moorhead Opera. With FMO, I had my first in-person performance in slightly more than a year. A live performance was an experience that I had learned not to take for granted.

I had also learned to be less shy about self-promotion – something that I had previously dreaded. Although applause and publicity had been two of my favorite things since I was knee-high to a grasshopper, I preferred the publicity to come from external sources. I was quite happy to share posts made by opera companies, for example, but self-conscious when it came to posting original information about myself. It just felt braggadocious. After I got over that notion in a pandemic-era attempt to make things happen for myself, I made some great connections. I had some wonderful opportunities that I would not have had otherwise – such as the opportunity to be a guest on Thought Row!

I suppose that I can sum it up by saying that, at a time when I lacked motivation because of the complete lack of performance opportunities, I had to make my own – however small at first. I was already a doer, but I had to learn to think outside the box. When life gives you straw, spin it into gold.

Madison Marie McIntosh

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Tiffany Apostolou

New York based curator, writer & researcher

When Inci and Rod reached out to me asking, "what keeps you motivated when you simply do not feel motivated to create?" it really got me thinking...

Creation for me, like so many others, is an outlet, at least on the surface. It can be an outlet for emotions, ideas, and even a solution to daily practical needs. But it can also be a way to relax because creation requires concentration which, therefore, makes it an ideal mindfulness activity.

So, when I was asked what I do to stay motivated to create, I had to really sit and ponder when is it that I don't feel motivated to create?

And at that moment, I realized that for people who, like me, work in a creative field, sometimes creation is just another project, a job that needs to get done. When creating becomes a job as well as your own preferred expressive outlet, that is when things can become tricky. It could be a few particularly long weeks that have left you feeling mentally exhausted or a work project that proved to be particularly monotonous that makes you want to avoid any of your personal ideations. That is when I feel the need to examine things.

Creating is an organic thing. It stems from the mind as much as the heart or wherever your emotions are currently residing. As a result, it is easier to keep myself motivated to create in an office setting because I simply must move forward. Others rely on me, and there tend to be more firmly set parameters and requirements, which makes moving things along a bit easier when I feel a block. If I take a break and a breath, usually my energy rises, and I am able to tackle it again.

When it is personal, however, that is when I tend to need that extra push to stay motivated. To be fair, depending on the circumstances hindering my motivation, I might actually let things be for a bit.

Sometimes life just gets a little too hard and emotions a little too strong and overwhelming, and that's when you need to allow your soul to rest and do what it feels like. And as soon as things equal, that is when I remind myself that for me creating is healing. That alone is enough to get me going again. And if I still feel a block or hesitation, I remind myself that with creating, you don't always need to know from where to start.

You can just pick something up intuitively, be it fabric, or a pen, or paint, or even seeds, and do with it what comes naturally.

Not everything you produce during a creative session needs to be usable or presentable or worthy of being framed and exalted by an audience. Some creations can simply be the spark that restarts your creative flow. Once I let go of perfectionism and lean into that healing sense that comes with making something that comes with taking something that resides within and turning it into a tangible object, that is when my motivation oftentimes returns with ten-fold might.

So, I suppose that my answer to the beautiful question posed to me initially is that I stay motivated to create by being gentle, by reminding myself how good and nurturing it feels to create just for the sake of creating. This is also what I tell others when they come to me with similar concerns.

The world needs creators, especially now! It doesn't need perfect individuals who create immaculate objects fit for museum displays. It needs people in tune with their inner world, empathic, and compassionate with themselves as much as with others!

--Tiffany M. Apostolou

Website: <https://peri-techne.com/>



Gavriella Abekassis

Founder and director of the Artist Entrepreneur Club

Good news: you're not broken or lost!
Ouch, this morning again.

I planned everything I wanted to make happen today, on Monday, the first day of the week, a promise to great achievements since I put all my hopes in the time, I have available.
But then, as every Monday, nothing works out the way I planned.

I forgot that I needed groceries for the week. I received a few emails which are not answers I wanted to receive.
I feel demotivated.

Everything is creative in my business. Therefore, if I don't function well, my business doesn't work well either.
I'm also supposed to exercise a bit on Mondays in the morning to protect my back.

This morning, I opened my mat, lay down, opened Instagram, and scrolled down for 10 whole minutes (alright, 20). No exercising. After this social media time, I finally did it.

Nothing works today, and I am late on my planning. Is it even worth it to keep going?
Instead of starting my day at 9 am, it's already 10, and it feels stressful as hell because I have just enough time during the day to progress on so many projects. Missing the first hour means I am late the whole day.
I'm at a loss.

Should I keep going with my journaling routine?
Should I let go of the meditation for today?
A few months ago, this would have meant that my day was ruined and that I was better off procrastinating for the whole day.

But with the experience of running my business, it doesn't matter that we are late or at a loss.
I'm slow, but it's ok. It's just who I am, and my business is who I am too. So, it's fine.
What matters is that when this happens, you prioritize what is really important for the day.

And you, of course, always start by reminding yourself of your progress.
This morning, I started the day on a very wrong foot.

Two things saved my day, though:

1) I had planned my week in advance. Although I was at a loss and overwhelmed. I had this piece of paper to refer to, my planning, which I can trust because I created my planning at a moment where I didn't feel overwhelmed.

2) I followed the important part of my routine which changed my life when I started it a few months ago: I write my goals (the big, exciting ones!), I write what I achieved this month, and how I feel about the day, as well as how I wanted this day to feel.

I write a lot in my business, and I love it.

Writing might not be your thing, so feel free to adjust my advice and find a routine that fits you and calms you down when you feel completely lost.

You're not lost.

You just forgot why you do things, and you need a little reminder, just like I do.

I wouldn't have known how I function and that I need to plan in advance if I want to avoid ruining my Monday.

I know it now because I am going through the amazing journey of being a business owner, a place where you learn so much about yourself.

This is why I am always encouraging artists who I meet to run their own businesses. In the end, it brings you something similar to creating art. You will reflect on what you really want from your life, your place in the world, and what you want to do about all of this.

Business is so interesting because you will be much more aware of the goals and the money you want and how much power you have over them.

Gavriella Abekassis

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Nalini S. Malaviya

Consultant, Curator, Writer

When I began freelance writing for newspapers and magazines almost 20 years ago, one of the problems I faced at the time was having to constantly think of relevant topics which would appeal to readers. All the topics had to be art-related – auctions, trends, building collections, exhibition reviews, artists' interviews, profiles, and so on. In addition, they had to be current, of interest to a large spectrum of readers, and also had to have a fresh take or angle. Although I enjoyed writing and loved the challenge of creating new content, there were times when it was difficult to find a balance between creativity and the stress of deadlines.

This was also a period where I was writing about 6 articles a week, which added to the pressure of thinking of suitable topics within the art niche and also dealing with low motivation at times. Looming deadlines can make it difficult to stay upbeat, as I have discovered at a cost.

Being creative on a constant basis and on-demand can be stressful – how do you meet your deadlines when you feel low, demotivated, or simply cannot find the inspiration you need. It usually leads to unproductive behavior – avoidance, procrastination, and of course, much stress. It happens to me frequently. And, it took me years to figure out a system that works for me, most of the time.

Working in a corporate environment prior to this, where your day and schedule are organized and structured, offered a sharp contrast to a freelancer's life. The 'free' in freelancing, although liberating, can also be daunting and make you feel defocused, especially in the initial stages. Suddenly your day frees up, and you think you can achieve a lot, but then it is very easy to get distracted. Working from home involves taking care of household chores, the baby (at the time), and all the other little things that tend to creep up when attempting to focus on your work. At least, that's how it was for me for many years – several distractions, interruptions, and anxieties.

To encapsulate, these are a list of things that caused me grief in the past and sometimes still affects me and how I've managed to learn to live with them.

Too big to start – there were projects that looked exciting, and I couldn't wait to start, but then fear – of failure, of not being able to do my best, of being judged, would grip me and lead to more procrastination. This was especially true whenever I started anything new. Fear would engulf me every time I embarked on a new journey - when I began writing fiction, curating art shows, conducting workshops, or teaching. I always felt excited and motivated with the thought of starting out on a new creative course but struggled to actually begin the process or take the first step.

How I've dealt with this is by researching and preparing more before starting out. I realize the more preparation I do, I feel more 'ready.' It helps to listen or read about other people's journeys. Comparing notes in this manner gives me a sense of perspective and also kinship. It feels less isolating to know that we share similar concerns and go through pretty much the same thing, even when we are located in different parts of the world.

Perfection syndrome – this is quite similar to the previous one! You want to do your best and be at your most creative, but then you are paralyzed by the thought that your work will be imperfect and you will not live up to the standards you have set for yourself. And, of course, you will fall flat on your face and have egg all over it. I wish I could say that I am past this one, and I know exactly how to deal with this. But the truth is, I struggle with it even now. Here too, I try and prepare as much as possible and think of all possible solutions and approaches to a problem. It gives me the confidence to begin a project. Usually, once I start, I find it gets easier to continue.

Lack of time – when deadlines are close, it can become difficult to find the enthusiasm or energy to complete tasks. You tend to run late, panic, and go into a cyclic mode of delay/panic/more panic.

Fortunately, over a period of time, I began to identify what was working well for me. I started to consciously incorporate practices that helped me stay motivated and allowed me to complete tasks optimally. Goal setting, daily and weekly schedules, breaking up jobs into more doable sections, actively looking for motivation, taking time off, and socializing are some of the techniques that have helped me immensely.

Adopting a disciplined approach, where I allocate time to various activities – ideation, structuring and defining the framework, making lists (I'm a huge fan and have lists everywhere, ticking them off as each job gets completed gives me much satisfaction!), timelines and endpoints. I also have resorted to post-its/sticky notes everywhere – reminders, lists, and humorous phrases. It did work for a while.

Setting up 'to-do' lists with targets and endpoints continues to be very useful for me. It allows me to look at the picture in its entirety and break it up into smaller, more doable tasks or sections with timelines.

I have been asked if having such a structured and disciplined approach doesn't suck the joy out of the process of creativity. Well, it works for me most of the time, but yes, it could be a dampener for some. From my perspective, I find it helps me stay on track and also relieves the stress somewhat. Having said that, there is no quick fix or fix-all solution!

Actively looking for motivation or that spark that can help you tide over those lean moments is absolutely essential. Take a moment to think about what inspires you? It could be a walk in the garden, a swim, reading a book or browsing art, watching films, or anything else which removes you from that immediate moment of stress and relaxes you. For me, it's usually a long walk, gardening, and watching inane comedic films. Finding those moments can be precious and go a long way in charting paths to creative success.

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A.K. Fielding

Writer, historian and artist

Staying motivated to create every day is possibly the greatest challenge in any creative individual's life. Sure, many of us love what we do and don't find it to be a chore. We are excited to get up every morning and look forward to the day unfolding before us. We hope to put all our energies and efforts into creating art. But even amongst the most motivated of us, there are moments when we lose that momentum.

It could be that we experience tragedy such as an illness or death of a loved one which throws us in a spin that we find difficult to escape. It definitely happened to me when my best friend, Carol, died a few years ago. Carol was a great artist who specialized in painting animals.

Towards the end of her life, her work was beginning to resemble the work of the great Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci. Indeed, I referred to her as da Vinci. She called me Michelangelo (in my opinion, the greatest of Renaissance masters!) She was painting beautiful horses, and her greatest dream was to paint dogs. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer and rapidly lost her health. Then, one fine day, I received a message stating that Carol was no more. I was stunned. And I crumbled. I could not paint. I could not write. I spent endless days and more nights staring at my canvas. But nothing came.

Every time I tried to pick up a brush, her face loomed before my eyes. It became so difficult that I had to completely withdraw from my creative world. In those months, I became a wanderer. I survived but didn't live life. Eventually, I came out of the darkness by remembering her words: keep painting no matter what. So, I did. I forced myself to sit in front of my easel every morning.

Initially, I just sat there and stared at it...sometimes for hours and even days. But slowly and steadily, I began picking up my brush and working through my paints on my palette. Then came the first stroke of the brush on the blank canvas, and before I knew it, I was painting again!

There was a natural rhythm to my movements, as if every fiber of my being was focused on creating something... anything. The blank canvas turned into a meaningful piece of art in the end that I still cherish today, and I found myself creating again.

Another reason someone may lose interest in creating can be a lack of interest from others in their work. Professional artists create art in hopes of selling their work. After all, this is how we make a living. But it can be disappointing, to say the least, when our work goes unnoticed. This is often true in the early stages of our careers, but it can also happen at other intervals of our working life.

Consider Vincent van Gogh who never sold a painting when he was alive! Isn't that a tragedy? It was for him. Who knows where he may have ended up had he found some success in his work during his lifetime. My work is now recognized by people who follow me, but it took a long time to get here. In the beginning, I had my own share of critics – some who were genuine in their suggestions, others who used their position to tear down my work. Fortunately, I recognized the distinction quickly and began to filter out professional advice from petty attacks. Working hard on creating a system that introduced and shared my art with others helped me tremendously in turning the spotlight on my work.

Other commitments in our lives can also take away from our desire to remain creative. Let's face it, even for those of us living alone, there is plenty that can come up during the day that can distract us from our creative world. My studio space is in my home, which makes it easier to get distracted throughout the day. It is essential to use proper time management in such cases because things can quickly get out of control.

You can find that you have done everything but your creative work when the day ends. I keep myself organized by using my journal and calendar. This allows me to keep track of everything I do each day and helps me plan ahead of time on how I will spend my time and how I will adjust to any challenges that might appear.

Losing motivation to create is a common factor in the life of an artist. Every artist goes through moments when they are simply unable to maintain a level of performance that is their normal way of working. It is important to remember at moments such as these that it does not have to be of long duration.

By finding inspiration in the lives of others who have come before us, believing in our own work, and finding ways to manage our time and effort, we can surpass the dry periods in our artistic lives.

A.K. Fielding

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Natali Herrera-Pacheco

Photographer, Writer, Artist

(Natalie's writing was transcribed from Spanish to English)

It is odd that thoughts, despite their immateriality, need such a particular space and time to form and develop the actions that result from them do not always correspond to the mental processes that preceded them. Proceeding from this premise, which could be summarized as that which distinguishes, approaches or distances the creative state inhabited by the ideas of the production of objects, some questions arise for which, unfortunately, I do not have many answers.

What is the right amount of time to craft a sentence and put the necessary and correct word on paper? And so, when does that something become or when can it be considered a finished product? Who draws the line that separates the beginning from the end? What is - and what is it made of? The matter that makes up a text, a sculpture, a poem, or a photograph? Every act of everyday life, ordinary, extraordinary - is a creative act. Despite the implicit and explicit laws that regulate the movements of an individual or of a society, no one can know with absolute certainty what place each occupies every second that passes from this *mise en scène* that is at once our own story and that of others, private and collective. The good news is that, regardless of whatever happens, regardless of those ups and downs, which we call "motivation," there is no way to escape the creative act, which is infinite, rich, and immeasurable. We live and survive because we create.

I began by talking about thoughts, and at some point along the way, I have confused thoughts with ideas. Still, I really want to talk about life or the importance of highlighting the point that living is mainly creating. However, the result of that creation is not always linked to the productive capacity that each person possesses.

The particularities of our consumer societies seem to insist that if something exists, it is measurable. If it is measurable, it can, among other things, be inventoried and compared. Leaving aside the fact that each process is unique and obeys the particular contingencies of each person. Although this may seem obvious, it was very difficult for me to understand that living and creating are sides of the same coin. And that even in those moments when I am not producing images or articulating words. I am still being traversed by a need to survive. Demands great amounts of creativity that sometimes take the form of an idea that evaporates or an image that consolidates and is shared -or not- with others. And that is just fine.

Without beginning and without end, leaving the necessary space for the relationship between subject and object to happen. Embracing the possibility of partially completed materialization until the harsh detachment of what has not been specified. I have wanted to convince myself that everything, absolutely everything, is of worth and counts. And it is part of and is manifested in different ways in each area of existence. But, deep down, the important thing here is to try to live this stretch of existence intensely because the beginning is before us, and there is no way to prevent the end from overtaking us.

II

It is a random day, in a random place, and I get again this overbearing feeling that fate has shaken me abruptly. It took away from me the possibility of creating new memories and condemned me to live what I have already lived. I close my eyes, and I see the places that have been ripped from me and, although I have done the exercise of destroying them, demolishing them, dynamiting them, they are still standing there, aging like me, dying like me, each one in its corner of the world, each one serving its own respective sentence. What always surprised me about Mérida was how quickly the blinding morning sun gave way to the dense afternoon's mist, with or without rain. Mérida was always impossible, beautiful, and cruel.

On this random day, in this random place, while I am nailed like a post to this chair that holds me, I think; and the images bleed out of me from everywhere, and since I cannot pull them out of reality, I pull them out of my memories, and then I write: the fruit man's hands (zas, zas, zas) counting a wad of bills; it is dark in his cellar, and his face is only barely, discernible. I wonder if he can see me, this made-up character for this story, which I do not know if it is the one that I was back then or the one that I am now. I emphasize never return to this moment because nothing good remains. If I think of greens, but the image of the hands of the fruit man remains, it was worth it.

That day was not at all random. In fact, it was already afternoon when it began to rain, and in Mérida, when it rains, the world ends, and since it rains so often, then the world ends many times. We sat on the steps of the Aula Magna. It was Kala and I (Kala as in short for "Calavera," which means "skull") and a river of water that overflowed the entire street. Kala asks me if I have listened to Sentimiento Muerto, and I say yes. But I am lying to him. And, since he can tell that I am, he opens up his bag, brings out a Discman, puts on Fin del Cuento, untangles his headphones, gives me the left one and keeps the right, and he tells me: "listen to this, I know you will like it." And I liked it. There is no way to avoid the rain, so we walk, with a wire that goes back and forth to the bus stop where the encounter ends. No photograph would have worked under those conditions.

There was very little light. The photo would have come out underexposed or, at the very least, blurry. But that, I now believe, would have done justice to that moment.

It is still a random day, the same one as the past paragraphs. But this place, how to put it? This place is not random. It is not any place: it confuses me, it turns me off, it drags me. It wakes me up, and since I want to live, I sit at my work desk, and then I start to put one word after the other in an "untitled document," another one that I rarely ever finish.

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Conclusion

Every person, whether they're creative or not, experiences days when they find it difficult to stay motivated. This book can shed some light on how others coped and motivated themselves into successful creativity.

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