

Roadblocks to Creativity: The Workbook

A Self-Coaching Resource
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Welcome to *Roadblocks to Creativity—The Workbook*. Expanding on the Roadblocks to Creativity e-course, this workbook goes deeper, offers supplemental readings and offers opportunities for more self-reflection and creative exploration.

By reading this workbook and completing the coaching questions and exercises in each chapter, you'll learn about the most common roadblocks to creativity and how prevalent they are in YOUR creative life. We'll also explore the impact these creative roadblocks are having on your life as whole.

How to Use This Workbook

Whenever you notice a particular roadblock is showing up in your life, read the associated chapter. Then fill out the worksheet and spend a few days reflecting on the coaching questions.

You'll quickly learn that a challenging experience is an opportunity for learning and growth. But only if we snap out of "autopilot" and acknowledge and seek to understand the difficulties that are blocking us.

Roadblock # 1: You Stop Before You Start—the Roadblock of Procrastination

You avoid starting, working on or finishing creative projects that are important to you. It's hard to follow-through and be disciplined once the initial creative burst has struck.

This usually shows up in other areas of your life as well, and your unfinished projects can be a source of confusion, guilt, shame and low self-esteem.

"I can easily have seemingly a million ideas and begin to create them. So often, though, I seemed to get stuck, unable to sustain my energy for the project to take it to completion. As a result, I was surrounded by both a multitude of unfinished projects 'screaming' to me to complete them. My energy felt zapped and I felt overwhelmed, drowning in a sea of 'to do's' for what were originally inspired by joy-filled, energizing ideas.

Dismantling my procrastination patterns is freeing up so much energy that was previously stuck when I was wallowing in the procrastination! And (yay!) I am completing pieces and feeling the deep satisfaction of birthing a creation to completion."—Elizabeth, Artist

Whenever I've worked on 'de-cluttering' my living or working space, I've always found that it's the unfinished project—whatever I'm procrastinating about—that takes up the most room.

Physically, it's a constant reminder of something I tell myself I SHOULD be doing. Mentally, it consumes my thoughts and diverts my attention from the present moment.

Emotionally, it weighs down my heart and nicks away at my confidence.

I invite you to consider how procrastination, as a form of self-sabotage, shows up in the different areas of your life.

Understanding Procrastination—Why Do You Procrastinate?

Maybe your physical surroundings and your 'systems' of organization are getting in your way. For example:

- ~ My workspace is too messy
- ~ I'm too busy

Maybe distracting or debilitating emotions or thoughts are getting in your way. For example:

- ~ I'm afraid—afraid to fail, afraid to succeed
- ~ I'm overwhelmed

Maybe your physical body and its level of well-being is getting in your way. For example:

- ~ I'm too tired

Maybe your thoughts about the other people in your life are getting in your way. For example:

- ~ They might not like it
- ~ It won't be as good as _____, so why bother?

Procrastination is a habit like any other. If you can envision how you want to be instead and look honestly at what forms of self-sabotage you usually use, you CAN compensate for your procrastination.

Overcoming Procrastination: What Type of Procrastinator Are You?

Are you a Do-er or a Stew-er?

Do-er's

A "do-er" will do anything to avoid the task at hand—the dishes need washing, the dog needs walking, the mail needs sorting, the bills need paying, the files need organizing, etc.

Action Plan for Do-er's

Set a timer for 15 minutes and tell yourself that as soon as it goes off you can do whatever else you want, but until it does, you must sit in that chair and work on the project in front of you.

Train yourself
Keep it short
Stay in your chair

Stew-er's

A "stew-er" will sit and "stew" about the thing you're not doing. Your mind will spin round and round about different possibilities, you will plan elaborate things for when you do get around to working, you'll be thinking so far into the future that you'll never catch up to yourself.

Action Plan for Stew-er's

Focus and calm your mind with meditation, affirmations and mind-body work such as breathing.

Clear your mind
Ground your thoughts
Pause and breathe

Whether you're a "do-er" or a "stew-er," when we can accomplish our creative goals *in spite* of having so many reasons to put them off, the rewards are even sweeter.

When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I need to remember that all I have to do is the next thing. A few next things later and I've tackled quite a bit!

It's important to consider the bigger picture of this "thing" that you're trying to do. There's always the possibility that you don't really want to do it or that you're not meant to be doing it. If this is the case, a part of you knows that and is trying to tell you, so listen up (just make sure it's not fear or self-doubt in disguise).

Lastly, remember to celebrate what you HAVE accomplished, no matter how small. The more you focus on what you HAVE done, versus what you HAVEN'T, the more confidence you'll have and the more momentum you'll build towards the next thing you're going to do.

Procrastination Worksheet

What are you procrastinating about right now?

What thoughts are coming to you as you're procrastinating?

What are you doing instead of the project you're avoiding?

How are you feeling about this project being unfinished?

What's one small step you can take to get moving on this project TODAY?

Roadblock # 2: You're Not OK, I'm Not OK—the Roadblock of Perfectionism

Closely linked to procrastination; you judge yourself and your work against standards that are so high it's impossible for you to feel good about your work or yourself.

This can leave you either in a constant state of torment and disappointment in yourself and your work, or can lead to turning your back on your creative work or settling for halfhearted efforts and results to match.

Perfectionism doesn't just impact your feelings about your own work and your ability to get it done. It also impacts how you judge other people, and this affects your relationships and ability to connect to others. This can lead to isolation and lack of support.

From *The Creativity Interviews*: One artist told me that they want their expression to be unique and original—if it begins to sound at all familiar they will throw it out.

What I strive to practice in my own life is that I need to accept myself and others AS WE ARE and know that everyone is growing and improving. High expectations and perfectionism will always lead to disappointment. Acceptance will always lead to limitless potential.

Perfectionism Worksheet

When will this project be “good enough”?

What if you found out you had only one minute until you needed to present this work to someone else?

How are you holding yourself back from really putting your “all” into this project?

What if this project isn’t perfect?

Roadblock # 3: Guilty Feelings—the Roadblock of People Pleasing

You don't like to say no or assert your needs, and the slightest bit of criticism wilts you and immediately changes your own perception of yourself and your work.

From *The Creativity Interviews*: Creative expression is very revealing, "if someone says something negative about my creative project it's as if they're negatively judging the deepest part of my soul."

We're people pleasing when we give other people the power to build us up or knock us down. It feels great to be recognized and acknowledged for our work. And we absolutely need to let that in and celebrate it. *and* if our channel is so open, if our self-worth is so tied in to what other people think, it can be devastating when that praise doesn't come, or when constructive or negative criticism comes in its place.

In order to take the best care of ourselves (physically, emotionally and spiritually) and to make our creative dreams a priority, we have to say no to certain people, situations and events in our life and that can create feelings of guilt.

Recommended Reading:

"Sharing Our Creative Work with Others"

<http://www.genuinecoaching.com/articles/sharing-work-with-others.html>

"10 Tools for Dealing with Criticism and Rejection"

<http://www.genuinecoaching.com/articles/dealing-with-criticism-and-rejection.html>

People-Pleasing Worksheet

What do you need to say “no” to right now?

What do you need to ask for right now?

Where do you need to put yourself first right now?

Which creative projects is guilt getting in way of right now?

What messages is your body sending you right now and how are you listening?

Roadblock # 4: Half-Empty—Distorted or negative thinking

You tell yourself things that aren't really true, you jump to conclusions, you imagine what other people are thinking, you imagine what's going to happen in the future, you magnify your mistakes and minimize your successes, you see the glass as "half empty".

Our thoughts can do much more than play tricks on us; they can harm us and prohibit us from living out a creative life. I know that I can tempt myself away from my creative project with all sorts of thoughts—from "it's already been done" to "if it doesn't come together in 5 minutes it must mean I can't do this".

From *The Creativity Interviews*: "If an audience member was to leave the room during a performance, I might make something up about that."

Distorted or negative thinking can affect your whole life and can make the difference between a good day and a bad one. If you predict a bad day, you'll usually have one.

Roadblock # 5: Buried in Clutter—the Roadblock of Disorganization

Physical clutter piles up, appointments are missed, and your insides are starting to feel as cluttered as your outsides are starting to look. Your muse continues to speak to you, but it's hard to see and hear through all this mess.

From *The Creativity Interviews*: One artist mentioned that she needed a clear workspace, free of physical and mental clutter like small chores, unanswered emails or a messy desk, before she could feel creative.

Disorganization will obviously have widespread effects in your life. While some artists claim that chaos and spontaneity are paramount to their creative expression, when it comes to the follow-through of finishing your work, preparing to show it out in the world, promoting yourself as an artist or other day-to-day tasks, disorganization is a definite hindrance.

Disorganization Worksheet

Which type of clutter is bothering you the most right now?

What's one step you can take today to begin clearing it? Make a plan and then follow through!

Roadblock # 6: Trying to Go it Alone—the Roadblock of Isolation

You have trouble relating to other artists (you might feel intimidated by them or jealous of them), and yet non-creative people have never understood you. In the end you feel alone and like you can't really be yourself with anyone, and you don't feel supported.

This roadblock keeps you from getting the much-needed support of other artists. When all the other creative roadblocks have taken their toll, we can end up feeling very low and the last thing we want is to reveal those feelings.

And yet in *The Creativity Interviews*, we heard that: Artists felt that it's good to be able to publicly acknowledge their insecurities and doubts, especially when it's revealed that others also have similar doubts. "Expressing myself and then having someone say, "I understand" is very strengthening and comforting."

And many artists advised that we fight against the impulse to isolate and instead that we "share what your challenges are and find the kinship—you're not alone feeling those things."

The support of others who understand you—and who understands you better than other artists—is essential to grow and thrive as a creative artist. And yet it's so natural to compare. Whether you come out on top or beneath whoever you're comparing yourself to, neither scenario makes a good basis for a supportive relationship.

Recommended Reading:

"Jealous Again":

<http://www.genuinecoaching.com/articles/jealous-again.html>

"Build Your Social Support Network":

<http://www.genuinecoaching.com/articles/social-support-network.html>

Isolation Worksheet

Who can you connect with today—by phone, letter, email, or in person—who makes you feel good about yourself? Make and plan and go for it!

Think of someone you could help with a phone call, visit or email today. Who would feel better after hearing from YOU?

Roadblock # 7: Bleh—the Roadblock of Feeling Uninspired

You feel flat, “bleh” and you can’t remember the last time you received a visit from your “muse.” The other roadblocks have left you weary. If you’re creating anything, it’s that “safe” type of work; you’re not able to let go and surrender to the unknown.

From *The Creativity Interviews*: The artists told me that financial pressure, lack of support & money, business distractions, and responsibilities can lead to over-work and tiredness, over busy-ness, depression and a feeling of burden, drained energy, disarray, lack of focus, and decreased motivation.

This is painful. This is your work not being expressed. This is your gift being blocked, shriveling up inside of you and never seeing the light of day.

While I’m no longer offering coaching services or a members-only community, here are some ways you can find new inspiration to blast through your creative roadblocks:

- * Create a plan, with built-in accountability, to get you out of your procrastination cycle and into action (blasting through your procrastination)
- * Remember to keep your expectations realistic, and to celebrate your strengths and accomplishments (blasting through your perfectionism)
- * Create nurturing self-care rituals that prove to yourself that you’re worthy and wonderful, regardless of what feedback you get from the outside (blasting through your people pleasing)

- * Practice speaking the truth about your perceptions and turning up the volume on your *helpful* inner voices (blasting through your distorted or negative thinking)
- * Create systems and structures to make your life and your creative workflow with more ease (blasting through your disorganization)
- * Find common ground with other creative artists (blasting through your isolation)
- * Visualize yourself addressing the issues that are most in your way, and reinforcing their solutions (blasting through feeling uninspired)

So, keep up the good work, my friend. You and your creativity are worth it!

Linda