

Express Yourself!

Get Your Creative Juices Flowing



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Express Yourself!
A creative guidebook by Diane Ingram



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However, please share what you have learned
with whomever you wish.

Published by DEI Press
Diane Ingram, LLC
Pawling, NY 12564
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Introduction

I have spent the better part of my life creating in some way or other: ballet dancing beginning at age 5, singing in the church choir and school chorus, solos sprinkled throughout, having a magical experience with crayons and black ink and putting my thoughts down on paper. These are the obvious ways I create.

The not so obvious ways I create are finding a different combination of ingredients to make spaghetti when the key ingredients are missing, or coming up with a new way to interact with a difficult relative that opens their heart, or moving things around on my website to be more pleasing and easy on the eye, or finding a shortcut home from work, or solving a problem that has been tripping us up.

We all are creative in a multitude of ways. In fact, everything we do is creative. . .unless it's destructive. We are constantly making something from nothing, either tangible or intangible. To recognize this means we need to own that we, too, are artists right alongside Picasso, Alvin Ailey and Sting. We may not have reached their level of notoriety, but our artistic contribution to the world makes it a better, more beautiful, richer place to live.

Creativity contributes to our lives in valuable ways that are sometimes forgotten, especially if it does not help pay the bills. Let's go forward and explore where creativity fits into our life and how it lubricates and enhances the whole of our existence.

Lighten up, have fun and get your creative juices going!



What Well-Being Value does Creative Expression have in Your Life?

Listen to your Heart

It is always important to do a check in with your heart whenever beginning any kind of project. Our head is so busy telling us how to proceed, what the final result has to look like—it engages the critical voice to step in and tell us how we are doing it all wrong.

Checking in with your heart opens the channel for creative energy to flow through you. By centering here, you gain clarity, focus and depth. This is the place to live life from, accessing the deeper wisdom that resides within.

Find a quiet place. Check in with your body for any tension or discomfort and just notice what's there. No need to change it, acceptance will help in release on its own, in its own timing. The same with your emotions check in and just notice how you are feeling and make space for those feelings.

Gently and slowly bring your attention to your heart. Allow your breath to gently massage and soothe your heart. Envision a jewel in the center of your heart—a glistening, sparkling jewel with many facets. What is the shape of this jewel? Notice the color. Allow it to be whatever it is. There is light emanating from the inside out and light reflecting off of this jewel. What are the colors of this light?

Ask the jewel what message it holds for you today. Then specifically, ask what well-being qualities will be enhanced in your life when you express your creativity.

Be open to receive the message in whatever form it may take—a thought or feeling, images or words. Be flexible with the timing of the message—you may receive it now, or it may come later.

Know that the jewel in your heart holds your inner wisdom. Trust that this jewel can act as an anchor for you, a point from which to ground and center your being.

You can contact this jewel in your heart whenever you want—in meditation, driving in your car, interacting with people—use its wisdom for guidance and direction as you go through life. This is your intuitive guidance. This is listening to your heart.



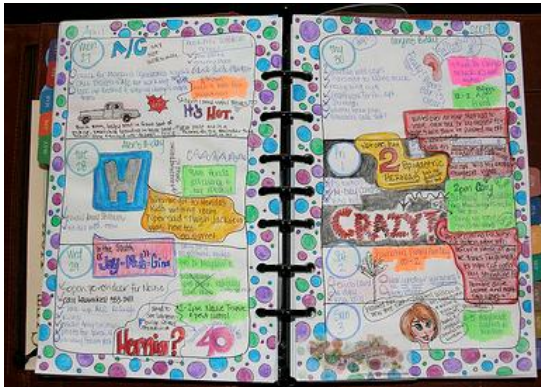
Choose Your Medium

When I was young I danced and sang. I compared myself to other singers and dancers all the time. Most times, I didn't fare so well. It's hard to listen to a professional believing they must have something I don't because they are getting paid for it. Hogwash! Because of this, I have the most creative fun when I am using a new medium of creativity; one I in which I can explore and play with no pressure to be a genius. Remember, have fun!

What artistic mediums do you have experience with? List them below. Say something about your experience with each: how much you enjoyed it, any issues that came up, etc.

Now pick something completely different this time around. Why? Just to trick your critic into not being able to chastise you for not being better at it and comparing yourself to others who have been doing it all their lives and are masters. Pick a medium that seems like fun and fits your budget and lifestyle, meaning space concerns, messiness quotient, you know.

(Examples: Acting, baking, blogging, cake decorating, carpentry, collaging, computer graphics, cooking, dancing, drawing, event planning, flower arranging, gardening, handcrafts, investing, jewelry making, musical instrument, model building, mosaics, painting walls or pictures, party planning, photography, pottery, relationship issue, repurposing junk, sculpture, sewing, singing, storytelling, teaching, tutoring, website design, writing: articles, book, comedy, journal, plays, songs)



Schedule It!

So where is it going to fit in your day or week? If you don't make time for it, it ain't gonna happen. What time of day, that you are in charge of, do you have the most energy to use for stepping out of your comfort zone into new territory?

Early mornings are ideal for some because energy is fresh and the rest of the world is asleep and therefore not making demands. It is also a great time to tune into ourselves when the world is so still.

Evenings are another good time if your work during the day is not too psychically demanding. If you see creativity as a way to unwind, then this is your time to let it flow.

Experiment with different times, but don't leave it up to chance or when the spirit moves you. That leaves too much room for other things or people to take priority.

And remember the value you said earlier that creativity has in your life. Inspiration, enthusiasm, relaxation, feeling jazzed, excitement; whatever it is, it is worth making room for it in your schedule on a regular basis in order for these qualities to become a part of your everyday experience..

So pull out your day timer or PDA and enter it in. That will be a message to your that you are worth it and your needs are important. Once you get in the habit of practicing your creativity regularly, no more convincing will be necessary—the evidence will be in how good you feel.

Heck, it can even support you in giving up some bad habits like zoning out to the TV while eating a bag of chips chased by a quart of ice cream. A bonus of healthiness!

So when is it going to happen? Choose some possible times and get started!

Get Support

So who in your circle of friends and family supports you in your life in general? And specifically, who in your life is creative and supports you in being creative?

If the answer is no one, it is time to change your circle of friends; family we have to live with, but at a distance if the support isn't there. Where might you go to get some new people to support you in being consistently creative?

Sometimes we have people who want to support us and they just need to be asked. Speaking up for what we need and want is an art in itself. When we start asking with little things, it strengthens the muscle for the bigger, more meaningful needs and wants that we have.

Inner Circle

Significant Support

Casual Support



Celebrate Completion!

In our culture we are really good at having an idea, starting and completing...well we may not be so good at it, but we know that is the way to accomplish most anything. What we often forget is to celebrate completion. When we forget to do this vital piece, we set ourselves up for burnout, pushing right on into the next project.

By pausing to take a breath, reviewing what went well and what we would like to do better next time, acknowledging ourselves for our hard work and celebrating our accomplishments we reap the treasured benefits of our work.

So how about it—will you do that for yourself? Don't be shy; no one else has to read it. Give yourself a well deserved high five and put it in form, here in writing!

Great work! Write me and let me know how this went for you.

Resources

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