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Creative practice occurs any time you extend an idea into the physical world. Writing, building something, writing code, painting, even how you dress or furnish your home, are all creative acts. All human action is made up of three parts: thought/intention, creativity/planning, and action/execution. Creativity is the moment between thought and action. It's where you go from "what" to "how" before you get to "how did it go"?

My career as a paid creator means that I have to create prolifically, yet I often found myself either stuck in thought/intention, or bitter than ideas weren't moving from planning into execution via the financing needed for films or TV shows.

This all shifted momentarily when I began a meditation and gratitude practice. The meditation practice revealed that my stuckness and anger – forms of dissatisfaction – resulted from clinging. This is clearly expressed in Buddhism's first noble truth, "Life is filled with dissatisfaction". Whether you call it clinging, suffering, or dissatisfaction, it is all the same – the sticky unhappiness that we often feel in the present moment.

This clinging could be clinging to fears about the future, regrets about the past, or unfulfilled desires. Essentially the first noble truth describes a state of anxiety where you run away from the present moment. Why do we run from the present moment? Because the present moment contains the seed and fruition of life and death – moment after infinite moment arising spontaneously and disappearing just as quickly.



My meditation practice helped me see the basic sanity of being IN that moment rather than chasing it or running away from it. I learned to be grateful for any sensation, by learning that the death of now is nothing to fear. Because there's always another now coming along right after this one!

I've come to believe that people get so obsessed and anxious with planning their future because they believe that the more plans they make for their future, the more likely they are to actually arrive there. Untrue, but very helpful in distracting from the anxiety of the here and now.

So it wouldn't be a stretch really to say that the human condition called anxiety – fear of living in the present moment – is really a fear of death, a fear of confronting the fact that the present moment comes and goes with absolutely no force or action from us. It's coming and going no matter what we do.

So if my practice helps me to unpack this anxiety and engage in more present moment awareness and gratitude about life itself, then I should have no anxiety about something like writing a script, or writing this essay? Right?

Right? So then, if I'm so great at all this mediation stuff, such a star on the cushion, why did I still have anxiety about writing this essay? Why do I still have to come at my creative work sideways?



If I've really come to terms with the fact that the world of sensation is going to come and go regardless of whether we try to push it away or pull it into existence, why do I struggle to come to terms with the same basic truth about my creative practice – my life practice?

Every new job I get, I have a total holy shit moment- can I do this? Do I know how to tell stories? Will I know how to make this tv show? Holy shit, probably not. But then I do it because otherwise I'd have to quit my job.



What is this fear? Is it because we re-attach to the notion of being the creator when faced with a blank page, a canvas, a project at work? Is it because we strive for perfection, knowing that whatever creative output we make stands a good chance of surviving in the world long after we are gone? Is it a fear of success, that we'll be called upon to ever greater responsibility if we do well at this task?

I submit that it is none of these and that all fear around creativity, all procrastination, all stalling around letting the universe express itself freely through us, stems from a fear of death.

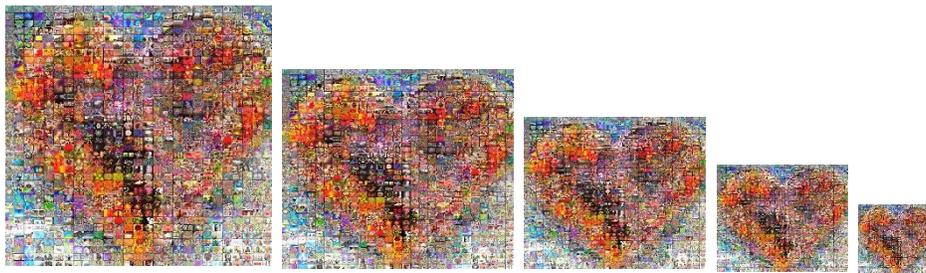
Here's what happens when I follow the procrastination/anxiety train of thought to the logical conclusion. Jerry, why don't you think you have the right idea? Because you don't know what you're doing. What if you just do it? It might be bad. What if it's bad? People will



laugh at me. What if people laugh at me? No one will respect me. What if no one respects me? No one will care for me. What if no one cares for me? I won't be able to get what I need to survive. What if I don't get what I need to survive? I will die.

I've looked into the neuroscience. Your brain does this on auto-pilot and impressively fast. Faced with the possibility of creating something, your amygdala – your reptile brain – kicks into super-secret high gear, letting it be known that if you undertake this new project - there's a pretty good chance you'll die. This is your lizard brain, the one that controls survival.

But your heart knows it will get a little bit smaller if you don't create.



So the trick is to listen to the heart, instead of the lizard

Creativity is the result of being receptive to life and what it has to offer. It is about having gratitude for the experience, and the ability to experience it – and then to reinterpret it into a creative project.

It as a process of arising, rather than forcing. The more you know truth – the more you listen to and actually hear the truth about what is happening around you – the more authentically creative you will be. The more your life will be a creative process arising from your observation.



The less I live from truth, the more my actions in the sphere of art – and in life – become inaccurate, colored by incorrect information about what is really happening around me. Also known as, bullshit.

Creative heart-centered awareness, arising from gratitude, is the way to truly understand the underlying terrain. It's the way to be in touch with reality.

It's enough to stop there and think about your life itself as creative expression. But I know many of you reading this are artists. So, let's go a step further.



All this sounds great and beautiful, but what does it mean? How do you apply to it your creative practice, whatever that looks like?

Whether you meditate, or have a gratitude practice, or ritual, the goal is to get out of your own way and let creation arise spontaneously from emptiness, just as each moment arises and drops away into the void.

Your own individual method of this may exist already, or maybe



you're exploring, or you might do it subconsciously.

For me, it is meditation and gratitude practice that reveals basic sanity. Creativity grounds my sanity in self-expression. It might be said that my creative output- when I'm not being inauthentic and making bullshit – is a specific outward manifestation of my meditation practice.

I've been shuffling around this planet for five decades. When I began gratitude meditations fifteen years ago in 2007, I thought – wow, what a perfect antidote to a world that's as crazy as it could ever get. Oops, got that one wrong!

So, as we make our way through 2022, I personally am realizing I need to commit even more to gratitude, meditation, and grounding practices.

And I've added a little question at the end of my practice to help cut through the noise: what role does the universe want me to play today? I don't know where the answers actually come from, but they've been helpful as a signal in a world increasingly filled with noise.