

This book is dedicated to all you creative souls.

May you shine, reflecting the glory of the original Creator.

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SECTION ONE

Chapter One: Let's Begin

Is there something you've always wanted to do that you haven't done? Perhaps you've dreamed of some accomplishment since you were a child or have felt a growing desire to do a certain work at a later time in your life. It may be singing; playing an instrument; composing music; painting; sculpting; pottery; writing a novel, a screenplay, a poem or short story; pursuing photography; inventing an innovation; making a film or pursuing acting or comedy; even designing websites or game apps; or to fashion clothing. This list of dreams is by no means exhaustive.

Still, you find you haven't begun yet or doubt you will ever get started. Or, if you've made a start, you fear it is a waste of time that could be better spent on something else. Possibly you find yourself ever struggling to get focused and accomplishing seemingly nothing. It could even be that you just don't know where to start or how to go about it. Because of one or all of these issues, many can't seem to get beyond the dreaming stage.

The purpose of this book is to help people get into and past the beginning phase of their creative expressions and subsequent blocks. There are so many talented individuals who are stifled unnecessarily from pursuing their talents. You don't have to be one of them.

This book strives to explore some common dreams and the reasons why people fail to follow their hearts. Also, we will consider examples of those who have followed their artistic inclinations in various fields and what has helped

them succeed. Plus, we will look at ways creative people can find their own particular voice or style. The second section of the book will look more intently at various creative goals individually.

Chapter Two: Your Creative History

We will start first with a little exploring. Think back to the earliest time you can remember harboring your dream. Well, over the years we may have wanted to do this or that, changing our minds frequently. Still, the particular creative pursuit weighing on your mind, when did you first realize it was something you loved doing? How did you continue with it? Was it as random as a school assignment or did you take courses on it purposely in school or did you exhaustively read every book on the subject? Is there more than one talent you have, leaving you indecisive as to which to follow? Spend a little time considering them all.

Let's also consider now what happened. When you were in school perhaps you loved writing assignments? Well, maybe this isn't you. Still you may insert what you did enjoy. Possibly you've always wondered what would have happened if you followed after that. Instead you may have opted even been encouraged by teachers, parents, guidance counselors, society at large, or doubts in your own mind to get something steady and dependable, a forty-hour paycheck blue or white collar. Others may have or be pouring their lives into raising children and reflect at times what would have happened if they did pursue forming that band and singing. Some may have held a dream in their hearts, longed for it, yet never openly told anyone for fear of seeming ridiculous.

Now let's examine any reinforcement you might have received. In your school days did one or two teachers encourage you in a certain subject? What were the strengths

or highlights that they appreciated about what you accomplished?

That doesn't mean that other teachers in that same subject treated your work as something special. These mixed reactions can cause some confusion making us wonder whether or not we are really talented in that area after all. As individuals, teachers have different likes and dislikes. It may be even that one of your talents reminds the teacher of gifts he or she didn't pursue. Unconsciously, or worse, consciously, that teacher may jealously undermine your achievements. A young person may not fully realize how much promise he or she is demonstrating in such an environment.

Finally, it may be that though interested in singing, you were too self-conscious to join the school choir, fearing you weren't good enough. However, that is rarely the case. Still, because you didn't try, you also have no idea how well you would have done. Unfortunately, your past fear has cost you getting a little feedback and encouragement. Still, you may think you sound well singing along to a tape of your favorite artist. At the same time, you are unsure as to the degree it would be appreciated by others.

When looking back at your school years, see them not as you did at the time, but through your adult eyes. (Or more mature eyes if you are a younger person.) It can be quite insightful to take a review of them in that light. Spend a little time pondering your creative past. What would you have done differently if you could go back and why? If you had more control over your options in school, what choices would you have made in the subjects you learned? And, why is that? The answers can tell us a lot about ourselves.

School is not the only area to examine this way. Also think back to your home environment. Was it one that

nurtured your talents? Were they ignored completely or treated as ordinary? Were you pushed to follow a talent more than you desired? Were you pressed to pursue something else entirely, an interest of someone else's? What were the attitudes on your creativity?

Make a note of these for your personal use. Keeping a journal will help. It may sound like work; but once you see how helpful it proves to be, you'll be glad you did. In your own private journal you can pour out your feelings. Just let them flow without worrying about grammar and spelling. If it seems a bit difficult at first, don't throw in the towel too quickly. This is especially true for those who have been out of touch with their feelings. However, these reactions to our creativity often leave an indelible mark, and these tend to stick in our minds until we feel settled about them. This is as good a time as any to search your past and make notes on your creative history.

The purpose of keeping this journal is not to find fault with our schools and families. However, many families don't know how to effectively encourage talents in their members. Odds are that attitudes or viewpoints of others spoken in the past may now be stifling your confidence and undermining your creative self-esteem. From such unsupportive environments, we ourselves may have formed viewpoints that also hinder our achievements. Examining them in later years, we may discover our impressions at the time were not as balanced as they could have been in other circumstances.

Here's an example. Let's say Amy's school records note her as gifted in art, English, and math. Amy never sees those records. Her parents recognize she is a sensitive child and try to toughen her up. Not wanting her to get too big headed, she is cut down to size often. At school she is

encouraged to pursue a career using her higher math skills. This is more because of their desire to see young women take up careers in male-dominated fields than because it's Amy's best and only talent. Meanwhile, there is some positive feedback from some early English teachers. However, later teachers in that subject seem less enthusiastic. Though her art teacher keeps some of her work, she never tells Amy what a great job she is doing.

In this scenario, it's assumed that Amy, despite her low self-esteem, realizes just how promising her talents are. Instead, Amy gets a lot of mixed signals leaving her confused and unsure of her talents. Because she gets insufficient positive reinforcement, and early influences make her feel only very special individuals make it in creative fields, Amy decides to get a practical, dependable career that provides a regular paycheck. Amy has little reason to think she can succeed in a less structured and less reliable artistic career.

In other words, this brilliant young woman with so much talent and promise never seriously entertains the idea of becoming a writer or artist. Failed by those who could have nurtured her talents and confidence, Amy never even tries to reach her potential. When she graduates, she feels a bit lost as to the direction she wants to take. Amy takes some local college courses and joins the workforce. She drifts through her life without much direction or planning.

Amy is not any particular person. Amy is a composite of many individuals who didn't get the encouragement and feedback they needed to find themselves early on. Some never get the necessary support from others or the improved self-esteem to try pursuing a gift. Others eventually are encouraged by spouses, friends, and/or co-workers to reach

for their potentials. Though getting a later start, many go on to accomplish amazing works.

This is something serious for parents and teachers to consider. Do your children and students really know their potential? What have you done to make sure they understand their promising gifts? What have you done to help them develop these talents?

It's often assumed that young people are automatically aware of their gifts. Of course the child that is nurtured and repeatedly reinforced with comments of how special his or her talent(s) is will more likely have this awareness. However, when environment isn't taken into consideration by parents and teachers and no reinforcement is given, another child falls through the cracks.

Well, perhaps you felt that the child has some promise. Still you choose not to encourage his or her talent because you think that you are doing the child a favor. It's hard to make it in art. So many are trying; and, not all make it. You will save them from suffering. Only some rare geniuses will truly succeed.

That reasoning is faulty. That would be projecting your own fear of failure onto the child. Of the writers and artists you know, how many really are wunderkinds? Yes, there aren't that many, are there? No, most of the artists and writers you know probably are talented individuals who supplemented a lot of study and hard work to have achieved arriving where they did. If you know some who have not succeeded, you also may find that you admire their courage for making the attempt.

It's not for us to make these decisions for others, what they should or shouldn't strive for as a career. Isn't it better to help them grow and equip them the best we can, leaving

the choice to them? You may reject this counsel, feeling you are protecting them. Still we can only wonder what he or she may have gone on to do. Can we really think we are helping them and anyone else when we purposely or by neglect hold young people back from reaching their potential?

Well, let's get back to everyone in general. If you were encouraged in your talents, that's great. If like a lot of people you suffered neglect in this area, please don't let it stop you from getting past that and reaching your potential.

Before going on, remember to reflect on how your history has affected your creativity. It helps to be aware of what was lacking in your environment or education pertaining to your potential. With that in mind, you can readjust your viewpoints on those events. Instead of seeing them as you saw them in childhood, your adult eyes can better moderate what could and should have happened. You will find this reflection worthy of careful consideration yielding valuable insights about yourself. It's worth any time and effort you put into it.

Let's go back to Amy. At age fifty, Amy got better in touch with her creativity. There were subjects she wanted to read to her grandchildren that just weren't written. She recalled that a couple of her early English teachers had praised her writing. Looking back, Amy was now more capable of understanding that they really thought her work was good. The English teachers that came after, well one was so quick to find fault. Amy could clearly see some unfairness and something that resembled jealousy. Well the last one was just indifferent, and seemed rather preoccupied with something else other than that class, no feedback there.

One thing she certainly remembered was that she had loved those writing assignments. Amy even recalled wanting to be a writer briefly in Junior High. She'd dismissed the idea as unpractical. Before Amy started high school, she recalled her cousin once saying that she really enjoyed Amy's funny short stories.

After recalling all this, Amy took it upon herself to give her hand to writing some homemade books for her grandchildren. The children loved them. Her daughter-in-law also took an interest. She even insisted Amy submit them to some publishing houses. It was a late start; but, by fifty-five, Amy became a children's author pouring her rich experiences into her stories.

This fictional example illustrates how we might come to remember our talents and past desires for expressing our creativity. Also, it shows how to go back and explore the impact of early influences as they related to these gifts and benefit by seeing them in a clearer light.