

TEN TIPS FOR JUMPSTARTING STALLED CREATIVITY

Tamara Holland

OVERVIEW

Sometimes, you just get stuck. It happens to all of us. For days or weeks or months, you're driving along happily on your creative project. And then one morning, the battery's dead. There's no juice, no spark, no energy to move the project along. Our goal as creators, of course, is to keep things moving right along. We recharge our batteries and get our projects back on the road. Here are ten tips to help you do that.

TIP ONE: LET YOURSELF STINK

There's nothing like the pressure to create perfect (or even really good) art to bind your creative juices right up. When you get stuck, back away from "serious," and give yourself permission to create something really awful. Be silly. Wreck something. Play.

TIP TWO: PLAY INSIDE A THESAURUS

Treat yourself to an actual hard copy of the actual Roget's Thesaurus. Thumb through the pages. Savor the words. Get lost in all the ways one can express "azure." Get caught up in language of numbers, time, emotion, geography. String a few random words together and feel your heart sing.

TIP THREE: GO OUTSIDE

Take a hike anywhere -- in your neighborhood, on a mountain, in a city center. Clear your head of its worrisome cobwebs by breathing in and out as you're exercising in the fresh air. Look at the architecture, or the trees. Listen to what people, or the wind, are saying.

TIP FOUR: GRAB YOUR CAMERA

Your digital. Your iphone. Your full-on fancy-pants photographer kind. The point is to take pictures. Do it with abandon. See something, and photograph it. See something else, and photograph it, too. Free up your eye to see and snap images and movement. Quickly. With a sense of abandon. There are no sorts of results required.

TIP FIVE: WRITE THEM DOWN

Make a habit of having a way to record your creative ideas the minute they pop into your head. And do record them the minute they pop into your head. They love it when you do that! When they see you taking them seriously, they will come back and visit you again and again. And they'll tell their friends to come visit you, too.

TIP SIX: ASK QUESTIONS

Remember that you're just the conduit for the creative things that want to flow through you. Respect your work by asking it questions. For instance, ask your main character, "And *then* what did you do?" Ask your painting which color it would like you to use next. Ask your song what key it wants to be sung in. And listen to what it tells you.

TIP SEVEN: TWEET AWAY

Get on Twitter. Follow what funny and smart people are saying, and start tweeting right along. Composing 140-character tweets exercises your creativity and writing muscles; it's a challenge to find ways to be funny, pithy and relevant in a very brief (both in time, and in word-length) space.

TIP EIGHT: LOG OFF

On-line sometimes can be too much -- input, stimulation, procrastination. Set daily internet time limits for yourself, and experiment with a whole day (or two!) a week off-line. Give your creativity the chance to push its "reset" button, and give your ideas and visions time to sink in and marinate without on-line distraction. Just like in "the old days."

TIP NINE: COMMIT TO "PAGES"

Draw. Write. Paint. Commit to doing a page a day of this for a week or month. Get your brain into this creativity commitment. To shake things up more, try operating in a different artistic mode than you're used to. Paint if you're a writer. Write songs if you usually draw. Don't judge the product. Committing to your daily experiment is the point.

TIP TEN: CHANGE UP YOUR GIVING TIME

If you spend a lot of your time doing things for others -- family, friends, those in need -- try giving yourself a little more of that time. If you don't do much caretaking, try volunteering some of your time. Changing the pattern of your giving will shake things up inside -- affording you more time in which to create, or a new perspective from which to do so.

RESOURCES

Wreck This Journal, by Keri Smith

Fearless Creating, by Eric Maisel

Hamlet's Blackberry, by William Powers

ABOUT TAMARA HOLLAND

Tamara Holland turns her mixed media collage pieces into reprinted paper products at her Bean Up The Nose Art company. She is also marketing her



first two screenplays. Tamara's day job is as a death penalty appeals attorney, representing condemned prisoners in California state court. She has three adult children, and lives on the West Coast with her husband, their animals, and several thousand honeybees. Visit beanupthenoseart.com, and contact her at tamara@beanupthenoseart.com