

# TEN TIPS FOR OVERCOMING CREATIVE BLOCK

Cherry Jeffs

## OVERVIEW

As creative professionals, we delve daily into our subconscious, to transform what we find there into a marketable product. Consequently, we identify very strongly with our artistic work. This can turn our daily lives into a roller-coaster - with success shooting us to the stars and 'failure' plummeting us, with equal velocity, into the pit. Although dismissed by some as laziness or procrastination, for those who suffer from it, creative block is distressing, debilitating and very real. Creative block can't always be avoided but these tips will help you stop it in its tracks and transform it into a motor for productivity and change.

### TIP ONE: ACCEPT THAT YOU'RE BLOCKED

Resistance is at the apex of its power when we are blocked. As creative people we don't *want* to be wasting our time on inane activities, we want to create. If it were simply a matter of blazing our way through, we'd already be doing it! Acceptance is the first stage of resolving any problem. *Accepting* you are blocked is your starting point.

### TIP TWO: FOCUS ON RELATED ACTIVITIES

Brainstorm everything that needs doing related to your blocked project/creative work in general, and get on with it: Catalog images or get artwork professionally photographed; propose guest-posting on someone else's blog; update contacts database; organise research material etc. All of this work must be done at some point; doing it when we're creatively blocked restores

our feelings of competence and professionalism and stops us sinking into despair.

### TIP THREE: 'BE WITH' YOUR WORK

Commit to being with your work for 15 minutes each day: No matter how unpleasant you find it, sit looking at your painting, shuffle your novel notes around, etc. Showing up regularly sends a message to your subconscious that you are still committed to your project. One day you will find yourself itching to change that top left corner of your painting and pick up your brush...

### TIP FOUR: TIDY UP

When we lose faith in our work, our work environment often becomes a reflection of this. 'Spring' cleaning is a simple, effective pick-me-up for the spirit: Move your workspace around; improve lighting or shelving; buy a new chair that's enticing to sit on or a different kind of brush that cries out to be dipped in paint. Get rid of clutter and with it, ideas and habits that are no longer valuable.

### TIP FIVE: DIALOG WITH YOURSELF

Losing touch with our subconscious needs and desires can cause creative block and, as in any relationship, dialog re-establishes communication. Visual and/or written journaling is a great way to re-establish dialog: Journal what it feels like to be in the flow; draw your block; compose a song or make a collage about your relationship with your work. Opening your creative channels in this way, reconnects you to your artist soul.

### TIP SIX: GET MOVING

Psychological blocks can frequently be found mirrored in our bodies. Although bodily relaxation tends to be associated with practices such as Yoga or Tai Chi, any form of physical exertion that engages us to the point of forgetting everything else can produce the same effect. Pick your favourite -

swimming, salsa, rock-climbing or walking in the park. Get your body moving and watch your mental blocks begin to dissipate!

#### TIP SEVEN: LEVERAGE EXISTING WORK

Set aside your blocked project and repurpose existing work to expand your customer base, gain new fans or simply earn some cash. Compile old blog-posts into print-on-demand or Ebooks; convert abandoned writing projects into blog-posts; create calendars, cards, t-shirts, slideshows or even jewellery from artwork or photos; post video tutorials on You Tube or podcasts on iTunes. Leveraging your existing work restores a feeling of being productive and creative.

#### TIP EIGHT: CREATE IN AN UNFAMILIAR PLACE

Falling into a rut is source of block that often goes unnoticed. Creating in a new environment helps rekindle our creative flame. Choose locations not normally associated with your creative output: A shopping-mall, the tube station, a wild place. Take a sketchbook, notepad, phone/camera or treasure hunt for found-materials. Allow this unfamiliar environment to awaken new responses within you and consider the implications this has for your work.

#### TIP NINE: LEARN SOMETHING

Learning something new feeds our childlike hunger for stimulation and broadens both our understanding of the world and of ourselves. Learning keeps our neural pathways functioning better into old age, provides stimulation from fellow students and, often, an inspiring teacher who opens the doors to new perceptions. Learning allows us to invent fresh connections and sparks new, sometimes life-changing, ideas. So think of something you've always wanted to learn...and go enrol!

#### TIP TEN: DO SOMETHING EMPOWERING

To unblock, we must reconnect with our normal energetic, professional selves. The most mundane and repetitive activities can make us feel empowered:

Stretching paper; developing negatives; printing a clean novel draft or tuning a guitar. Activities completely unconnected to our work can also empower us: Running a half-marathon, competently speaking another language, a new haircut. This shift in self-perception may be all you need to beat your block!

## RESOURCES

THE ARTIST'S WAY, *A Course in Discovering and Recovering your Creative Self* - Julia Cameron (Pan, 1995)

Art & Fear, *Observations On The Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* - David Bayles & Ted Orland (Image Continuum, 2010)

Fearless Creating, *A Step-By-Step Guide to Starting and Completing Your Work of Art* - Eric Maisel (Tarcher Putnam, 1995)

## ABOUT CHERRY JEFFS

Cherry is a mixed-media artist and artist-empowerment coach living in Southern Spain. In her former lives, as a graphic designer and jewellery designer-maker, she cleverly disguised the subconscious block that kept her from her true passion of making art. Cherry transforms everything she learned from this experience into coaching alchemy to empower artists treading a similar path, helping them fight blocks, set achievable goals and discover hidden meaning within their personal stories and myths. Cherry runs her BLAST YOUR BLOCKS course and other online courses regularly throughout the year. Visit [www.dialogvisual.com](http://www.dialogvisual.com) for more information or drop Cherry an email on dialogvisual {at} gmail {dot} com.