

creative turnaround

ADVICE &
INSPIRATION
for
ARTISTS +
ARTISANS

2015



CREATIVE TURNAROUND 2015

CreativeLive

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Cover design by Lara McCormick.

Ebook design and layout by David Moldawer.

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We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

—“Ode” by Arthur O’Shaughnessy

Ta-da!

—Anon.

Introduction

Award-winning photographer, director, and media maven **Chase Jarvis** co-founded CreativeLive in 2010 to share free creative education with aspiring artists and entrepreneurs worldwide. In addition to his work creating campaigns for Nike, Apple, Red Bull, Starbucks and other *Fortune* 100 companies, Chase is widely recognized for creating Best Camera, the world's first photo app to share images to social networks, which kicked off the mobile photography and sharing craze.

Connect with Chase: ChaseJarvis.com

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Whether you're new to CreativeLive or you've been with us from the start, I'd like to share something of our roots because—like yours—they lie in hopes and fears and dreams for the future.

It feels like yesterday when Craig Swanson and I sketched our vision on a whiteboard, rallied a bunch of friends, and kicked off this effort to unleash the creative potential of millions of people worldwide—the creative potential we all have inside us—by delivering the world's highest-quality creative education to a global community for free.

The obstacles to getting CreativeLive off the ground were as daunting as any I've faced in my career as an artist and entrepreneur: logistical, financial, creative, emotional...any and all of these combined. The fear of failure itself kept me up at night for months on end. And yet, here we are. A success by some standards, just getting started by others.

What keeps us going, staying late, building, stumbling, and growing? Put simply, CreativeLive was founded on the principle that everyone should have the right and

the means to pursue their creative aspirations. That includes you. So this is the lovely part where our dreams come together. We're chasing our dreams in creating this education platform to help you chase yours. We're all in this together.

Craig and I both believed that there should be a place where life-long, skill-based learning is accessible, affordable, and really, really well done. Four years into this journey, the scrappy little company born in a gritty warehouse in South Seattle and based on the fundamental principle that we should *all* have access to world-class creative education regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, or experience level, has reached some exciting milestones.

We have now delivered more than 1 *billion* minutes of free creative education to more than 3 million people watching from every country on the planet. I'm proud to call over a hundred people my teammates. We've produced nearly a thousand classes containing over ten thousand lessons on everything from Photoshop to overcoming your fears. And we're immensely proud of that. But none of this fulfills our dream unless you're fulfilling yours, living out your creative destiny and making the world a better place.

In the following pages, we've assembled inspiring and practical advice from world-class experts (who happen to be some of our favorite CreativeLive instructors) on how to take your own vision for the coming year and turn it into a reality. We offer it as a free gift to you in the hopes that something here will move you to open your heart and take a risk: start a project, share your work, leave your day job, start a business. Wherever your creative passion takes you, we'll be a resource for you at every step of the journey. Good luck!

7 Ways to Let Go in 2015

Kenna Klosterman is the Lead Host of CreativeLive, based in Seattle. She is a travel and humanitarian photographer, a photo tour leader, and connects the dots between members of the CreativeLive global community.

Connect with Kenna: [Website](#)

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We all know the old adage, “the only constant is change.” I recently tried to impart these words of wisdom on my seven-year-old niece. She glanced up at me with a concerned look and replied, “But Auntie Kenna, our faces don’t change.” As I explained that the physical aspects of our faces do indeed change, that our cells are reproducing all of the time, I stopped and laughed at my desire to be factually correct. Her youthful sentiment was merely that when she looks in the mirror every day she sees the same person. How has your acceptance of change itself changed over time?

We are transforming our lives every day, whether we’re aware of it or not. The peak of our awareness and desire to transform often arises as we turn the calendar from one year to the next. The first of January is just another day, and yet we approach it as a major opportunity to choose change.

There are many reasons we try to avoid change. For me it’s usually the fear of the unknown. Fear has so many guises—for creative people it often comes in the form of blocks, because creativity by definition is change. I get blocked in thinking I need to know how to take an idea from A to Z every step of the way before taking the first step. Anxiety builds, and I don’t do anything.

The key to my personal turnarounds when I’ve been stuck has been to get laser-

focused on the act of letting go—mentally, emotionally, and physically. Figuring out how and where to let go and marshaling the willingness to do so is a daily practice. Consider joining me as we enter 2015 with these seven helpful techniques for putting your fears aside and releasing those blocks as they arise. Set yourself up to let go and embrace change so you can move forward with your creativity, your passions, your relationships, your profession, and your personal growth.

1. Let go of “should”

One of the best pieces of advice I’ve ever received is, “Don’t should on yourself.” I should on myself all the time. My inner dialogue sounds like this, “I should go to yoga. I should eat a smaller portion. I should work on editing photographs instead of binge watching the latest series on Netflix.” Sound familiar?

In a strange way, the shoulds add a sense of shame, a sense of “I’m a bad person if I don’t do this now that I’ve categorized it as a should.” Self-sabotage easily sets in and I tend to not do the thing simply because I’ve told myself I *should*. Ridiculous.

When I let go of “should” I can choose one of two statements: “I want to” or “I don’t want to.” When I shift my thinking to, “I *want* to go to yoga” and I truly feel that I want to, then I get myself to yoga. If I *don’t* want to go to yoga, then it’s okay to accept that fact and move on without hanging on to the reasons I should have gone and feeling bad about myself because I didn’t.

List three of your most frequently recurring “shoulds.” What will it take to shed those shoulds? Start by asking yourself if you really want to do _____ and go from there.

2. Let go of worrying about what other people think

When my mom turned fifty she got a pair of bright purple and red glasses. I thought they looked silly and felt embarrassed when she first wore them in public. She told me she had reached a point in her life where she didn’t really worry about what other people thought anymore. Fifteen years later I now understand my mom’s

wisdom. Those purple and red glasses stick with me when my decision-making process is leaning heavily on what others might think. I remind myself that the only thing I have actual control over is what I think and feel, not what anyone else thinks or feels. A dear friend constantly reminds me of the quote, "It's none of your business what other people think about you." That's a tough one to swallow sometimes, but it's true.

As creators we are especially vulnerable to being blocked by potential future criticism before we even create something for "people" to criticize. That's completely backwards. There is incredible freedom in letting go of the crazy-making that is conjecturing about anyone's thinking but your own.

What was the last thing you got hung up on and didn't do because you were worried what people might think? How can you shift your thinking for the next time?

3. Let go of "the fastest route"

I'm a big fan of the mobile app [Waze](#), which gives me the fastest route to my destination by using real-time, crowd-sourced traffic data. I usually ask the app to give me a few routes for comparison. I like to be sure I've considered all the options. Often the results vary only by a few minutes, and yet I opt for the fastest route even if it's just slightly faster. I catch myself stressing out many mornings at that decision point of which route to take so that I can tell myself I succeeded at taking *the* fastest route.

What is it about the "fastest" or the "best" or outsmarting all my fellow morning commuters that appeals to me? Is taking a slower route a failure? I add completely unnecessary stress to my day while spending the entire drive wondering if the other way would have been faster after all. Really Kenna? In the scheme of your day, do three or five or even ten whole minutes really matter?

I've begun letting go of "the fastest route," and when I find myself frustrated in traffic, I use the time to see the sights that I normally don't notice while consumed in thoughts about what I'll say if I arrive five minutes later than I'd hoped.

Just try it once, for starters. Let go of worrying about the fastest route and enjoy the ride.

4. Let go of tension

Physical tension can cause much more than temporary discomfort. When our minds hold on to emotions, fears, stress, and worry, our bodies translate that into physical tension. Often we hold that tension in the same spot without even realizing it, which can lead to chronic pain, as it did for me in my lower back. Anyone who has suffered from chronic pain knows that it's hard enough to get out of bed in the morning, let alone put effort into creative projects, when you're in pain.

I'm not a doctor, but what I've learned from twenty years of troubleshooting a cranky L4/L5 disc is that calming the nervous system is key. I mean quieting the *actual* neural pathways that our brains use to send pain signals to parts of our bodies. Whether it's deep breathing, meditation, or the exercise of your choice, shaking it up and letting go of both emotional and physical tension can not only relieve pain, but also open space for your creativity to flow.

One practice that has helped me let go of tension is from my orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Hanscom's book, [*Back in Control*](#). He suggests you try this: write stream of consciousness for ten minutes every morning for a week. Don't think about it, just write whatever comes out. When you're done, rip up the paper and throw it away. Sometimes you'll be quite surprised what you'll let out of your brain when you just start writing without worrying about anyone reading it, even yourself. The physical act of writing with pen and paper can create new neural pathways that can counteract those tension-inducing thought patterns.

5. Let go of thoughts

The word meditation scares a lot of people (including me). For years I wanted to be that person who meditates and I assumed meditation required thinking nothing at all. I didn't believe I could do that. I'd tried many times on my own and would

get frustrated when I couldn't close my eyes and immediately stop thinking at the snap of a finger. If you're like me, too much thinking is a beeline to blocked creativity.

In 2010 I took my first awareness meditation course and it changed my world. More accurately, the practice allowed me to open my world to change. As a beginner, I learned that the goal was not to turn a switch and get rid of thought completely, but rather to start by being aware of thoughts. The mere awareness of thoughts can trigger a shift in your brain's focus to other senses that you are experiencing in the present moment.

Stop what you're doing right now, close your eyes, and just listen for a minute. When a thought pops into your head, which it will, go back to noticing any and all sounds around you. Now open your eyes and just see for a minute. Look, really *look*, at the details in the room surrounding you. Let your eyes follow the patterns of the rug or the lines where the wall meets the ceiling. When a thought arises, acknowledge it, and then quickly revert back to what your eyes are seeing. If you've just completed those two simple exercises—congratulations—you've practiced a taste of awareness meditation!

When you find yourself stuck, let go of thoughts as they arise, be aware of what you hear, see, smell, taste, or feel, and explore where that leads you. If this exercise resonates with you, look into meditation classes in your local area and consider prioritizing letting go of thoughts in 2015.

6. Let go of "I'm not"

This is a biggie. When I label myself as what I believe I'm not, I'm slamming doors right in my own face. "I'm not a painter. I'm not a singer. I'm not a dancer." It all boils down to the same thing—I'm not good enough.

When you define yourself as what you are not, you aren't even giving yourself a chance to try that thing. Perhaps you even shame yourself for not being good at that thing that you've never tried. This makes no sense, but we all do it. If you're naturally gifted at certain things as a child, you may come to believe you should be

naturally gifted at anything you want to do. This way of thinking can get you into real trouble and can even lead to depression. It did for me. I became frustrated with myself when I wasn't an expert right away without putting in the hours and hours of practice and work to build a skill.

Whenever you are holding back at starting something you want to try because you've categorized yourself as "I'm not," let go of thinking you should know how to do something without having put in the time to learn it. Would you expect that from others?

7. Let go of waiting for "the time to be right"

How often do you think to yourself, I'll start this project when the time is right? How often do days, weeks, months, or years go by while you still haven't found that right time? When you think back on your most creative endeavors, can you pinpoint a "right time" when all of the pieces you needed were in place and you felt like you had all the time in the world? I'm guessing not.

One of the excuses I use to not move forward is the false belief that the outcome of a project will be superior if I wait for precisely the right moment to start. What does a right time even mean and can you be sure there will ever be one? I often place blame on factors beyond myself for my own indecision and failure to act.

Instead of waiting, let's start doing. Choose one project you haven't started precisely because you've been playing the waiting-for-the-right-time game with yourself. List out three things that you can do today. Choose one. Now do it.

See? You've transformed "waiting for the right time" into "right now."

Now that you're on the path to letting go on a daily basis in whatever small or big way you choose, on a parallel path consider embracing acceptance and compassion for others, and most important, yourself.

Hi, I'm Vanessa, and I'm a Recovering Controlaholic

Vanessa Van Edwards is a published author and behavioral investigator. She is a Huffington Post columnist and a Penguin author. As the founder of ScienceofPeople.com, she regularly gives keynotes and appears in the media to talk about her research. She has been featured by NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Today Show*, and *USA Today*. She has written for CNN, *Fast Company*, and *Forbes*.

Vanessa is also a sought-after corporate consultant and has used her research to consult for numerous *Fortune* 500 companies including American Express, Clean and Clear, and Symantec. She has spoken to groups across the globe, from the stage at the Consumer Electronic Show to the podium at MIT.

As a professional people-watcher, Vanessa studies, speaks, and writes about cracking the code of human behavior. Vanessa's groundbreaking workshops and courses teach individuals how to succeed in business and life by understanding the hidden dynamics of human interaction. Her specialty is lie detection and body language in business.

Vanessa graduated magna cum laude from Emory University in 2007 and is SETT certified with Dr. Paul Ekman, SUBx certified, a member of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, and is certified in Statement Analysis.

CreativeLive: [Master Your People Skills](#) | [The Power of Body Language](#)

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* * *

Alphabetizing gives me an adrenaline rush.

If we're really being honest, there are a few other quirks I should confess to. Small zippered compartments kind of turn me on. Color-coding revs my engine

only slightly more than drawer organizers—oh, the potential of a thoughtfully designed drawer organizer.

My heaven looks a lot like the Container Store (with the addition of a chocolate fondue pot at checkout). If you really want to get my blood pumping, show me a little extra closet space. What endless possibilities! I could make a crafting corner or an indoor herb garden. Or—and I'm going to have to restrain myself here—it could be a gift-wrapping nook! Talk about manna from heaven.

Why do sticky tabs make my toes tingle? Why do to-do lists hit my brain like nitrous?

The truth is, I'm a recovering controlaholic. That means I used to consider organizing a no-holds-barred professional sport. *Hoarders: Buried Alive* is my NFL; call it Sunday night clutterball and you'll start to get the picture. Knickknacks were my kryptonite. Dry-erase wall calendars were my MDMA. (MTWThF, actually.)

Before I went into recovery, if you had asked me to choose a superpower, it would have been a no-brainer. Flying? Buy a plane ticket. X-ray vision? We have walls for a reason, people. The superpower I wanted was control, pure and simple.

After a while my controlling tendencies started to get in the way. My to-do list was never-ending. I couldn't enjoy a vacation if it didn't have a minute-by-minute itinerary. I found myself constantly asking myself (and my poor friends): "Is this normal?"

Is it normal that I'd take a label-maker over a new outfit any day of the week?

Is it normal that I look forward to Tupperware parties more than actual parties?

Is it normal to classify filing as a hobby and accord status to certified professional organizers on par with that of professional athletes?

My bucket list didn't include skydiving, bungee jumping, or a spiritual pilgrimage to India. I just wanted to organize my parents' attic before I died. Talk about thrilling!

I didn't realize how bad it had gotten until I hit rock bottom.

Rock Bottom

My bottom was at the literal bottom of my closet. I had wanted to reorganize that closet for months. You know, the whole shebang: donating clothes from when I was skinnier, dusting shelves, making sure all of my hangers and shoes faced in the right direction.

I was convinced that life would be better with that closet clean. I would feel amazing every time I went near my bedroom. I would find clothes I had forgotten about. I would even lose weight from all the calories I'd burned from the endeavor.

Two Saturdays, five trash bags, and three rolls of paper towel later, I felt...the same, except for the sudden sense that I really needed to organize my kitchen pantry. You know, the whole shebang: getting rid of expired canned goods, wiping down shelves, making sure all of my cereal boxes faced in the right direction. I was convinced that life would be better with that pantry organized. I would feel amazing every time I went near my kitchen. I would think of new recipes to try. I would even lose weight...*Wait a minute*, I thought. *This sounds eerily familiar.*

Something odd was going on. Why hadn't the desired satisfaction come after I'd organized my attic or labeled my garage or even after I'd perfectly categorized my iTunes library?

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I was following the unspoken creed of many controlaholics:

"The busier you are, the more successful you are."

I believed that if I organized my outside, perhaps I would begin to feel more ordered on the inside.

I believed that if I kept myself busy, I could distract myself from feelings of sadness, depression, and inadequacy.

I believed that by maintaining perfect control, productivity, and efficiency, I would feel worthy.

But it wasn't working. I sat on the floor of my closet and wondered how many drawers, cabinets, and closets it would take for me to acknowledge that I was running away from something. And that's when I started to ask myself the hard questions:

What am I hiding from?

Why does being out of control feel so terrifying?

Why don't I feel worthy now?

As I started to answer these questions for myself, I began to sense that I was not alone in my controlaholism. I saw the symptoms in the people around me: A secret stash of ziplock bags in the trunk of a car. A stubborn denial of the compulsion to control the way the dishwasher is loaded. A paranoia about “spontaneous” people. (Spontaneity is a dirty word for controlaholics.)

But, like an ugly boyfriend or an embarrassing rash, we keep our vulnerabilities and fears hidden and never talk about them. Until I did. I started talking about how much it sucks to fill your schedule because it is the only way to feel productive. About how much work it is to constantly be the one in charge of planning events for friends because you want to be in control of what happens. About how exhausting it is for your significant other to tiptoe around all of your “idiosyncrasies”—a kind word that really stands for “all the weird crap you do.”

And you know what? The most surprising thing happened. Slowly, I began to feel worthy. Being vulnerable—hearing, sharing, and connecting with others on a real, authentic, and deep level—made me feel alive for the first time in a long time.

Recovery

For me, recovery has been about learning. Learning about myself. Learning about my loved ones. Learning how we, as humans, work.

I founded my company, the Science of People, because I wanted to make learning about people my life's work.

I want to know what makes you tick. I want to ignore social niceties and talk about your deepest, darkest secrets. I want to dig into your authentic self. I want to find out more about your legacy. I want to talk to you about the topics no one wants to talk about. I want to study the stuff you never thought you could study—jealousy, empathy, regret, and revenge.

And I started this colossal endeavor with the biggest topic of all, the one thing

that was going to get me out of rock bottom and into true recovery:

Fear.

I had been ignoring my fear for a longtime. I ignored it by trying to control everything I touched. I ignored it by stuffing my emotions into the most remote corner of my brain. I ignored it by shaming, judging, and criticizing myself for my perceived inadequacies. But I was done hiding from fear and living in my little routine prison. It was time to face my fear. To study it, examine it, and embrace it. Heck, it was time to take my fear on a date, wine and dine it, and make love to it all night long.

In our human behavior research lab we began to take fear apart. We dug into the research, investigated causes and symptoms, and began to look for patterns. Here's the truth bomb we found:

Fear is a cross-dresser.

Fear likes to dress-up as other emotions and parade around as other feelings.

It's easier to be angry at your partner for forgetting to call you than to be afraid they forgot you. It's safer to be passive aggressive at a friend than to tell them they are taking advantage of you and thereby risk that friendship.

The best way for me to show you how fear dresses up is with a story:

One day in a land far, far away, there was a maiden who was very, very afraid. She was afraid of being rejected by her countrymen. She was afraid her friends would grow tired of her and exclude her from their outings. She was afraid of being left out, disliked, and forgotten.

She did the only thing she could think to do—she tried really, really hard to please everyone. She thought that if she could be the “perfect” maiden, everyone would like her and accept her. She said yes to everything and she dressed, talked, and acted like everyone else. She let her fear dress up as perfection.

Much to her dismay, her appeasements didn't work. The more she tried to fit in, the more people called her boring, unoriginal, and weird. People didn't want to be with a fake. They didn't want to be with someone inauthentic, who was always trying so hard to impress and please.

So it happened that the thing she feared the most came true. She was rejected. She was excluded. She was forgotten.

This is the worst part of the story—the maiden’s rock bottom. But there is a happy ending. To get there, I have to tell you about Fearvana.

Fearvana is what happens when we stop letting our fear dress up as something else. Instead of trying to ignore or change our fear we have to face it and learn about it. Knowledge is the key to making sure fear doesn’t control you.

In my CreativeLive class [Master Your People Skills](#), I have an entire day dedicated to achieving Fearvana. I placed it on day 13—making it the luckiest day of the class. Of all 30 days of lessons, that one was my least favorite because I had to share my personal story, but also my most favorite because I got to hear those of my students.

Your story, my story, our story helps us learn about fear because it allows us to examine our fear triggers. A fear trigger is a person, topic, environment, or situation that puts us into fear mode. When we are in fear mode, we cannot connect with people, we cannot make good decisions, and we cannot be our best selves.

Here is my challenge to you: I want you to make love to your fear.

Think about the last time you felt afraid. I’m not talking about outwardly afraid like being afraid of the dark or of jumping off the high-dive board. I’m talking about internal fear. When were you afraid of being rejected? Of being inadequate? Of being judged? Of being criticized?

Now identify what triggered you. What caused that fear to bubble up inside of your gut? That’s the source of your power. Spotting your fear, examining it under a mental microscope, and wrestling with it directly has the effect of immediately disengaging it. When we look at the science of fear and how fear works in the brain, we see that acknowledgement is all fear needs to subside. Like an attention-hungry toddler, all fear wants is to be acknowledged. When we do this we begin to understand ourselves and live an examined life.

When I start to feel the urge to clean my closet or alphabetize my friend’s bookshelf, I enter Fearvana by asking myself: What are you afraid of?

Instead of letting my fear dress up by ignoring my emotions and responding to the world on autopilot, I act with purpose. I live with intention.

The Future

I'm on a mission to help people bring out their inner awesome. That means helping my students learn about their fears as well as so much more—improving their presence, connecting more deeply with their loved ones, and embracing their legacies.

I do not pretend to have all the best answers. But I do try to ask the best questions. In my courses, in my life, and in my business I ask and help people answer the hard ones:

Why are you here?

What is your purpose?

What makes you act the way you do?

Because I know the hard questions bring us hard truths. And I would always rather live in hard truth than ignorant bliss.

Funny thing is, this is *exactly* what the maiden said in her happy ending. Isn't that a coincidence? Wink, wink, nudge, nudge. Here's how our fear-filled maiden turned her fear into self-knowledge:

The exact thing she was most afraid of came true. She was rejected. She was excluded. She was forgotten.

While she was alone, she had no one to impress. No one to pretend to be. No one to perform for. So, for the first time, she was able to be her true authentic self. And she found that she didn't dislike it all that much. She found she was quirky and sensitive. She found that she had much more time and energy now that she wasn't trying to be someone else. She got to know herself instead of just getting to know others.

And then the most surprising thing of all: She began to feel worthy. She began to talk about her vulnerability. She began to hear, see, and connect with people on an authentic level. She began to feel alive. People around her came alive in turn. She

was accepted, and accepting. She was included and inclusive. She was not forgotten and she did not forget.

The End

Play with People Who Have Your Back

Michael Port has been called an “uncommonly honest author” by the *Boston Globe*, a “marketing guru” by the *Wall Street Journal*, and a “sales guru” by the *Financial Post* (which is remarkable given that he may be the only former professional actor to be a *New York Times* bestselling business author).

Michael is the author of five books: *Book Yourself Solid*, *Beyond Booked Solid*, *Book Yourself Solid Illustrated*, *The Contrarian Effect*, and *The Think Big Manifesto*. He has appeared on almost every television network, either as a business commentator or an actor. You may have seen him in *Sex & The City*, *Law & Order*, *All My Children*, *Third Watch*, *The Pelican Brief*, and dozens more. He was a TV and radio voiceover artist for MTV, AT&T, Pizza Hut, Budweiser, Coors, and hundreds more.

These days, you’ll see him regularly on MSNBC’s business programs and performing his one-man show, *The Think Big Revolution*. It’s unlike any keynote you’ve seen and guarantees you’ll think bigger about who you are and what you offer the world—or you get your small thoughts back, no questions asked. Learn more about Michael's mentoring programs and public speaking training at MichaelPort.com.

CreativeLive: [Book Yourself Solid](#) | [Heroic Public Speaking](#)

Connect with Michael: [Website](#) | [Blog](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

* * *

I’ve taught two courses for CreativeLive: *Book Yourself Solid*®, which is about getting as many clients as your heart desires, and *Heroic Public Speaking*®, which is about saving the world, one speech at a time (or, if you don’t want to go that far, simply

being a better communicator and presenter).

In order to do either, you've got to play with people who have your back. Some might disagree, but I believe that we can do more together than alone.

If you're making the commitment to realize your individual potential as a performer, what about the other people on your team, in your company, or associated with your small business who will work with you on the next big project, whether that's a speech, a pitch, a deal, or a media event?

You know some of the people in your life and work who have your back. You may also want to inventory just who else fits that role in your life—and who doesn't. Inevitably, you'll find yourself facing business and performing situations with clients or associates you don't know well. But developing a stronger awareness about whom you'd rather have in the conference room, around your small business, or on the stage with you when the spotlight goes up, will give you the confidence you need to steal the show. It's never a great strategy to assume it will all just work.

Actors and directors will tell you that trust and support, among the cast and with their director, are the essential ingredient in many great productions, films, and TV series. One example of this comes from the career of the late legendary director Sidney Lumet, whose seventy-three films include *Dog Day Afternoon*, *12 Angry Men*, *Network*, and *Midnight on the Orient Express*. He was known as an actor's director, and won an honorary Academy Award in 2005 in recognition of his "brilliant services" to performers, screenwriters, and the art of the motion picture. Lumet typically assembled actors he liked and respected and shaped them into a cohesive, trusting group of players who made each other better.

I'm speaking from experience here. My pre-author, pre-entrepreneur career was as an actor. (You would have seen me on shows like *Sex & The City*, *Law & Order*, and dozens more.) I was lucky enough to be cast and directed by Mr. Lumet in one of his final TV projects, *100 Centre Street*. Of all the auditions I did and parts I played, the only other director who was as supportive and respectful of their actors, including those playing small parts, was the late Alan J. Pakula, director of *Sophie's*

Choice and *All The President's Men*. I had been a Tulane graduate for all of one week when Mr. Pakula cast me in my first film part, one line as a law school student in a class with Julia Roberts.

Both Mr. Lumet and Mr. Pakula went out of their way to make a young actor feel like he was meant to be there, and that they were thankful I was interested in working with them. Mr. Pakula even told me that I was a young Robert De Niro. And you can be sure he knew just how wonderful and affirming that would make me feel. The cast of Mr. Lumet's last film, *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*, featuring Ethan Hawke, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Albert Finney, and Rosemary Harris, later raved about the chemistry on-set and about Lumet's focus on and passion for actors. They knew he had their backs.

Lumet always began work on his films with an intense, multiple-week rehearsal period, moving from read-through to walk-through, including discussions and blocking on taped sets. The actors worked from start to finish of the script, just like they do when working on a play. They worked with furniture and props, and the process built a confidence and comfort. Ethan Hawke would later say: "The nice thing about a long rehearsal process was that we got to know all our key collaborators before we arrived on the set ... We had an opportunity to make many of the creative decisions before we started filming." And the late Philip Seymour Hoffman observed of Lumet, "He grabs your shoulder, your face, your hand. He wants his connection close and wants you to know that he's on your side. He doesn't play the withholding father type. He's direct, he's honest, and he's supportive." You can learn more about Lumet's movies and his extraordinary work with the greatest actors of his time in his book, *Making Movies*.

This kind of trust was captured by Amy Poehler's famous 2011 commencement speech to Harvard, when she talked about the rules for life she learned from studying improv and theater. Among them was: "Don't start a scene where two people are talking about jumping out of a plane. Start the scene having already jumped. If you are scared, look into your partner's eyes. You will feel better. This advice has come in handy and it would often be something I would think about

when I would perform on *Saturday Night Live*."

Playing with people who have your back means you will, wherever possible, stop working with people who wouldn't make that jump with you, who don't bring out your best, or who have conflicting interests. In *Book Yourself Solid*, I used the metaphor of a red velvet rope to capture how entrepreneurs and independent professionals must exercise good judgment when taking on clients. You will be more successful and productive, I argue, if you dump the clients who don't bring out your best and instead work only with clients that energize and inspire you and, most important, allow you to do your best work.

That book has been published in multiple editions and dozens of languages and I've personally taught this concept thousands of times. In the end, I've been told more often than I can remember how readers found this one of the most powerful as well as confronting concepts. It can be hard to say no to someone when they are saying yes to you. But if they're not someone you're meant to work with, there's little right in the relationship and it quickly turns to conflict and sometimes even misery.

The consistent objection my readers and students raise to the concept is a good one: We often can't decide whom our colleagues and particular clients will be. I agree that within an organization you don't always get to choose with whom you work, and as an entrepreneur you very well may need to make that strategic alliance, or to stage an event with someone you don't know well or who even makes you slightly uncomfortable.

First, let's recognize that discomfort may dissipate when you get to know someone. This happens all the time. But it is also a fact that if you are going to deliver a significant performance or product and your colleagues or co-participants don't have your back or simply lack the right chemistry with you, the outcome will suffer. That is a significant risk. Therefore, taking a calculated gamble or two in pushing to have the team that is right for you doesn't seem like such a stretch. Otherwise, you might end up being stuck in a role you were never meant to play.

Remember: the people you share the spotlight with, whether in a presentation, a

pitch, or a personal event, reflect on you and your performance. For maximum joy, prosperity, and abundance, think about the person you are when you are performing optimally, when you are with all the people who inspire and energize you. Now think about all the frustration, tension, and anxiety you feel when you work with colleagues or clients who are less than ideal—not so good, right?

To return to the red velvet rope image and how much you control that rope, it can get tighter or looser depending upon the circumstances—but you should always have one. When you perform with colleagues, partners, or teammates you like and trust, you'll enjoy, even love, the entire process. And when you love the work you're doing in the spotlight, you'll give an even better performance.

Performing with the Wrong Cast Can Get You Upstaged and Undermined

Take public speaking, for example. When you're with the wrong cast or on the wrong stage, you can be upstaged, undermined, or misunderstood by your audience because of your "guilt by association" with poor performers or people who don't work well with you. You've probably experienced or heard about situations like these:

- You get upstaged on a panel by someone with a higher profile (or just a louder voice). For instance, a friend who writes literary food books was booked to a major book festival where she shared her panel with a local TV food celebrity who sold a hundred books while she sold two after he didn't give her the opportunity to answer any questions.
- You are organizing an event where you are undermined by speakers who accept their invitations and then cancel or send substitutes late in the process.
- You are assigned to appear together on a presentation with a collaborator you don't know, only to discover they have a very different agenda than yours.
- And the thing that continues to baffle me... when the other speakers on the program run over their allotted time. Nothing is more unprofessional. I try to

remain cool, non-attached, and non-judgmental about other people's opinions and actions but, man, I'll tell you, this one really gets my goat because it's so disrespectful to the other performers.

Tactics for Finding People Who Have Your Back

I don't need to tell you whom you already trust. You know the people in your life. But in circumstances where you lack a lot of control, it pays to take the initiative. If you're going to be a part of a group presentation, be the first to nominate your co-presenters. If teams are being selected, volunteer for the groups with your preferred colleagues. If you're making a pitch for funding, it's very likely you're appearing with someone you already know well, but if others are going to participate, set up meetings or calls and walk through the plan. Get to know them.

If you're invited to speak at a conference panel, schedule an early call with the group of invited speakers and see what you can learn about their approach and what their plans are. You can often tell from the nature of that conversation how the panel will work, who will try to upstage you or who may lack motivation to do a great job.

I believe in people. I really do. But reality demonstrates that sometimes folks are out to stab you in the back, not have your back. It happens. Establishing early communications gives you the time to prepare even if you are stuck with a particularly bad lineup.

Word to the wise, however: it's one thing to recognize that this will happen from time to time, and it's another to base your worldview on the idea that everybody is out to get you. If that's your perspective, it's going to be hard to find people who are willing to have your back. It's hard to earn trust without extending it yourself.

Similarly, make sure you organize early rehearsals for speaking appearances or any type of events where you're unclear about how you will work with the rest of your cast members. As you experience that process you'll be able to adjust. If you begin to notice that someone could be a problem, see if you can limit their role, have them speak after you, or, if you sense a disaster in the making, explore options

for re-negotiating or re-organize the commitment or cast members. (This would be rare.)

Playing with People Who Have Your Back is Also a Good Way to Live

Playing with people who have your back is good for your health and your life. These folks are friends who can become part of your trusted circle, the ones you turn to when you need help. They will know what it means to take risks and audition for the leading role you've wanted for years. They'll know what it means to make decisions that make you uncomfortable, because you want to change the world when you perform.

People who have your back will be there to lift you up when you break down. Often, it's only after we break down that we have a breakthrough. But that's not a process to go through alone. When we have a setback or are going through a difficult time, we can be fearful and begin to isolate ourselves because we don't want to share this vulnerability with others. We feel some shame. However, isolating yourself generally exacerbates the situation. Sometimes the first step back into the sunlight is reaching out to the people who've had your back in the past, with whom you've established a foundation of talking about and working through the good times and bad. One of my oldest friends, Ben Terk, once said to me, "Mikey, I don't want to hear from you only when things are good. I want to hear from you when everything goes to shit."

Do you know whom you'd call for help if you had a setback or a crisis? If you don't, then go out of your way to bring more people on your side of the red velvet rope. The secret to finding folks that will have your back is, of course, playing the same role for them.

When I decided to develop the *Think Big Revolution* show, it was a real departure from what is typically presented on the speaking circuit. I decided to bring in Amy Mead, another former actor who earned her MFA at the Yale School of Drama while I was attending the Graduate Acting Program at NYU, to give me some feedback. We developed trust quickly—resulting in me asking her to direct

me in the show. We developed so much trust that I eventually brought her on as a partner and co-founder of HeroicPublicSpeaking.com. It was the power of having each other's backs that made this possible and resulted in a long-term business partnership and friendship. At HeroicPublicSpeaking.com, we offer tons of free tips sheets, guides, e-books, and video training on public speaking and on-camera performance techniques for both professionals and laymen alike. So, if you have a wedding toast, a big presentation, a sales pitch, or just want to improve your ability to communicate, head over there now.

If you're going to be a performer, someone who does big things in the world, you want people around you who have your back because you'll have to go out on a limb again and again. You're going to take big chances. And you want to know whose eyes you can look into when you make the jump.

How to Reach Your Goals with Brutal Honesty and the Tripod of Stability

Ramit Sethi is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *I Will Teach You To Be Rich* and writes for over half a million monthly readers on his website, iwillteachyoutoberich.com, on the topics of psychology, personal finance, careers, and entrepreneurship.

Ramit's unusual combination of psychology, analytical testing, and irreverent style led *Fortune* to call him the "new finance guru on the block."

Ramit studied human behavior and social influence at Stanford, and previously co-founded PBworks, a Silicon Valley collaboration startup. He appears on ABC and PBS regularly and periodically writes for the *New York Times*.

CreativeLive: [Money + Business for Creatives](#)

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* * *

If you want to trigger a change in your behavior, you need to learn to be brutally honest with yourself. This is true in all areas of our life, whether it comes to eating better, becoming more social, building your career, or something else entirely.

Let me show you what I mean with an example from my own business: I asked more than a quarter of a million people on my email list a question: "What's one thing you *claim* you want to do and still haven't actually done?"

"Ramit," one person wrote, "I always tell myself I want to run three times a week, but I never, ever do it."

"Why don't you just run once a week?" I replied.

Her response is one I'll never forget: "Why would I run once a week? I'm not going to get any benefit out of it at all."

In other words, she would rather dream about running three times a week than actually run once.

I found this astonishing.

How many times have you not been completely honest with yourself? For example, spending twenty years of your life saying, "I really wish I was a morning person. I want to wake up early. I want to start off productive." But you don't.

Compare this to saying, "I'm not a morning person. I work better at night, and that's where I'm going to spend my productive time." Wouldn't it be better to acknowledge and work under those constraints than to beat yourself up and feel guilty?

Put another way, wouldn't it be better for this woman to say, "You know what, three times a week is just too big of a goal for now. It's embarrassing, but who really cares? I'm going to run once a week for twenty minutes, and that's it." After she does that for a few weeks, she might say, "It's hard sometimes, but I'm doing it. I'm going to try for twice a week."

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is critical for mastery and for change—yet so many of us fall back on excuses. When my team and I did our research for [Earn1K](#), our premium product about earning \$1,000 a month on the side, we talked to tens of thousands of people. We found that the number one reason for not earning money on the side is, "I don't have an idea." And the second reason is, "I don't have enough time."

We didn't understand. If this were the case, why didn't they go online and search for ideas to start a business? "No time" is a similar excuse—my team and I discovered it takes only five hours a week to start earning significant amounts of money on the side.

When we dug in, we discovered that reasons like "no idea" and "no time" are actually surface-level barriers. The true reason was always fear:

- "What if I fail?"

- “I don’t know what I’m doing”
- “What happens if I’m successful? There’s so much to think about.”
- “What will people think of me?”

I can relate. All the way through college I didn’t wear contact lenses, even though it would have made sense for me to use them. I never liked the way I looked with glasses, but I’d put it off, thinking “there’s no way I could put anything *in my eye*.” I didn’t know if that excuse were true—I’d never tried it.

The truth was that I was afraid of changing and what people might say to me as a result. You don’t want your friends to make fun of you or for girls to look at you funny and say, “What are you, metro?” As a guy, I’m insecure about trying to improve my look. So it took me until I was twenty-two years old to start wearing contacts.

How can you learn to identify and overcome your fears? I’m going to show you how to use the “top performer” mentality of brutal self-awareness.

Action Step #1: Identify Your Priorities

Ask yourself the following question: What do you *claim* to be important to you that you’re not taking action on now?

List out as many things as you can think of. A trick to finding these is thinking about the “goals” you’ve had in the back of your mind. (A good place to start is last year’s New Year’s Resolution list.) What article topics do you always end up clicking on? Parenting? Fitness?

List out three or four of these big goals that you haven’t improved despite thinking about them for a long time (maybe even *years*).

For example, you might want to:

- Lose ten pounds
- Spend more quality time with your family
- Start a side business
- Wake up earlier in the morning
- Get a promotion at work

- Go back to school
- Start a new hobby, like playing the guitar or surfing
- Learn a foreign language

Action Step #2: Systematic Self-Appraisal

Next, systematically list out the reasons you're not pursuing these goals. "I don't have enough time" is going to be the first one, but go deeper. If the President wanted to give you an award, would you find five hours a week to fly out to Washington, D.C.? Of course you would.

So what else is holding you back?

- **Fear of success.** This sounds like: "If I get too many clients for my side business, I'll have to quit my job, and I love my job." "If I get really good at surfing, I'll have to move closer to the beach." "If I get that promotion and I'm terrible at the new position, everyone will see that I don't really know what I'm doing!"
- **Fear of failure.** This sounds like: "I'm not really the type of person who can learn languages quickly." "That guy online succeeded because his parents own a business." "I never got good grades in school, so this is a waste of time."
- **Fear of others.** This sounds like: "Who starts surfing at forty?" "What are my friends going to say on Friday when I skip the beer and fries? They'll make fun of me for eating healthy?" "My parents are going to freak out when I tell them I want to start a business."
- **Fear of being overwhelmed.** "Even if I had the time, I would have no idea where to start." "There are too many choices, where would I begin?"

Action Step #3: Set Measurable Goals

I want you to write down three steps you can take within seven days. Only three, no more. It could be getting your inbox clear. Or spending an hour playing with your daughter with your phone's ringer off.

Set a calendar reminder in one week to look back at these goals and see if they happened. Why or why not? Be brutally honest. Is it embarrassing to feel bored after twenty minutes of playing with your daughter and pulling out your phone? Maybe—but you're not sharing this with anybody else. You have to be ruthless with yourself, because only then will you have the framework to change your behavior to match your values.

Taking Intelligent Risks Even When You're Risk-Averse

Making big changes doesn't have to be as risky as you might think. For example, most people think entrepreneurs love risk, but I actually hate risk and most other entrepreneurs I know feel the same way. The difference is, successful entrepreneurs think about risk differently.

For example, I decided to work on a startup in my twenties. If I failed, I knew I could always go back to work at a big company, while it would become increasingly difficult for me to try a startup when I was older and had more responsibilities. I decided to take a big risk on my job knowing other parts of my life were stable. For me, this means I have three key areas of stability in my life:

- My car
- My home
- My relationships

If I can keep those three steady, I can comfortably tolerate a ton of risk in other parts of my life, like business. I call this the Tripod of Stability.

Action Step #4: Create Your Tripod of Stability

What are the two or three areas you want to keep stable in your life? Spend some time thinking about what's truly important to you in your life. Sometimes we keep areas stable but we never write down what they are. We never analyze them or acknowledge them even as we try to protect them. Here are a few examples to help you start:

- Your job

- Your relationship
- Your home
- Your car
- Your clothing

These stable areas are important to identify. Once you know the areas of your life you don't want to mess with, you open up possibilities to experiment with other areas of your life. For example, if "where you live" is not in your top 3, you know that moving for a new job opportunity might be an option.

If your job is in your top three, you know that you'll have to work around it to reach your goals. Putting your Tripod of Stability on paper can be an extremely valuable way to understand what really matters to you.

Action Step #5: Identify Opportunities for Risk-Taking

This is a little trickier: Where do you want to take more risks than you have in the past? Is it in your career? Think about it: What's the worst that can happen if you end up at a job you hate for one year?

Or is it your health—do you want to try a new workout routine or diet? You've been taking the same approach for years and years and it hasn't produced the results you want.

I want you to pick two areas in your life where you can afford to take more risks. Write them down.

Action Step #6: Take Small Steps to Embrace Risk

Like Action Step #3 above, I want you to create a plan for how you're going to put your risk-taking into effect. By using the Tripod of Stability, you'll think about risk in a different way than you have in the past.

What small steps can you take to embrace risk? For example:

- **You want to find your Dream Job.** You might take one person out to coffee every week until you find a job you want to target.
- **You have ten pounds you want to lose.** You might bread out of your diet six

days a week for the next month.

- **You want to travel more.** You might set a savings goal to take a five-day vacation every six months.

I want you to set a calendar reminder for a month from now to look back at your goals and ask yourself if you're on the right track. If you are, figure out what else can you do to increase your results. If not, take a look at what didn't work and adjust. Did you set unrealistic expectations for yourself? Did your fears get in the way? Go back through the action steps to see how you can do better next time. And remember, be brutally honest!

As a bonus to help you with your goals, I want to share [fifteen little life experiments that will change your life](#). In the free e-book, not only do I offer some experiments I've conducted myself, I've also invited a number of special guests, including BJ Fogg, Neil Strauss, and Noah Kagan, to share some of their own best tests as well.

You'll learn how to triple your productivity, strengthen your friendships and self-esteem with one dollar, increase your gym attendance by 300 percent—and much more. Click [here](#) to download the free e-book now.

Become SANE

Jonathan Bailor is a *New York Times* bestselling author, founder of the modern alternative to Weight Watchers, SANESolution.com, nutrition and exercise expert, wellness entrepreneur, and former personal trainer who specializes in using modern science and technology to simplify getting and staying well.

Jonathan has collaborated with top scientists for more than 10 years, analyzing over 1,300 studies, and garnering endorsements by top doctors and scientists from Harvard Medical School, Johns Hopkins, and UCLA. He serves as the CEO for the wellness technology company Yopti. He authored the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, Barnes & Noble, and Amazon bestseller *The Calorie Myth*, hosts a popular syndicated health radio show, and blogs on The Huffington Post. Additionally, he has registered over 25 patents, and served as a Senior Program Manager at Microsoft.

CreativeLive: [Eat More, Exercise Less & Lose Weight](#)

Connect with Jonathan and get your free plan: SANESolution.com

* * *

Once upon a time, there was a skinny little boy who wanted to be Superman.

He looked up to his older brother, a football player. He wanted those same big muscles so people would look up to him, too. The boy dreamed of the day he, too, would be tall and strong, a “big man.”

Yet as the birthdays came and went, the boy grew taller but not broader or stronger. Just lanky. He tried everything. He tried every exercise routine and meal plan. He tried pills, powders, and potions. Yet he failed to find Superman in the mirror.

The boy read and studied, devouring health and fitness magazines and books, listening to big, strong men like his brother talk about how to get big and strong. To earn his way through college, he decided to put some of this hard-earned knowledge to work as a personal trainer.

Every day he would eat more, trying to gain weight. And every day he would ask his clients to eat less, so they could lose weight.

He consumed up to 6,000 calories a day, without doing any cardiovascular exercise. Still, he could gain not one ounce. His clients consumed 1,600 calories and worked out half an hour a day. Still, they would lose not one ounce. He cut them down to 1,400 calories and increased their workout to an hour a day. Then down to 1,200 calories and an hour and a half workout every day. Still, they would lose not one ounce.

The boy grew distraught—where could he go from here? Would he have to eat 7,000 calories—and his clients 700?

With every calorie they cut, his clients felt more and more miserable—achy, angry, and even depressed. The boy did, too. His heart was broken. He could not help himself. He could not help others. What was going wrong?

In his private moments of frustration, the boy blamed his clients. “If they could just eat less, they would lose weight—what’s their problem? They just need to try harder!”

One day, while he drank his sixth shot of calorie-packed olive oil of the afternoon, the truth revealed itself to him in a blinding flash: What if some big, strong man somewhere was thinking the exact same thing about him? “If that skinny boy could just eat more, he would gain weight—what’s his problem? He just needs to try harder.”

The boy felt a tremendous sense of sadness and failure—how had he not seen the truth before? How had he tortured his clients for years, subjecting them to restrictive diets and misery, all in the name of the exact same logic that wasn’t working for him? How could he have inflicted that same calorie-based brute force torment and heartache upon them?

His mission had been to help people feel healthier and better about themselves but all he was doing was making everyone—including himself—sicker and sadder.

He was overwhelmed with regret—and determined to make it right. He went back to his parents, brainy professors both, to ask their advice. He told them about the countless hours he'd spent reading and studying and applying what he'd learned without being able to help any of his clients, or himself.

"Son," they said, "remember what we taught you about any type of information: 'Consider the source.'" The "truth" in which he'd placed all of his faith, the standard fitness industry tale of willpower-meets-calories-in-calories-out-meets-try-harder, clearly wasn't the whole story—and might even be the wrong story altogether.

"Son," they said, "you and your clients are not suffering from an effort problem. You are all trying really hard. What you have is an information problem."

So the boy threw away everything that he knew and started fresh. He drew upon his geeky roots and began a new journey that took him deep into the foreign and little-traveled lands of jargon-packed scientific studies and academic journals.

During his journey, the boy discovered the gospel he'd been taught as a trainer had long been disproven in the scientific literature. Every single thing he thought he knew was wrong.

The more the boy read and the deeper he searched, the bigger the gap he found between what he'd been taught and what the science actually said. He wandered into the depths of the human brain in neurobiology papers. He explored endocrinology, the delicate interplay of hundreds of hormones. He delved into gastroenterology, the role the gut and digestive system have on health. He looked at any and every study that might help him answer the burning question: "Why can I eat 6,000 calories and never gain weight while some eat 1,200 and never lose it? How can we all get the body we want without struggle and suffering?"

The boy was no longer interested in fighting against the body; he wanted to help the body transform itself. He wanted to change the way the body processed calories all day, every day. He wanted to improve the system itself, rather than using barbaric supplementation or starvation to wrestle against a system that wasn't

working correctly in the first place.

After more than 10 years, 10,000 pages of research, 1,300 scientific studies, and countless conversations with scientists, the boy emerged from his research journey reborn. The opinion-centered, willpower-driven, calorie-focused boy was now a science-centered, research-driven, food-focused man.

For the first time, this man realized a stark truth: He would never become Superman. His genes simply wouldn't allow it. However, he also realized a truth that freed him and changed his life forever: While he might never become Superman, through modern eating and exercise science, he could become a super man, the very best version of the person he was born to be.

He had discovered an approach to burning fat, developing lean muscle, and optimizing health that turned calorie-counting upside down. He had found thousands of studies that proved the culprit was not the calories in the food, *but the nature of the food itself.*

He found that the *quality* of calories varies wildly, and identified four key factors that made all the difference: Satiety, Aggression, Nutrition, and Efficiency (SANE). Satiety is how quickly calories fill us up. Aggression is how likely calories are to be stored as body fat. Nutrition is how many vitamins, minerals, essential amino acids, essential fatty acids, and so on those calories provide. Efficiency is how easily calories are converted into body fat.

The quality of a calorie depends on where it fits on the SANEity spectrum. High-quality calories are on one end the spectrum: non-starchy vegetables, nutrient-dense proteins, whole-food fats, and low-fructose fruits. These are Satisfying, unAggressive, Nutritious, and inEfficient. SANE foods fill us up quickly and keep us full for a long time. They provide copious nutrients and few of them can be converted into body fat. Even better, they foods trigger the release of body-fat-burning hormones, clear metabolic clogs, and lower our body fat set-point. The more SANE foods we eat, the simpler slim becomes.

Low-quality calories are just the opposite. Starches and sweets are unSatisfying, Aggressive, nonNutritious, and Efficient. When we eat these inSANE foods we have

to overeat to satisfy ourselves. They provide few nutrients and are easily converted into body fat. Triggering the release of body-fat-storing hormones, these foods cause metabolic clogs and raise our body fat set-point. The more inSANE foods we eat, the more complex slim becomes.

Only large quantities of delicious, whole, healing SANE foods are powerful enough to reset the body's entire system and allow the brain to get back to balancing calories automatically—just like it does in naturally slim people.

Once he knew this truth, the man could not wait to share it with the world. He recommitted his life to helping people achieve their weight loss goals with data and facts, rather than hurting them with fairy tales of starvation dieting and binge eating.

The boy never did become Superman. But he had finally become a super man, the best possible version of the man he was born to be. And he now had a new mission: to teach others and to spread the word.

You *can* transform your body. You *can* enjoy an astounding level of vibrancy, love, and satisfaction in your life. You *can* eat more, not less—and you will get leaner and healthier in the process. You don't have to suffer. You just need correct information.

You just need to go SANE—and then you will become super, too. And you and your body will truly live happily ever after.

The Creative's Guide to Quiet Power Strategy

Tara Gentile is a microbusiness strategist and the author of *Quiet Power Strategy*. Find out what kind of self-leader you are at QuietPowerStrategy.com.

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* * *

Smart, capable, and creative people are all around us. Why does one succeed while another one never realizes her full potential? What separates the person who scales the summit from the one who never leaves base camp?

Quiet Power Strategy, which I define as the ability to accurately perceive the world around you, determine where you truly want to go, and create a step-by-step plan for achieving that change. It's steady, purposeful self-leadership in a noisy, overwhelming world. It offers the tools you need to engage your highest value.

I work with smart, capable, and creative people every day: artists, academics, therapists, MBAs, coaches, graduates of the school of life. My clients are wildly devoted to their work, but all that drive isn't enough to ship products and services that will make a difference in the lives of their customers and fans. Inspiration alone won't build an audience or a movement. You need to learn how to lead yourself forward, as Commander-in-Chief of your work and career—no matter where you fall in the company hierarchy.

You face many roadblocks on the path to realizing your full potential. The obvious ones—perfectionism, or lack of support—aren't nearly as dangerous as the ones that masquerade as common sense, when at heart they are nothing but fear of

discomfort.

Chief among these roadblocks are false assumptions. My clients constantly battle their own assumptions about how much people are willing to pay for a product or service, how prospects will react to a new idea or approach, or what people might be willing to buy based on what's already on the market. These assumptions keep them from innovating and exploring new ideas.

Instead of believing the worst about everything that stands in your way, look for contrary information. In the digital age, we're especially prone to only exposing ourselves to media and data that confirm our assumptions. If you find yourself especially prone to making assumptions about what is and isn't possible, make a list of all the roadblocks standing between you and your goal. Then research whether those things are, in fact, the truth. It can take some real digging, so don't give up easily and enlist help if you need it. That's what Stacey did.

Stacey Howe-Lott is an SAT coach. She works with extremely busy students who have more going on than just test prep. She loves helping student athletes, drama kids, and aspiring musicians get significantly better test scores so they can get acceptance letters to their top-choice schools without devoting all of their time to studying. When Stacey came to me, she was working through a lot of assumptions. The first assumption she'd made was that she had to work with students one-on-one to help them create personalized plans. The second assumption was that she couldn't raise her hourly rate because she was already at the top of the market. In other words, her assumptions had her stuck.

During the process of finding her Quiet Power Strategy, Stacey challenged those assumptions. She discovered that her highest value lay in her unique coaching methodology and the analytics she used to inform her tutoring plans, not in her one-on-one approach. That meant she could scale what she was offering to work with more and more students at once. She also experimented with higher pricing and found that the results she delivered, in the time frame she delivered them, could command prices well above the (former) top market rates. Stacey's business growth, as a result, has been massive. At the time I'm writing, she's on track to triple

her revenue this year and has a plan to triple it again next year.

The next roadblock to effective Quiet Power Strategy is our tendency to adapt to other people's plans instead of investing in our own ideas and direction. If you've ever heard that nagging voice that tells you that you have to follow so-and-so's path or wait for a particular milestone, you've run up against this roadblock.

At the heart of this is the Impostor Phenomenon, originally described by Dr. Pauline Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes: "an internal experience of intellectual phoniness." I think we're all familiar with this belief and its wily ways. It's that voice that tells you you're not good enough, that some day soon everyone will find out you're a fraud, that you need to do a little more research or get a little more training to be successful. And it's favorite tactic is having you pursue the "right" way instead of your way.

You search and search for a formula or strategy that originates with someone more seasoned, experienced, or smart. And when that strategy doesn't work out, you find the fault with yourself instead of with the strategy. Because that's what the Impostor Phenomenon does: it makes you discount yourself. Tanya Geisler, my life coach and an expert on this belief, writes, "The very fact that you are experiencing the impostor complex in the first place is proof that you are conscientious, high-functioning, and have strong values of integrity and excellence." It stands to reason then that you might have a few good ideas about going your own way based on who you are.

Your unique composition is the source of your Quiet Power Strategy and the key to finding your own way forward. You have to know yourself and own your power to make your own way. Luckily, that's a lot easier than always chasing the hot new thing. Nilofer Merchant, author of *11 Rules for Creating Value in the Social Era*, calls your unique makeup your Onlyness. She writes, "Onlyness is that thing that only one particular person can bring to a situation. It includes the skills, passions, and purpose of each human. Onlyness is fundamentally about honoring each person, first as we view ourselves and second as we are valued."

Take an inventory of your Onlyness. Get clear on exactly what skills, passions,

and purpose you possess. Look from your own perspective and then seek out evidence of how others perceive and value you at your best. You can weigh every idea, every piece of criticism, every tactic, and every taunt from your impostor complex against that inventory. Just getting that piece of the puzzle is a personal transformation in itself.

The third roadblock creative people face is the compulsion to fix weaknesses instead of leveraging strengths. In every employee assessment you've ever received, you've likely been told to improve in some "areas of opportunity," a thin euphemism for your weaknesses. But experience shows us that people who focus on their strengths and find ways to mitigate their weaknesses end up on top.

How much easier could the task of personal transformation be if you simply doubled-down on what you're good at naturally? Tom Rath, bestselling author of *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, writes that research has "discovered that people have several times more potential for growth when they invest energy in developing their strengths instead of correcting their deficiencies."

If you've ever taken the StrengthsFinder assessment, you've received a clear look into how using your strengths offers exponentially more value than fixing your weaknesses ever could. Every day, I look at my own StrengthsFinder results as a way of reminding myself to let go of ideas, projects, or tasks that don't play into where I excel.

In her *New York Times* bestselling book *How the World Sees You*, Sally Hogshead advocates for using the natural ways you communicate to differentiate yourself from the rest of the market. When you are more fascinating and memorable to the people around you, it's difficult to get caught up in your weaknesses and discount the power of your unique makeup.

The final roadblock to personal transformation is a difficulty admitting what's wrong or what's not working.

My friend Jennifer Louden, author of *The Life Organizer*, posted something profound on Facebook: "To me it seems like one of our biggest issues as humans is often our inability to look, to face into what we don't like." Her choice of venue for

this statement was perfect. Social media is an arena where we will try anything—including cleaning one corner of the kitchen to take the perfect lunch photo for Instagram—to make our results match our vision. But nothing is more frustrating and disillusioning than affecting those kind of results instead of embodying them.

Dr. Samantha Brody, who happens to be my own doctor, told me in our very first strategy session that she follows up a discussion of a patient's health routine with the question, "How is that working for you?" Getting 5 hours of sleep a night? How's that working for you? Drinking 5 cups of coffee after lunch? How's that working for you? Sitting behind a desk for 10 hours straight? How's that working for you?

I ask my clients the same thing. Sometimes, the answer is "It works great!" and, while their tactic might be unconventional, I leave it alone. Often, though, the answer is, "It isn't." So we look for a better way. The idea isn't to optimize the behavior—it's to find a new one that will work for you.

Acknowledging what isn't working isn't the same as doing what you "should" have been doing from the beginning. It's just the first step in figuring out what will be effective specifically for you, regardless of all the "shoulds" and "supposed tos." As Tina Fey writes in *Bossypants* (a book whose philosophy is integral to my own Quiet Power Strategy), "When people say, 'You really, really must' do something, it means you don't really have to. No one ever says, 'You really, really must deliver the baby during labor.' When it's true, it doesn't need to be said."

I'm sure these roadblocks to success and transformation sound familiar: succumbing to false assumptions, following other people's plans instead of your own, fixing your weaknesses instead of doubling-down on your strengths, and ignoring what's not working. The good news, of course, is that you can find your way over, under, or through them. There is a better way to get where you're going: *yours*.

Finding your own way is finding your Quiet Power Strategy. It's leading yourself past all the potential roadblocks, detours, and potholes by knowing what's going to be most effective for you based on your unique composition. Trying to follow

someone else's path in your business (or career, or relationship, or lifestyle) hurts, and it denies your own self-leadership. It's not the dis-comfort that comes from pushing boundaries that need to be pushed for growth. It's dis-ease.

The difference between dis-comfort and dis-ease is one we too often ignore in the course of pushing ourselves to be something we're not. Dis-comfort comes from discovering what it is about you and your business that really works and pushing that to the limit. Dis-ease comes from feeling like you're not who you're supposed to be. On the other side of dis-comfort, there's growth. On the other side of dis-ease is a long, fast fall.

Beginning to claim your own Quiet Power can help. Quiet Power Strategy begins by recognizing the connection between what is out there with what is true for you. It grows by taking action that makes that connection stronger, more meaningful, and more real. Instead of a mess of tactics that don't relate particularly well to your understanding of the world around , you have the clarity of a strategy that is particular to you. You know what you want to create in this world and for whom.

If you've ever struggled to get traction with your business, Quiet Power Strategy is for you. Look at what you already know to be true, what has worked for you in the past, what has made others stand up and take notice, what has lead to rounds of applause or pats on the back, and, most important, what has lead to genuine, heartfelt words of gratitude. As Danielle LaPorte, creator of The Desire Map, is fond of saying, "Gratitude is a feedback loop that will show you where you are thriving."

The key to transformation—in business and life—is to understand how you thrive and create the conditions that lead to more of that. You don't use tactics or methods that cause you dis-ease. You don't use systems that take you out of your zone. You don't subscribe to strategies that force you to create or connect in ways that were built for different kinds of people with different values.

Instead, you work with what you already have. You'll bankrupt your own power if you try to rely on loopholes, fads, or whims. Your Quiet Power Strategy lasts as long as you do. It might evolve, but only as you do. It begins with 5 questions that

lay the foundations.

How will you make life better for your community? How will you measure the success of that vision?

Define your vision. You can operate in the short-term, but you must commit to a working definition of where you want to go.

Dr. Samantha Brody, who I mentioned earlier, is a naturopathic physician and licensed acupuncturist. She defines her vision as helping patients make personalized, proactive decisions about their health. She knows she's most effective when she helps her patients and clients identify the personal values that guide their lives and how those values can be used to guide their health choices. Knowing that, she can position her services well in a very crowded market. She can easily communicate just what kind of results she can deliver and how that differs from her competition.

Once you've got your vision in place, define the metrics that will signify your progress. Do you need to grow your email list to a certain size? Do you want to publish a book? Plan a major event? Attract a certain amount of donations to your cause? Establishing your metrics means that your vision isn't a dream, it's the start of a workable plan.

What conversation is your business a part of? What voices in that conversation are your best prospects looking for an alternative to?

"Markets are conversations," according to *The Cluetrain Manifesto*. Your business needs to be a part of the right conversation to succeed.

While the purpose behind your business determines the overall conversation you're part of, you determine its voice. First, though, identify the existing voices. These are the leaders, businesses, and influencers that make up the "sound" of your market. They're the ones that have, thus far, set the tone.

Your business differentiates itself in part by how it distinguishes itself from the loudest voices. There are always people actively looking for an alternative to those.

Make a list of the dominant voices and what it is about those voices that people might want to break away from.

Think about how Steve Jobs positioned Apple after returning as CEO. He knew that the conversation around personal computing was all about more, more, and more. In contrast, he presented a case for design and simplicity. It was an alternative that galvanized a whole segment of the market into becoming fiercely loyal customers as well as active brand evangelists.

How will you represent your unique point-of-view to engage customers?

Once you understand the conversation as well as the voices you want to position yourself against, you need to determine how you'll represent your unique voice. Look to your unique strengths, skills, and passions. Identify your obsessions, the things that get you riled up, and the things that unlock your ability to connect with others.

The more you differentiate your voice and unique point-of-view based on those things, the more “quietly” you can speak while still making an enormous impact. Your influence becomes tied to how well you speak your own message in your own words with your own quirks, instead of how loudly you agree with others. Maybe this appears obvious to you and, if so, ask yourself if your business truly differentiates itself this way. Personally, I hear many more voices saying “Me too!”

As you craft your own Quiet Power Strategy, make sure that your business's voice focuses on what makes it unique, not on how it blends in.

How will you invest in your unique strengths, skills, and passion to better connect with the right people?

Instagram's great strength as a marketing tool isn't in posting pictures of your product or superimposing clever quips over scenic landscapes. It's in filling the holes in your brand story. I post pictures of great food and beer, not because being a foodie is related to what I do for a living, but because it creates a more compelling story. It communicates my values and passions to the people who

matter to me.

During a trip to Orlando, I posted about a piece of crispy catfish I was eating at a restaurant and brewery there, Cask & Larder. This experience felt authentic to Florida as well as my home on the Oregon Coast. I was surrounded by hipsters, amazing food, artisan cocktails on tap, and killer beer. It's in sharing a moment like this that I leverage my Quiet Power using social media. It doesn't have to be on message if it fills in the details of my story in a way that connects with my audience.

It's worth investing time, money, and energy into experiences that make you more than a product or service.

What systems can you put in place to support and enhance your business's unique strengths, skills, and passion?

The unique details of your story matter beyond surface level. If I post that catfish photo on social media and then you meet me or do business with me and you discover I don't actually like food all that much, you lose some trust in me. But instead, when I invite clients to my coastal town and take them to our three local microbreweries, I've deepened their sense of my authentic self.

Or consider MailChimp, an email marketing service provider that emphasizes beautiful design and a whimsical approach to the serious business of email marketing. They've developed a brand of marketing with "a splash of mischief." Their mascot, Freddie the Mail Chimp, appears not only in their logo but also sprinkled throughout the user interface. Before you confirm that you want to send an email, a sweaty chimp finger hovers over a big red button. Freddie tells jokes and suggests funny YouTube videos. He also appears on knit caps, T-shirts, and plush toys.

At every level of your interaction with MailChimp and its team, you get the sense that their marketing, product, sales, and management systems embody this sense of playfulness-with-a-purpose. Their support people are fun to interact with, their product people are clearly passionate about what they're developing, and

their own email marketing is not only useful, but beautiful and fun.

MailChimp's modus operandi is quintessential Quiet Power Strategy. They're self-funded and chose to grow slowly and purposefully before they transitioned to a freemium model in 2009. They work their story and their desire to make email marketing fun into every layer and system of their business. CEO and cofounder Ben Chestnut writes, "It's also kind of a cool idea to think of bajillions of 'serious' business newsletters being distributed with little monkeys in their footer."

Your business might not have fun as one of its chief values, but whatever is most important to you and the customers you want to attract, make sure it is woven throughout every part of your business.

Your transformation isn't a result of the tactics or formulas. It stems from a deep understanding of what you want to create and how you want to connect. Your choices are rooted in your own Quiet Power. It's not enough to have strengths, skills, and passion. Perceiving the breadth of options at your disposal, spotting your best opportunities, and focusing your energies there: that is Quiet Power Strategy.

Your transformation isn't in becoming something other than you are. It's becoming more of who you are than you've ever been before.

What is Your Purpose As An Artist?

Ann Rea is on a personal mission to destroy the myth of the “starving artist.” She is the author *SELL YOUR ART without Selling Out, 101 Rules*, and the creator of an 8-week, intimate and interactive business course, “MAKING Art Making MONEY.”

Rea’s paintings, and her inspired business approach, have been featured on HGTV and the Good Life Project, in *Fortune* and *Wine Enthusiast* magazines, and profiled in the book *Career Renegade*. Her work is commended by American art icon Wayne Thiebaud and she has a growing list of collectors across North America and Europe. She coaches artists from around the globe including painters, jewelry designers, illustrators, musicians, photographers, and mixed-media artists.

CreativeLive: [Make Money Making Art](#) | [Fulfill Your Creative Purpose](#)

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* * *

Who doesn’t want to understand their purpose?

What artist doesn’t want to know that their art matters?

- Do you know your purpose? Your “why?”
- Does your purpose define your mission? Your “what?”
- Do you know what problem you are solving? Your “how?”
- Do you know what target market you are serving? Your “who?”

Did you answer yes to each question above? Congratulations! You are among the very few happy, grounded, focused, and confident artists who are making art and making money.

If you answered no to any of the questions above, keep reading.

To sell your art—to sell anything—you must clearly solve a problem for a target market. That’s your tribe.

If you help, and you celebrate, your tribe’s core values, culture, and customs, they will celebrate you as an artist.

“Solve a problem? How can my art solve a problem?”

Stay with me. I promise that I will bring you back on board with some examples of artists whom I have mentored and who:

- know their purpose
- have defined their mission
- are solving a problem
- are serving a target market

I know. You think that the only reason that people buy art is just because it “speaks to them.” That’s true. It must. No argument there. But hoping that your art alone may “speak” to someone is no way to build a sustainable artistic enterprise. Artists who thrive create clear and purposeful value above and beyond their art, and they lead with that.

Your unique value proposition shapes and consistently focuses your sales and marketing efforts. With consistent marketing grounded in your purpose:

- sales increase
- competition diminishes
- creative focus increases
- you gain a level of resolve and confidence that comes from knowing and operating from your purpose

Maybe you have been extraordinarily lucky and you’ve stumbled upon a market niche? Even if you have, relying on luck instead of clear and purposeful strategy, places your artistic enterprise at risk.

Why? One reason is that artists are generally idealistic and spiritually inclined, so they chafe at marketing that is not grounded in a purpose.

Besides, trends fade. The question is, how do you build a profitable and sustainable artistic enterprise? You start with your personal purpose and blend it

with your passion. Where you *don't* start is with your website, your business card, or your blog. You start by knowing your “why.”

Let's start with how *not* to find your why.

- Finding your “why” is not about crafting an engaging narrative
- Defining your “mission” statement isn't about creating a snappy headline
- Finding your “why” is about knowing and committing your purpose in service your core individual truth.

So why, as bestselling author Simon Sinek suggests, start with why?

Reason #1. You can take pride in your product and that gives you focus and confidence.

Reason #2. The truth is, and has always been, the very best marketing strategy.

Truth is the vital ingredient to the most enduring artistic brands. With every famous artist in history, their art was their truth. They served a greater purpose than their craft. So finding your “why” requires deep and honest self-reflection.

Your why does not come from some wisdom outside of yourself. It comes from within, so you must “know thyself” and pay *no never mind* to everyone else. Who can possibly know your calling but you?

If you want to get paid, then your job goes well beyond mastering your craft and finding your voice. An artist's job is to *inspire*, from the Latin *inspirare*: to breathe into. The primary function of art is to inspire new thought shaped by emotions using the creative mediums we master—be it painting, music, design, craft, or photography. The medium is secondary.

Regardless of your artistic discipline, our common currency is emotion. This is the reason that we artists are often the first to be commissioned and the first to be executed during political or religious revolutions.

Given our cultural and economic role, a successful artist must know who they are and what they stand for and that is not something they are going to teach us in art school or in business school.

I have identified eight sequential “realms” that are essential to building a profitable artistic enterprise.

1. **Visioning.** Confirming your values and expressing your purpose. “Know thyself.”
2. **Valuing.** Creating unique value above and beyond the art.
3. **Dealing.** Making art that makes money.
4. **Copyrighting.** Claiming your intellectual property.
5. **Targeting.** Celebrating your tribe’s values and culture.
6. **Selling.** Having guided conversations.
7. **Profiting.** More money in, less money out.
8. **Accomplishing.** Remaining committed to a SMARTER goal.

When [I mentor artists](#) we spend about 80% of our time on the first realm, Visioning. Once an artist masters this, they have their “why,” they know their “what,” and they’re getting clearer on their “how.” Visioning is *the* most challenging realm, but it’s also the most important and rewarding.

To help artists find their why, I’ve developed a deeply personal and brutally honest process of discovery inspired by Viktor Frankl’s book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Frankl taught me that suffering is an inevitable part of our human condition. Yet suffering, loss, and failure can be our greatest teachers and our greatest source of inspiration. This led me to a simple equation:

Pains + Lessons = Purpose

I always tell artists that if they are not crying and blowing snot out of their noses during the Purpose Process, they are not really doing their homework.

This may sound awful, it’s actually very healing. Artists say that this process, in and of itself, is worth the price of admission. Even if they didn’t sell one damn piece of art. The Purpose Process allow artists to shift their most painful memories from a source of hurt and shame to one of wisdom and purpose.

Here are a few actual examples from three very brave artists whom I’ve mentored.

[Kate Bradley, children’s portrait painter](#)

Describe the first most painful moment in your entire life.

When my mom left my dad.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Scared*
2. *Helpless*
3. *Abandoned*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting her arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would she offer?

Don't worry. Be strong and trust in God. He has a plan for you and your parents and it will work out for your good.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. She is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

Marriage is hard, but your parents love you. Don't be defeated by this—it will pass. Our suffering makes us stronger, more compassionate, and better able to help and inspire others.

Describe the second most painful moment in your entire life.

When my boyfriend broke up with me.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Hurt*
2. *Rejected*
3. *Unworthy*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting her arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would she offer?

I know it really hurts now, but one day you will be thankful it happened. One day you will meet a man who cherishes you and you'll say it was all worth it.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. She is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

You are a person of great value whom any man would be lucky to have. Don't let one person determine your value.

Describe the third most painful moment in your entire life.

Being left out of friend groups at school.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Hurt*
2. *Rejected*
3. *Unworthy*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting her arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would she offer?

It's going to be okay. You will make true and lasting friendships. Girls are so clique-y now, but you'll get through it and be stronger for it.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. She is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

Others may not know your value, but I do. You are a precious creation of infinite worth. You don't have to be anything other than yourself.

What is the overall purpose of your suffering?

To be able to help others know they are loved and valued, to inspire them.

What is your mission?

To help families celebrate their relationships by honoring the individuality of their children.

What is your unique value proposition? What problem is worth solving?

My work captures and celebrates the fleeting moments of childhood and alleviates the pain parents feel as a result of their children growing up so quickly.

Whom do you serve?

Wealthy, married, stay-at-home moms between the ages of 30 and 35. They are members of churches and country clubs and they contribute to charitable causes. They typically have two to three kids who attend private schools. Their husbands are doctors, lawyers, and bankers.

My customers often feel like they aren't doing a good enough job as a mom, that they're screwing up their kids. Their children are growing up very quickly.

Kate's why: Affirming the individual's value within the context of their relationships is an ongoing theme in Kate's work. She focuses on children because that's when our self-worth is shaped.

[Gabriella Lewenz, mixed media artist](#)

Describe the first most painful moment in your entire life.

Leaving my home in Greece and my primary caregiver, with whom I was very close, as a little girl.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Terror*
2. *Alone*
3. *Mute*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting her arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would she offer?

The pain of this experience, being severed from love, will take its course and you will heal in time from the loss of love and safety.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. She is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

Someday you will find an extraordinary sense of place, of beauty, and you will feel deep joy again.

Describe the second most painful moment in your entire life?

My father's death when I was only 12 years old.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Unworthy*
2. *Abandoned*
3. *Alone*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting her arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would she offer?

Losing your father will change your life. This pain will pass with time.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. She is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

You will learn to use your solitude to learn to paint.

Describe the third most painful moment in your entire life?

Giving birth to my still-born son.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Shock*
2. *Guilt*
3. *Destroyed*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting her arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would she offer?

Feel this pain. You are not alone in feeling the depth of this pain. In this extreme loss you will also feel an immense joy; to know joy and loss at the same time is a huge gift.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. She is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

Life takes away and life renews. You will never forget your loss, but the pain will pass in time.

What is the overall purpose of your suffering?

I've learned there is a powerful threshold in the depth of grief. To trust in life. I am not alone, and the pain will pass as life renews and restores.

What is your mission?

People are unnecessarily grieving alone and feeling isolated in their life challenges and they need a nurturing and beautiful place to heal and reflect.

What is your unique value proposition? What problem is worth solving?

People often need a welcoming and private retreat away from home to heal. I offer a beautiful, warm, and private sanctuary vacation where people can retreat and heal, and they can take home a symbol of their stay with an existing or

commissioned piece of art from my adjacent artist's studio.

Whom do you serve?

My female patron often wears Ralph Lauren. There is an elegant but understated presentation about her. She's had subtle facial work done and is healthy and fit. She has a natural overall look with discrete makeup. She wears one-off designer accessories purchased from her exotic travels in the way of her belts, shoes, and scarves. She loves adventure travelling in style to places like Peru, Ecuador, Tibet, and remote parts of Africa. She often thinks about her spirituality.

She knows many parts of Europe but has never been to New Zealand. She has a diplomatic vibe and manner. Very likely she had working stints at the UN and UNICEF in her earlier days, has been a strong advocate for animal rights, and is influential in her charity causes. She speaks at least one other language and while she doesn't have time for small talk, she is discreet and kind.

Gabriella's why: Interestingly Gabriella volunteered at a hospice for several years, so she is quite familiar with the process of grieving, nurturing, and comforting. She has known grief and isolation, life and death, and she has learned how to channel those emotions into creativity and thus make peace with them.

[Mitch Siegel, painter and children's autism advocate](#)

Describe the first most painful moment in your entire life?

The moment I received an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis for my son Ryan when he was 4 years old.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Denial*
2. *Shock*
3. *Fear*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting his arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would he offer?

Ryan is a wonderful and unique gift from God. He will forever enrich your life and you will enrich his and the lives of other families who are trying to cope with an

ASD diagnosis.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. He is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

Unconditional love and acceptance.

Describe the second most painful moment in your entire life?

The moment I fully realized that my mother was incapable of being a grandmother to my children.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Disbelief*
2. *Resentment*
3. *Anger*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting his arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would he offer?

Mom was a loving and caring mother when she raised me, but she had a difficult time emotionally dealing with the fact that I had a son with ASD. Ryan's disability triggered some deep emotional issues for Mom because she had a younger brother with a disability. His name was Lawrence and my grandmother could not take care of him once he entered adolescence.

Grandma was advised by doctors to give him over to the state, a sad but common response to a disability back in the day. She did so and Lawrence entered a state facility where he remained for the rest of his life. I cannot imagine the pain my grandmother endured for the rest of her life. My mother went to see her brother one time only at the age of 21 and fainted immediately upon seeing him in that environment. She was not capable of reliving that trauma again.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. He is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

Be more understanding, as much as it may hurt, of your loved ones' motivations and emotional weaknesses. Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know

nothing about.

Describe the third most painful moment in your entire life?

The moment I knew I had to separate from my wife and leave my family after coming to terms with my sexual orientation.

Choose three words to describe how you felt in that very moment.

1. *Sorrow*
2. *Regret*
3. *Loneliness*

Imagine the wiser, more mature version of yourself putting his arm around this earlier version of you in pain. What words of comfort would he offer?

Leaving the family will require you to have much strength and patience. As your children get older and mature, they will come to better understand the situation and will accept you and love you for who you are.

The future version of yourself knows that there is a lesson you are to learn from this painful moment. What is it? Just pretend you know. He is counting on you to tell the truth, to see the future.

You will ultimately have a healthier, more joyful, and more authentic relationship with your children.

What is the overall purpose of your suffering?

Embracing personal authenticity and confronting and accepting reality brings joy and happiness to life.

What is your mission?

To build a community of educated parents that possess hope and who are empowered and take early action to help their Autistic children.

What is your unique value proposition? What problem is worth solving?

There is little support or knowledge about how to cope and act when a parent receives a child's diagnosis of autism, so critical early intervention is unnecessarily delayed. I am providing a step-by-step process to help parents cope, have hope, and effectively advocate for their child.

Whom do you serve?

Parents or caregivers of an infant or toddler with a recent ASD diagnosis who are feeling the psychological impact of ASD, with grief, denial, and anger, yet trying to feel in control again.

Mitch's why: What Mitch eventually discovered was that his painting is his hobby while his purpose is working with parents to accept and act upon their children's autism diagnosis early.

Each of these brave artists has found a powerful personal purpose and determined a clear mission, but that's just the beginning of their journey. Next, each artist must specifically define, test, and master their unique value proposition. Having learned a vital lesson and solved a problem for themselves, their next test is to determine how they can help solve that problem for others that share their values.

As an artist, you must reach and engage your tribe, and this will require another level of skill and knowledge beyond significant self-reflection. You must take on the mantle of entrepreneurship so that you can be of service to others by creating products that satisfy a need in the marketplace.

This is quite the opposite of the message we receive in art school, where we are encouraged to just indulge our own creative satisfaction. If you are one of the very few darlings who are currently favored by the art establishment this may work out, but most artists will never get past the fierce and fickle gatekeepers.

Yet the pervasive and patronizing message to artists is that they shouldn't worry their pretty little heads about business and money. This is completely destructive nonsense that it is my own mission to destroy. Every successful artist is an entrepreneur just as every successful entrepreneur is an artist. When you have a purpose you don't need permission or sanction from the art establishment. You can sell art without selling out.

The bottom line is this. If you have unique talent and something to say to the world, you must make art. And if you want to be heard, you must sell art.

My Entrepreneurial Journey

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Sue B. is the creator of the online Instagram course Insta-Results, the author of the bestselling ebook *Instagram Basics for your Business*, and a speaker and business coach.

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* * *

I grew up in Andover, Massachusetts, with an entrepreneurial father who worked long, hard hours as a partner at Al's Auto Supply in nearby Lawrence.

As a middle child of three, I knew that if I wanted to get quality time with my dad, I had to wake up at 5 am on Saturday morning to go to work with him. Not only did I get to be with my dad, Goldie, but I got to pick the first Dunkin Donut in the pink box and hang out with all the guys who worked there. I was the only girl in the shop.

Typically, my job was to sweep the wooden floors and organize the distributors and mufflers. Occasionally I got to work the front desk and greet the customers. This was my favorite—I love meeting new people. From a young age, I saw the value of great customer service. This was lesson #1: ALWAYS make the customer

feel special and appreciated. I believe this is one of the most important qualities of a successful business.

One of the bonuses I got from working with my dad was taking home the samples of car paint. At the time I wore plain metal barrettes in my hair. I thought, *how cool would it be to paint these with rainbows, strawberries, hearts, and boats using this beautiful paint?* I was proud of my original creations, especially once all my friends decided they wanted their own. So I brought them to school on a ribbon and sold them for \$2.00 a pair at recess (even though I wasn't suppose to).

I loved what the money afforded me: all the things my parents wouldn't buy. I liked the power I felt when I could shop and buy what I wanted, when I wanted, with my own money. This was the beginning of my entrepreneurial journey. At 13 years old I was making money doing what I loved.

I wasn't a stellar student. I probably should have taken first grade over. My spelling was awful and I never mastered the rules of the English language. To this day, I struggle with spelling. But I chose to embrace my strengths and pursue creative projects that fueled my soul and gave me more self-confidence.

I graduated from Simmons College in Boston with a degree in nutrition. When a job offer fell through (after moving to Norfolk, Virginia) I decided to do what I loved, which at the time was hand-painting clothing. This was the early 80s. I leased a pushcart at The Waterside in Norfolk and started selling my wares.

Late at night, I was painting overalls, diapers, sneakers, hats, and T-shirts. During the day, I sold my creations off that pushcart under the moniker Color Me. I got a waitressing job at Phillips Seafood to pay my bills. When you start a business you need multiple revenue streams, a practice I continue to this day.

When my customers started asking me for hand-painted boxer shorts and my sales of boxer shorts exceeded the sales of everything else I was painting, I knew I was onto something. I changed the name to Boxer Rebellion, brought in a partner, and with no business degrees or business experience we grew Boxer Rebellion to a million-dollar business. I was 22.

I simply listened to the demands of my customers and took action. I was nimble

and willing deliver what the market wanted to make money doing what I enjoyed.

For four years I had fun traveling to trade shows selling to buyers and growing a successful wholesale and retail business. We acquired licenses from Disney and The Simpsons. Our biggest success came from selling to college bookstores across the country. Back then I knew every team's mascot and colors.

After four years of success, I got the itch to move back to Boston to be with my boyfriend, now husband, Roger, who has known me since I was hand-painting barrettes. We were Camp Tel Noar buddies. After college, Roger had encouraged me to move to Virginia and figure out what I wanted to do with my life. His support and encouragement has been critical to all my businesses and is a bedrock of our marriage and friendship.

When I moved back to Boston, I started a business called Only in America selling T-shirts and boxer shorts from pushcarts at 3 malls in the Boston area. When my daughter Amanda arrived 22 years ago, I decided to pull out of selling at malls and turned my attention to college campuses. I strategically set up shop around reason-to-purchase times like Christmas, Hanukkah, Valentine's Day, and graduation. I paid each university a fee to sell for the day. I brought Amanda and her nanny with me and put the baby in a pack-and-play right next to where I worked. I was able to make \$800 to \$2,000 a day and worked 3 days a week. This was great money with a very flexible schedule. I always figured out how to be profitable by juggling the demands of motherhood and the responsibilities around the house.

When my twin daughters Lila and Kira were born 4 years later, I had to step back and reinvent myself again, this time with a business called From the heART. For 5 years, I taught art classes in my basement to Amanda and all her grade school friends. This was my favorite business. I got to hang out with Amanda and her friends and teach them how to re-purpose everyday objects into art while listening to their conversations and watching Amanda thrive as a budding artist.

Success for me hasn't always been about the money, although the money justifies the value of time. Success to me was having my daughters see me doing

what I love. I never said things like “I can’t wait for the weekend” or “I need a glass of wine.” I lived every day with confidence and passion.

As the twins got older and needed more of my attention, I reinvented myself again, this time with a good friend who also had 3 daughters including twins. (In fact, our twins have remained best friends.)

We’d been crafting together with our 6 daughters and no one was fighting, whining, or crying...this I noticed! We were using a double-sided, super-sticky tape instead of messy glue. My antennae went up. I have always had a knack for spotting trends and opportunities and this was one of those moments.

I looked at my girlfriend and said: I want to sell this tape to the craft market. So we started a company called Treasure It and sold our double-sided tape to the craft market with a focus on scrapbooking. This was 2002, when scrapbooking was huge. I even had the opportunity to be featured on QVC. I went to QVC School and demonstrated how to use our Treasure Tape to embellish photos with beads, ribbon, thread, cabochons, and paper. It was a huge hit. We went back on a second time and sold lots more tape. However, we did not have a pattern on the tape so we couldn’t scale the business.

This is the one business where I was in debt. After 4 years of trying to make it a successful business, it failed. I paid off \$20,000 in bills and moved on. Even though this is the business that failed, it’s the one that gave me the most confidence. You have to know when to call it quits and move on. This is something that I embrace.

Of course, I started an other business (surprise, surprise). This time I wanted my name to be a part of the brand, so I came up with SueB.Do. We sold Holey Soles (like Crocs) and used Jibbitz shoe charms to personalize them. From back in my barrette days I knew that people are willing to pay more for the personal touch.

My parents live on Cape Cod and we would spend our summers there as a family. We loved being on the beach in the water watching beautiful sunsets, and I saw a huge opportunity to sell products on the Cape. In the summer, visitors like us were in a good mood and wanted a to capture a special memory. So I put together a product line, worked with artists, and sold products at craft fairs and events.

In 2008, when the opportunity came to open up a seasonal retail store in the Popponesset Marketplace (coincidentally where my husband and I got married), I did. SueB.Do is now a fun and interactive retail store selling clothing, jewelry, and accessories with a nautical, coastal vibe that represents the Cape and the Islands (Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket).

Like every other parent, I tried to keep tabs on my kids' activities on social media, and I went from learning how to use it for that to learning how to use it for my business. In fact, I had so much success using social media to get people in the door at more store that I decided in the off-season (September–May) to teach other business owners how to use social media in my home town of Wellesley, Massachusetts. I founded Computer Companion and had moms come to my house once I week to learn Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest.

I loved teaching adults social media almost as much as I enjoyed teaching kids art. Inspiring, mentoring, and making a difference in someone's life is true success.

Then I observed something life-changing. I saw my twins scrolling on their phones. Not talking or texting—scrolling. I asked them what they were doing.

“Don't you dare get on Instagram,” they said. “Because then you're going to start teaching it.”

Of course I took the challenge. I read every blog post, studied all the big brands, and put together a strategy that saw my sales increase 40% that summer.

That's when I realized I had to teach this to business owners all over the world. I invested in Brendon Burchard's Experts Academy. For four days, I learned how you can share your gifts with the world by selling services online. This opened up a whole new world for me.

I invested in attending Masterminds: one with James Wedmore, who taught me how to launch an Instagram Bootcamp, and one with Melanie and Devin Duncan, who taught me about integrating automation and other systems into my online business.

Investing in others who have had success doing what you want to do is important and can save you a lot of time and money.

In October 2013, I launched my first online course, Insta-Results, and made over six figures in eight months. This pent-up demand inspired me to teach as many business owners as possible how to use Instagram.

I have been speaking on stages from Social Media Marketing World in San Diego to Social Media Camp in Victoria, B.C. and many more in between, but my personal favorite has been the stage at CreativeLive, which has allowed me to engage with a growing community of crafters, artist, DIYers, photographers, and business owners who tune in to watch from all over the world.

Of all my eighteen (and counting) businesses, teaching other business owners how to use Instagram has been my greatest joy.

About CreativeLive

CreativeLive empowers you to unleash your potential by bringing the world's greatest experts directly to you, live. Featuring workshops in photography, film, design, craft, business, and audio, CreativeLive unlocks previously closed doors by making dynamic education accessible to everyone.

Anyone can watch our live online workshops—for free—and interact with instructors in real time. The future of education is interactive, free, and live now. Join us.