

Creative Struggle is Real

30-Day Challenge

by
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Creativity in the shadows

Gain new perspectives from the darkness

Explore shadows and observe the forms, textures, movements, and stories that rise from the darkness. Find new perspectives as you learn how the light works to cast different shadows.

Exercise these creative muscles:

Curiosity

The practice of asking questions about the nature of your shadows trains you to question your surroundings so you can investigate and learn.

Body engagement

Engaging your body in the creative process helps open up creative channels that assist with making.

How to...

1. **Prepare for your shadow journey.** Grab a camera and prepare to look for shadows. Choose any type of camera. You can begin by using a digital camera or your mobile camera. You can also try using other types of devices—such as a disposable or Polaroid camera—to enhance your creative experience.
2. **Find shadows.** Shadows form when opaque objects disrupt the pathway of light. Let your curiosity lead you to discover shadows that exist in nature, in your home, or in the streets... anywhere! Pay attention. Be an observer. Play. Take your curiosity with you. Snap a photo of each unique shadow you encounter. What stories do the different shadows tell? What new patterns and textures do they create?
3. **Ask questions.** How was each shadow created? What objects does each represent? How is the shadow of an opaque object different from the object itself? How does an object's interaction with light and various surfaces create movement and form?
4. **Make and play.** Create your own shadows. Find a dark room or space and use a lamp, a candle, or a flashlight to cast shadows using different objects. Find interesting ways to make the shadows move. Practice using your body as a creative tool. Dance with your shadow or create unique poses and forms.
5. **Reflect.** Review your series of shadow photos. What new perspectives have you gained? How has shadow play inspired you?

Colour yourself

Connect and explore using colour

Become aware of the colours that are present in your life. Use colour as a prompt to connect to your feelings. Find new ways to express yourself by using different colours in different ways.

Exercise these creative muscles:

Observation

When you pay attention to your surroundings, you feed your inspiration with new information that can bring about creative breakthroughs and new perspectives.

Emotional connection

When you practice making conscious decisions to connect with your emotions, you gain direct access to an unlimited creative resource.

How to...

1. **Stop.** Push the pause button for a moment and make a conscious decision to observe.
2. **Look around.** Notice the colours that are present in your life. Which colours have you chosen—your clothes, possessions, home, etc. ? And which colours do you find yourself adapting to—perhaps at the office, on public transport, or in nature?
3. **Feel color.** Pay attention to any emotions and sensations connected to the colours in your life. How do the colours that surround you make you feel? Why?
4. **Reflect.** Are there any colours missing from your life? Which ones? Why? Are there any colours that are overly present, or colours that disrupt your life?
5. **Play with colour.** Practice playing with different colours. Explore colours that don't normally resonate with you. Use crayons, markers, and fingerpaints in different shades to experience the new and unexpected feelings that can arise from colours you don't usually interact with.
6. **Colour yourself.** Choose to bring colours into your life with the intention of connecting with how you are feeling or how you would like to express yourself. It can feel invigorating to wear a colour that communicates the emotions you wish you could convey with words. Take risks with colors to “try on” new ways of being or discover new parts of yourself. Or simply gain deeper self-knowledge by paying attention to the colours you choose.

Storysmelling

Stories only the nose can tell

Your sense of smell is a powerful creative tool. Smells connect with narratives. Use your sense of smell to unleash your imagination and uncover untold stories.

Exercise these creative muscles:

Imagination

When you exercise your nose, you unlock the door to your imagination. Using smell as a simple prompt grows your capacity to access your imagination on the spot.

Connection

Practice using faculties you already have, like smell and memory, to connect with the world around you. Use what you already know to develop stories that others can relate to.

How to...

1. **Locate a smell.** Open your nose and let it lead the way. You can start by choosing a specific object (like flowers in nature) or location (like a pastry shop). Or you can take a moment wherever you are right now and begin to notice the different smells around you. Choose one to focus on.
2. **Breathe it in.** Close your eyes and sit with the smell.
3. **Describe it.** Use adjectives. Think of using different textures to describe what you smell. What emotions does it evoke?
4. **Take a trip down memory lane.** Do any specific memories come to mind? How are they connected to this smell?
5. **Enter your imagination.** Choose one aspect of your smelling exploration to focus on and inspire a creative making session. How can you use this scent as a launching pad to imagine a story, make a new connection, or create a fresh idea?

Blackout poetry

Transform existing creations into something new

Work with the creative constraints of existing texts to launch your creative process and transform old ideas into new ones.

Exercise these creative muscles:

Uncertainty

When you exercise your capacity to build on existing textual creations, you learn to face the perceived limitations of uncertainty and expand your creative world.

Making

When you practice working with simple, everyday materials, you develop your ability to look for creative opportunities in any situation.

How to...

1. **Start with existing text.** Find a newspaper or any other existing text (e.g. poetry, sheet music, old books). Make sure you choose something you don't mind writing on; otherwise, you can make a photocopy of it to use for the exercise. Note: what you choose isn't important here, so there's no need to spend too long deciding on a text. In fact, choosing something at random often enhances your creativity.
2. **Prepare your making tools.** All you need to complete this exercise is your text (or photocopy) and a black marker.
3. **Choose words.** Skim the text and pick out words that jump off the page or resonate with you.
4. **Isolate the words.** Use your black marker to draw squares around each word you chose.
5. **Black out the rest.** Use your marker to eliminate the remaining text by covering it up.
6. **You are a poet!** Take a step back and admire your work. Share your newly created poem(s) with others.

The inspiring “Oops!”

Embrace your creative mistakes

Practice working through creative mistakes, errors, and accidents. Reframe what was *supposed* to be into what *can* be. In other words, turn your “Oops!” moments into positive creative constraints that drive possibility.

Exercise these creative muscles:

Ambiguity

Practice facing uncertainty. When you learn to welcome the unknown, you develop your creative resilience.

Creative constraints

Practice using what you've got. This builds a tolerance for working with limited resources and ultimately boosts your creativity.

How to...

1. **Own the “Oops!”** You've made a creative mistake. So what?
2. **Accept it.** There's no turning back now, so it's time to move on. But first, take a moment to feel it. Are you angry? Sad? Worried? Then *be kind to yourself*. Start learning to let go of your attachment to what should have been.
3. **Reset.** Step back and take a breath. It's time to reset your mind and begin thinking differently.
4. **Reframe it.** Is this really a mistake or could it be an opportunity? Consider how the mistake might inspire another creative path or action.
5. **Take a chance.** Free yourself from the word “mistake” once and for all and start believing in your next action or decision. Then—roll with it! Practice moving forward.