

## An Introduction

***“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.”***

— Pablo Picasso

We are *all* artists. Every single one of us. From the belly dancer to the banker. From the salesman to the singer. There are as many different ideas about why we are here on this planet as there are people. But what if it's as simple as this: we are all here to *create*.

Authentically. Non-judgmentally. Joyfully. Fearlessly.

The question is — are you?

Are you heeding the call of your true artistic self? Are you willing to do what it takes to silence the inner critic — that fear-based voice that will keep you from manifesting your potential and devise lots of rational-sounding excuses that put your *real* life on hold?

We're all artists, regardless of whether we get paid or not to make art. Whether someone tells us “it's good” and gives us an award, or no one ever notices. Your *life* is your work of art. *You* are the art. And it's more than the sum total of the jobs you book, the paintings you create, the poetry you write, the money you save, the sales you make. It's your joy and hope and love and passion expressed onto this gigantic canvas called

Existence. It's been said (and it's true): we are each — individually — the Michelangelo *and* the David of our lives.

But how do we become more conscious of what we're creating and learn to express our creative selves fully in our daily lives? How do we reach the feeling of joy that is our birthright? How do we become liberated from our fears that imprison us? These are our real life goals. As creators. As human beings. And that's a bigger calling than simply being an actor or a lawyer. A musician or a teacher. A painter or a nurse. Yet, wonderfully, our entire lives can be transformed by meeting face-to-face our own potential creative genius. And when we do, we become our own best teacher. Our own best lawyer. Our own best painter or nurse. And isn't that what we're all after? To be our best selves?

So how do we do it? A book agent once asked me why I was specifically qualified to write about creativity.

My answer: Duh. Because I've suffered.

Not the kind of epic suffering that torments millions of people every year. No famine. No civil war. No incurable disease or living below-the-poverty-line. My suffering seemed to be more specific to living in America — a culture that allowed me to have it all and yet something was still missing. How could that be? I had everything and yet still felt as if a part of me needed to be filled. (And actually, the word “suffering” isn't the right word when compared to *real* suffering.) Let's call it unhappiness. A general malaise that

strikes so many of us. Boredom. Restlessness. Low-level edginess. Dissatisfaction.  
Chronic complaining.

Sound familiar?

I was so dramatic. On stage. And off. I wanted out of this feeling. But how?

I started searching. Hard.

I went to India three times. I bathed in the Ganges. (My Indian friends thought I was nuts.) I did weeklong yoga retreats meditating 12 hours a day, not speaking for 10 days straight. “Austerity is the way to enlightenment,” I thought. I read books (like the ones in college that made me fall asleep) about every religion known to man and explored the great spiritual truths taught by many teachers. I fed the homeless. I had lots of sex (were the answers hidden there?) and became a work-a-holic. I tried therapy and quitting acting. I found a Guru (or did he find me?) and fasted for days. I did hallucinogens only to be found deep in the forests of Brazil (“Is that lizard talking to me?”) and went through a period of celibacy. I went to self-help seminars and workshops and weekend conferences. I wrote pages and pages in my personal diaries, partied, made vision boards and moved cross-country.

Finally, exhausted from all my trying, I screamed to the universe, “I need answers!” Actually, it was something less articulate like, “What the *F\*\*\*?*”

And then I had an epiphany. Of sorts.

I stopped searching. Instead, I began to live the questions. (Well, not at first. And more like stumbling around in the dark to find the light switch, but hey, I tried.)

Giving up control? Not so easy. But I loosened my demand that the answers had to be given to me in the way I wanted. I realized that the answers I was seeking were there all along. I just didn't want to look. Or sometimes I was truly unable to receive them at the time because I wasn't open to what they wanted to teach me. Ironical, huh? Considering I am a teacher.

I learned that life's potential lies in the *not knowing*: the excitement and fear of throwing yourself into something with abandon — risking embarrassment, failure and ridicule rather than sitting on the sidelines of life asking for a guarantee *before* you take the leap.

I discovered that every time I avoided something, I was, in reality, trying to run away from it.

Actually, I was trying to run away from myself.

The answers I sought were not *out there*. They weren't in a lover or a job or a drug or a TV show or a vacation or a better body or bigger house or nicer car or a reality show or a pay raise or a newborn baby or a marriage or a nose job or even . . . in an acting teacher.

The answers we seek lie within ourselves. Within each of us.

We're all here to learn how to be the creators we truly are. Or, more accurately, to *remember* who we already are. This happens by sharing ourselves — all parts. Even the parts we want to keep hidden. Especially them. The ones we judge most harshly — the icky, scary, ugly ones.

And once we do, the stuff that held us back from our brilliance — our light — becomes the very stuff that is our source of creativity and inspiration.

So that's where our journey begins.

A lot of what's going to help us is to understand the practical applications of many of the concepts I discuss in this book. In order to do so, I use a lot of examples from the work I do with actors.

## **Why Acting?**

Why do you think? Look around. We're everywhere. Our culture is driven by anyone who can become famous for *any reason*, using their popularity to sell products. A lot of times, it's actors. Other times it's an athlete who takes on celebrity status or a YouTube star who brands himself. But the truth is, we *all* act. Some of us just get paid a lot of money to do it. Acting — perhaps more than any other art form and any other profession — can be understood as a metaphor to make points about who we are — and aren't — as people.

It seems we're living in a time where we relate to each other not through who we are but through the roles we play — which include what we accomplish, how much money we make, how we look on Facebook, how famous or beautiful we are, how many hits we get on YouTube and how clever we tweet. Our culture is so oriented toward the roles people play and how we *appear* to others that when someone shatters those illusions — either negatively or positively — we're often left having to deconstruct the myths we believed about them in the first place.

Celebrity is our national obsession. Our desire for our 15 minutes of fame (at any cost) illustrates how we're all actors, whether we're famous or not. Our interest in actors partly has to do with our culture's elimination of archetypes. American society has no archetypes to draw from in order to forge more authentic lives. Historically, most cultures have created through Divine archetypes to help human beings realize their innate potential and connect to nature and something greater than their personas. The ancient Greeks would utilize the pantheon of gods and goddesses, Native Americans created totemic rituals, and today, much of India relies on Hindu gods and goddesses to help them personify qualities they wish to evoke within themselves. Americans have no ancient mythological archetypal models to inspire us.

One could argue that we do, but almost all of them are derived not from nature or spirit or some other existential quality, but ironically through TV and film images and celebrity itself. There's Cinderella (the rags-to-riches story), June & Wally Cleaver ("family values"), and the underdog hero who "makes it" — Rocky Balboa. Because the identification with mythology is hard-wired within us as a people, we're going to search. And since media of every type and the use of social networking sites are

becoming *the form* of storytelling in our culture, our new role models have become celebrities born of this technology. Not because they inspire something within us but simply because they're on TV. So, *The Apprentice's* Omarosa takes the place of Medusa. A famous celebrity being thrown into jail for numerous infractions fulfills our need to see the fall of the tragic hero. Contemporary Schadenfreude.

But the question remains. Are reality stars who become famous for eating cockroaches or beating each other up while on vacation in Italy fulfilling the deeper desire within each of us to connect to our own archetypes to realize our potential?

Our fascination with actors comes from what psychologists say is our over-exposure to celebrity-infused media; causing us to invite actors into our homes through the media we receive. They inhabit our universe and we enact certain roles learned by watching them. They become our extended family. Even if we've never met them. If we follow their tweets, we're a part of their lives.

We dress like them, mimic them, parody them, read about them, have websites built for them, talk like them, demand answers from them, tweet with them, Facebook friend-request them, stalk them, deify them, vilify them, make fun of them, and want to be them. They become our role models, our heroes, our disappointments, our cultural scapegoats, our surrogate parents. We buy their records and DVDs, their perfumes and make-up and nail polish and hair products, their jeans and shoes and handbags and sunglasses, their books and movies, their work-out programs and cookware and skin care packages and fashion lines.

Actors (and celebrities of any kind) in short, *are* our culture. But what if they – and you (and all of us!) – are so much more than the roles we assume? What if

transcending our self-ascribed labels, definitions and judgments led us to an entirely new relationship with ourselves? What if everything we ever needed is deeply buried within ourselves and the journey is a journey inward. Not outward. But in order to access it we first have to know we possess it. And we also have to identify the fears that hold us back. That's not always easy, because just like the acting masks we wear on a daily basis that keep us hidden from the world, fear hides itself through many different faces: resistance, doubt, impatience, judgment, sarcasm, negativity, complaining, comparing, procrastination, avoidance, pessimism, denial and cynicism are just a few. I dabble in all of them on a daily basis. *Rats!* The goal is to first become aware of them. Then we can dismantle them. We'll do that in this book.

We're also going to cover a lot of other ground here. There are homework exercises (one lesson a week for the next 15 weeks) that might help you discover creative worlds you never knew existed. Think of it as a workbook to be used any way you like. The next 15 weeks may be asking you to suspend your conditioned thinking. You know, that voice that's the first to tell you something isn't possible. Don't believe it. It's been keeping you in the dark too long. It's time to unlock access to your right brain and let as much light in as you can. Try stepping into a new way of thinking. It may question old-view paradigms you've outgrown — and ask you to create a new framework from which to see yourself, and what's possible. Isn't that exciting? Couldn't it be fun? Our built-in biases will still be there to reclaim after the experiment if you choose to re-adopt them. I'm hoping you won't.

So really the question to ask yourself is, "What do I have to lose?"



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