

What does it mean to be “creative”? While we often associate creativity with artsy types, anyone who creates anything new can be said to be creative. When you think about it that way, doesn’t “creative” apply to all of us? Whether you create poems, flower arrangements, baby blankets, grilled specialties, tattoos, hairstyles, or something else, you are making something that did not previously exist — creating.

When we are inspired to create, to combine ingredients in a bold new way or to carve a hunk of wood into some never-before-seen shape, it can feel magical. Perhaps you recall a time when you awoke from a dream, knew your dream had a fantastic story line, and sat down at your computer and furiously typed out a rough plot for a short story. Or maybe you went to the farmers’ market, purchased a wide assortment of vegetables, and then went home and invented a new dish with many of them, delighted in the new taste combinations you had created.

Sometimes our creative juices flow. Is it magic? Everyone at some point, though, experiences the frustration of not being able to create. Writers call it Writer’s Block, which is defined as the inability to write. We may not have a fancy term to describe the lack of inspiration a flower arranger may feel when he struggles to figure out his next bouquet — Flower Arranger’s Block just doesn’t have a great ring to it — but we know that every person involved in creative endeavors has that awful feeling occasionally (or more often) of just being completely stumped by what to do next. Sometimes creators even wonder if they will ever be able to create again. Staring at a bare canvas or empty page or collection of ingredients with a blank mind can be intimidating enough to paralyze even the most seasoned creator.

While we typically celebrate success and try to hide our failures, the burgeoning failure movement asks us to not only acknowledge our failures but to recognize them as learning experiences and honor them. By publicizing our failures, we can normalize the idea that defeat is often a precursor to success. Appreciating failure also helps us understand the value of a less-than-smooth process.

The beginning of the chapter focuses on creative impulses and processes. Anne Lamott suggests that the secret to creativity is to not aim for brilliance. A meme expresses what a fine line there is between being blocked and simply lacking motivation. Emily Temple presents the advice of thirteen well-known writers on beating Writer’s Block. New York Book Editors suggest that Writer’s Block may boil down to procrastination. Andre Grant explores the creative genius of Beyoncé’s visual album *Lemonade*.

The chapter ends with a look at forces that crush creativity and ways to free ourselves of those forces. Philosopher Alan Watts suggests that the education system’s emphasis on grade completion causes us to not pay attention to the journey, which to his mind, *is* the inspiration. Johannes Haushofer and the Aalto Entrepreneurship Society urge us to embrace failure as part of the process of getting to success.