

Clare Thorbes  
Creativity Coach

## Block-Buster

Info and Inspiration for Creatives: November 2019



FEATURE

### ***Anxiety: A New Relationship***

What if anxiety is actually your friend and not some dreaded enemy that must be ignored, suppressed, or medicated?

In my inaugural *Block-Buster* issue a couple of years ago, I wrote *Why So Scared: Performance Anxiety*. If you'd like to read it, [click here](#). Although that knowledge is still valid, new neuroscience and cognitive and behavioural research are revolutionizing the way anxiety is viewed by the helping professions. They're also pointing the way for us creatives, who tend to be more susceptible to anxiety throughout the process of making and sharing our work - and in our lives in general.

### **Attitude shift**

In *Hack Your Anxiety: How to Make Anxiety Work for You in Life, Love, and All That You Do*, psychologist Alicia H. Clark argues that anxiety is not a holdover of our lizard brain whose easily-triggered alarm bell no longer applies to modern life. Instead, it's a critically important system that alerts us to the things we value and need to protect and look after. Once it has our attention, anxiety's next function is to energize us and motivate us to take the right action.

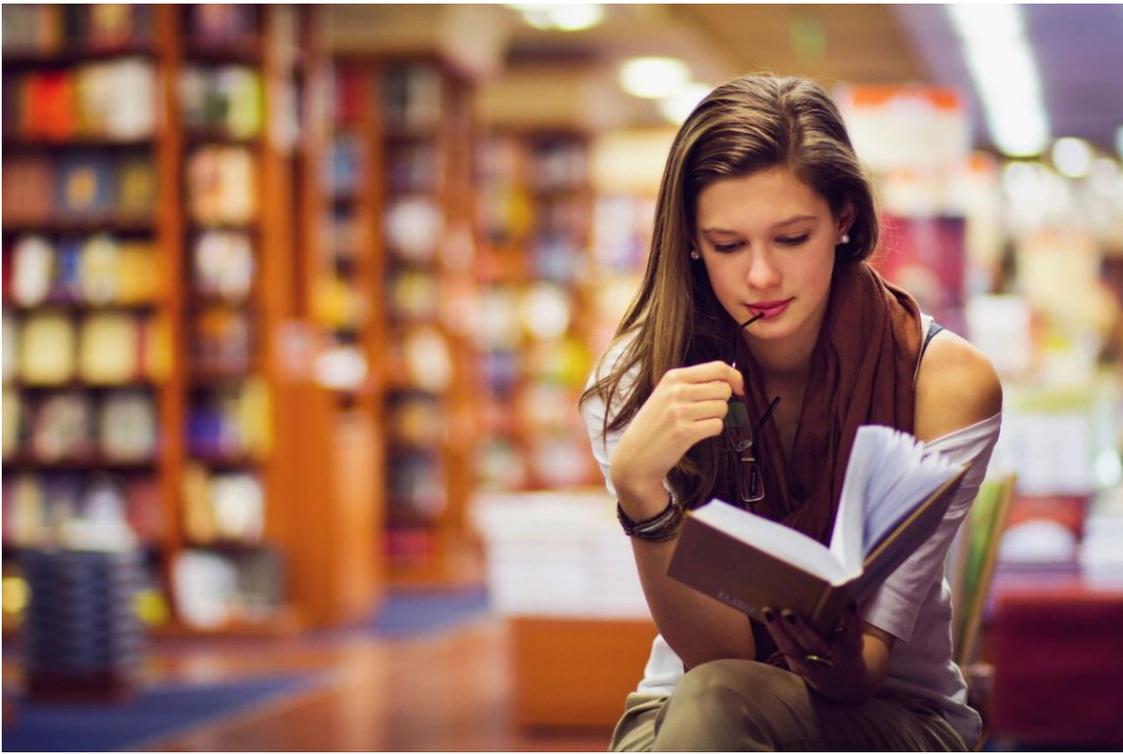
### **New approaches**

Changing our self-talk and the way we think about anxiety is the first step towards harnessing its energy. You can break the pattern of escalating symptoms that can take you straight into a panic attack. Instead of saying to yourself, "Oh God, I'm anxious, I'm going to have a heart attack!", try one of the following techniques, or make up one or more of your own:

- Re-interpret the sensations as something positive: "I'm excited! I can't wait!"
- Give your rational brain a chance to weigh in: "Hm, I wonder what my anxiety is trying to tell me."
- Build your confidence: "I *can* tolerate these feelings."
- Switch the focus outward: "My work brings people joy; I can't wait to share it!"

### **Diving deeper**

Would a workshop on anxiety that offered a host of strategies you could use to build a customized anxiety management plan be helpful to you? I'll be offering it in person for people in the Ottawa area and via email for creatives who live further away or would like to absorb the information at their own pace. Contact me at [clare.thorbes@gmail.com](mailto:clare.thorbes@gmail.com) for information on 2020 workshops.



## BOOKSHELF

### **Art Before Breakfast: A Zillion Ways to be More Creative No Matter How Busy You Are**

Danny Gregory

Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2015

Gregory, a self-taught artist, urges us to make creativity a part of our everyday lives, however chaotic or full of distractions and demands they may be. His "zillion ways" to make art each day include doing a contour drawing of your breakfast, stopping partway through a walk and sketching your surroundings, and drawing during meetings: "Draw your colleagues. . .your tools. . .your boss (if you dare)".

Along the way, the author shares little gems about making mistakes, obstacles, and the inner critic. He also takes the fuss out of perspective, with a quick reminder of the most basic concepts. Then he sagely advises, ". . .you are an artist, not an architect. Capture the spirit of the building, its age, its personality. Don't worry about perfection."

Gregory's central theme is that the deliberate slowing down that is required by drawing, painting and other visual arts not only makes us more observant, but serves as an antidote to the frenetic pace at which most of us live our lives. You'll find

yourself dipping into his book often for ideas to help you slip into peaceful creative flow.



## BRIGHT IDEAS

Creatives often say they're uncomfortable talking to collectors about their work, or that they couldn't possibly perform in front of an audience. This kind of belief can really hold us back. It ignores the reality that we all have a range of abilities, qualities, and sensibilities inside us that we can tap into and bring to the fore.

In *Soprano on Her Head*, Eloise Ristad described inviting a timid violinist to imagine being a star with a huge ego. How would such a person walk onto the stage, set up, and begin playing for the audience? The student gamely swaggered his way to the stage, really hamming up the ego stance - and proceeded to play with far more assurance than anything he'd been able to achieve before!

Instead of saying, "I can't do that" or "That's just not me", you could decide to be who and what you need to be in the moment. [Eric Maisel](#) expresses this idea as identities that are available to us.

The next time you need to come out of your shell to advance your creative

career, remember that you can don the cloak of the celebrity artist, the famous writer, or the laid-back performer who nevertheless commands the stage.



## COACHING NEWS

I have spaces available for in-person coaching at a café of your choice in the Ottawa area, or over the phone. Please contact me at [clare.thorbes@gmail.com](mailto:clare.thorbes@gmail.com) to arrange your free first consultation.

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## WISE WORDS

“Mistakes are almost always of a sacred nature.”

— *Salvador Dalí*

## Clare Thorbes

Clare Thorbes is a creativity coach and a visual artist specializing in portraiture. She helps writers, artists and performers overcome creative blocks and build a fulfilling life in the arts.

[About Clare](#)



Learn more about Creativity Coaching

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