

## Block-Buster

Info and Inspiration for Creatives: February 2020



### FEATURE

#### ***The Internal Logic of Resistance***

Resistance is one of the most frustrating aspects of building a creative life. It sometimes feels like insurmountable walls around you, and it can crop up in many different ways.

We resist the things we know would advance our creativity (like practising the foundations of our discipline or contacting people who could help us get noticed). Often this is due to some internal logic that escapes our conscious awareness.

Ellen Langer (*On Becoming an Artist*) likened this reluctance to addicts holding onto their substance of choice because to them, it makes psychological sense and yields dividends that others are hard-pressed to understand.

Sometimes we resist the things that matter most to us. The soul-deep importance of our art form can give rise to great vulnerability and feed resistance.

### **What do you gain by resisting?**

What is the psychological payoff of not taking the steps you know would be good for you in the long run? Staying in a place of safety, maintaining the comfort of familiar habits? It could feel too dangerous to confront your fears and risk stepping into the unknown.

### **What are you avoiding?**

Are you convinced you'll fall on your face if you dare to create? You might resist beginning because you know that writing a book, making art or sharing your music with an audience entails years of work to achieve mastery. You might cringe at the thought of your messy early output being misunderstood or even scorned by non-creatives. Or do you resist out of fear of others' reactions to the new direction in your work?

### **In the neutral zone**

If you manage to fight through initial resistance and begin, you'll face the challenges of what change consultant William Bridges<sup>[1]</sup> calls the neutral zone. Though aimed at the business world, his take on the transition process applies to creatives as well. The neutral zone is an uncomfortable place, because you're doing your creative work but aren't yet confident about it. You're still struggling with the learning process, yet afraid of what lies ahead.

### **What joys are you denying yourself?**

Imagine that those walls of resistance are ephemeral, or that you can simply step around the end of the wall and claim the gift of the creative life that awaits you.

Test your beliefs: do you fear that creativity has to involve endless struggle, or can you envision many joyful, ease-filled periods of creative work?

To de-escalate your fear, list the things that feel hardest about whatever it is that you're resisting. What's the worst that could happen if you stepped out of resistance? In the unlikely event that the worst *does* happen, what strategies could you devise to make it easier?

Ask yourself whether resistance is actually giving you a false sense of security. Although you feel safe from risk, you may be nagged by the feeling that something is missing, such as doing deeply meaningful work. That could be all the push you need.

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[1] *Managing Transitions*, by William Bridges,  
[https://www.amazon.ca/Managing-Transitions-4th-Making-Change/dp/0738219657/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Managing+Transition&qid=1581020306&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.ca/Managing-Transitions-4th-Making-Change/dp/0738219657/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Managing+Transition&qid=1581020306&s=books&sr=1-1)



BOOKSHELF

**Wild Words: Rituals, Routines, and Rhythms for Braving the Writer's Path**

Nicole Gulotta

Roost Books (imprint of Shambhala Publications) Boulder, CO, 2019

Gulotta adopts an invitational tone, using gardening and changing of the seasons metaphors to bring us into the world of writing. She describes journaling and reading as “perennial” activities that can be done year round as part of craft enrichment.

When her child was young, she would write on her phone in 10-minute increments. She calls this “writing in the margins”, and says a sustainable writing practice can be built from such brief intervals.

It’s common for creatives to lament the hours “wasted” on a day job or survival job. Gulotta says it’s more helpful to embrace the steady job as a partner in our creativity, and encourages us to think of it as having a patron. She also urges us to make peace with our circumstances, rather than bemoaning the lack of time for writing. Accepting that it may always be difficult to find time for creativity, and that even established and successful creatives face the same challenge, both comforts the reader and shows the way through any negativity.

Gulotta includes a chapter on taking care of the body, which she insists will ensure that “creativity flows more freely and more frequently”. She offers a ritual that consists of listing all the things that restore us, including naming fears aloud and accepting that our work may not have universal appeal. She acknowledges that: “It’s one thing to know that something might help, and quite another to bring our awareness there repeatedly, to follow through with the task, however small.”

*Wild Words* stands out from similar books about the writing life in its nurturing approach, fresh perspective on tackling internal and external challenges to creativity, and generous compendium of new rituals and habits that writers can fold into their lives.



## BRIGHT IDEAS

A technique I call Making a Space is useful for maintaining your equilibrium during encounters with difficult but important people in your creative or personal life. Imagine that there's an ever-widening space between you and the other person. You're safely and solidly planted where you are, but it's as if the other person is drifting further and further away. You can still hear their words, but the imagined distance between you diminishes the emotional sting of what they're saying. When the encounter is over, go off and do something vigorously physical to burn off any lingering stress in your body. Then you can calmly separate the content from the aggressive tone and assess whether any of it was valid criticism.

To read a full description of the technique, check out *Inside Creativity Coaching*, edited by Eric Maisel, available through Amazon: [https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=Inside+Creativity+Coaching&i=stripbooks&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss](https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=Inside+Creativity+Coaching&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss).

The book contains tips, techniques and inspirational ideas on a variety of topics, contributed by 40 creativity coaches from around the world.

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## COACHING NEWS

Nectar Gallery was the venue for my first *Re-Thinking Anxiety* workshop in January, attended by Ottawa Art Association members and area artists. Here's what one participant had to say about the workshop:

“A key issue for me was [Clare's] acknowledgment of the insecurity, self-doubt and anxiety involved in creating, exhibiting, and performing your work. Clare provided some concrete tips to curb that anxiety so that the creative life can flourish. – Jadzia R., artist

I plan to offer *Re-Thinking Anxiety* at various locations around the Ottawa area this year. Please contact me at [clare.thorbes@gmail.com](mailto:clare.thorbes@gmail.com) if your group would like to host this workshop.

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## WISE WORDS

“And the day came when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”

— *Anaïs Nin*

## 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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