

Personal Inventory

Checking in to Keep Your Creativity from Veering Off-Course

Passionate



PODCAST

episode 79 fun sheet

Set a timer on our phone for the same time each day to pause and check-in on how you're doing emotionally. Ask yourself objectively and without judgment where your head is at in that particular moment and make a note. This will only work if you're honest. There are no judgments here. You can't grow if you don't know what's going on in your head.

Building a habit of doing this regularly can greatly benefit not only your creativity, but your personal growth by helping you develop a growth mindset. Know that no matter where you are at, you have the power to learn, grow and become what you seek to become.

Before you read on, I'm obligated to remind you that I am not a mental health professional. The suggestions in this episode are intended to support you and give you an electronic hug of encouragement. If you feel you need a therapist for more in depth guidance, I whole heartedly encourage you to seek someone to speak with for professional support. I've done so myself over the years to grow and move through tough patches, with wonderful results. As an artist and a person, you deserve love and support.

IDENTIFY

Question: What am I feeling?

Example Answer:

Today I'm feeling small.

CLARIFY

If you're murky on what you're feeling, write something down and then dig deeper by asking:

What does that mean?

You can write "I don't know," but try to push through to a *why* and then another *why* until you feel you've gone as far as I can go before moving on to dig deeper.

Example further developed:

Today I'm feeling small.

What does that mean?

I'm feeling like I don't have the talent other artists have. Like I don't deserve to call myself an artist and stand among them. I feel unworthy.

Why?

Because I'm not good at drawing.

continued...

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DIG DEEPER FOR MORE CLARITY

Once you get to the end of your “whys,” ask: Is that really true?

Example further developed:

Today I'm feeling small.

What does that mean?

I'm feeling like I don't have the talent other artists have. Like I don't deserve to call myself an artist and stand among them. I feel unworthy.

Why?

Because I'm not good at drawing.

Is that really true?

You may answer: *Well not exactly.*

Dig deeper by getting as specific as possible:

In what way am I not good at drawing?

I struggle with proportions when I draw people

Okay. Now we're getting somewhere. We've gotten specific enough that we can pursue a solution. Now try asking yourself:

What are some ways I can address this challenge?

Whatever you find you are dealing with, brainstorm and write down as many as you can think of.

You might come up with, for example:

- *I can take a class*
- *I can practice in my sketchbook drawing figures 3 times a week for 5 minutes (chances are once you start, you'll keep going, and that's always okay)*

continued...

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COMMIT

Each day, decide on one action you can take for your art to move your goal along. For example:

I will carry my sketchbook and draw in the waiting room while my child is at the dentist

Note: You can put this all into one sketchbook page if you want. It's okay to use your sketchbook as a journal. It's *YOURS*. You can always draw on top of or around your notes later, and as a plus, the page won't be as intimidating for drawing on that way.

REFLECT

Think about what you did or didn't do toward that goal.

How does it feel to have done it or if you skipped it, **why did you skip it?**

Now of course, it's okay if you don't do your action step — this exercise is meant to *help* you, not make you more stressed. But the real help is going to be in clarifying *why* you didn't do it if you chose to skip it, just as it helps to clarify why you're feeling off. Notice I wrote, "Why you chose to skip it." Inaction is a choice, too. If you skipped the work, you owe it to yourself to figure out why. Would another solution work better for you?

Remember, **your fears are bullies**. They'll evaporate if you shine a light on them and stare them down. The check-in exercise is meant to help you shed light on your creative blocks.

When you check in with yourself, step back and try to be detached. Pretend your feelings are a fascinating new leaf you've found on your morning walk. Really look at it with curiosity.

Fear blocks creativity, but **fear cannot exist in the same space as curiosity**.

Curiosity is the key to a growth mindset, which is what you need to make progress.

Fear also cannot exist in the same space as gratitude. So you may want to add a short gratitude check-in with your morning coffee and before you turn out the light at night.

continued...

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You know I'm going to suggest that goes into your sketchbook. Remember, you can draw around it or even over it. Whatever you want.

The messier I am in my sketchbook, the more I use it. Often, I'll do a check in by ripping words out of print materials that resonate with me and pasting them on blank sketchbook pages. Then later I'll go back and draw over and around them as they resonate with me. It gets rid of the blank pages, and prompts ideas.

So, replace your fear with gratitude and curiosity and take action. Show up in your studio. The best way to overcome insecure days is to show up and get to work.

Here are my personal tricks to making it as easy as possible to get into my studio and get to work at all times:

- I scrape my palette clear after every session, so it's ready to go. I put wet paint onto palette paper, should I be able to use it in my next session (you can store this in a plastic container in the freezer to keep it away from food)
- I always have neutrally primed canvases and panels in my studio.
- I keep a list of paintings I want to make in my sketchbook, with sketches for potential layouts and clips of reference photos — or a group of reference photos saved in the lightbox of a stock image account online. It's stressful to try and keep all in your ideas in your head; go ahead and jot them in your sketch book.
- **I work on several pieces at a time, so I always have one in the “messy middle stage” I can jump back into.**

You're not likely to jump into an insecure day by confronting a blank canvas — maybe if it's slopped up with some gray gesso, but I still prefer using a “gateway” painting to pull me in. This is going to be a painting I'm working on that's in the messy middle stage. No pressure to begin, no pressure for knowing when it's good enough to stop. Just the middle. Just a work in progress.

I hope this episode has helped you. Please let me know how it goes by emailing me at caroline@passionatepainterpodcast.com.