



# The Artist's Way

*Julia Cameron*

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**This international bestseller has inspired millions to overcome the limiting beliefs and fears that inhibit the creative process.**

First published twenty-five years ago, *The Artist's Way* is the seminal book on the subject of creativity. Perhaps even more vital in today's cultural climate than when it was first published, *The Artist's Way* is a powerfully provocative and inspiring work. In it, Julia Cameron takes readers on an amazing twelve-week journey to discover the inextricable link between their spiritual and creative selves. This groundbreaking program includes:

- Introductions to two of Cameron's most vital tools for creative recovery--The Morning Pages and The Artist Date
- Hundreds of highly effective exercises and activities
- Guidance on starting a "Creative Cluster" of fellow artists who will support you in your creative endeavors

A revolutionary program for artistic renewal from the world's foremost authority on the creative process, *The Artist's Way* is a life-changing book. This 25th anniversary edition includes a new introduction from the author.

## The Artist's Way Details

Date : Published October 25th 2016 by TarcherPerigee (first published 1992)

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Author : Julia Cameron

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# From Reader Review The Artist's Way for online ebook

## Lena says

This is a really difficult book for me to rate. At the time I first read it fifteen years ago, it did wonders to open me up creatively. I was still struggling to slough off some negative parental programming about being a writer, and this book (along with a good friend) helped give me permission to explore that side of myself.

Since that time, however, my belief system has changed so radically that I no longer agree with a number of the book's fundamental premises. For this reason, it would be hard for me to recommend it now. I do think it contains some good material in the form of useful exercises and uplifting stories about creative development. But those come with heavy doses of New Age spirituality and recovery beliefs that will likely make the book inaccessible to anyone who doesn't view the world through that filter.

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## Annie says

Another book that has changed my life! (See also: The Runner's Handbook!) I have started this book many times and not finished my 12-week (or more) commitment, but this time, when I got to the point where I wanted to give up, I kept on going, and let me tell you where I am now, as a result of this:

I pitched my memoir to agents in February.

I am taking acting lessons.

I have started wearing clothes I like every single day!

I am planting a garden.

I have taken up knitting.

I am taking ballet classes.

I am treating myself to massages, manicures, and trips.

I write every single day.

I have started working on my memoir again after a long withdrawal period, post-graduation.

I am having more fun and playing!

I am discovering myself.

If you are interested in doing this, please feel free to contact me. I am going through the book again, and I would love to work it with other people!

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## Kathleen says

A book to cheer you on when you feel like you can only look longingly at your passion (writing, painting, drawing...) because the dog needs a walk and the kids need a bath, and you've bills to pay so you've just come home from a job that took you from the house and back to it without a glimpse of the sun.

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## **Rosie says**

I read and did the exercises in this book during the most intense professional and personal time in my life. It was a life-changer because it allowed me to articulate my life purpose which is fundamentally about using my voice and helping others to find theirs. I recommend this book often.

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## **pani Katarzyna says**

Okay, I read over a half and this is cheating a little bit but I am so DONE with the book! And I do believe that enduring through 150 pages of this entitles me to regard it as absolutely "read". Any book that recommends affirmations is not good for much else but using it as a beer coaster. Then there's this constant babbling about some God the Creator - Whatever. There's more pseudo-psychotherapeutic talk than any actual propositions of inviting creativity... Oh, and the repetition of the "artist's child" phrase was driving me insane. It must be the equivalent of "the inner goddess" from *The Fifty Shades of Grey* or something.

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## **Jerome says**

My New Year's resolution for 1998 was to finally actually DO the Artists' Way. I had given it to several people close to me for the last three holidays, but I had never actually done the process. This is not a book to read. It is a book to do and it promises major life changes in 13 weeks. I was desperate to find a new way to make a living and decided to give this my best shot. 13 weeks later there was no epiphany. I still didn't know where to go, so I started over from the beginning. Two weeks later, week 15 it dawned on me and I saw a way out and I knew what I had to do to get there. It changed my life.

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## **Michael Laflamme says**

<http://mrlshelflife.wordpress.com/201...>

The Artist's Way, while it contains some gems, is an overall disappointment. I've started it several times and it took me this fourth time to get all the way through. I had previously blamed my inability to finish it more on myself than on the work in general. The book taken as a whole comes across as pop psychology mixed with a heavy dose of New Age philosophy. There is a lot of talk about nurturing the inner child that is our real artist, the child's inability to accept raw criticism and how this creates emotional scar tissue. The inner artist child needs to be protected and nurtured and needs to have its hand held and be tenderly led through the miasma of the psyche of the growing artist. She even goes so far as to equate poorly delivered criticism to sexual abuse, and projects that don't materialize to miscarriages from which the artist suffers as much as the woman who lost a child. That was where she lost me for good.

The book is full of case examples; artists, novelists, poets, script writers, all of who benefited from Cameron's twelve week recovery. (Should I understand this as Cameron, a recovering alcoholic, devising her own twelve step program?) All of these case characters are given to us on a first name basis. One example is Ted, a blocked novelist who after the program and twelve (that number again) years of working with the Morning Pages, now has three novels to his credit. Okay. Ted, who? I want to see his work. I also want to see Bob's breakout documentary, the one that a teacher trashed so harshly that Bob hid the reels in his

basement which was then flooded. Then, after opening up to Cameron about the lost project, copies of the reels are found and he uses his newfound creativity, found with Cameron's help, to finish the documentary and do yet another. I want to see these works. I want to connect to the tangible success of people who have traveled this path that Cameron is leading us on. But alas Ted and Bob are just two examples of the long list of one-name shadows walking through Cameron's book. The works these people completed and published could be a source of inspiration but are denied us by this one-name, AA-style, anonymity. After a while I began to question how many of these people were real. The one example she gave that I found truly inspirational worked for me because she used the full name, a name I recognized (Blake Edwards), and a story about him that is well known. It was one I'd heard before and I was glad to be reminded of it. It is a loss to Cameron's work that there aren't more examples that the reader can actually wrap his/her hands around.

Cameron also talks long and hardy about her own work, much of which is in the film industry. I checked on IMDB. The list is short, two of the citations are for "Special Thanks" on major works by other people. She talks about writing plays. I can't find any. She apparently worked as a journalist but a quick (and far from thorough) internet search didn't turn up any leads. I remember seeing one novel by her in the library. Google her name and the overwhelming return is for *The Artist's Way*. This is not to minimize Cameron's achievements but it would help if she threw up some street signs leading the way to tangible evidence of her own work that shows us her program works.

Her idea for Morning Pages does have an application. It is an effective brain dump. It does clear the pipes, so to speak, but I don't see the efficacy of a slave-like devotion to the practice. I used it long before I found *The Artist's Way*. I called it "writing in my journal." I use it when my head is cluttered with too much information, which often happens during my job running two departments in a busy hotel, and trying to maintain even the barest minimum of creative pursuits. I can't see myself, however, locked into every morning spending up to an hour doing Morning Pages. I can put that valuable time to better use writing my novels, stories, poetry and blog posts.

I will admit I did exactly what she said not to do; I read the book through instead of doing the weekly exercises. In fact the last few chapters were scanned rather than thoroughly read. I realized early on that my "blockage" wasn't about my creativity. My creativity is fine. I have lots of ideas and when I sit my butt down and work I can actually write and what I write is usually pretty good. My blockage is my discipline, my self-sabotage, and my lack of confidence and I didn't find Cameron's prescription to be a healing balm for my symptoms.

I started looking at what some of my favorite and most respected writers have to say about writing, unblocking, and producing work. They don't talk about twelve step recovery and nurturing our inner child who never grows up. They talk about work. Getting pen in hand, or hands on the keyboard and working. They talk about working until it works. They talk about breaking through blockages with action, not weekly exercises and group therapy sessions. These people talk about writing as people of other professions talk about their careers. They talk about how it takes work, discipline and action, and confidence in your ability. They talk about being able to recognize good criticism vs. poor criticism, and being mature enough to deal with both at face value. They talk about the reality of rejection and putting it in its proper place and not letting it sideswipe your momentum. This is the approach that I believe will work best for me and my writing.

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**Lisa says**

I read this book while I wrote Still Alice, and I'm reading it again while I write Left Neglected. Thank you, Julia Cameron, for this amazing gift!! And thank you to RJ Julia's book store in CT for the gift of this edition.

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### **Stephanie \*Very Stable Genius\* says**

I read The Artist's Way a few years ago and could see the benefits of actually doing the work in it. But, of course, I never did it. So I thought I would listen to the book and refresh my memory, and again I feel it would do me good. But will I do it this time?

I have many other artists friends who have read it and also planned on doing it, but I don't know if they have either...

The Artist Way is a book written to unblock artist of a kinds, writers, painters, actors ect. I can't say that I'm blocked, but it is hard to carve out time and feel creative in this crazy world we live in today. It is even harder to work on something of your own when you are actually working in the art field daily. The last thing you want to do when you get home from work is more work.

The book is full of exercises to get you on that creative path, week by week, 12 in all (I think). The main exercise, one you do the whole time, is the one that is holding me back from starting. It's called Morning Pages. This exercise is doing a stream of consciousness journal first thing in the morning every morning. I am not a morning person, and I don't know many artists that are so writing anything, even spewing crazy off the wall and top of your head stuff is asking a lot. I don't think I could hold a pen at that moment, let alone actually write with it. Before coffee?

I do recommend this book to all my creative friends reading this. As I said, I can see how it would work.....if you did it. You can't win, if you don't play.

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### **Katherine Addison says**

I can't rate this book, since my opinion of it veers wildly between five stars and zero stars.

For those not familiar with it, *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron is a book that claims it can reconnect anyone with their "Inner Artist," via a program modeled openly on AA's Twelve Step Program (it is not a coincidence that Cameron is a recovering alcoholic). As such, it conceptualizes creativity as something inherently spiritual and conceptualizes the artist as a channel for God's will.

So.

PROBLEM NUMBER ONE: For me, creativity is not something that comes from outside the self, but something that comes from deep *within* the self. (And Cameron isn't actually very consistent, since her model of creativity seems to be something like the Puritans' model of the Elect: it's entirely out of your control, but you have to behave properly in order to be one. So her model goes back and forth between "you have to open yourself to God's will" and "you have to find the ideas that are deep within you and nurture them into bloom.") Also, I admit this freely, I have all the spirituality of a brick, so treating creativity as

something spiritual means it's something I'm excluded from, and I think I can be forgiven for not liking that model very much.

PROBLEM NUMBER TWO: Cameron has (I hope unconsciously) reinvented one of Freud's more repellent ideas. Where, in talking about Dora, he postulates that "yes" means yes, and "no" *also* means yes, Cameron explains that if you don't like any of her teachings, or if they make you angry, that just means you're childishly resisting the thing you need in order to heal. So, basically, if you question or argue with her, that's a sign you're Doing It Wrong.

This idea annoys me more than a little.

PROBLEM NUMBER THREE: Cameron is writing from a position of unconscious privilege. She has the freedom to assume that if you are blocked creatively, it is something you can solve by willpower alone, that it's more or less something you have unconsciously done to yourself because you are scared of being creative. She does not allow for health (either physical or mental) to be something *out of your control* that may be affecting your creativity, and although she acknowledges that there are people who are creative but who cannot create because they are too busy struggling to survive or to care for their children or whatever other actual and genuine impediment may be in their life that they cannot simply will away by rearranging their schedule a little, she has a serene confidence that none of *those people* are reading her book.

As someone who has been unable to write, to a greater or lesser degree, for seven years (yes, you did read that correctly; I finished the principal draft of *The Goblin Emperor* in 2009), I would like to state for the record that if the problem could be solved by willpower alone, **I WOULD HAVE SOLVED IT ALREADY**. And I resent the condescending attitude that the problem is all my fault, if I would just have enough self-insight to see it.

PROBLEM NUMBER FOUR: Cameron is of the same school of thought as Anne Lamott and Natalie Goldberg, that writing (and other forms of creativity) is basically therapy, that creativity comes from the well of psychic injury. Now, writing *can* be therapeutic, and tremendously so, but this model of writing-as-therapy, as direct one-to-one correspondence stream-of-consciousness therapy, does not work for me and never has.

PROBLEM NUMBER FIVE: Cameron believes "The universe will always support affirmative action" (194), that if you open yourself up to the universe, the universe will send you what you need. Always. Now maybe it's just because I've read too much true crime and it's made me cynical, but I can't help pointing out that sometimes, if you open yourself up to the universe, the universe sends you Ted Bundy. The universe is *not* inherently benevolent. It is inherently indifferent and does not give a fuck whether you succeed or fail.

Some of these problems are merely annoying; some of them are potentially destructive to writers (and other artists) if they take them as gospel (pardon the pun); some of them are irresponsible and dangerous.

But despite all that, and despite the fact that I did not so much *follow* the Artist's Way as *argue vigorously with* it, there are a lot of valuable ideas in what Cameron says. Some of them were things I already knew, but needed to be reminded of, like that, just like any other form of creativity, writing requires continual practice. Even if you can't write a story, you can still write *something*, and you need to.

"Sloth, apathy, and despair are the enemy," she says on page 62, and I agree with that whole-heartedly. And I love her idea of true north, that two people can have the same goal, but their *reasons*, the thing pulling them like a lodestone, don't have to be the same. And I would follow that with, if you lose your true north, for whatever reason, you're going to have to find it again before you can get very far. She harmonizes with

Csikszentmihalyi in emphasizing that the writer is well-served to value process over product, and she points out something I have, in fact, taken to heart; that when your "sensible" self asks, "Do you know how long it's going to take you to do X? Do you know how old you'll be?" the correct answer is, "Just as old as I'll be if I don't do it."

Cameron also provides a lot of quotes from a lot of people, some of which I found wrong, some inane, some simply not applicable. But some I really liked, like Theodore Roethke's "I learn by going where I have to go." (Which, okay, I'm not going to say "The Waking" is the greatest villanelle of all time, but I am gonna say it's pretty damn close.)

Others:

"I merely took the energy it takes to pout and wrote some blues." --Duke Ellington

"Whenever I have to choose between two evils, I always like to try the one I haven't tried before." --Mae West

"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult." --Seneca

"In a dark time, the eye begins to see." --Roethke again.

"Look and you will find it--what is unsought will go undetected." --Sophocles

"Living is a form of not being sure, not knowing what next or how. The moment you know how, you begin to die a little. The artist never entirely knows. We guess. We may be wrong, but we take leap after leap in the dark." --Agnes de Mille

"Satisfaction of one's curiosity is one of the greatest sources of happiness in life." --Linus Pauling

"The unconscious wants truth. It ceases to speak to those who want something else more than truth." --Adrienne Rich

"The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery." --Francis Bacon (this one, not that one)

"What moves men of genius, or rather what inspires their work, is not new ideas, but their obsession with the idea that what has already been said is still not enough." --Eugène Delacroix (forgive him his sexism, he's been dead for a hundred and fifty-four years)

"Adventure doesn't begin until you get into the forest." --Mickey Hart

"One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time." --André Gide

"A painting is never finished--it simply stops in interesting places." --Paul Gardner

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## **k.wing says**

I recently completed the 12-week book on my own, and I think that it was very well put together. I was already on my way to discovering a few of the main drivers in the book, but it would have taken me many years to collect them. I have been inspired by this book, and it has helped me work through things, instead of ignoring big problems with my creative process and trying to push them aside.

A few of the reviews haven't been so kind for this book, which is okay. It is really hard to surrender to anything - it's hard to let go and give in to something. And I don't mean God or Christianity (which is the author's personal belief system which also influences a lot of the book) necessarily - I mean a process - put in place to help. It's hard to just do it, and be open to what this book can do and what can happen. That being said, I didn't agree with everything written in the book. It's not like it's The Creative Process Bible or anything (so don't feel like it's that way or the highway or anything). Sure, for a couple of the exercises I just wrote "eh, that's okay" instead of doing them, and many of the exercise questions were obviously trying to lead you in one direction. But I think that's hardly a reason to throw this book to the birds.

First, if you're considering doing this but aren't sure, read "The Artist's Way Questions and Answers" in the back of the book (page 205 in the 10th Anniversary Edition that I had), and you'll get a really good idea of what you'll be doing every day, every week, and Julia Cameron's philosophical approach to her book.

And finally, if you decide to do it, do it all. If you're like me, you barely finish anything and it takes a hell of a lot of energy to complete something - and sheesh a 12 week long thing? But, at least for me, the 12 weeks went by in a flash and I really looked forward to the readings and exercises, and was so enthusiastic with the kind of creativity this book helped me to find and produce. Enjoy it. When it gets frustrating and you don't have the time, deal with it. Skip a day. Come back and do a morning page and you'll inevitably write until you get to the bottom of why you are frustrated and skipped a day.

It's a process, and it doesn't have to be perfect. Have FUN!

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## **Byron says**

On the whole, the key to the Artist's Way is selfishness. That is something I fundamentally disagree with. You should not skip your child's soccer game to paint your masterpiece. Your kid is the masterpiece. All of the relationships in your life are masterpieces. I use that as an example but there are other moments in this book where self-indulgence at the expense of others is encouraged. This is loathsome.

So why didn't I just give the book and the program a 1-star rating? Because there are some very good ideas in there. Namely the morning pages. They grow tedious for me but I do find them effective. Also, I highly recommend taking an hour or two out of your week to have an adventure in the world by yourself. This really is a great way to stimulate your creativity, no matter what your craft is.

Overall, if you want to try this program, go for it and recognize which parts do and don't work for you. However, I must warn that there is an ugly side to what Julia Cameron preaches here and I won't endorse that.

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## **Pewterbreath says**

Look, for writers and artists whatever inspires you to create is a good thing. However, I found this book (For me) to be too "I am an artist, I am bohemian, I create" attitude. Writing (or any of the arts) has a greater verity for my when it's a little less "GIFT OF THE GODS" and a little more "craft." The most successful creators view their work as a craft in the same manner that a furniture maker or a bricklayer would, in my experience. Also when one focuses more on craftsmanship rather than inspiration it makes for better work as well.

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## **Kate says**

Julia Cameron works my last nerve. She's always talking about looking out at the sun-dappled mesas of New Mexico, or using some other affected, high-falutin' lingo about her gloriously new age, trendy life. Meanwhile, I look out at the cracked concrete of my driveway in the Chicago drizzle and wonder how us normal people ever survived without people like Julia Cameron telling us about their fantastically charmed lives. However, I like the little mind toys in this book. I did the morning pages, and found them interesting. I strolled the aisles of dollar stores and played a bit because of her book, and it was fun. So, she gets two stars. If she were less Baby-Boomer Annoying, she would have gotten more.

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## **Gayle Pitman says**

I was introduced to The Artist's Way back in 2005 when I took a college class on creativity. If I hadn't signed up for that class, I'm sure I would have never picked up this book. I expected The Artist's Way to be full of fluffy, New-Agey platitudes, and I approached it with cynicism and skepticism. However, I kept an open mind. I read each chapter thoroughly. I did the morning pages every day and an artist's date once a week. I did a handful of the exercises at the end of each chapter. And my life changed.

The morning pages resulted in an award-winning nonfiction book, a series of children's picture book manuscripts, and the willingness to embark upon another, more challenging nonfiction book writing project. The artist's dates renewed my childlike love for the fiber arts, and I began creating beautiful handwork projects. I learned to surf. I joined a writing group. Most importantly, even more important than the concrete examples of creativity that have resulted, I was given a set of tools for life - tools that enable me to challenge that critical voice in my head, and to trust my instincts.

I can't say enough about this book. It came into my life during a difficult time, and it has dovetailed beautifully with recovery in other areas in my life.

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