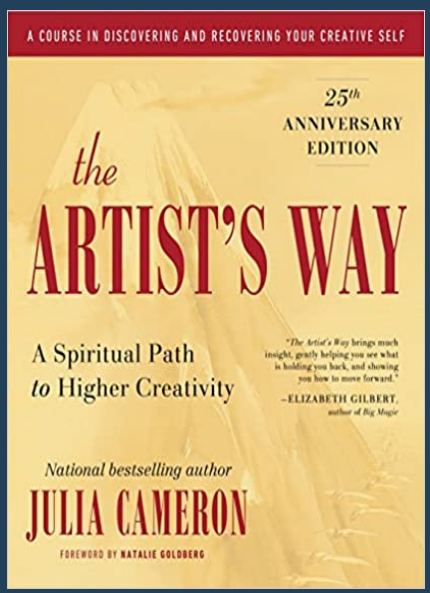

The Artist's Way

Year of publication: 2016
Author: Julia Cameron
272 pages

Have you ever spent hours staring at the horizon in search of an idea while a thousand different things went through your head, except what you really needed to develop? Then "The Artist's Way" was made for you!
Ability with brushes, captivating writing, fluidity in front of the cameras... Artists are blessed with a great gift of creativity, while we, normal people, need to be at the mercy of a long and tiring time to advance our ideas, isn't it? Well, not really!
We know that the capability to make art is directly associated with creativity, right? We've heard for a long time that creativity was an aptitude for few people, and in his book Julia Cameron will show us that, in reality, it's all a matter of practice.
Creativity can be applied in several professional and personal environments that are unrelated to the traditional conception of art. And that's exactly what we'll talk about in this summary. You will follow us, right?

Main ideas of the book

- Although it is not a quick or simple process, the development or discovery of creativity can be learned and measured;
- Your inner artist is a child, needs to be taken care of and treated like one;
- We use to resist what we need to do the most;
- Practicing your art in a singular way is simpler than the frustration of not doing it;
- You develop easily when you surround yourself with people with the same purposes as yours;
- Putting yourself first is not selfishness, it's self-care.

To whom is this book indicated?

"The Artist's Way" is recommended for people who have a creative block or believe that creativity is a gift from a select group of people.
This summary is indispensable for anyone who wants to start a process of self-knowledge and inner development, that, consequently, will change the perspective in the way we see things, becoming more creative and learning to see the good things even in the details.

Overview of the book

Can we all be creative?

Do you agree that even in a world with billions of people, all individuals are unique and many-sided? But, did you know that even though all these infinitely single characteristics, we do have something in common? We can all be creative.
Even though we oftentimes don't realize it, the creativity of each person can be seen in the way they dress, in how they decorate their homes, do their hair, it is also in the movies we watch, music we listen to and in how we do our work. Everything is a direct or indirect expression of creativity.
According to Julia Cameron, creativity can be teached, learned and measured.
Which means it's never too late to develop the creativity we already have or arouse the one we think doesn't even exist.

What does an artist and a child have in common?

In “The Artist's Way”, Julia Cameron compares our inner artist to a child. But pay attention: it doesn't mean that creative people are immature!
Julia makes it very clear that our realization of what it really is to be an artist is directly related to the way we feel motivated to keep working and making our art.
The author makes this parallel because, like children, our inner artist needs attention and care so that it can develop with all its needs answered; needs patience to grow slowly and without pressure; it needs protection to expand in a trusted environment too.

How to extract good things from bad feelings?

“The Artist's Way” is mainly a path to self-knowledge. For that reason, recognizing our feelings and learning to interpret them will also be part of that journey.
We know that our feelings are the truest expression of what we are experiencing, but often we don't understand or don't consider why we feel certain things at certain times, right?
Anger, fear, shame or envy, none of this can bring us something good, right? But what if we stopped to analyze where these feelings come from and why they are generated, maybe we could control them, or even overcome them!

Anger and Envy

Julia Cameron states in her book that feelings like anger and envy are our mind's reply to what bothers us. Things that are not important to us would not arouse in us a feeling of restlessness.
We frequently envy people who have the courage to do what we would like to be doing. As well as the anger we feel when we see that we could do something better than who really stands out for this activity.
Therefore, the author enhances the importance of availing such feelings as an invitation to action... “If this bothers me, why don't I solve it?”, “If I'd like to do the same, why don't I start trying?”.
The refusal of these ideas is exactly in other villains: fear and shame.

Fear and Shame

In “The Artist's Way” we understand that, for creative people, fear is defined, mostly, by the concern with the unknown.
And that is why, many times, great artists fail to follow their dream, the possibilities of success are unknown, while failure is already present and can be considered a safe place.
Besides that, failure and shame go hand in hand: who has never stopped trying, just for fear of failing and experiencing the horrible feeling of shame?

Learning how to ignore shame opens up a whole new world of possibilities: when you stop worrying about other people's opinions or the possibility of failure, you can focus on the process, not on the result.
Do you think Michael Jordan hit the basket on her first attempt? Or that Nelson Mandela's first discourse was perfect? You have to be ready to get it wrong to one day get it right!

What can change in 12 weeks?

In this book Julia Cameron gives detailed instructions that should be followed by the reader with a creative block. In it, you will find reflections, question lists and different activities that should only be produced between you and your inner artist.
According to the author, it is only possible to develop the most genuine creative mind when we are connected with ourselves. That's why the most important activities that should be done in these 12 weeks are the morning pages and the artist's date.

What are morning pages?

Morning pages are only three pages that have to be handwritten by you, early in the morning and daily. In them, you have to write down all the thoughts that come to you: "I need to do the laundry", "I think the dog needs to cut his nails", "maybe I deserve a more comfortable chair"...
"But what if I don't know what to put in my morning pages?" So write three pages talking about it! The logic behind the morning pages is to kick out all unnecessary thoughts so that, when you need to do your work, your mind will be clear and you can stay focused.
Furthermore, the pages will be a stimulus for reflection on the paths of your life. How is it possible to disapprove of something every day and not take action? How is it possible to always celebrate an achievement and not be thankful?

Who is the artist and why do you have a date with him?

You are the artist! And you will have a date with him because that will provide a greater connection with yourself. In "The Artist's Way", Julia Cameron states that it is impossible to connect with other things or other people without first being connected with ourselves.
And that's why you must have a date with the artist weekly.
The date can be any activity that you think is interesting, alone. You can take a walk in the park, cook a new recipe, look up a record store... Dating the artist needs to provide the opportunity to enjoy your own company, learn about your interests and strengthen your curiosity.

Logical Brain and Artist Brain, which one is yours?

If you've paid attention to the summary so far, you must have understood the main idea of this book. So I'll give you a chance to answer that question! 1... 2... 3...
The answer is that we have both! A creative person can assimilate and control the fundamental characteristics of either.

Logical Brain

The logical brain is the part of our mind responsible for our survival. Its behavior is based on the principle of knowledge. The logical brain looks for safety in what we already know, the unknown is identified as dangerous or wrong.

Who is the Censor and why does he hate you?

The Censor is a consequence of our logical brain. He is responsible for making us hesitate and question our own abilities.
Do you know that voice in your head telling you “you're doing a horrible job, “you should give up”, “nothing is working out”, "if I were you, I would be ashamed”? Well, I will introduce you to your censor
Often, we cannot ignore this voice and then she manipulates us. “The Artist's Way” teaches that understanding and controlling our feelings is better than ignoring them.
That's why you write the morning pages! You learn to ignore what the censor says while you write your pages, you can even write what the censor tells you as a way to repel those thoughts.
The principal thing about the censor is to be aware that the beliefs he carries are exactly that: just beliefs, and that beliefs aren't the same thing as facts.

Artist Brain

The Artist Brain is our discoverer, observer and creative part. He is responsible for watching some things and telling us “This looks interesting, why don't you give it a try?”.

The Power of Positive Affirmations

Have you ever realized how many self-destructive thoughts you have during your day? What about positive thoughts?
Because of our censor, we use to think in a negative and pessimistic way. Julia Cameron talks about the importance of using positive affirmations in place of our censor's thoughts.
What do you think about changing a “this is terrible” for a “it's much better than when I started”, for example?

Are you self-destructive?

For the author, self-destruction is the destruction of your own nature. It's important to be good sons, husbands, wifes, workers, or anything else, but how far should we be good to other people before we are good to ourselves?
A person destroys his nature when he stop to do what he likes, when he does not show his wishes or when he gives up on a dream, just to satisfy other people, not hurt other people, or “respect” other people.
“The Artist's Way” leads us to reflect on the things we give up for others and about the way we are influenced. Obviously we must consider importants people to us, but we need to always remember that the most important person to us is ourselves.

How can I deal with toxic people?

Part of our self-destruction is in keeping toxic people around. People who do not support and respect our goals and people who only point out our failures instead of praising our achievements should not be part of our lifes.
Julia Cameron invites us to reflect on what is essential and why we keep people around who are not good for us. One thing is certain: it is much more important that you surround yourself with people with common goals and dreams.

How can I filter criticism?

Another part of self-destruction is not knowing how to handle criticism. Do you remember the last review you received? And what about the last compliment? We tend to consider criticism more intensely than praises, often questioning us if we really deserve such exaltation... Do you remember the censor?
Of course, feedback is essential! Through it you can always improve your work. The point is: you must ask yourself about each criticism and its value, so that you don't absorb only the bad parts of it.
In this way, you can filter the criticism considering the person who made it, the way it spokes, and especially if it can help you to improve or was just an evil comment. The main idea is: you can choose what to do with it. It is possible to ignore it or embrace it, it all depends on the context.

Understanding the Spiral Path

As we saw earlier, the author of "The Artist's Way" calls this discovering and developmenting journey a spiral path.
Imagine yourself taking a talk around a mountain, your goal is to reach the top. You go around and around and look at the same landscapes from different points of view. Sometimes you will see the same landscape and you will not be able to see any difference between the images of your current round and previous round.
What does that mean? Julia Cameron takes this metaphor to discuss small evolutions and that, no matter how much they happen, we often don't realize it, which makes us doubt our capability or our purpose.
And what do we learn from this? Keep climbing the mountain! Not realizing immediate evolution doesn't mean it doesn't exist, it's all a matter of perspective.

What do other authors say about it?

In "**The Creativity Leap**", we see that, like a muscle strengthened, our creativity will grow if we exercise it with simple activities such as inquiry, improvisation and intuition. What if you develop Natalie and Julia's activities at the same time? The sky will be the limit.

With the summary of the book "**The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down**" you can learn more about the importance of the search for self-knowledge, and how understanding your feelings produces a great change in the way we live our lifes and deal with different situations.

Last but not least, we have Brené Brown with her book "**Daring Greatly**", in which we understand how feelings of shame and perfectionism are obstacles to our development and are directly related to the feeling of fear.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

- Reserve a daily time just for you: in it you should write your morning pages and do something you like, even if for just 5 minutes;
- Have your weekly dating with the artist: take walks, watch movies, go to different places... always by yourself;
- Appreciate things with a curious look: notice opportunities in the details;
- Practice self-care: set limits between what you can do for people and what benefits you.

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