

## ***Opening up your creative mind***

Even if you don't consider yourself to be an artist, improving your creative skills will inevitably improve all the different areas of your life. Whether or not you choose to take up specific arts such as painting, cooking, writing, photography, garden designing, crafts, or singing and playing music, you knowingly or unknowingly are already an artist of the amazing creative artwork that is your whole life.

Because you're already an artist, why not strive to be a great one? Whether you're setting up your living space, cooking a meal, or teaching your children right from wrong, doing whatever you do with a creative and spiritual flow enhances all your actions and helps turn whatever you do into a spiritual practice. Every activity in life is enhanced by doing it artfully or creatively.

One way to improve the creative artistry of your works is to keep your focus on what you are doing and not on what material benefits you may receive from it. For many people, the initial impetus to do something is sparked by hopes of increasing their income or receiving other benefits.

However, when you're actually in the midst of doing an action — writing the book, designing the recipe, sewing the costume, or building the structure — your creativity tends to flow more smoothly when you remove your focus from the desire or greed that may have motivated you to begin the action and shine the light of your focus on the action itself and on staying open to a creative flow through your connection with the universe.

In recent decades, nearly every field of creativity — including science, music, philosophy, the arts, and even spirituality — has unfortunately turned into one more avenue for commercial profiteering. Today's greed culture became especially obvious to me when I started offering my creative spiritual works, including an extensive Web site of writings, video, music, and other spiritual multimedia resources, for free.

During my vibrant decade of monastic-style ashram living, I became very comfortable with the idea of offering creative service without looking to receive anything in return, other than the honor and joy of being able to do it.

When I left the ashram to go to Hollywood, I found a very different culture that was still creative and artistic, but often focused on material benefits and "getting ahead." Friends would invite me to come to meals or parties so that I could meet people who "could be a good contact for you," instead of thinking about who would be interesting or uplifting for me to meet. One coworker in my early years of news editing gave me a stern lecture about how the union rules said that I had to request overtime pay for working through a missed lunch even if I hadn't been hungry when asked to work through the hour. This focus on hourly wages was very new for someone like me who hadn't counted an hour for pay in ten years.

Therefore, after my Hollywood years, when my life shifted into a more reclusive time of writing, singing, producing uplifting videos, and creating Web site offerings, I decided to go back to my more comfortable tradition of approaching my creative works as freely offered service.

Although this approach brought some lean financial years that were somewhat out of balance, still it was worth going through these challenges to be able to offer spiritual resources as I thought they should be offered — freely.

During my monastic years, I'd been blessed to have access to an abundance of inspiring videos, audiotapes, and spiritual teachings, and now I wanted to share my spiritual resources in the same free spirit through these online offerings. The “google gods” were kind in giving my pages good rankings, and many guests have come from around the world every day to enjoy the free multimedia spiritual resources.

However, some acquaintances, colleagues, and book marketing experts seemed to be upset by the idea that I was wasting all this Internet traffic flow without capturing e-mail addresses or pushing products and advertising, especially when they knew I was living on meager funds. For some, their concern was based on wanting the best for me, and for others, it seemed that my commitment to sharing rather than selling broke some kind of unspoken business law about the importance of maximizing financial profits. More than one person became angry when I refused his moneymaking suggestions and explained that my goal was to give these works freely, without capturing anything from guests other than hopefully their enjoyment and upliftment.

In truth, my commitment to keep these works freely available was not only altruistic, but also a way to tap into greater creativity. Many artists, scientists, and philosophers throughout time have discovered this secret — that divinely inspired creativity often flows best when you work with full focus and freedom from materialistic desires and intentions.

Even on a neuroscience level, parts of your brain that deal with creative, holistic, and spiritual consciousness issues tend to be on the other side of the aisle from the parts of your brain that deal with business or bookkeeping tasks. Certainly, some people have achieved a good combination of these abilities, but others whose priority is focused on spiritual awareness or creative expression may prefer not to get too bogged down in too many contracts and business deals — and thus you have the archetypal “starving artist” syndrome. Some artists find that focusing too much on selling can eventually turn into selling out.

*Adversity reveals genius, prosperity conceals it.* —Horace

If you want to open up your mind's creative abilities, one suggestion is, if circumstances permit, to move forward with your artistic endeavors without worrying too much about how to sell what you do, but with a higher intention of wanting to use your time on earth to express something wonderful. Through the efforts of many poor but prolific artists came the great renaissances of philosophy, arts, and music, along with world-shattering scientific and philosophical paradigms. These productive artists focused on inspiring audiences with their wisdom, talents, and spirit, above merely looking for a way to cash in for big bucks.

With an artistic mindset, you can create your own renaissance in whatever fields of expression inspire you. With a creative approach, you can even craft your view of the world into one that will transform and uplift your experience of the world. You may still receive big bucks from your creative works, but either way, your focus will be on the spiritual creative flow as you dance a glorious dance of being you.