

**ART  
FOR  
LIFE**

**31**

**DAYS  
OF DEEP  
CREATIVITY** WITH  
**ZOË DEARBORN**  
CREATIVITY COACH, MULTIARTIST +  
EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPIST

[www.zoedearborn.net/31-days-of-deep-creativity-private](http://www.zoedearborn.net/31-days-of-deep-creativity-private)

**WEEK THREE:  
CREATING YOUR ARTS PRACTICE, SKILL-BUILDING  
&  
CONTACTING YOUR HIGHER SELF**

**“As we practice our daily arts, if only in the composing of a heart-felt letter, we are unearthing the eternal from within ordinary time, engaging in the special qualities, themes, and circumstances of the soul. Soul thrives as we jot down a thought in our diary or note a dream, and give body to a slight influx of eternity. Our notebooks then truly become our own private gospels and sutras, our holy books, and our simple paintings truly serve as icons, every bit as significant in the work of our own soul as the wonderful icons of the Eastern churches are for their congregations.”**

**- Thomas Moore**

**“To create, we need both technique and freedom from technique.  
To this end we practice until our skills become unconscious.”**

**-Stephen Nachmanovitch**

Congratulations on making it to week three of this intensive!

So now that you've gotten more familiar with your inner child and inner critic, we are going to open up to another very important quality or aspect of yourself. There are many names for it—higher self, wise self, inner mentor, guide, observing self or ego. They all mean slightly different things to different people, but the most important aspect is that we are learning to cultivate the part of us that can witness, express, and ultimately, love all the different, smaller parts.

The theme of this week is creating an arts practice and skill-building, and you can call on this higher self to guide and protect your creativity, as you venture out into making a deep commitment to growing your creative skills and commitments based on what you need as a unique soul.

I like to think of the higher self as the organizing principle of the personality, like a puppet master. When we contact our higher self, the all-seeing, compassionate part of us, we start to feel more empowered to make choices of how we respond to situations, rather than reacting from the smaller self's needs. For example: if you notice that your inner critic is shaming your inner child, and you find yourself identifying and agreeing with your inner critic, ganging up with him/her on your inner child, you can call in the wisdom of your higher self, and re-orient yourself to see the whole process, and give love to every part, rather than taking sides. You can learn to identify with the higher self, and act from the place of compassionate witness.

## 31 DAYS OF DEEP CREATIVITY WITH ZOË DEARBORN

There was a prompt at the end of last week about protection. This is something we can look into this week as well. In order for us to make space in our lives for our creativity, we will need a lot of support and protection. We can use the higher self as our protector as well as our guide.

This week you can also look over the last two weeks of journaling and assignments and cull some of the learnings you have received so far, so that you can use this inner knowledge to make decisions on what kind of arts practice you are going to commit to after this month is over.

If your arts practice so far this month has been doing the prompts, you can absolutely continue doing those for the rest of the month. But, if you find during your explorations this week, that you want to swap out or adjust the prompts to focus on your own arts practice, you can choose to do that. Or do both! It's totally up to you. My intention is to offer you tools and suggestions on how you might choose an arts practice on your own that feels do-able and fun and most importantly, nourishing. I want to emphasize that this week the focus is *practice*, as opposed to working on a more goal-oriented project, which we will be looking at next week.

In the context of this course, and based on my recommendation for a satisfying creative experience, I define an arts practice as something you do regularly, if not every day, then at least once a week. If your arts practice is a few times per week, then I recommend trying to find a consistent time of day that you do your practice — it will be easier, and start to feel automatic over time, and you are less likely to procrastinate. It is helpful to build your arts practice into your day, so that it feels

non-negotiable, just like brushing your teeth, or eating breakfast, or any other basic need.

For some of you, the *what* of your arts practice might be the trickiest part. Especially for those of you who are like me, with a lot of creative interests and outlets. This might take some time to tease out. Which practice you want to pick that is most nourishing, that you believe will have the biggest impact on your life. From doing the prompts these past few weeks (even if you didn't do all of them), you may already have some idea of what is feeling most nourishing. It may be something that surprises you—EG: you think of yourself as more of a writer, but you have really enjoyed sketching or doodling. So be open to how you actually feel about doing the practice, rather than imposing an idea of who you are supposed to be, or what you are supposed to like.

In my Sunday Museletter a few weeks ago, I shared that I have 4 activities that I am committed to daily (I often end up doing 2 or 3 out of 4) , that keep up my skills, and feel nourished, balanced and whole. My 4 practices spell out the acronym MEWS: Music, Exercise (not always arts-based practice, but it does support my arts practice as it helps me with over-all balance), Writing & Sitting (meditation). My intention is to do each thing for a minimum of 15 minutes per day. I often spend more than fifteen minutes on each practice, because once I start (knowing I have only committed to 15 minutes), I usually get so into it that I want to keep going—and I don't feel like I *have to*.

I have also become aware, by observing my different behaviors over time, that some of the practices are more suitable for different times of the day. For

## 31 DAYS OF DEEP CREATIVITY WITH ZOË DEARBORN

example: I prefer to meditate, write and go for a walk in the morning. I prefer to dance in the afternoon (if that's my form of exercise for the day) and I prefer to practice music at night. I have been able to work it into my schedule to do the walking meditation and writing immediately after I drop my kid off to school, and before my work and other obligations. Music happens after I put my son to bed. Of course, it doesn't always work out this way, and there are times that I miss some of my practices, but mostly my MEWS have become a habit for me, over time, and it's nice to not have to think about what I *should be* doing, because I already know what I *need to be* doing. Higher Self has already guided me there.

I am sharing my practices as an example, and the idea of 4 practices may feel overwhelming to you. I encourage you to start by picking just one practice that you will either start during this month, or after the month is over. Or you may want to create a practice that combines a few different activities. For example: morning pages (or free writing) and meditation. 15 minutes of each. You may want to experiment with which you prefer: doing your meditation first or doing your writing first. According to my Clear Receive Create flow that I shared in my previous sessions, it might feel good to do the morning pages first, so that you can clear your mind before you meditate. But then again, you may prefer the other way around. Experiment and take notes. You are developing your observational skills and your relationship to higher self, just by noticing what works for you and what doesn't.

Okay, now it's time to start Session Three.

**SESSION THREE: CREATING YOUR ARTS PRACTICE & CONTACTING YOUR HIGHER SELF**

**PART ONE: FREE WRITE: 15-20 MINUTES**

Pick up your favorite pen. Write with out stopping until you fill two (or you can expand to three) 8.5 X11 pieces of paper or pages of your journal. Don't. Stop. Writing. Don't edit, or worry about spelling. Don't censor yourself. No one will be reading this, even you don't have to read it later if you don't want to. This is an exercise in both letting the unconscious flow more easily and clearing out the cobwebs of your brain.

**PART TWO: AUDIO MEDITATION: CONTACTING YOUR HIGHER SELF (40-50 MINUTES)**

Start by listening to the audio, these questions are for reference:

**QUESTIONS FROM THE HIGHER SELF MEDITATION:**

What was the first question you asked your higher self?

How did your higher self respond?

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What did you feel?

What did you notice in your body?

What was the first question you asked your higher self?

How did your higher self respond?

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What did you feel?

What did you notice in your body?

### PART THREE: JOURNALING WITH HIGHER SELF ABOUT YOUR ARTS PRACTICE

Look back on the answer your higher self gave you when you asked about your arts practice. Look at the image, if there is one.

You are now going to go a little deeper into this by practicing journaling with your Higher Self.

Here are some examples of questions to get you started:

- Higher Self, what arts practice would be most nourishing to me right now?
- Higher Self, should I add an additional practice now or wait until the end of the course?
- What arts practice do I want to start when I am done with this course?
- What has been most missing from my life?

Feel free to come up with your own questions.

Similar to how you did it in the meditation, you will write down your question and then wait for a response. You can write out the response from higher self. You can even make it a dialogue, like a play.

Example:

ME: Higher Self, what is my greatest block to my creativity?

HS: Your concern about what other people think.

ME: How do I let go of this concern?

HS: Keep listening to your heart. Keep expressing from your heart.

ME: Can you show me an image of what this looks like?

HS: (close your eyes, and see an image of a large heart expanding outwards)

And so on. You can try doing this with different parts of yourself as well.

The next time you feel the critic's presence. Try dialoguing between your inner critic and your higher self.

#### PART FOUR: SKILL-BUILDING BRAINSTORM: 5 MINUTES

Set your timer for 5 minutes. You are going to do a free-association list of every thing you've ever wanted to learn. Every skill you'd like to have. It could be a grand skill like making a feature-film or a smaller-scale skill like learning how to draw hands. It doesn't just have to be arts-focused skills—if other kinds of skills pop into your mind, feel free to write them down too. Like learning a new language, or how to garden. This list may help inform what you will do for your arts practice.

We are going to do more with skill-building this week.

## PART FOUR: CREATING YOUR ARTS PRACTICE

### WHY CREATE AN ARTS PRACTICE?

The idea behind creating your arts practice is to take away the ego-driven part of creating—so that we feel less pressure to make “a work of art” each time we create, but instead, we are simply showing up for our creativity because we know we need to. Just as a yogi practices yoga or a musician practices scales—any art form can have a practice aspect to it. Sometimes we find ourselves divinely inspired, and other times we are practicing just to keep our juices flowing.

The arts in this sense include anything creative that you are called to do. This includes all the usual art forms (music, visual art, writing, dance, drama, digital arts, etc.), but it could also include the home or life arts, such as: gardening, sewing, cooking, scrapbooking, knitting, etc.

I find an arts practice is easier to keep up if it is not content-defined, but rather time-defined. There can be less pressure about *what* you do—the point is that you are keeping it up.

And also, it is important that the structure you create for your arts practice is regular, consistent and doable. It should not cause anxiety, but rather, excitement. Check in with yourself after you come up with your structure—to see if it really feels possible to commit to. Make sure that it fits into your current schedule. If that's once a week—then start with that. If you are regular with the once a week thing, then you might find you want to change your life around a little so you can practice more often. But start with something that is do-able right now. Even if it is only 15 minutes a week. 15 minutes is fifteen times more than nothing. Fifteen minutes is enough to re-awaken your creativity.

You are already doing an arts practice as part of this course. Either the prompts, or maybe you have already come up with your own. Here is your chance to fine tune what you are already doing, add an additional practice or to start to develop a practice that you will commit to after this course is over.

Here are is a guide to the steps:

## 31 DAYS OF DEEP CREATIVITY WITH ZOË DEARBORN

### WHAT?

Define your practice – it can be as open or as structured as you want. Play around with structure to see what works best for you. Keep in mind what materials or equipment you may need for your practice. Acquire anything you need that will help you feel successful at your first attempts. But... don't let not having everything you need be a reason not to start.

### HOW OFTEN?

(EG: 3 x a week. everyday)

### FOR HOW LONG?

(EG: 15 minutes. 2 hours)

### WHERE?

You don't need a sunlight filled studio to create. You can create outside, or at a café, or in your car. This does not have to be defined, unless you know that it works better for you to be defined. Some people need quiet and no interruptions, some people prefer to be in a public, bustling space. What works for you?

### HOW?

Sometimes it's helpful to set an intention—"I will doodle just to see what happens." "I want to be more honest in my writing." "I want to keep things loose and just warm up my body." We will explore this idea in the prompts this week.

### WHY?

***This is the prompt for Sunday, October 15th. If you did already did this prompt, you can pull some stand out reasons and put them here, as a quick reminder.***

## 31 DAYS OF DEEP CREATIVITY WITH ZOË DEARBORN

Come up with a few sentences of why your creativity or arts practice is important to you. One way of describing this importance could be—what do you get out of creating? You might want to tape these few sentences to your work space or somewhere you will see it.

### WHY NOT?

As far as I'm concerned, there is no good answer to this question--which is why I like to ask it.

### INSPIRATION

*This also something we will explore this week in the prompts.*

In your journal, or in a file folder or box, keep a list or a pile of images, words or objects that inspire you to create. It could be post cards, images torn from a magazine, dried flowers, photos of people who inspire you, favorite quotes or books... anything that helps you remember the part of you that yearns to create.

### COMMITMENT

Once you have created the parameters of your arts practice, commit to it. Make an official statement that expresses your commitment—sign it, and date it. Return to it when you need reminding. It can help to have a friend or colleague help hold you accountable to your commitment. You can email your statement of commitment to a friend, or to me, or even create some sort of electronic reminder for yourself—so you won't let yourself off the hook.

### GUIDANCE FOR YOUR ARTS PRACTICE

## 31 DAYS OF DEEP CREATIVITY WITH ZOË DEARBORN

I find that it is helpful to treat your arts practice as a ritual that requires special attention and a different kind of consciousness than other types of activities. This is why I usually start my classes with a meditation. The meditation helps us to center ourselves, slow down and fine tune our senses to the creative realm, where imagination, the senses and emotions become the more dominant language. I also find it's important to ready the space where we are to work so that its emptiness invites us to "do something". As everyone is unique and different styles work for different people, I offer these tips as suggestions, but please only do what feels right for you. I invite you to explore different ways.

Here is a loose structure I created that may be helpful to apply to your arts practice, called: Clear, Receive, Create.

**Clear**—Clear your space, clear your mind, retreat from your regular conscious mind and activities of practicality.

**Receive**—Put yourself in a receptive state—a state where you are relaxed and something enters you—EG: listen to music, meditate, read, look at nature.

**Create**—Here is where you are ready to take action on your arts practice—expressing what is inside you.

### PROJECT-BASED ARTS PRACTICE

Sometimes an arts practice is project-based. Project-based arts practices are more content defined and have a definite beginning and end. We will be developing projects the following week. This is something to keep in the back of your mind this week.

A final note: You may want to hang up the image you drew of your higher self as a reminder for this week. Refer to your higher self as much as you want for guidance and support. This is part of your practice.

I hope you enjoy this week and I'll see you in the group!