



FIND YOUR flow

Creativity is deeply personal & unique. There is no one approach to genuine creativity that will work for everyone. To figure out YOUR ideal flow zone, let's investigate your creative life as it has gone so far. What has worked in the past? What were the common elements? How can that be implemented now?

Let's take this one step at a time, shall we?

identify

IDENTIFY 3 MOMENTS IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU WERE THRIVING CREATIVELY.

These could be specific moments or more general phases. These can be any time from when you were a kid to just recently. We're looking for significant periods in your creative life and meaningful moments when you felt expressive and vibrantly alive.

List these moments below.

Examples: - *when I was in that creative writing class in high school; when I got back from Burning Man ; when I took that online drawing class; when I had the studio; when I was living with Charles...*

examine #1

Now let's take a closer look at what was going on in those creatively alive moments. For each of the three phases you listed on page 1, answer the questions below.

CREATIVE PHASE 1: Write the first phase you mentioned on page 1.

EXAMPLE: *when I was taking that Creative writing class in High School*

WERE YOU RESPONDING TO PROMPTS / ASSIGNMENTS / PROJECTS OR WAS IT ARISING FROM WITHIN YOU? OR SOME COMBINATION?

EXAMPLE: *Mostly I was responding to assignments but once I got going on one it seemed to lead to the next poem.*

WAS IT PROJECT-ORIENTED OR MORE PROCESS-ORIENTED / OPEN-ENDED EXPLORATORY CREATIVE PRACTICE?

EXAMPLE: *It was a series of projects that led to something more open-ended.*

WERE YOU CREATING ALONE OR IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS?

EXAMPLE: *I was working alone.*



HOW CONNECTED WERE YOU TO SOME SORT OF CREATIVE COMMUNITY?

EXAMPLE: *I had a lot of alone time but then we always shared in class.*

WAS ANYONE ELSE INVOLVED (EG. TEACHER, MENTOR, PROJECT PARTNER, DIRECTOR, COACH?) WHAT WAS HELPFUL ABOUT HAVING SOMEONE ELSE OR NOT HAVING SOMEONE ELSE INVOLVED?

EXAMPLE: *Ms. Richert was giving assignments and was always very encouraging and reading us inspiring poems.*

WERE YOU RECEIVING FEEDBACK, TIPS, SUGGESTIONS, DIRECTION?

HOW OFTEN? HOW WAS IT STRUCTURED? OR WERE YOU SEQUESTERED?

EXAMPLE: *We had the chance to share our work once a week but no schedule of who would share when. Whoever wanted to would read aloud and then we did one round of positive feedback and one round of constructive criticism.*

DID YOU HAVE DEADLINES YOU WERE RESPONDING TO?

EXAMPLE: *We had due dates for writing but we could share spontaneously.*



WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESSURE & SPACIOUSNESS?

IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU FEEL SAFE OR A LITTLE EDGY?

EXAMPLE: *I felt very much encouraged by and safe with Ms Richert but knowing that I had to share at least once during the semester added just a little bit of pressure.*

WHAT WERE THE FACTORS OF YOUR WORK SPACE, EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS?

EXAMPLE: *I didn't have any particular workspace , but I always wrote in the same notebook and I had a really smooth pen that I liked.*

DID YOU KEEP A PARTICULAR SCHEDULE OR WERE YOU FREE FLOWING?

EXAMPLE: *I wrote every day on the bus.*

WHAT ELSE WAS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE AT THAT TIME?

EXAMPLE: *I was swimming 2 hours every day. I think the physical effort really helped free my mind.*



WERE YOU WORKING AT A PARTICULAR TIME OF DAY? HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND?
DID YOU TAKE BREAKS?

EXAMPLE: *I was writing in the morning for about 30 minutes at a time.*

DID YOU HAVE SORT OF RITUAL OR SURROUNDING HABITS? FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU
MEDITATE, GO FOR A WALK, MAKE TEA?

EXAMPLE: *Now that I think about it, I did walk to the bus before writing.*

DID YOU DO ANYTHING TO HELP YOUR FOCUS? FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU TURN OFF YOUR
PHONE, COMMUNICATE TO YOUR HOUSEMATES, LISTEN TO MUSIC?

EXAMPLE: *I wore sound cancelling headphones on the bus.*

WHAT WERE OTHER FACTORS THAT MIGHT HAVE HELPED OR HINDERED?

EXAMPLE: *I would up always having my notebook with me so I would write while I rode the bus and also at random times when I was waiting for someone or felt inspired. I also jotted down images or phrases that occurred to me and could jumpstart poems later.*



ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT TIME THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT?

EXAMPLE: *I was listening to a lot of music in those days. And because my work sessions would end abruptly when I arrived at my stop, I would always know where to start next time — sometimes mid-sentence.*

GREAT JOB! On the next pages, you'll repeat this process for each of the phases on your list from page 1.

examine #2

Now let's take a closer look at what was going on in one of the other creatively alive moments in your life.

CREATIVE PHASE 2: Go back to page 1 and pick one of the other phases you mentioned.

Write it below. **EXAMPLE:** *when I got back from Burning Man*

DURING THAT CREATIVE PHASE, WERE YOU RESPONDING TO PROMPTS / ASSIGNMENTS / PROJECTS OR WAS IT ARISING FROM WITHIN YOU? OR SOME COMBINATION?

EXAMPLE: *There were no prompts. Or rather, everything felt like a prompt. The creative expression was just flowing.*

WAS IT PROJECT-ORIENTED OR MORE PROCESS-ORIENTED / OPEN-ENDED EXPLORATORY CREATIVE PRACTICE?

EXAMPLE: *It was totally exploratory.*

WERE YOU CREATING ALONE OR IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS?

EXAMPLE: *I was working alone.*



HOW CONNECTED WERE YOU TO SOME SORT OF CREATIVE COMMUNITY?

EXAMPLE: *Although I was working alone, I felt very connected to the Burning Man community.*

WAS ANYONE ELSE INVOLVED (EG. TEACHER, MENTOR, PROJECT PARTNER, DIRECTOR, COACH?) WHAT WAS HELPFUL ABOUT HAVING SOMEONE ELSE OR NOT HAVING SOMEONE ELSE INVOLVED?

EXAMPLE: *I didn't have anyone involved in the work I was making, but I was sharing it with Rebecca.*

WERE YOU RECEIVING FEEDBACK, TIPS, SUGGESTIONS, DIRECTION?

HOW OFTEN? HOW WAS IT STRUCTURED? OR WERE YOU SEQUESTERED?

EXAMPLE: *It wasn't structured but I would email Rebecca and she would share what she was doing and I always felt jazzed by her comments.*

DID YOU HAVE DEADLINES YOU WERE RESPONDING TO?

EXAMPLE: *Not technically, but since Rebecca and I were writing each other it felt like a weekly deadline.*



WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESSURE & SPACIOUSNESS?

IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU FEEL SAFE OR A LITTLE EDGY?

EXAMPLE: *I felt very safe with Rebecca and I felt something like pressure from the Burning Man community — maybe it was more of a dare than pressure. They were daring me to be free with my expression. That felt edgy.*

WHAT WERE THE FACTORS OF YOUR WORK SPACE, EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS?

EXAMPLE: *I was working at the kitchen table and since I lived alone I could leave everything out.*

DID YOU KEEP A PARTICULAR SCHEDULE OR WERE YOU FREE FLOWING?

EXAMPLE: *I made art most evenings after work.*

WHAT ELSE WAS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE AT THAT TIME?

EXAMPLE: *I was spending a lot of time an art openings and theater performances.*



WERE YOU WORKING AT A PARTICULAR TIME OF DAY? HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND?
DID YOU TAKE BREAKS?

EXAMPLE: *I made art in the evening for about 30 minutes. I would stop when I got hungry for dinner.*

DID YOU HAVE SORT OF RITUAL OR SURROUNDING HABITS? FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU
MEDITATE, GO FOR A WALK, MAKE TEA?

EXAMPLE: *Before starting I would close my eyes and say aloud: "whatever comes, comes!"*

DID YOU DO ANYTHING TO HELP YOUR FOCUS? FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU TURN OFF YOUR
PHONE, COMMUNICATE TO YOUR HOUSEMATES, LISTEN TO MUSIC?

EXAMPLE: *I put on the lofi beats playlist on Spotify.*

WHAT WERE OTHER FACTORS THAT MIGHT HAVE HELPED OR HINDERED?

EXAMPLE: *I think leaving everything on the kitchen table made it easy to start again and the visual reminded me to do it.*



ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT TIME THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT?

EXAMPLE: *I wasn't worrying about what all this artmaking was for. I was just doing it for the sake of doing it.*

NICE! On the next pages, repeat this process once more for another phase from your list on page 1.

examine #3

Last time through these questions.

CREATIVE PHASE 3: Pick one more creative phase from page 1 and write it below.

EXAMPLE: *when I had the studio in Oakland*

WERE YOU RESPONDING TO PROMPTS / ASSIGNMENTS / PROJECTS OR WAS IT ARISING FROM WITHIN YOU? OR SOME COMBINATION?

EXAMPLE: *No, I was just doing whatever I wanted to do.*

WAS IT PROJECT-ORIENTED OR MORE PROCESS-ORIENTED / OPEN-ENDED EXPLORATORY CREATIVE PRACTICE?

EXAMPLE: *It was definitely process-oriented. I didn't know where anything was leading.*

WERE YOU CREATING ALONE OR IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS?

EXAMPLE: *I was working alone.*



HOW CONNECTED WERE YOU TO SOME SORT OF CREATIVE COMMUNITY?

EXAMPLE: *I was not a part of any organized community but I did have a couple friends who also made stuff.*

WAS ANYONE ELSE INVOLVED (EG. TEACHER, MENTOR, PROJECT PARTNER, DIRECTOR, COACH?) WHAT WAS HELPFUL ABOUT HAVING SOMEONE ELSE OR NOT HAVING SOMEONE ELSE INVOLVED?

EXAMPLE: *No, I didn't have anyone like that.*

WERE YOU RECEIVING FEEDBACK, TIPS, SUGGESTIONS, DIRECTION?

HOW OFTEN? HOW WAS IT STRUCTURED? OR WERE YOU SEQUESTERED?

EXAMPLE: *No, nothing structured. But I did invite friends over to the studio now and again.*

DID YOU HAVE DEADLINES YOU WERE RESPONDING TO?

EXAMPLE: *Eventually I organized a show and then I started painting like mad!*



WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESSURE & SPACIOUSNESS?

IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU FEEL SAFE OR A LITTLE EDGY?

EXAMPLE: *I felt a certain amount of pressure to use the studio because I was paying for it. But I wasn't paying so much that I was freaking out about it. So the amount of rent created the perfect amount of pressure for me.*

WHAT WERE THE FACTORS OF YOUR WORK SPACE, EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS?

EXAMPLE: *I loved having a space to myself, 3 work tables and walls I could pin up on. And I didn't have to worry about staining the floor.*

DID YOU KEEP A PARTICULAR SCHEDULE OR WERE YOU FREE FLOWING?

EXAMPLE: *I went to the studio every day and had to stay for 20 minutes whether or not I worked. Sometimes that turned into painting for 6 hours. Sometimes I left after 20 minutes.*

WHAT ELSE WAS GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE AT THAT TIME?

EXAMPLE: *I was listening to a lot of dharma talks and audiobooks about Goddess culture.*



**WERE YOU WORKING AT A PARTICULAR TIME OF DAY? HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND?
DID YOU TAKE BREAKS?**

EXAMPLE: *I almost always went to the studio in the morning right after meditation. I stayed at least 20 minutes.*

**DID YOU HAVE SORT OF RITUAL OR SURROUNDING HABITS? FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU
MEDITATE, GO FOR A WALK, MAKE TEA?**

EXAMPLE: *In the beginning I would light a candle or meditate. But then I started to just say aloud "let's do this!"*

**DID YOU DO ANYTHING TO HELP YOUR FOCUS? FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU TURN OFF YOUR
PHONE, COMMUNICATE TO YOUR HOUSEMATES, LISTEN TO MUSIC?**

EXAMPLE: *I didn't have cell reception at the studio, which turned out to be great. I often listened to audiobooks.*

WHAT WERE OTHER FACTORS THAT MIGHT HAVE HELPED OR HINDERED?

EXAMPLE: *Telling myself to go for 20 minutes even if I didn't make anything helped a lot. Many days I wouldn't have gone if I didn't have that rule.*



ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT TIME THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT?

EXAMPLE: *I was going for lots of hikes and taking pictures of beautiful color combinations. That gave me something to start from when I didn't know what to do next. I'd just try to recreate those colors on my canvas.*

EXCELLENT! On the next pages, we'll look for the common themes in your creative phases.

implement

Now that you've worked through all of your listed phases, look through your answers for commonalities.

WHAT ELEMENTS SHOW UP MORE THAN ONCE? LIST THOSE BELOW.

EXAMPLE: *In most cases I was responding to some kind of deadline. I had a community that was reflecting back my work, inspiring me and providing accountability. I always had a specific time of day I was creating.*

BRAINSTORM AT LEAST FIVE WAYS TO CULTIVATE THOSE CONDITIONS IN YOUR

PRESENT LIFE. EXAMPLE: *I could invent deadlines for myself. I could take a class that has some sort of community aspect. I could ask Phoebe to be my accountability buddy.*

PICK ONE OF THE FIVE ITEMS ABOVE. WRITE THREE SMALL, SPECIFIC ACTIONS YOU COULD TAKE WITHIN THE NEXT THREE DAYS THAT WOULD MOVE YOU IN THE DIRECTION OF CULTIVATING THE CONDITIONS FOR YOUR FLOW.

EXAMPLE: *I could look at my calendar and make up a deadline. I could spend 20 minutes searching online for a class. I could send Phoebe a text right now, tell her my deadline, and ask her to be my accountability buddy.*

Pick one of the actions. When & where will you do it?

EXAMPLE: *I'll make up a deadline on Saturday morning at the kitchen table!*

celebrate!

Identifying the conditions that support your creative flow is a super important step that most people don't take.

Now you can make your way to cultivating the conditions that work for you by continuing to identify what actions need to be taken and chipping away at that list.

For support in developing your creative flow (and how to blend that with mindfulness), come on over and visit us ARTMONASTERY.ORG.

