

May Theme

Creativity: The Practice of Imagination

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Books

- *A Big New Free Happy Unusual Life: Self-Expression and Spiritual Practice for Those Who Have Time for Neither*, by Nina Wise
- *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*, by Daniel H. Pink
- *Wreck this Journal*, by Keri Smith

Videos & Online

- Creative Resistance – daily dose of activist art: <http://www.creativeresistance.org>
- Linda Hill TED Talk: [Managing for Collective Creativity](#)
- Meklit Hadero TED Talk: [The Unexpected Beauty of Everyday Sounds](#)
- Manoush Zomorodi TED Talk: [How Boredom Can Lead to Your Most Brilliant Ideas](#)
- Check out the Spotify play list for music about creativity: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

Children's Books

- *I Wonder*, by Annaka Harris
- *The Sound That Jazz Makes*, by Carole Boston Weatherford
- *The Wedding Portrait*, by Innosanto Nagara
- *Roxaboxen*, by Alice McLerran

Movies

- *Buena Vista Social Club*, 1999 (G)
- *Mary Poppins*, 1964 (G)

QUOTES FOR CONTEMPLATION

Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction.
~ Pablo Picasso

Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted. ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

The war of an artist with [their] society is a lover's war, and [they] do, at [their] best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to [themselves] and, with that revelation, to make freedom real. ~ James Baldwin

Creativity is intelligence having fun. ~ George Scialabba

All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life. ~ M.C. Richards

I invented this rule for myself to be applied to every decision I might have to make in the future. I would sort out all the arguments and see which belonged to fear and which to creativeness, and other things being equal I would make the decision which had the larger number of creative reasons on its side. I think it must be a rule something like this that makes jonquils and crocuses come pushing through cold mud.
~ Katharine Butler Hathaway

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you. ~ The Gospel of Thomas

If your heart is broken, make art with the pieces.
~ Shane Koyczan

When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So what the hell, leap. ~ Cynthia Heimel

Nature is infinitely creative. It is always producing the possibility of new beginnings.
~ Marianne Williamson

You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.
~ Maya Angelou

We design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us.
~ Anne-Marie Willis

Each New Day

~ Rev. Peter Friedrichs
Why is this blank page staring back at me, mocking, like an affliction, and fraught with dread? How can it hold such sway, this simple emptiness? Might it instead be a gift left on my doorstep overnight, waiting to be broken open with the dawn?

A present, eager to emerge if only I had the sense to hold the paper over a candle flame, its lemon juice message appearing, like magic, clear and true?
Each new day is like this, pure air, devoid of density, but for the weight of our own invention.
Birds do not worry the morning or fret the rising sun. They wait, expectant, until its rays kiss their downy necks. Then, stretching, they turn to face the day, And sing.



Photo by Chris Barbalis

What Does It Mean to Be a People of Creativity?

Creativity is our ability to dream things up and make them happen.

— Peggy Taylor

We're all familiar with that part in the quote about dreaming. Conjuring up new ideas and images is what creativity is all about. Using the building blocks of "what is," we - almost magically- make the "not yet" appear in our minds.

But what about that other part? The part about "making them happen." When we talk about creativity, that half of the equation often gets short shrift. We celebrate the fun piece about dreaming and leave off the hard piece of making our imaginings real. And it's not just the hard part; it's the scary part too. You have to be brave to try new things and fail. Being creative and unique can cause the crowd to cheer and swoon; it can also lead to being laughed at and excluded from the group. Yes, there is joy, beauty, and play in creativity, but there is also insecurity, loneliness, and self-doubt. Which means that this month is not just about imagination, artistry, and self-expression, but also courage.

Once that's in view, it's clear that we also need to talk about "co-creativity" this month as well. Something as daring as creativity is dangerous if we try to do it alone. Indeed, where did we get the silly idea that artists and inventors are isolated, independent geniuses? When it comes to myths about creativity, that one tops the list. We need to remind each other that there is no such thing as a "person of creativity," only "people of creativity." The Bible talks of the Holy Spirit appearing when "two or more are gathered." The same rule applies to the *creative* spirit! For instance, new ideas come from the clash of debate. New art emerges only after inspiration from those who've gone before. Better forms of community are built on the back of those who have toiled and sacrificed long before we put ourselves on the line. Simply put, there are no creators without companions.

It's all a way of reminding us that the secret to creative self-expression is staying connected to each other. Those sacred sources of inspiration inside us – our imagination, unique voice, and inner muses – are like wild animals; they are hungry to run free but are also shy and easily scared away. They want to come out and play but will only do so when coaxed and cared for by the inspiration and support of others. So, in the end, maybe the most important question this month is not just "What do you want to create?" but also "Who are your partners?"

With gratitude for all our sources of creativity – those within us and those all around us – let us begin.



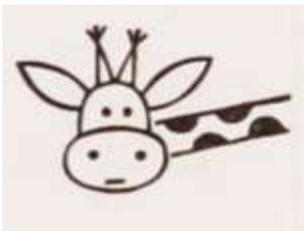
Art by Tara Rieke-Elledge
(from Salinas, CA)

*You have to be
brave to try new
things and fail.*

KIDS' CORNER

Story building drawing

Find a few friends to have some fun with. In this space here, draw for 15-30 secs. Then pass the paper to the next person, and they will add on to your drawing. Keep passing until everyone gets their original paper back. Then go around the room and allow each person to tell a story about the picture they ended with.



Create and Give

This exercise invites you to explore the relationship between creativity and generosity.

Often the creative impulse involves expressing yourself, but it's also about using yourself for the sake of others. Another way to put this is to say: we create in order to heal and help. Creativity is not just about bringing something new and original into the world; it's also about bringing beauty, kindness, joy and affirmation to others.

So, give some thought to how the people around you need beauty, kindness, connection, joy or affirmation. Then pick one person from the bunch and create something for them. The gift can be as simple as a baked good or as elaborate as a painting. The most important thing is to figure out what that gift is a conduit for. Are you offering it to bring a bit of joy or fun into their life? Are you sharing it to reflect one of their wonderful qualities back to them? Is your gift a means of helping them hold on to something they loved but recently lost?

Ask a friend to do this exercise as well so you can check in with each other afterward about how your gift-giving went.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of creativity means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. Do you know what are you building, constructing, composing, planting, or recreating with your life? Is it in line with what you *want* to be creating? If not, how can you readjust? And if so, how will you keep that focus?
2. When was the last time you created (or helped create) something that will outlive you?
3. Who or what is in the way of your self-expression? What can you do to re-center yourself?
4. Is it time to recreate yourself? If so, what is your vision, and what can you do to make it happen?
5. They say creativity comes with a cost. Are you trying to achieve creativity but avoid the cost? If so, what do you fear is the cost?
6. There's creativity in tearing things down. What in your life needs to be creatively deconstructed so new life has room to grow?
7. How often do you give yourself the gift of inspiration? Why you think you can go without it for weeks at a time? How can you build more time in to allow inspiration to come through? In what kinds of circumstances do you generally find yourself feeling inspired?
8. When was the last time you woke up feeling like the new day was a blank canvas? How did that feel, and what did you paint on the canvas that day?
9. Do you feel like you create your days or like they create you?
10. Do you make space for the muses? If not, what would help you make more space?
11. Are you trying to create alone? With whom would you like to be creating?
12. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

JUSTICE CORNER

All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for May 2018.

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Participate in The Poor People's Campaign! The aim is not simply trying to win on an issue, but instead building a long term movement that brings religious principles, of loving and not harming our neighbors and our earth, to the center of public discourse and policy, rooted in nonviolence.

Through highly publicized, non-violent moral fusion direct action over a 6-week period in at least 30 states and the District of Columbia, the Campaign will force a serious national examination of the enmeshed evils of systemic racism, systemic poverty, ecological devastation and the war economy during a key election year. The first national event is on May 14, 2pm, at the California State Capitol South Steps (1315 10th St B-27 Sacramento CA 95814).

RSVP: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/nonviolent-moral-fusion-direct-action-sacramento>. Contact Ellis Vance at vev40@comcast.net about UUCF's participation.