

How To Embrace Frustration As The Key To Creativity

By Tony Fahkry



Can Frustration Inhibit Creativity?

Frustration is the foundation to creativity and the birthplace of new insights. You may try to ignore the struggle that frustration throws up, though if embraced, the battle allows you to form a new relationship with the creative process. Resistance stifles creativity since you become embroiled in negative emotions that inhibit genius and wisdom. In one way, you are enslaved to the emotion, but not the intoxicating highs that go with it. Learn to live with tension to harness inspiration, as alternative medicine advocate Deepak Chopra states: "Be comfortable with and embrace paradox, contradiction, and ambiguity. It is the womb of creativity."

It is important to reframe your relationship with frustration if you seek to move deeper into creativity. This doesn't mean you should enjoy it, though acceptance goes a long way to be able to benefit from its power. Frustration is obvious in the countless rejection letters you receive in reply to your book submission. Whilst you despise it, you accept there is something to be gained, otherwise you wouldn't be frustrated.

Many people have an ambivalent relationship with frustration - in fact one that inhibits creativity. They welcome the inspiration that sparks new ideas. However, they feel frustrated when it does not play out according to plan. "If you want to be an artist of any sort, it seemed to me, then handling your frustration is a fundamental aspect of the work - perhaps the single most fundamental aspect of the work. Frustration is not an interruption of your process; frustration is the process," affirms the acclaimed author Elizabeth Gilbert in: *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*.

Some people experience flashes of creativity and inspiration one day, and resistance the next. The key to inspiration lies somewhere in the middle, when you are open to the unknown. In the unconscious your greatest accomplishments emerge, since you are not



bound by expectations other than the flow of inspiration.

Expand Your Horizons

Working with frustration requires being acquainted with its energy. You recognise how it occupies space in your body and the tension that arises. These are the boiling points for creative success. "People need trouble - a little frustration to sharpen the spirit on, toughen it. Artists do; I don't mean you need to live in a rat hole or gutter, but you have to learn fortitude, endurance. Only vegetables are happy," states the late American writer William Faulkner.

Collaborating with frustration means being aware of what is being called forth. If you exploit it correctly, you will channel creativity into the tip of a ballpoint pen. Frustration is a sign you have reached a plateau. The subconscious mind advises you to step out of the known, to give creativity a home in which to flourish. That's why you should welcome frustration as a source of wisdom. It is the intuitive part of you summoning to reach deeper into the abyss of your mind and expand your horizons.

Frustration invites you to be less invested in outcomes and to channel creativity through your core. Rest if you must when you reach a sticking point and engage in something non-creative, meaningless and devoid of intent. A valve releases pressure for gas to escape and so should you.

The English economist Tim Harford states in a TED Talk titled: How Frustration Can Make Us More Creative: "These distractions were actually grists to their creative mill. They were able to think outside the box because their box was full of holes."

Awaken Your Creative Impulses



As someone who has been involved in the arts my entire life, I recognise the call of frustration and use it wisely. I enjoy being active and engage in exercise when frustration calls. Aside from the release of endorphins, I am receptive to new sources of inspiration and no longer attached to an idea whose time has passed. In the same way, be mindful of your sleep and avoid burning the midnight oil to get more work completed.

Nutrition and hydration are important too. I have eliminated consumption of packaged and junk foods over time which helped my mind flourish with new ideas. I nurture my body and mind with the attentiveness it deserves. I am creating a home for creativity to reside so it feels welcomed. Remember; frustration is a sign post calling you to examine parts of the creative process that require change. Think of travelling down a freeway that will take you so far, before having to choose a new road. You are only as good as your recent creative endeavour. Awaken your creative impulses and don't allow yourself to become stagnant.

Above all else, welcome frustration as the spark of creativity and be acquainted with its temperament. I leave you with something the British playwright Hanif Kureishi wrote in his book *The Last Word*: "It's frustration which makes creativity possible." Embrace it. Exploit it. Let it be your servant and when you are done, you will have transformed it into a force that otherwise will have remained dormant.

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