

VOYAGE WITHOUT A COMPASS: tapping into the creative process



he famed French novelist, essayist, playwright and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Albert Camus, once wrote, "A man's work is nothing but a long journey to recover through the detours of art the two or three simple and great images which first gained access to his heart."

For almost as long as there has been human life on our planet, man has cast his small but tireless shadow over the remotest parts of his shrinking world in a restless quest for new lands, riches, fame and adventure. But what of a different sort of quest, a voyage without a compass, one that taps into the seemingly invisible yet limitless lands rising out of the Sea of Creativity that flows in and around us. Many before have embarked upon such a voyage, and their legacy remains solidly with us as a reminder of who we are and of what magical stuff we are made. Just contemplate those haunting images of animals painted by our Cro-Magnon ancestors on cave walls throughout Europe, experience the primordial sonic beauty of a John Coltrane tenor saxophone solo, fall under the spell of the graceful language of love wrought by the Persian mystic poet Rumi, and you will get a sense of the inexhaustible creative expression to which we are heir.

Have you ever wondered what makes the artist paint, or what inspires the sculptor to sculpt, the writer to write, a dancer to choreograph or a group of musicians to play spontaneous compositions? Each of these individuals has a unique gateway to the kingdom within, and each holds the key to unlock and probe its depths. In order to do this, one must, first of all, have passion for the endeavor and secondly, make the genuine commitment to cultivate the tools and skills of expression necessary to the unfolding of his or her particular talent. This is known as "intent" which the Dictionary defines as "having the mind fastened upon some purpose." For the artist who has committed to this process, there are no short cuts and much preparatory work is required. So be advised!

But enough of all this talk of work! Instead, let's talk here of "play"...that's right, you heard me correctly. So, why play? I believe that when one is in the act of doing absolutely nothing, when one's mind has been caught momentarily off-guard as in a state of play, and the clamor and responsibilities of our daily life come to a standstill, we are ready to begin our journey. And it is in this peaceful, unhurried and ideal state that the path to creativity truly reveals itself. Then and only then, the rusty gateway, once shrouded in fog and mist, or overgrown with cobwebs, moss and ivy, is unlocked at last. And this is the joyous moment when one enters the garden of creative delight and begins to play.



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Play is also an essential ingredient because it allows us to connect again with our child within, and to be free, spontaneous and creative in our means of self expression. Once we have returned to this natural state, we shall uncover vast storehouses of treasure, not some glittering collection of jewels and gold coins in an old iron chest, but greater awareness and enlightenment as our creative language unfolds and blossoms. Cultivating the tools and skills of expression as we hone our craft then becomes effortless and in the process we will have great fun.

Creativity is synonymous with discovery, the discovery of our true nature and hence, our true self. Once one has chosen to embark on his or her creative passage—this magical voyage to unnamed lands and indescribable places—there is no turning back. The voyager is hooked and will evolve and become empowered because of it.

In forums or gatherings such as this, sharing the fruits of each other's journeys will ultimately bring us all closer to realizing the wealth of untapped resources, gifts and talents that lies at the core of each of our beings and within each human's grasp, but only if we allow and make time for the discovery. While there are many lessons that I have personally learned from my voyage as well as absorbed from the journeys of those who came before, of one thing I can be certain: there is always magic to anticipate when one charts the new course and sets sail. May the sun of possibility brighten all of your future passages!