

Creative Fix

Creative Fix Toolkit

**BUILD A SUSTAINABLE
CREATIVE HABIT**

The Creative Fix Cycle



This cycle is used for **every** creative session, no matter how short, in order to ensure we are working in harmony with our nervous systems, meeting our needs, and building a habit we want to come back to.

The whole cycle can take as much or as little time as you like. I recommend the following:

	Possibility	Optimal
Arrive	1–5 minutes	2 minutes
Open	1–5 minutes	1 minute
Create	3 minutes – 6 hours (sprints for long sessions)	Capacity dependent
Close	< 2 minutes	< 1 minute
Reflect	1–15 minutes	2 minutes
Integrate	1–5 minutes	2 minutes
Celebrate	Variable	Capacity dependent
Rest	Variable	Variable

Arrive

Settle in and notice what you need right now

ENERGY COMPASS

This worksheet will allow you to assess your energy and mood, and use that to inform your creative actions.

Assess your feelings in the different categories, and then plot your position on the compass on the next page. Then, on pages 3 – 6, you'll find suggestions of what creative activities will suit your current state best.

1: ENERGY CHECK

Date today: / /

Where are your energy and mood levels right now?

Physical energy



Low

High

Mood



Low

High

Creative energy

Which of these sounds most like you right now?

☐

**Stuck /
unmotivated**

☐

**Unclear /
hesitant**

☐

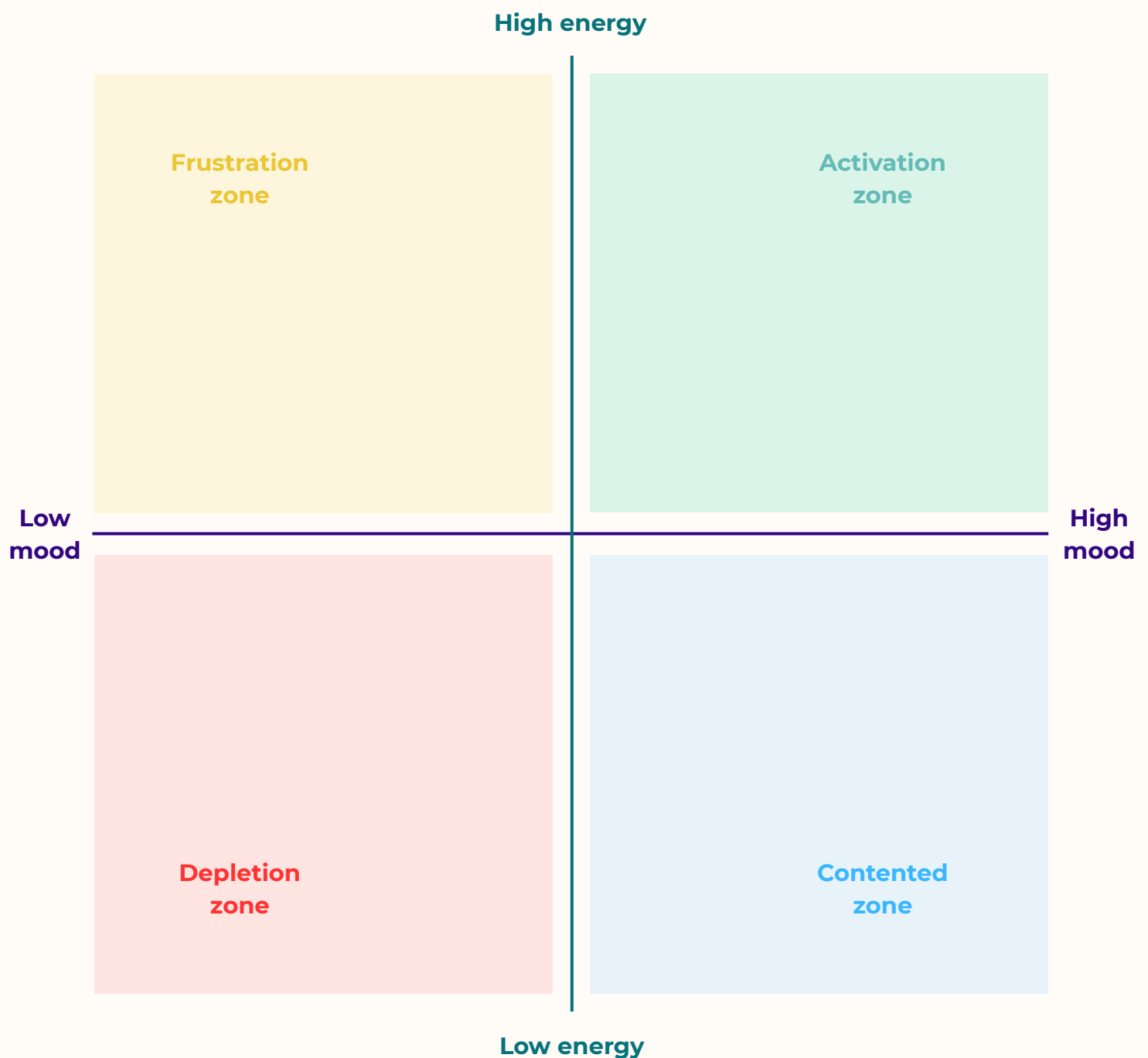
**Open /
exploring**

☐

**Imaginative
/ sparked**

ENERGY COMPASS

2: ENERGY COMPASS



ENERGY COMPASS

3: CREATIVE ACTIONS: DEPLETION ZONE

Tread softly here. This is the space where you are most susceptible to burning out or giving up.

Priorities in this zone:

- Reduce demand
- Nourish your nervous system

Choose from the actions applicable to your current creative state:

Stuck /unmotivated

Rest and restore

- Consume art – read, visit a gallery, watch a movie, listen to music...
- Revisit / reread your work in progress, or look through previous works without changing anything
- Collect inspiration – save images, quotes, ideas by writing or sticking them in a journal, leaving yourself voice notes, or adding to a folder
- Try a gentle creative therapy activity (see YourCreativeFix.substack.com for ideas)

Unclear / hesitant

Light touch only

- Write ideas or plans in messy bullet points or doodles
- Make a “what might happen next?” list
- Look for images, songs or other stimuli that connect to your work in progress and save them for inspiration
- Use a creative therapy activity to explore your thoughts and feelings

Open / exploring

Gentle engagement

- Light editing for short time only
- Reorganise notes or files
- Make a list of work that needs to be done on your work in progress
- Highlight interesting parts of existing notes or drafts
- Play around – free write, journal, doodle, collage or splash paint around with no expectations
- Decorate notebooks, sketchbooks or folders

Imaginative / sparked

Unlikely in this zone, but not impossible! Keep it simple.

- Brain dump ideas
- Voice note your thoughts
- Sketch / experiment lightly

Top Tip: In the Depletion Zone, keep demand low - set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes and stop when it goes off. Allow that to be enough.

Arrive 2

ENERGY COMPASS

3: CREATIVE ACTIONS: FRUSTRATION ZONE

This can be an intense space. You may be feeling anxious, irritable, agitated... Go gently with yourself.

Priorities in this zone:

- Channel your energy
- Regulate yourself

Choose from the actions applicable to your current creative state:

Stuck /unmotivated

Release

- Move your body – shake, dance, go for a walk... allow ideas and images to come as you move
- Get physical with your work – make a collage using soft materials, paint with your hands, build something from sand or clay or soil
- Create something messy or “bad” on purpose
- Use a creative therapy prompt to channel and process your feelings

Unclear / hesitant

Make an easy entry point

- Set a timer for 3 minutes and make a rapid list of possibilities
- Consider three different ways you could approach the next section of your work in progress
- Get brutal with editing – how could you remove half the words or lines on a page and keep the impact?
- Do something wild – e.g. if you’re writing a gritty crime novel, what happens if a dragon appears? You can delete it later, just play for now.

Open / exploring

Fast-paced building

- Block in composition or structure
- Draft the next section quickly
- Make a plan for the overall project
- Connect ideas or scenes
- Make a mood board for the project
- Brainstorm places you will pitch to or promote your work once it’s ready
- Discuss your progress so far with a trusted friend or fellow artist(s)
- Make a list of people you trust to give constructive feedback

Imaginative / sparked

Experimentation

- Play around with stylistic shifts
- Try out a bold narrative or visual choice
- Experiment with alternative versions
- Set a timer for 10 – 15 minutes and free write or sketch without stopping to edit or erase anything

Top Tip: Engage your physical senses with creative ritual to soothe your system (see YourCreativeFix.substack.com to find useful rituals).

Arrive 3

ENERGY COMPASS

3: CREATIVE ACTIONS: CONTENTED ZONE

This is a place of calm and gentle focus. Energy is low, so you don't want to push too hard, but emotionally you're good.

Priorities in this zone:

- Keep it gentle
- Slow and steady progress

Choose from the actions applicable to your current creative state:

Stuck /unmotivated

Encourage

- Reread your work aloud, or look at / experience your work and vocalise what you see / your reaction - see what insights arise
- Read a book or listen to a podcast about creativity or about a topic related to your work in progress
- Make a list of challenges or gaps in your work that you need to solve (but don't try to solve them now)
- Journal - see YourCreativeFix. substack.com for prompts

Unclear / hesitant

Something simple

- Make notes on possibilities for your work - nothing is set in stone yet
- Make notes on one of your characters - what do they like, enjoy, hate, fear, want, etc.
- Organise your ideas
- Make notes on any themes or patterns, or highlight connected sections
- Edit or refine short sections

Open / exploring

Steady development

- Edit or refine sections
- Add detail or finishing touches
- Look at how you can improve the structure or flow
- Build on any recurring themes
- Find ways to bring to life different elements of characterisation
- Work on setting
- Make a timeline of the events in your story

Imaginative / sparked

Gentle expansion

- Draft the next section
- Brainstorm ideas for deepening themes
- Make notes on layers of meaning you'd like to explore further
- Play with different interpretations of your work in progress
- Note down ideas for new techniques, media or practices you'd like to try
- Express your current emotions through doodles, collage or colour

Top Tip: Stop before you run out of energy so you don't burn out - give yourself a fixed amount of time and stop even if you're on a roll.

Arrive 4

ENERGY COMPASS

3: CREATIVE ACTIONS: ACTIVATION ZONE

This is the space where inspiration and flow are most accessible. It's the one we long for most, but have access to the least. So enjoy it when you get it!

Priorities in this zone:

- Have fun!

Choose from the actions applicable to your current creative state:

Stuck /unmotivated

Rare, but possible – gently move past the blocks

- Change medium – try sketching instead of writing, or voice notes instead of sketching
- Start something different in the same project universe
- Externalise your ideas – speak it out loud, voice note yourself, use movement
- Free write, draw with your eyes closed, make a song up as you go along – remove expectations

Unclear / hesitant

Unlock inspiration

- Outline the next section
- Brainstorm multiple options for plot, composition or style choices
- Create quick and simple prototypes
- Discuss ideas with trusted friends, family or online communities
- Work in short bursts – set a timer for 10 minutes and write/draw/etc. as fast as you can without stopping, then take a break, then repeat as often as feels comfortable (speed overcomes hesitation)

Open / exploring

Production

- Write / create the next section
- Build / develop existing work
- Share or submit work
- Integrate feedback or new ideas
- Promote your work
- Finalise a piece
- Review plans and trackers
- Brainstorm new ideas
- Review notes on ideas and consider what to take forward next

Imaginative / sparked

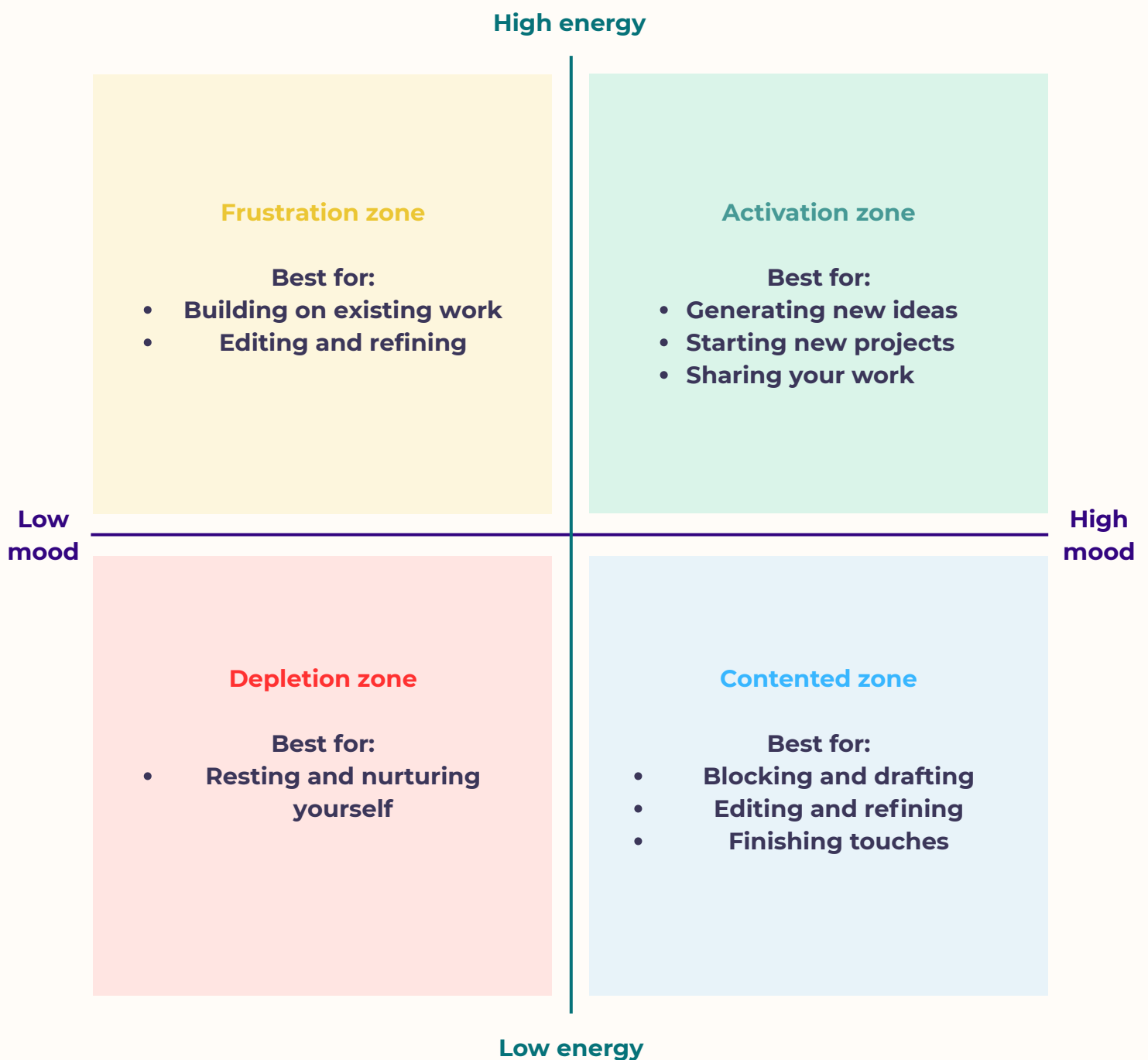
Deep expansion

- Start something new
- Experiment with voice, style, medium
- Take bold creative risks
- Promote your work in a fun new way
- Consider new opportunities (for yourself or your work in progress)
- Deep focus session on your current project (work in sprints – e.g. 30 minutes of work, 10 minute break, repeat – to avoid burning out)

Top Tip: Don't forget to look after your basic needs! Work in sprints, have snacks to hand. Set reminders for toilet and hydration breaks.

ENERGY COMPASS

4: QUICK GUIDE



Open

Open space and signal that it's time to create

CREATIVE RITUAL

WHAT IS A CREATIVE RITUAL?

A ritual is a way to indicate to your brain that it is time to create. It brings you into a creative mindset, a feeling of calm, confidence and expansion.

Rituals are easier to hold than routines. For some, routines feel stifling, whereas rituals are adaptable and flexible.

It also engages your senses. This can be highly pleasurable and energising for those of us who are sensory seekers, but also wakes up the parts of you that interact with the world so that you can create from a place of greater depth and connection, harnessing your sensory experience more powerfully and taking action as your whole, embodied self.

A ritual can be as simple as lighting a candle before you start work. It can be a particular playlist you listen to, or a certain way you set up your space.

The idea is to stimulate your senses and open a space where you feel safe and open to creativity. Therefore, choosing a few different sensory elements will help you feel embodied and relaxed.

The most important thing is that they feel simple, accessible, enjoyable and nurturing **to you**. So choose what feels right, and feel free to change it as often as you like (although repetition helps to embed the signal that “it is creative time now” in your brain).

Choose different elements from the sensory boxes on the next page – you may like to choose one from each box, but don’t make your ritual overly complicated. Just one or two things are perfectly sufficient.

You might like to add an affirmation (you can choose one from the box on the next page, or create your own) to help you open your creative space, set an intention and help your system feel safe to explore.

CREATIVE RITUAL

SUGGESTED RITUAL ELEMENTS

Sight

- Candle(s)
- Lamps
- Daylight
- Mood boards
- Artwork
- Visual prompts

Scent

- Essential oils
- Room spray
- Incense
- Flowers
- Herbal tea
- Dried herbs

Taste

- Herbal tea
- Cacao
- Cold drink
- Snacks
- Mint
- Sweet to suck on

Touch

- Comfortable socks
- Cosy blanket
- Fidget toy
- Smooth pebble
- Different textures
- Soft clothing

Sound

- Music
- Nature sounds
- White noise
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Singing bowls

Practice

- Meditation
- Stretching
- Chanting or breathwork
- Dancing or walking
- Read a poem
- Draw a sigil

Affirmations

- I give myself permission to create imperfectly
- I will do what I can, and that is enough
- I am allowed to share my voice
- I will write for 20 minutes, and then rest

Create

Time to unleash your imagination

CREATIVE PROMPTS

If you need help to ignite your creative spark, you can find a range of creative prompts in my Creative Fix membership.

Visit

YourCreativeFix.substack.com/Toolkit

to get a **7 day free trial**.



You can also get a deck of Creative Oracle cards on my website. This deck of 36 cards is designed to help you build a regular creative habit that supports your emotional wellbeing, by supporting you to explore and express your deepest thoughts and feelings.

Each card has a creative prompt, inspired by nature or mythology, that asks you to consider key themes and ideas. Reflect on how these concepts have relevance to you personally – or to the characters or subject of your current work in progress – and use whatever creative techniques you like to express what is calling inside you.

Visit

CreativeFix.net/Shop

Create

close

It's safe to stop

CLOSE THE SPACE

When you've completed your creative session, use a closing ritual to signal to your brain that you are done and you can let go.

Open loops in our brain can make us anxious and drained. Close the loop to let your system know that it's ok to switch off for now and allow yourself to rest.

Reverse your opening ritual - blow out the candle, put away your materials, take a final drink of your tea or eat a snack. Stretch, breathe, or whisper a thank you to yourself for showing up.

A closing affirmation - even something as simple as, **"That is enough for today,"** signals to your brain that it's safe to rest now.

Don't forget to celebrate or reward yourself for showing up.

And make sure you rest and recover fully before starting another creative session.

Reflect

Take a moment to process your experience

CREATIVE REFLECTION

Use these prompts soon after a creative session to process your experience and plan your next steps.

You do not have to answer every question - skip any that don't feel necessary. Bullet points, single words and doodles are all perfectly acceptable answers.

Date today: / /

Where are your energy and mood levels right now?

Physical energy



Mood



Creative energy

Which of these sounds most like you right now?

☐	☐	☐	☐
Stuck / unmotivated	Unclear / hesitant	Open / exploring	Imaginative / sparked

Have these changed from the start of your session?

CREATIVE REFLECTION

What went well today?

What felt challenging?

How are you feeling right now in your...
Body?

Mind?

Emotions?

What do you most need to nourish yourself?

Integrate

Be ready for the next time

CREATIVE INTEGRATION

Are there any blockers or challenges you're experiencing?

What might help?
Support, tools, changes, or something else?

What is the next step you need to take with your work?

Celebrate

You showed up, you're awesome

CREATIVE CELEBRATIONS

Celebration is a vital component of your creative practice. Acknowledging yourself for showing up and noticing your progress gives you the hit of dopamine that will motivate you to come back and keep going, and boosts your trust and belief in yourself.

We don't often give ourselves permission to celebrate, and we withhold even small acknowledgements until we've finished a big project. That's not enough. If you want to get serious about your creative practice, you need to get serious about celebrating yourself.

WHAT'S WORTH CELEBRATING?

Small wins

- I showed up today
- I opened the document
- I tried something new
- I kept going when it felt hard
- I wrote a sentence

Milestones

- I finished a chapter
- I completed a poem
- I finished the outline
- I plotted the novel
- I made an initial sketch
- I sent work for feedback

Achievements

- I finished the first draft
- I finished the book
- I submitted a story
- I recorded an album
- I booked a gallery show
- I sold a piece

All of these are important!



CREATIVE CELEBRATIONS

WHAT IS A CELEBRATION?

Celebration is a personal thing. It needs to suit your needs and your mood in the moment.

Reward types

Extrinsic rewards: ticks, stars, treats, gamification – visible, tangible progress + dopamine boost

Intrinsic rewards: reflection, meaning emotional acknowledgement – internal satisfaction

Both have value – extrinsic rewards are good for keeping us coming back to our practice regularly, and intrinsic rewards help us stay the course on big projects.

Types of celebration

Different rewards give us different benefits – all of these are valuable, but some are needed more at certain times than others, and only you know what you require in the moment.

Gentle regulation: rest, soothing, decompression

Recognition: being seen, acknowledged, celebrated

Joy / pleasure: fun, treats, playfulness

Meaning / reflection: noticing growth, honouring effort

Momentum: rewards that help you build a habit you want to keep coming back to

We are not rewarding perfection. We are training ourselves to keep showing up.

Celebrate 2

CREATIVE CELEBRATIONS

CHOOSE YOUR CELEBRATION

Gentle rewards

- Rest with a favourite drink and/or snack
- Give yourself a tick, gold star, sticker
- Do something that feels comforting – warm bath, sitting in nature, watching your favourite TV show
- Tell someone you've done it
- Whisper "well done" to yourself
- Add your work to a folder – notice your progress
- Write in one sentence how that session felt

Feel-good celebration

- Give / buy yourself a small treat
- Share your work with someone else
- Mark your progress on a planner
- Play a favourite song and dance, or listen while appreciating yourself
- Reflect on your progress and learnings
- Tell yourself you're proud of you
- Share a progress update online or in a community

Mark the moment

- Give / buy yourself a big treat
- Take the rest of the day off
- Display the work / mark off a project planner
- Take an outing or enjoy an experience you love
- Reflect on your learnings from this project
- Share your work publicly
- Hold a small ritual to mark the occasion
- Host a celebratory gathering with friends

CREATIVE CELEBRATIONS

PROGRESS TRACKER

Mark off or colour in a star every time you show up. It doesn't matter if there's been a big gap since you last showed up. It doesn't matter if you only showed up for a few minutes. We're not counting finished projects or perfect days, we're counting **one creative moment** at a time.



Rest

Nourish yourself so you have capacity to return

HOW TO REST

Our culture glorifies toxic busyness and hustle, and trains us to neglect and override our needs. No wonder we struggle to rest.

Rest doesn't have to mean sitting still. Here are some ideas based on Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith's identification of seven types of rest. Choose the one you feel in need of, and try to incorporate a variety of types into your days and weeks.

Physical rest

(relaxing your body)

- Sleep
- Stretching
- Getting a massage
- Sitting down

Mental rest

(resting your mind)

- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Gentle exercise
- Creativity

Emotional rest

(processing feelings)

- Journaling
- Therapy
- Connecting with friends

Social rest

(nurturing connection)

- Spending time with loved ones
- Finding a sense of community

Sensory rest

(reduced stimulation)

- Time in nature
- Relaxing bath
- Dimming lights
- Screen-free time

Creative rest

(free self-expression)

- Making art
- Freewriting
- Crafting
- Playing

Spiritual rest

(feeling part of something bigger than yourself)

- Appreciating nature
- Chanting
- Prayer
- Ritual

Creative Fix

CreativeFix.net



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