

Jumpstart Your Creative Art Project – Exercise

Part 1

First, I would like you to imagine, in your mind's eye, this hypothetical situation: Imagine a close friend or relative, somebody that you have known for a long time, that you regularly talk with and share confidences with, but whom you haven't seen or talked to for at least two or three weeks. And they reach out to you via phone or text and say "Hey, I'm free this evening. Let's get together and chat for about an hour or so. I really, really, really want to know what's been going on with you in the few weeks since I talked to you last."

Also, for the sake of this exercise, presume that you can and will say yes, and you'll be talking to them shortly.

Remember, they want to hear you talk, to tell your story.

And what I want you to do is pay attention to the first things that you start thinking of, right now in your own mind, regarding what you're going to say to them, or tell them about, when you start sharing about your recent past.

Jot down a few notes so that you don't forget what those things were, just in broad terms, a few words or a short description will do.

Take just a few seconds more to consider whatever it is that you're going to tell them about your life circumstances. Make a note. And then stop that train of thought.

Part 2

And we're going to move into the second part of the exercise.

Because what you're going to tell them about from Part 1 is not necessarily the critical information that you're seeking.

What I want you to isolate and identify is this: how did you immediately start thinking about the information that you might convey? How did you start mentally preparing for the chat? Not what you would say, in and of itself, but how would you present it, how would you verbally deliver whatever you intend to share, how do you rehearse for it, how do you imagine that conversation going? The answers to those questions are the critical pieces of information you need.

To get you started I'm going to list several different ways that you might choose to communicate your story. This is a long list of considerations. You may want to jot down a note or two if something really speaks to you, but you do not need to write everything down because you can go to my website, AvisionaryZ.com, and download a PDF of this exercise later.

Here are some prompts about your creative choices:

- Would you share one big event and describe it in depth? Or would you share a sequence of the events, like a list? I know that's my go-to, and then I start putting them in an order.
- Do you relate a broad overview or just an oddity, like a surprising element?
- Would you be talking about an event, a person, or a place?
- Rather than giving a description of something, would your emphasis be more about how you felt, in other words, your enjoyment or your discomfort?
- Do you talk about how you feel now or how you felt then?
- Do you tell about what happened or do you tell why it happened?
- Do you take the time right now to remember the details, or will you let memories surface once you start speaking later?
- Are you more comfortable being given the floor to tell your story or do you prefer to simply answer questions, to be prompted by your friend?
- Is your choice more about how you put your story together for them? Do you emphasize the drama, or use the moment to teach something, like the moral of a story? Do you make it a humorous story or maybe a quirky one?
- Will your tone of voice be that of a mentor, or an adversary, or an advocate, or...?
- How do you phrase your words? Poetically, dramatically, softly, logically, compassionately?
- What speed do you speak at? Do you try to fit a lot into a short period of time?
- Do you use metaphors such as "bright as the sun" or "the spinning wheels of a bicycle"?
- Are you going to tell the 100% factual truth? Are you going to color what you say with innuendo or modify it with fantasy or soften the blow?
- Do you emphasize an inconsistency or an idiosyncrasy, something that's out of place in the overall story? Is there tension or conflict?
- How much detail will you include? And what percentage will be emotional? Intellectual? Philosophical? Etc.?
- Do you connect the dots, starting with a broad-spectrum statement and then provide details? Or do you mention many different things and then tie them together? I do that, because for me, the importance is about the overall span of time and how those things integrate and intertwine.

- Do you speak in a vernacular or use any colloquialisms? Remember, a 20-year-old man from New York City will verbally relate things differently than would an 80-year-old woman from rural Scotland.
- Do you use full sentences or partial ones or speak more in paragraphs, like a complex idea expressed with several sentences?
- Do you make a statement and then explain it or qualify it?
- Do you create an outline in order to keep your thoughts organized, for example: first this happened, then this and so on?
- Do you start at the beginning with a basic piece of information, and then explain how it applies, how you felt about it, and how it all resolved? Or do you tend to jump around a central topic?
- Is there anything else you can learn from this exercise about your way of creating a “communication”, that is, a creative art project?

And that is the end of the exercise.

Make it a practice to seek out small events where you’re forced to think creatively and pay special attention to the ways in which you instinctively approach the task.

Here are a few more ideas for mini exercises that you can adapt for yourself:

1. Pretend that you have been invited to speak to your daughter’s fourth-grade class about your work or hobby or travels.
2. Imagine a family member who is a shut-in. They love to read, and you are going to choose a book to give to them.
3. A friend comes to you with a problem. How do you relate?
4. Ask anyone that you know well how it is that they perceive the way you communicate.
5. An old friend has posted on social media “Happy heavenly birthday” to their spouse. Compose your response.
6. Try writing a one-page anecdote about your favorite pet, or movie, or charity.
7. Look around at your everyday world and look for non-language opportunities to explore the choices you make. Put together a new outfit for going out. Develop a plan to redecorate your bedroom. Teach yourself to dance. Design a new recipe for a taco Tuesday.

As always, Enjoy Your Journey!

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