

$$K_C = K_p / (RT)^{\Delta n}$$

Where:

K_C = creative fulfillment

K_p = presence

Δn = nature

R = ritual

T = time

Art does not always need a deeper meaning or higher purpose. Anyone can find joy in picking up a pen to draw or singing through their household chores. There is beauty in creating to alleviate boredom; to make something beautiful once and move on. Still, there are those of us who yearn for more. For a deeper connection to our creative pursuits. For more inspiration, more fulfillment, more time. This essay is for the ones craving the deep end.

1. Presence:

Where many move through life with muffled senses, artists must remain viciously aware, bearing witness to it all. Color, patterns, our own thoughts; anything can be fuel. Creative health works differently from the physical. A thirty minute workout after spending the entire day stationary still offers the benefits of that half hour. It will change your body. Treating art the same way, you might end up with a decent final piece, but the product is not the point. It will not change you. The process will. And that process starts before you open your notebook, stand at the easel or even wake in the morning. It starts with every half remembered dream that sparks a question. With every attentive pause, every thoughtful question. It starts when you teach yourself to follow your curiosity instead of bookmarking it for later. Think without external inputs, form opinions without online discourse, then dive deep into the literature only to realize how wrong you were. You never know where the art will come from; the topic you were researching or the feeling of being surprised by something you thought was a sure thing.

2. Nature:

The first time I wrote for sheer desire was a late September afternoon. Entranced by the sun filtering through orange leaves, I stood underneath a sycamore, scribbling in my journal. Time in nature can influence art in a myriad of ways. Maybe the chaos of pink blossoms against a still-barren winter landscape reminds you of the brutality of finding second love before healing from the wounds of the first. Maybe you see a color scheme you like, or a strange cloud sparks an idea. Creatives tend to hole up in their rooms, seeing the world through reference photos. But that is no way to live. Nature was the first artist, the first sculptor; painter; writer; singer. And it has more to impart than we will ever know. Even if nothing inspires you; sitting by a lush green tree,

breathing in fresh air, listening to bird song or falling rain. These moments have gravity. They will center you so you can step into the studio fully grounded within your creative vision.

“The work’s possibilities excited them; the field’s complexities fired their schedules. The caring suggested the tasks; the tasks suggested the schedules.”

– Annie Dillard

Presence, curiosity, looking outward and inward; these acts are only the beginning. We might associate routines with monotony and boredom, but that’s not always the case. When we intentionally form daily practices, informed by our preferences and habits, they become something special.

Depending on the person, routines are rooted in either time or ritual.

3. Time:

Humans are haunted by time. We fret about wasting it and celebrate when we save it. Our language betrays the truth: time is a finite resource, one even the stingiest souls cannot hoard. Use it wisely, or use it foolishly, but use it we must. As artists, we must ruthlessly prioritize the things that matter. We need time to see the world, to notice it and then, to report back on it. To utilize time in routine, first examine your life. Ask yourself: What is replaceable? When can I reflect, when can I create? Highly disciplined people might pick a specific time of day for their creative practice or set a daily goal, like a word count for writers.

4. Ritual:

Ritualistic routines are preferable for less disciplined, but nonetheless devoted individuals. The ones that cannot sit down to create without an idea already in mind. If your priorities are defined and life allows more randomness in your practice, then you can still create more often than not. It’s random but not irregular. And I would suggest anchoring the chaos in a sensory constant, something that signals to your brain that this is the time to make art. A rug you always sit on, a window to look out of, or a candle you light.

In truth, most of us will benefit from a routine that blends both extremes. Staying open to inspiration, noticing what feeds your creativity and then, a few times a week making time to review those fragmented ideas, expand them, connect them, or perhaps, burn them to ashes.

Carving out a few moments for art is better than none, and sometimes all one can do. But if you want to bask in the cycle of inspiration and creation, then you must live a life centered on the conditions required for creative fulfillment.

