

Living Creatively: Permission



Now that our week of goodbyes and well wishes has passed, while far from easy, what I feel most deeply is gratitude for the rich and varied experiences of the past years. If you are just joining me, this past week I bid an expected farewell to my longtime loyal assistant Aaron and an unexpected farewell to our storeroom and shipping assistant Aubrey, whose recent health concerns required her full attention.

Here we are, right in the very midst of fall. With the contemplative months of winter in sight, it is clear that a new way of being will continue to unfold. To think that this all began with my early August commitment on a hillside overlooking the vast expanse of the Pyrenees. There, as dawn approached, I welcomed the new and declared that moving

forward I would use a different approach toward my long list of personal and professional goals. I would, from that moment forward, choose an open hearted path. However that would chose to take form, I would see.

Upon my return to Austin, I soon learned I would be traveling the path with new companions. Discovering this certainly brought up a cautious trepidation but peaking out from underneath, a playful curiosity. So, in these past weeks, with this, "new way of being," as my guide, I have navigated these days of transition feeling as if I was wearing a new sweater, a bit prickly and scratchy, but clearly the clothing I was intended to wear.

While there are moments I fear I've lost traction moving my goals forward in this period, with a closer look I touch a deep knowingness that proclaims this is just the new way. A way that is a bit slower, a bit more reflective, and just possibly, a bit kinder and gentler to me. Joining me are two bright shining lights who are more than ready to walk this new path with me. With no shared history of how things were done in the past, there will be no questioning of how I choose to work, all seen with fresh eyes and an entirely new perspective.

So what does all of this have to do with permission? Well, Elizabeth Gilbert had a lot to say about the need to give ourselves permission in her book on creative living, *Big Magic*. There, she discusses the fact that what stops so many from following the enchantment of a new idea is exactly the granting of permission. We, for some reason, are programed to expect a power greater than ourselves to give us the authority to move forward in our creative process.

I suspect some of the awkwardness I have felt these days is due to the concept of permission. I have found myself on occasion hesitating as if there were another authority greater than mine to grant me permission to act on my ideas. Once I

became aware of this, I realized I needed to give myself permission on a daily basis. Permission to allow this new way to manifest as it desires, permission to find joy in this particular time, and just possibly, permission to be a bit playful with it all. And, as Gilbert comments in *Big Magic*, I needed to allow myself to,

"Be the weirdo who dares to enjoy."

To be honest, it isn't completely enjoyable yet... but I'm working on it! It's clear this new way is going to take some getting used to. So, instead of charging forth headstrong into that deep list of projects I created over the summer, I will consciously leave some space for this new way to mature.

Playfulness is a good thing, and the "Gemmo Bar" retail display I shared last week is a great place to begin. A lighthearted approach is just what this needs, no attachments to an outcome, just permission granted to take up the time and space it needs to try one idea and then mix it up with no particular destination or deadline in sight. Yikes! This really is a new concept!

It is interesting to discover myself right smack in the middle of the whole idea of permission. Some days have felt as if I have been dropped into a huge permission swamp and if I wish to move in any direction I've got to allow myself to accept where I am, consider my options, and make some moves, even if it gets messy. What I create now, may go through several reiterations and in knowing and accepting that I've found myself stalled.

So whether my creation involves my wild Gemmo Bar idea, restructuring the work in my practice, or discovering personally a new way of accepting the only stamp of approval needed is my own, and with that permission, I let go of any expectation of perfection. I'll hang on to that scratchy new sweater and wear it until it breaks down into something comfy,

cozy and all mine.

Why not join me in this journey? What might you have put on hold, waiting for permission to be granted?

“If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.”

– Ecclesiastes 11:4

Living Creatively: Enchantment II

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Last week I shared with you the concept of *enchantment* proposed by Elizabeth Gilbert in her book *Big Magic*. Gilbert shared her belief: *Ideas are driven by a single impulse to be made manifest. And the only way an idea can be made manifest in our world is through collaboration with a human partner. It*

is only through a human's effort that an idea can be escorted out of the ether and into the realm of the actual.

Once an agreement is made, *enchantment* is what follows. Enchantment is the magic experienced when falling in love. Similar emotions arise when we engage with an idea. Signs and confirmations in support of the idea fill our days along with a nagging distraction that leads you to a state of utter absorption. This experience is absolutely something I can attest to and the very fact that I do the work I do today. I was driven by my willingness to commit to an idea that wasn't about to let me be. But that story is for another time, perhaps next week, as I have a current story line unfolding as I write. Allow me to share how Gilbert's proposed concept of ideas and the enchantment can play out in everyday life.

Negotiating the waves of transition that is underway with my office team has provided an unarguable opportunity to practice what I preach about trusting the process. I will admit however, while some days have been more challenging than others, for the most part this experience has taught me well. Taking time to get quiet, allowing all the emotions to rise and fall, wailing (or whining) when I needed to, avoiding knee jerk reactions, and most importantly always staying present have been the guidelines I've followed. This time around I have chosen to do the work now, in the moment, so it won't be necessary to replay it again in the months or years to come.

As a new way of structuring our office work began to fall in place, I am not surprised that in my days of quiet an idea paid a visit. This one in particular, I am quite sure has nudged me a time or two in the past but always at inopportune times, while I was in the throes of completing a book, or was headed off to manage a conference. But this time, it found me to be a willing partner as I was wide awake and waiting. Over the last two weeks, I have certainly fallen under its spell allowing it to guide me on a timeline of its own and the experience has been gratifying.

I've longed for a way in which I could make our Gemmo extracts more visible and accessible, but struggled with practicalities such as time, money, and risks. Additionally, we face the challenge of having a product that needs considerable explaining to a population that doesn't know a lot about the subject we need to discuss. Try as I may, I've yet to meet success in reducing what these little dropper bottles of extracts can do into an elevator pitch. While we know visuals help, as they have done wonders for my curriculum and my books, how might we use them in a retail setting providing just enough to intrigue a customer without overwhelming?

I've read countless books on consumer behavior but none captured my dilemma more closely than the book *Crossing the Chasm*. In it, author Geoffrey A. Moore, discusses the importance of finding a beachhead in which to cross over from your early adopters to the masses. Turns out those early adopters and the masses don't speak the same language or even hang out enough to pass each other a message. This lack of connection is what creates a gap or chasm for innovative products. For those who've studied marketing this is nothing new but for me it was a revelation that has helped me see the problem I faced was not completely unique.

So here's the wild idea that won't leave me alone. Are you ready for it? It's a Gemmo Bar! A pop-up kiosk model that could introduce essential starter extracts for acute symptoms and everyday immune support with a clean fresh look that mirrors what the extracts can do for the body. What do you think? While the placement of these pop-ups as well as countless other details is yet to be determined, I've signed on and as Gilbert explains, the moment you say yes to an idea,

You have officially entered into a contract with inspiration and you must try to see it through, all the way to it's impossible-to-predict outcome. You set the terms for this contract however you would like.

So with just a hint of where I thought this might go, I reached out to my visual magic maker, designer Christine Terrel. Christine has worked with me for years refining my vague and often rambling ideas and shaping a Gemmo narrative that actually makes sense to those who don't think like me, which I've learned happens to be a lot of people! I knew I was on the right track when it only took a few mumblings of the concept and Christine too fell under the spell. She got it all the way through and could agree that we needed to separate Gemmos from the slew of natural products available and create a display that would capture the essence of this extraordinary product and its potential. She also got the challenge behind the task.

The first week we were totally caught up in the excitement and had some fun playing with visual displays, quickly settling on one. Rest assured, you will be seeing a stream of renditions as this idea takes full shape and the fun will all be happening right on the walls in my waiting room. What better space to try the first prototype than the best idea incubator I have known these past five years. I also happen to be confident in the honest feedback we will receive from my local clients who are fabulously forthright.

Here's the latest look we are playing with.



It's a start and we never know where ideas will lead us once we accept their invitation. For now, we know our next steps will be to refine the content we use in order to best reach our audience and also to move on to various types of displays such as freestanding and tabletop. It will all be one big experiment and we invite you to play along with us! If you are in Austin, you are most welcome to drop by on a Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday after October 31, we will be opening up these days of the week for drop-in shopping during the hours of 10-2. Stay tuned to our Facebook page, or better yet follow us on Instagram for up to the minute happenings and upcoming giveaways!

Until next week, make time for some quiet in each of your days and be mindful of what idea may be trying to capture your attention.

Living Enchantment

Creatively:

A few weeks back, I shared a book review of Elizabeth Gilbert's *Big Magic, Creative Living Beyond Fear*. Her view so aligned with my own belief on creativity that I thought it might be enjoyable to engage with her message on a personal level through writing a blog series. The ingredients that Gilbert shares for creative living include courage, enchantment, permission, persistence, trust and identity... all fantastic themes to expand upon.

Let me just tell you this – I had absolutely no idea just how gosh darn personal this was about to become. I mean, here I am desperately attempting to walk the walk, and now with an audience no less!

After three weeks of sharing stories on courage, ending last week with the minor upheaval in my practice, I could not wait to move along to the topic of enchantment. Just what is enchantment, you ask? Gilbert explains that enchantment is what we experience as we engage with an idea. But where do these ideas come from? While our culture wants us to believe ideas only come to gifted minds, Gilbert thankfully proposes an entirely different perspective.

“Ideas spend an eternity swirling around us searching for available and willing partners. When an idea finds someone – say you – who might be able to bring it into the world, the idea pays you a visit.”

Crazy stuff, right? Well, not so fast. Have you never had an idea pay an unexpected visit, like the slight tickle of a

gossamer-like thread that floats across your mind? Quite possibly you have learned to tune these sensations out as adult. So think back to your childhood, when the outrageous idea for the most perfect fort ever arrived, or you were inspired to assemble that magnificent outfit (the one that made everyone in your house cringe).

Surely you have some memories you can draw from your early years. As for me, I was an idea machine, and (get this) one of my ideas was using plants to make potions that would heal all of my childhood friends!

So take note! While I believe ideas are reaching out all the time, their frequency is often missed when the recipients are distracted by the busy-ness of life that fills every waking moment with activity or noise.

I should know all about this – I spent the first half of my adult life, from 18 to 40 years of age, in this state, numb to any whisper of creative ideas and certainly shut off from the voice of my own heart. Now don't get me wrong, I knew all about ideas and how they worked as a child, and again as a fledgling writer in my teens. But at the end of those teen years, I chose what I believed to be love over creative living and entered a relationship where all that I had previously cultivated was considered foolish nonsense.

Based on this personal choice, I shut down my reception of ideas, whether they were about writing, designing or anything other than what my partner viewed as normal. The things we do for love, right? Where this led should be no surprise, as over the years the slope into despair and depression grew more slippery with time. Before long, I was in a place I never want to be again, a place in which I stopped believing in myself, my intuition and the enchantment of new ideas.

Fortunately, our soul can only accept such a state for so long, and I began to hear mine beckon from within. By

listening and paying close attention, I found my way out and, in doing so, was once again blessed with ideas and the Universe's personal invitation to live creatively.

And so my friends, let me share today that the very same invitation is right there for you, whether you believe it or not. Creativity is far from an elite club. It is for all, deeply ingrained in our DNA. When we use creativity to navigate this human life, we stop taking ourselves and our problems so seriously. We are more willing to tune into the frequency of the Universe, embrace moments of stillness, discover our own courage to engage and let the enchantment unfold.

Living Creatively: Courage Part III

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Seriously, here we go, it's part three on Courage in this *Living Creatively* series, that I absolutely never intended to

be so up close and personal. But hey, we are here and this journey only continues to get more interesting by the day!

Last week I shared, with all the courage I could muster, the beautiful opportunity that has been presented in my practice and interwoven into my personal life. While Aaron, ever faithful, is working full tilt to complete projects she has personally orchestrated and tie up her far reaching responsibilities in a neat bow for a graceful exit, it seems the Universe might just have another plan. Together we continue to witness one piece resolved while another falls apart. Just like Pema tells us. Darn it.

Some parts of the transition have been successful. For instance, we have welcomed my niece Molly into my team to take over editing and scheduling all written communications to include this weekly blog post, our Take 5, monthly newsletters, as well as training curriculum and managing my next book project. Because it's 2017, she will do all of this from Helena, Montana! I'm thrilled to have her on board and will be sharing more about Molly in coming weeks.

On the other hand, Aubrey, who we welcomed into my practice last January to manage Vital Extract, was poised to take on a host of Aaron's responsibilities just as she encountered some new health challenges. Deeply concerned with her welfare, honoring her desire to continue, and still committed to meeting the needs of our customers, has pushed me to create some agile solutions that I would not have previously considered.

And so here we are. Things are a little messy and I can be fairly sure it will get even messier before we know what exactly is germinating under the rubble. How do I know this? Well, I've been here before and, holy cow, while every cell in my body screams resist and find something to grab hold of, my soul is quite confident we are in for a free fall with no safety harness involved.

So what to do? I'll do exactly as I have been trained by those much wiser than me. I will stay present, solve the problems of the day, and believe with all my heart and soul that we have what is needed for whatever lies ahead.

Are you ready to come along to see how this all transpires? While a part of me would like very much to hold back on sharing until every piece is in place and reveal a polished plan, I know for certain that this time around that is not an option. Instead, I am going to take a deep breath and pull back the curtain while this set is still under construction as it would be a shame to keep the lessons revealed all to myself. Let's brave this together and discover first hand, on the spot, what living creatively is all about.

I'll leave you with one last bit to ponder and that is this nagging message I continue to receive. It seems that the bits that are falling apart may need to come back together in a whole new way: One that will better support the rise of Gemmos and their well deserved space in healthcare.

So buckle up! We are in for a wild ride together and as Elizabeth Gilbert says, *"If you can't learn to travel comfortably alongside your fear, then you'll never be able to go anywhere interesting."*

