

Living Creatively: Trust

Where do you place your trust when you are working on a creative endeavor?

It turns out that question is much more complex than it appears at first glance. In my exploration of Elizabeth Gilbert's, *Big Magic*, I found this chapter to be by far the most challenging to grasp and in the end the most eye opening. It took me several reads before I could grasp Gilbert's message and then one more before I could see that I actually do a version of the misplacement of trust she portrays.

Gilbert begins the Trust chapter explaining that most creatives, famous and struggling, get it all wrong when it comes to trust. It seems common practice to buy into the myth that suffering and making go hand and hand. This idea is so prominent that we have generations of artists who only trusted their agony and suffering and were skilled at perpetuating it in their own lives. This by no means is a historical phenomena, it is rampant today. As examples, she shares stories of the heroin addicts who emulated Charlie Parker and the alcoholism among the writers of the Lost Generation. This misplacement has been passed down and today there are countless painters, writers, musicians, and even tech start-up geniuses who believe they must place their trust in misery over joy to bring about great work.

Boldly debunking this myth, Gilbert proclaims that when we accept an idea, and form an agreement to bring it to life, our trust belongs to the joy of our work. The love of what we do should be our guide not our suffering. By lightening up and embodying the pure and simple pleasure and trusting in it enough to invite it to stay we can deliver masterful work without the agony.

I especially appreciate a section of this chapter in which

Gilbert reflects on the process of her friend and colleague Brene Brown. Brown comes to the creative process from the world of academia known for its long suffering stance and she admittedly suffered greatly through the writing process of her bestselling books. It wasn't until Gilbert offered another approach that she could see through her own martyrdom.

What brought Brown joy was storytelling and if she could find a way to capture that voice her process would take on a whole new light. This was in direct opposition to the dark and heavy place she typically drew from. So, with Gilbert's help, she came up with a way to trick this process, and I so love what she did! When she was hard pressed against a final deadline, she gathered two trusted colleagues to join her at a Galveston beach house. There, she told them the stories she wanted to share in the compassionate storytelling voice she is known for. They in turn recorded her words on paper so that her own natural tone could be captured. Not only was this brilliant and successful, but it was even a bit playful and the three girlfriends together brought a joy to writing in which Brown had never before experienced to the completion of her book. She reported writing faster, better and with more trust than ever. In this process, Brown was able to tap into her own deep well of Big Magic, the very subject of Gilbert's book.

The first time or two I read Gilbert's reflections on the suffering in this chapter on Trust I would wince and think how fortunate I was not to take on that habit. I never drank my way through a project or abused my partner or family but then I had to ask myself this, was I allowing myself to feel joy and did I place my trust in it? Not so much. I feel joy when the idea first arrives and in the process of making the commitment to bring it forth. In fact, I am experiencing that right now as I work out the outline for my next book project. This part absolutely has a light almost playful presence. I also feel joy when I clear the space physically and mentally in my schedule for the work ahead.

But, the story changes completely when I get down to the business of writing. Even that term, business, is important to pay attention to as I shift from a lighthearted state, experiencing the deep connection to my writing, to the business of getting it done. Once in this "production mode" I become a task master and lost is the earlier sense of playfulness and pleasure. And to be sure, there are no breaks in sight for the task master once deadlines are set because I am absolutely fearful that the work might not get done. What a profound realization and one I am so grateful I have brought to light before this next project is fully underway.

Join me next week for Trust: Part II as I commit to a new way of being at the start of my third book project.