

What's yucking your creative yum?

by Mathangi Subramanian

Take this quiz and figure out what's blocking your creativity. Remember, these blocks can change as our lives change!

1. You have ten minutes of free time. You could do something creative, but you don't. Why not?
 - a. What's the point? Ten minutes isn't long enough to do anything!
 - b. I felt like I should use that time to cook dinner or run an errand or cross something else off my to do list. Anything else felt selfish and wasteful.
 - c. I was supposed to set an hour aside, and I ended up with ten minutes! I screwed up and I don't deserve creative time.

 2. When you get discouraged about your work in progress, what goes through your head?
 - a. My art is so cliché. The themes I'm working with have already been done. There's no room for my take.
 - b. I could've used this time more productively - like, doing a freelance job that actually pays money!
 - c. My work is just so flawed. It'll never get to the level I want, so why bother?

 3. What is keeping you from improving / creating a space in your house for creativity?
 - a. Where would I even make space? My house is so tiny!
 - b. It's all so expensive. I can't justify a space that doesn't contribute to the household income.
 - c. I keep trying to set up a space, but then when I go to look at a desk or chair or artwork, I'm afraid it isn't right.

 4. What's your greatest fear about putting your work out there?
 - a. It's going to get lost in the mix. No one will see it, and if they do see it, they won't care.
 - b. It's totally unmarketable.
 - c. It's going to have a ton of mistakes and get me cancelled.

 5. If you do put your work out there, how do you measure your success?
 - a. I'm only going to be happy if a ton of people read it and share it. Anything less feels like a failure.
 - b. I need to make some money off it. It's only real if I get paid.
 - c. I need to win a huge award. Getting shortlisted or longlisted doesn't count.
- Tally your answers and see your results below!

If you got mostly A's, Scarcity Mentality is scarring you

Capitalism makes us believe that there's not enough to go around. This is a lie! We live in a world that has the capacity to sustain us all - physically, emotionally, and creatively. To fight scarcity mentality, invite abundance into your life. I'm a big fan of guided meditations about abundance - they really reset my subconscious. If you're feeling witchy, you can set up an altar inviting abundance. You might include money, lots of red for good fortune, or other symbols of abundance that mean something to you.

Each day, you can also do something small to push your scarcity-related boundaries. Spend a little extra money on a luxury. Take a little extra time on your lunch break. And, of course, give yourself a little extra time and space to create. (Doing this is hard, but it helps, I promise!) You might also want to look into alternatives to traditional publication or art galleries or whatever supports your art form. Where are some places where you can share your work where you feel welcome? Concentrate on making space for joy and authenticity in your life, and your process will follow.

If you got mostly B's, capitalism's trapped you

Capitalism tells us that we should measure our success solely by the amount we get paid. Writing for free? Doesn't count. Singing cuz you feel like it? Cute, but fake. I go through this ALL THE DAMN TIME. When you feel the money-success thing creeping in, try and measure your success another way. Instead of noticing the day's word count or the amount of time you spent practicing, consider how you feel after creating. Did you create for ten minutes and feel awesome and inspired? SUCCESS!

I am not totally sold on gratitude journals, but recording how fantastic you feel is a great way to cement this into your subconscious, and to keep a record of your successes. Also remember that quality of life isn't always about things you pay for. Go for a walk, lie in the grass and cloud watch, go stare at some birds - whatever it is, notice how this free, available thing makes you feel about yourself. Look, money is a constant stressor. But unpaid work isn't going to kill you, I promise - practice unpaid joy enough, and you'll believe me! [Note that this does NOT mean I condone doing free labor - I do, however, condone free fun!]

If you got mostly C's, perfectionism is punking you

Oooooohhhh do I relate to this one. Perfectionism is a thorn in the side of anyone with any kind of marginalized identities. I've spent my whole life proving I'm a "good" American (because apparently my birth certificate isn't enough) by overachieving. Being able to articulate this (thank you therapy) was a huge weight off my shoulders. Once I knew why I was scared of making mistakes, it became easier to talk myself out of my fear.

Besides therapy, I also use two other methods to overcome perfectionism: first, I worst case scenario my mistakes. My latest worst case scenario is, "What if I never publish another book?" Just typing it makes me see how little this matters! When you're in perfectionist mode, try coming up with the worst case scenario - since we're talking specifically about creative work, I think you'll find that whatever you're afraid of, it's probably not so bad. The second thing I do is practice making mistakes by purposefully doing stuff I'm really, really bad at. For example, I'll draw with my kid (who always helpfully reminds me that I'm a terrible artist). Or I'll put on a dance workout video and then totally fail at each and every move. In both of these cases I make mistakes...but I still enjoy myself. The more you notice how non-life-threatening mistakes are, the more your perfectionism will ease up, and the more fun your creative practice will be.

This quiz first appeared on [Mathangi Subramanian's Moon Rabbit Reader](#), a publication of [Moon Rabbit Writing Studio](#).