

Five Best Books to Unlock Your Creativity

Creativity. Google the word and you will get so many answers. Most of us think of creativity with regard to art. Not only do we admire artists, but we idolize them and their ability to produce great works - things that we think we could never do. Creativity becomes this elusive thing, a quality we think that we lack. We think we could never produce great art, we aren't creative enough, or that some people are born with creativity and others are not.

This way of thinking is false. **There is an artist inside of each of us. We all have the ability to be creative, to use our imagination, to produce original ideas.**

There is a creative spark in each of us. We are all born with it. We just need to get out of our own way and let it flow out of us into whatever art form we choose.

I spent years blocked, shuffling along in a 9-to-5 job without much of a creative outlet. I knew I had potential to do great things. To be happier. To not spend the rest of my life tired and sick and unfulfilled.

Someone recommended a book to me. The book recommended some steps to unblock myself. I followed those steps and it was like a dam burst inside me. Everything I'd kept buried for years came rushing out. Thoughts, feelings, ideas, emotions - all were released. It was incredibly freeing, but also a little scary.

But I kept going. I followed the steps day after day. **Soon, big changes started to happen.** I left my job, left a relationship that was no longer working for me, and I filled up 30 composition books full of a novel. (Currently working on publishing). I'd rediscovered a love of writing -something I'd loved when I was 6 years old, but that had gotten buried down deep.

It's been nine years since I started the journey. I find it much easier to create. Ideas come to me so much easier than they used to. I find myself eager to learn new hobbies whether a new craft like rug hooking or learning how to illustrate children's books, so I can publish the children's story I wrote.

I no longer limit myself, and my inner critic is much less vocal than it used to be. Sure, I still struggle like we all do. Worries of the day sometimes get in the way. But now I know how to get back to the place where ideas are free to come to the surface. I can go back to the tools I learned and use them to reset.

The books I've listed below are those that helped me on my creative journey. I hope they help you do the same.

1. The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity by Julia Cameron

This is the big one. The heavy hitter here. This was the book that changed my life. In 2012, a group of women from my local belly dance classes formed a Facebook group to work our way through this book together. The goal for me was to become more creative in my dance. I wanted to be able to use the skills and moves I'd learn to choreograph my own solo dances.

Little did I know it would change my life.

If you want to take a deeper dive into this book, check out this post. I go into greater detail about how to approach this book, as it is quite an undertaking. But If you follow the program and commit to it, it will change your life too. Even my boyfriend (now husband), followed this book and has recommended it to friends and family as well. That's how powerful it is.

2. Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

Most of us probably remember when this book went viral. Then the movie came out and the book became even more popular. But the reason this book went viral, especially with women, is because we identify with her experience. The emotional crisis of realizing you are stuck in place. Somewhere you thought you wanted to be, but realized it was more like a cage. The thought of spending the rest of your life merely existing is terrifying to our creative souls.

The journey she takes, how she discovers what it means to live a full, rich and creative life - that is what made millions of people fall in love with the book. If you asked me to explain the emotions it evoked in me at the time of reading it, I couldn't. The sense of vague wanderlust, the freeing of emotions, the wanting to explore what could be possible in her life. The healing she found. Those things started something brewing in me. I started to want more.

3. Big Magic: How to Live a Creative Life, and Let Go of Your Fear by Elizabeth Gilbert

One of the obstacles to living creatively is fear. Gilbert tells us it is okay to be afraid. To learn to be able to "travel alongside fear," while still keeping the focus on moving forward with our ideas and thoughts and projects.

A lot of the ideas in this book reinforce those we learned with *The Artist's Way*, but it is empowering to hear from such a wonderful author about the path she has been on throughout her creative life.

4. On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft by Steven King

There are few authors as creative, successful and prolific as Steven King. The amount of inspiration he has provided to other artists and creatives is unparalleled. His books have inspired movies, television series and even remakes of those movies and series.

Even if you aren't a fan of horror or science fiction genres, this memoir is interesting, and he offers relatable advice. He talks about his life and struggles with alcoholism. For him the alcoholism didn't stop him from writing, but he barely remembered writing the novel *Cujo* because he was drinking so much. Even though his focus is writing, the advice applies to all of us on how we get ideas, where they come from, and what to do with them.

5. Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life by Anne Lamott

I read this book for my first course when I started my master's degree in creative writing. I'd grown to love writing so much that I decided I wanted to spend a year and tons of money on learning more about it.

This was our first reading assignment and I fell in love with this book. It's funny and light, but more importantly it teaches you how not to be overwhelmed by what you want to do. Whether you have a big idea bursting at the seams and don't know how to get started, or you have no ideas and don't know what to write about (or paint, or sew, or sculpt or whatever your medium is). She tells you how to go ahead, taking it one small thing at a time.

There you have it. The five books that made a huge difference for me, that helped me learn that not only am I an artist, but that I have the ability to create big and wonderful things, and live a full, rich and creative life. This list offers something for everyone-spiritual to secular, funny, awe-inspiring, readable and actionable. I hope you will love them as much as I do!