

Grit and Grace: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Developing a Creative Heart and Mind

Copyright 2021 Amanda Udis-Kessler; amanda@amandaudiskessler.com

- 1) Live fully. Embrace a wide range of experiences and emotions. This will provide both material and guidance for your creativity. Carry out any emotional or spiritual healing work that you might need to do; continue to develop your emotional and spiritual life.
- 2) Learn as much as you can about your area(s) of creativity, historically and now. Study derivative, poor-quality work as well as the best stuff and learn why the former is considered inferior and the latter, outstanding. Study formal creative techniques in your area(s). Learn how to analyze the kind of creative work that you yourself create. This engagement will also give you additional opportunities to be inspired; there's nothing like listening to and analyzing hundreds of songs to give me new ideas for songs.
- 3) Learn about creativity and the creative process. Read books like *The Artist's Way* (Julia Cameron) and carry out the exercises they suggest.
- 4) Get comfortable with the idea (and practice) of creating ideas or materials that are not good enough to share. Get comfortable with the idea (and practice) of creating ideas or materials that are going to need a lot of reworking. This comfort comes from practicing your creative process(es) and sometimes also from other spiritual work. Learn to let go of your internal editor/self-censor and practice radical hospitality toward your ideas and creative processes. Learn to create great stuff by creating mediocre stuff first and then getting better.
- 5) Get comfortable asking others for suggestions to improve your creative work. Practice humility, but also discernment: learn over time whether a suggestion for improvement has merit or not. Make changes that improve your work; don't make changes that damage its integrity.
- 6) Develop and practice creativity rituals. Set aside time and space for creating and for affirming your creativity. These might not always be the same times and spaces.
- 7) If you tend to be so relaxed that you're not creating as much as you want, practice discipline around your creativity and create more. If you tend to be so perfectionist that you're not creating as much as you want, practice sloppiness and create more.
- 8) Build in moments of honest, courageous reflection about your creativity. How is it going? What's going well? What needs changing up? Let the reflection inform your creativity practices.
- 9) Be open to the possibility of ideas and opportunities coming from unexpected places and experiences. Lin-Manuel Miranda came up with the idea for the musical *Hamilton* after picking up Ron Chernow's biography of Hamilton as Miranda was starting a vacation. It's hard to imagine a more mundane beginning to a life-changing and Broadway-changing creative project.
- 10) Practice, practice, practice. Create, create, create. Make all the decisions that get you from that first idea to a finished product, however good or bad. Then do it again, and again, and again.