



The Five Most Valuable Things They Don't Teach in Art School

Darrell Fusaro (April 02, 2016)



The key to getting started is to lower the bar. This may seem outrageous to some who believe that great accomplishments come at great sacrifice and perfection.



The other day a young artist asked me, "How do you do it?" Having been in her shoes myself, I understood what she meant by her question and I had an answer. The answer was ready, and is ALWAYS ready because I must remind myself of it daily. The answer is, let it be easy.

The key to getting started is to lower the bar. This may seem outrageous to some who believe that great accomplishments come at great sacrifice and perfection. That erroneous belief has killed off more creative endeavors than death itself. There is only one sacrifice to make and that is the one of talking yourself out of getting started.

Never argue against what may seem like a silly idea. Allow yourself to get carried away by the angel of inspiration. Take the tiniest step in the direction of your desire and your enthusiasm will compel you to continue. Emerson explains the hunch as Divine guidance to which we all have access. There's no special training required to receive this guidance since it continuously flows into us, "everyman is an inlet." You only need to trust your intuition and by taking action you will be surprised with proof that, "we are wiser than we know."

"But what if you have so many inspired ideas that you don't know where to begin and you're stuck?" she asked.

I told her to start simply and shared the story of exactly how I do it as an example. Coincidentally, I began when I was the same age as her, some thirty years ago. I told her how I allowed doubt and reason to convince me leave art school and join the Coast Guard. After enlistment I was assigned to the Honolulu Police Department as a military liaison. The desire to create followed me there, I couldn't shake it and it began to gnaw at me. I could have easily made excuses such as, I had no time, no place to create, no decent art supplies, etc. Instead I kept it simple.

In 1985 we used an ink roller to fingerprint at the police department. One day during a break I had the silly idea to ink up my fingers and randomly place my fingerprints onto blank 3 x 5 cards. The intention was to transform the fingerprints with my pen into little people interacting with one another. I allowed the impromptu arrangement of the fingerprints inspire the circumstances I'd put these little characters in.

After they were done, I'd write a friend's address on the back and mail it off as a postcard. This motive fueled me to continue to make more and send more. It became a creative habit.

When I was transferred to the prosecuting attorney's office, without access to fingerprinting, I was challenged to create characters from scratch. Now my postcards had new characters to surprise my friends with.

Whenever I'd hear the thought, "You're not doing anything legit with your cartoons." I would dismiss it with, "Yes I am. I'm having fun and the Universe is arranging things on my behalf. All I need to do is to keep enjoying what I'm doing." And I did.

I was having fun and gaining confidence. Not long after, I was asked to contribute illustrations to be used in the U.S. Coast Guard's local newsletter. I still continued to make postcards for friends. A recurring character I created and enjoyed drawing on these postcards was a happy-go-lucky surfer I named, "Poki." I could never have foreseen that Poki would become the 14th Coast Guard District's cartoon mascot in print ads. At the end of my enlistment I applied and was accepted back into art school. Incredibly, I received a merit scholarship based on these examples in my portfolio.



Today there are five simple principles that I rely on to knock out resistance and propel me forward. You can remember them with this silly slogan, "It's a simple system that KILLS!" Using the word K-I-L-L-S as the acronym for the following:

Keep it simple. Let yourself off the hook. You do not need to wait until you have the right pen, brush, pad, or canvas to get started. Simply put, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." **-Theodore Roosevelt**

Inspire others. The best way to get into the creative current is to make something simple for a friend. If you're an artist make a postcard, if you're a musician sing a ridiculous song as your voicemail message to a friend. That's what I do. This gets me in the habit of enjoying creative freedom without the negative commentary of my critical mind.

Lower the bar. Self-imposed perfection is stifling, relax your demands and your creative spirit will soar. "Anything worth doing is worth doing badly." **-G.K. Chesterton**

Let it be easy. What you desire to do is possible. Give yourself permission to let it be easy. "How would I be doing this differently if I were willing to let it be easy?" **-Alan Cohen**

Swim with the current. I've learned to never argue with a hunch. Go with it, they'll take you places more remarkable than reason would allow. "Don't be afraid of silly ideas." **-Paul Arden**

Listen to your creative leads. Trust to your intuition; don't let reason slip you a roofie. Let it be easy: there's no virtue in fighting against simplicity. Hunches always lead you to the creative current that will carry you to better-than-expected outcomes: swim with the current.

Each morning I start out by making a silly little drawing on a 4" x 6" piece of cardstock. Then I write a friend's address on the back on the back of it and mail it to them as a postcard. It lifts me up and drops me into the positive flow of life.

-Darrell Fusaro

Darrell Fusaro is the author of [What If Godzilla Just Wanted a Hug?](#) [2], co-host of the [Funniest Thing! with Darrell and Ed](#) [3] podcast and a contributing columnist for [i-Italy Magazine](#). [4]

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