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Creative Women



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Spark Your Creative Courage Now

by Gail McMeekin, LICSW

A few years ago, I did a survey of my newsletter readers and people talked about wanting to immerse themselves in their chosen creative work and lifestyle and make it profitable. People wanted to get their work exhibited, licensed, or distributed widely or have the guts to let go and move in a totally different direction.

But what they lacked was confidence and a believing in themselves. All these aspirations and changes require courage.

So what is courage? Courage is the quality of mind or spirit that enables you to face difficulty, danger, or pain with manageable fear.

Some fear arises daily in the life of a creative person, as we are always working with novel ideas. Creative courage is essential to self-expression and that expression, regardless of its form, is creative.

All life changes and projects involve the creative process, not just the arts. Anytime we want to grow a business, invent a better toy for kids, or improve our writing skills, we need to make new connections and create something new!

We change something and put our original spin on it. The word courage means heart and when we strive to stretch ourselves and do something courageous, our heart must be entranced with the idea. As Maya Angelou says, "One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential."

In order to help you to spark your creative courage, you need to learn to take positive, calculated risks, and replace your fear with faith. Here are three strategies to fortify you:

1. As you set an intention for your creative courage, you must embrace it with your body, mind, spirit, heart, and your money. You must want it so much that you feel it in your bones and the core of your being. Write it down, visualize it, and practice having the guts to do what you want to do.

I have a client who wanted to get promoted at her interior design firm. She needed to do something to prove her originality and talent to get noticed. She had an idea for an inspired, but novel color scheme for a big showroom, but she was scared to put her design out there. When I challenged her and we worked out the bugs, she put her room together, invited in the media, got two new clients, and her promotion. She wanted this advancement so much that she was willing to go to the wall for it.

2. What kind of a risk-taker are you? The word risk means, "to sail around a cliff", stepping into the unknown, being experimental. What is your track record with risk-taking? Name one big risk that you took that paid off and analyze why. What strengths did you bring to the endeavor? Was your intuition supporting the venture? What were the ingredients of your success?

On the reverse side, when have you taken a risk and it flopped? Flops are learning experiences. Did you not do enough research, tick off the wrong person, or give up too soon? Does your pitch or portfolio need to be snappier? Look at the facts head on and change the recipe and try again.

As Churchill says, "Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm." We all have patterns to break. Marcy always went to work for savvy, impressive women only to end up feeling controlled and stupid, while Toni was always late for meetings with potential new clients. Identify your inner saboteurs and destructive patterns and release them.

3. You need to dissect the limiting beliefs, old wounds, and other dynamics that make up your fear. You must know exactly what you are afraid of and if it is a real possibility or not. Are you afraid of losing money, being humiliated, feeling foolish, being criticized, or rejected, perhaps? You need to know your enemy in order to forge the right battle plan.

For example, if we fear rejection, we need an anti-dote. I once knew a group of women writers who all wanted to get published, but they were afraid to re-send out their work after a rejection. So they banded together and when a rejection letter came in for one group member, another group member sent out the next batch of writing to other publishers. There was no time wasted on brooding and self-doubt. New material went out immediately. And they all got published. Find a support team that loves you and your work, and help each other!

Practice being courageous every day. Nurture that courage muscle so that it becomes strong and fit for any obstacle. If someone cuts in front of you in a line, speak up. Express your real opinions on things, and look for chances to take small, but potent risks regularly and stretch out your comfort zone.

Courage can be cultivated. Every time you resist the temptation to hold back, hide out, or not try again, we lose your creative essence and contribution. Lead from your heart and conquer.

The reason I developed the Creativity Courage Cards was to remind you to stay focused and move ahead on your goals. I see too many people abandon wonderful creative projects or initiatives due to fear.

Fear keeps you from exploring your dreams in depth and implementing successful action steps to achieve them. Courage, on the other hand, gives you the strength to enjoy the experimentation process of creative exploration and accept the curves in the road as normal, and as a challenge you can overcome.

These *Creativity Courage Cards* are meant to guide you along in your creative quest.

When you begin to feel clutched by self-doubt, take some time to read my inspiring prompts and enjoy the beautiful photographs by my husband. You will get your energy back and move forward. We all need a support system and this one is designed to be easily accessible and visually appealing.

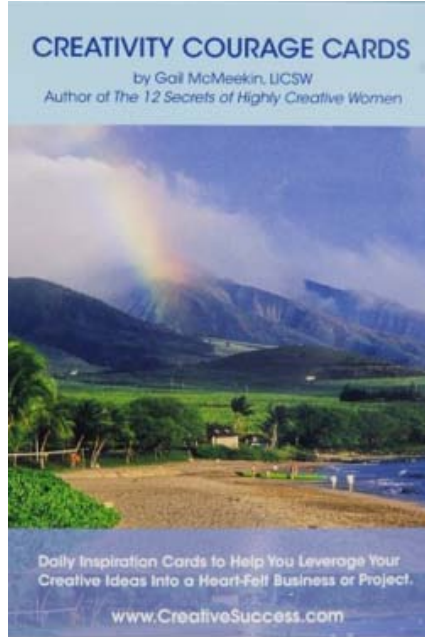
I use the Cards too. Right now I am studying drawing again (using the right brain approach), which makes me feel like a total idiot. I would rather clean the bathroom than do the exercises. I just want to paint with my gorgeous watercolor paints and have fun.

But, I have to discipline myself to draw these pears over and over until I see improvement. I have to remind myself to honor the magic of the creative process and keep fear at bay. It works and I keep drawing.

What do you need the courage to do in your life this year?

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Available at:

<http://creativesuccess.com/product/creativity-courage-cards>



Gail McMeekin, LICSW is President of Creative Success, LLC, a national executive, career, and creativity coach as well as a licensed psychotherapist and writer located in Boston. She has over 30 years of experience helping people to vision and achieve their personal, professional, and creative goals. She coaches clients on how to leverage their creative ideas into heart-felt, prosperous businesses and fulfilled lives.

She wrote the best-selling book *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women: A Portable Mentor* (Conari Press) which was just released as a 10th anniversary edition along with a brand new companion Journal called *The 12 Secrets of Creative Women Journal*

Her newest book is *The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women: A Portable Life Coach for Creative Women*. She also wrote *The Power of Positive Choices* (Conari Press), which won the *Living in Balance* magazine Award.

She created a 90-minute companion audio workshop called *Positive Choices: From Stress to Serenity* which has been featured in *Human Resource Executive*, *Training*, *The Improper Bostonian* and *The Lifestyle Book of Tufts Associated Health Plan*.

Her beautiful deck of *Creativity Courage Cards* was just featured in *Artist Magazine*.

Her work has been profiled on television and radio as well as in major publications such as *Investor's Business Daily*, *National Business Employment Weekly*, *Boston Business Journal*, *Redbook*, *Shape*, *Woman's Day*, *Health*, *The Boston Globe*, *One Spirit Book Club*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Sunday New York Times*.

Visit her website at www.creativesuccess.com