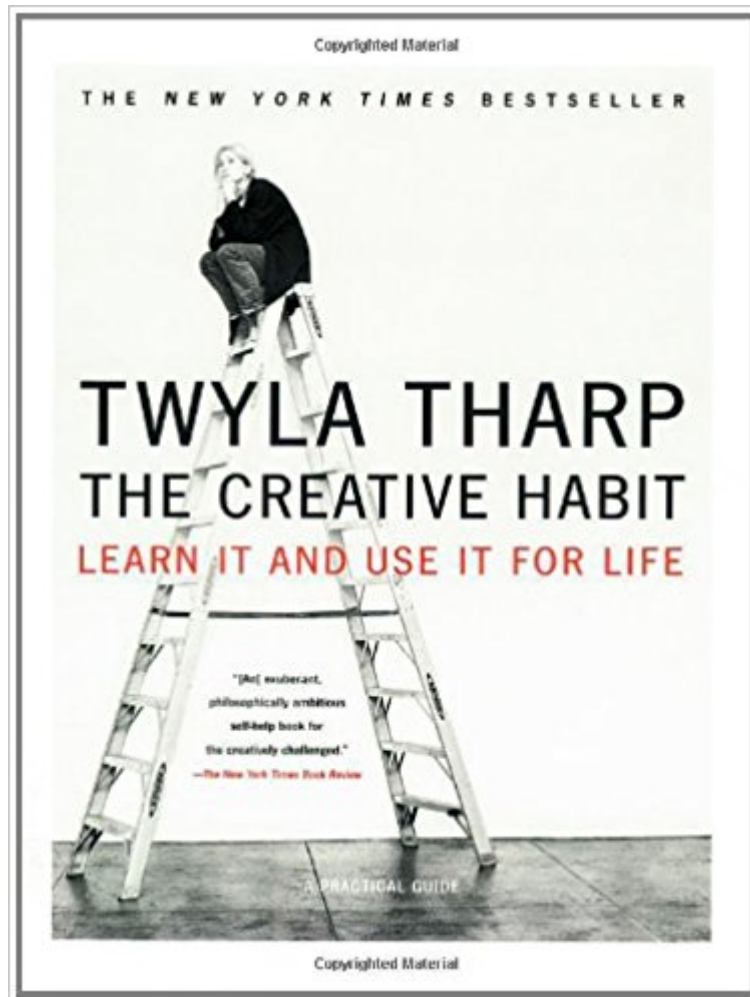


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The Creative Habit: Learn It And Use It For Life



Synopsis

One of the world's leading creative artists, choreographers, and creator of the smash-hit Broadway show, *Movin' Out*, shares her secrets for developing and honing your creative talents—at once prescriptive and inspirational, a book to stand alongside *The Artist's Way* and *Bird by Bird*. All it takes to make creativity a part of your life is the willingness to make it a habit. It is the product of preparation and effort, and is within reach of everyone. Whether you are a painter, musician, businessperson, or simply an individual yearning to put your creativity to use, *The Creative Habit* provides you with thirty-two practical exercises based on the lessons Twyla Tharp has learned in her remarkable thirty-five-year career. In "Where's Your Pencil?" Tharp reminds you to observe the world -- and get it down on paper. In "Coins and Chaos," she gives you an easy way to restore order and peace. In "Do a Verb," she turns your mind and body into coworkers. In "Build a Bridge to the Next Day," she shows you how to clean the clutter from your mind overnight. Tharp leads you through the painful first steps of scratching for ideas, finding the spine of your work, and getting out of ruts and into productive grooves. The wide-open realm of possibilities can be energizing, and Twyla Tharp explains how to take a deep breath and begin...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Twyla Tharp's new book, *The Creative Habit*, is 1. Practical and straightforward, two attributes to be expected from a dancer. Dancers wrestle daily with the obstinacies of the flesh. It's not about smoke and mirrors. It's about hard work and commitment, the "habit" of showing up to do the work and developing one's creativity in the process. 2. Literary and literate. Tharp quotes the Bible,

Dostoyevsky, Mozart, and many other greats of the Western Canon to illustrate her points and show that the struggle to be creative is nothing new and that great artists have fought the same battles as anyone who strives to create.³ Accessible. There's no mystery or theory of genius here other than the habit of work. Tharp constantly makes the point that we have to establish habits for our creative pursuits or the work will not get done and the creativity will have no place to manifest.⁴ Myth Busting. Mozart didn't get his musical genius from On High; in fact, he worked his fingers into early deformity from practicing so much. Not that Tharp proposes hurting oneself in the creative quest. She's merely making the point that practice is supreme, not sitting around waiting for the muse to make an appearance. Her choice of Mozart is historical, but I've heard similar about Michael Jordan. When other ball players were out doing whatever, Jordan was on the court practicing his shots.⁵ Encouraging. One of America's greatest choreographers shares her demons with us, so we know our fears aren't "special," and no, they won't go away with success, so stop with the "if only." Wrestling demons is just part of the process; it comes with the territory. I love the layout of this book: an airy, elegant use of color, font, and white space, which parallels the visual of her stage work.

Inevitably any self-help creativity book will be compared to Julia Cameron's block-buster, *The Artist's Way*. Those who liked Cameron will find similarities here, but also differences. I will be recommending both for my career change and business consulting clients. Cameron directly uses "spirituality" throughout her book, with references to "God," who, she says, can be broadly defined. She appeals to images and emotion. Tharp goes directly to action. She's strictly verbal: no cute sayings, no quotations all over the page. She's as unadorned as the Nike swish and just as straightforward: "Just do it" could be her motto. Her own life seems starkly disciplined. Lots of people get up before dawn (they must not have dogs -- mine demands a walk right away) but Tharp actually gives up movies while she's working on a project. Not just movies, but videos as well. Too distracting, she says. The key to art, she says, is practice. Dancers start with class, whether they're stars or corps members. Painters prepare their material. Practice harder, she says, but with "purpose." And practice what's difficult. We tend to practice only what we do well. I think not only of dancers, but of basketball players like Cynthia Cooper, who practiced left-handed dribbling and three-point shots for hours. My favorite part of Tharp's book was her discussion of ruts. A rut can be associated with bad timing, a bad idea, bad luck, most likely because you don't realize you have changed and the world has changed. Her advice for a typical artist problem - when to stop tinkering - is straightforward: When you feel that you have straightened out a messy room, stop! Otherwise, keep working.

"Venturing out of your comfort zone may be dangerous, yet you do it anyway because our ability to grow is directly proportional to an ability to entertain the uncomfortable." -Twyla Tharp

When I decided to read *The Creative Habit* right after *The War of Art*, I have to admit I gave myself a great big pat on the back. *The War of Art* was great in helping artists recognize & identify where & why Resistance stops you from doing That Creative Thing You Do, but the phrase "A Practical Guide" at the bottom of the cover of *The Creative Habit* made me think that it would address the "how." Sure, *The War of Art* really hit home with that beloved phrase, "Just do it (Every day. No matter what)," & while that's simplistic & powerful in so many ways, the artist & life coach in me wanted more. I was hoping *The Creative Habit* would deliver it, and it did - to a point. *The Creative Habit* is divided into chapters that formulate a foundation for Tharp (Spine, Memory, Accidents, etc). She delves into personal anecdotes & advice, always followed by a suggestion of different exercises to further you along in your discovery & personal interpretation of that idea. For example, Twyla speaks often of "scratching", or the process of "digging through everything to find something" - an idea, an image, anything that'll turn into a tangible idea that'll spark your creative endeavor. One of the most memorable exercises comes at the end of the chapter, where she encourages the reader to take a handful of coins in any number & denomination & toss them onto a table to see how they fall, & then rearrange them into a pattern again & again & again, like "a musical chord resolving." I can see how it helps her, a world-renowned choreographer, come up with new configurations for her dancers.

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