Creative + Practice

with Lisa Sonora Beam

http://www.lisasonora.com/

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If you write a post, please shoot me an email and let me know so I can share it.

Lisa’s Facebook Page: http://www.facebook.com/lisasonora

Lisa on Instagram: http://instagram.com/lisasonora

OK - I think we’re good to go now!

Let’s dive in, shall we?

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If you have any technical questions or issues, please send an email to jen@lisasonora.com and Jennifer will help you out.

She checks and responds to email Monday-Friday.
Creative + Practice

Week 4

Rhythm & Recap

We are at the halfway point in our journey together. This week you’ll solidify the foundation you’ve been building the last three weeks. It’s all about establishing rhythm.

If you feel you are “falling behind”, have no fear. We’ll address that, too. All is well. Make sure you see the Really Good Questions section, below.

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Here’s what some of the previous participants have shared about their experience with Creative + Practice:

“I’m really appreciating that the exercises I do in my journaling somehow give me lots of inspiration for my creative sewing business.” - Liz

“It feels like I'm really taken great care of myself, nurturing the best parts of myself and getting excited to see what blooms!” - Annette

“The space to write ideas without judgment is very helpful. I am feeling more inspired and trusting my ideas more.” - Briana

I appreciate the reminder that consistent creative practice gives that says that I'm worth the time.” - L’Tanya

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Topics this week include:
Intention for Creative Practice
The Paradox of Creative Practice
My Story with Creative Practice
Creative Practice and the End of Struggling in Business
There is also a sketchbook activity to help you integrate the learning so far.

**There are no new videos this week.** This will give you a chance to integrate what you've learned so far. Easy does it!

But this .pdf is contains lots of new material! Print it out and savor it. Mark it up with your notes and questions.

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**Here’s what we’re doing this week:**

1. Sketchbook Activity: Video Treasure Hunt - Find the Take Aways

2. Daily Quick Write (see video from week 2 if you missed it or want to refresh your memory on the technique)

For the duration of the course, you will continue:

3. Harvesting: Use your sketchbook to document your creative practice process, and

4. Collecting: Continue collecting your source materials (there is a video in week 2 on Collecting source materials)

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**Rhythm**

Rhythm is the natural ebb and flow of creative practice.

Whenever we begin something new, especially involving creating new habits, the following can happen:
- We miss a day
- We miss a day that turns into several days
- We miss a whole week
- We drop the thing all together

This is a normal and natural part of the process of doing something new, adding something new into the routine of our hectic lives.

Consistency of a new daily habit comes with practice, time, trial and error. It’s all part of the process. If you are experiencing this skipping of “too many” days, and feel you are falling behind, I invite you to simply pick up from where you last left off.

“My creative practice is flabby. My job, my business is creativity, so I think I tend to avoid it in my non-existent "free-time". Everything else takes priority. (That's why I am taking this class!) I am already falling behind... but will think of today as officially beginning, rather than being a few weeks late! :-)” - Sandy

There is no blame or shame about falling out of rhythm, or struggling with establishing a rhythm. Creative practice is developed by trial and error. We learn by doing, and then discovering what works and doesn’t work for us at this particular time and place in our lives.

Establishing a creative practice is about learning how to begin anew, over and over, day after day.

“I appreciate that I'm enjoying the creative practice and that I look forward to it daily."
- Indigene Theresa

The One Day at a Time approach works beautifully here. This requires self-compassion. You were brave to sign up for this workshop. It takes courage to create. It takes humility to try and try again. By the way, humility and courage are essential to doing our creative work, especially if we are selling our creative work. Creative practice helps us to strengthen those muscles.

**Intention for Creative Practice**

All through this course, we revisit our intention for doing this work. One of the most important lessons I’ve learned as an artist and entrepreneur is
that when things are really hard in the business, or I get stuck in a creative rut, then all I have in those moments is my intention. Intention is like fuel when you need to keep going and don’t think you can.

If you have a strong intention for creating a daily creative practice, that will help a great deal in making it stick over the long run.

One way I like to look at intention is to think of my higher purpose for the creative practice. What do I hope to gain from this? How will this support me? How will this help me work through old bad habits (like procrastination and lack of follow through)?

The more you can feel a sense of purpose behind your intention, the stronger the pull toward what you want to create.

Intention helps with clarity and focus, which ultimately support disciplined action.

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Rhythm is also established with Pairing. Another way to look at this is to establish a routine.

In Week 1, we talked about Pairing your creative practice with something you already do every day. How is that going for you? If your pairing is working, great! If not, try pairing with something else. Try the new pairing for a week and assess.

“The right pairing activity makes a difference in whether I get it done. I had to change the activity after Week 1 because it wasn't happening--so neither did the creative practice. I lost a week (there was a new job and other events that week) and am only this week (11/21) starting Week 2.” - Anne

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**My Story with Creative Practice**

People often comment to me on the volume of work I produce. They go on to say that I must be really disciplined or well-organized, or that I have some special quality that makes it easy for me to work.
I do not think of myself at all as disciplined. In fact, I’ve struggled my whole life with motivation, consistency of effort, and the battle against passivity.


Yet...lots of stuff does get done. I don’t have any special qualities. What I have is what I’m sharing here: Creative Practice.

My own daily creative practice is what supports me. When I’m not doing my creative practice consistently or enough, things begin fraying at the edges, and in time, all hell breaks loose.

And then I start again.

I remember my practice, and do it. Every single time we begin again, the creative practice gets stronger and easier. The longer we practice, the more of the rhythm of practice develops, and so we no longer have to think about doing it so much. We practice and it’s not a big deal.

My creative practice shows me how I can procrastinate so professionally that it looks like I’m being productive. It shows me where my weaknesses are, so I can shore them up. And what my strengths are, so those can be capitalized on.

Keep in mind that I’ve been actively involved in my own creative practice for about thirty years now. For the first five years, I was refining my methods. There was no one to teach me how to do creative practice in those early days, and no classes, I had to figure it out for myself, so it was very slow going.

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**Creative Practice and the End of Struggling in Business**

By doing all of the things I’m sharing with you in this course, I am still learning and discovering how to keep growing and deepening into my work and life.
That’s the real benefit of creative practice: We become more of who we really are. When we know who we really are on the inside, it becomes easier to share it on the outside.

If you are thinking of how this can help you in your business, knowing who you really are is like a secret weapon.

You won’t be struggling to differentiate yourself from competitors, or find your unique voice, or stand out in the crowd. That sounds simplistic, but when you aren’t struggling with that, whole new worlds of possibility (along with the profit) open up.

For a long time I worked in advertising and marketing, and believe me, it’s all about trying to remind and convince people of who you are (or your product) and how great it is, etc. And that’s after the very hard work of figuring out who you are (the company, product, service, etc.)

This is such hard work, that hardly anyone (even companies) do it, or do it well. If you’ve ever written a marketing plan or been through a branding strategy experience, or even just tried to get your work sold to the right customers, you know how just how challenging it is to get this figured out.

When you are expressing who you really are, all of that marketing and sales stuff takes on a new dimension of ease and flow. Can you imagine not struggling with marketing position questions or sales promotion strategies? Creative Practice will help you with that.

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**The Paradox of Creative Practice**
The nitty gritty here is that we want results from our creative practice.

The paradox is that we can’t go after those results directly in order to get the results.

We engage in creative practice because it nourishes us, or promises to nourish us in some way. We likely struggle with the beginnings of practice. And that is part of the practice.
Maddening and mystifying!

The very challenge of establishing a creative practice teaches us so much. That’s why you’re dong all of that Harvesting. We have to look for the learnings in order to find them.

Eventually and over time, creative practice begins revealing patterns, maps, ideas - and you’ll be so glad that you’ve been taking all these notes and gluing visuals down into the sketchbook.

Creative practice helps us make a map of where we want to go, what we want to do, how we want to do it and with who. (That just sounded like a line from Dr. Seuss to my ear.)

Usually we decide to start a creative practice because we’re stuck or fed up or frustrated or lacking inspiration in some way. We lack direction or clarity. This is just the moment when we want some fast answers and ready solutions. These are the moments when we might turn to something less constructive for soothe our stress.

The good news about creative practice, is that it gives us something constructive to do to alleviate stress. If you’ve already glued images into your sketchbook, you know how delightfully absorbing it can be.

The more directly we try to “solve problems” in creative practice, the more stuck we get. Can’t struggle against it. Gotta relax into it. We don’t do creative practice to quickly and desperately arrive at direct answers.

I’m not going to ask you to blindly “trust the process”.

I’m going to invite you and encourage you to get in here in the trenches of not wanting to practice, not feeling like practicing, and do your creative practice anyway. And see for yourself what happens.

Invite = go gently.

Encourage = with courage.

That’s all you need right now to keep going...good time to try the following activity.
1. Activity: Video Treasure Hunt - Find the Take Aways
Go back and watch the videos with your sketchbook and pen handy. Take some notes as you watch. What stands out to you? What did you learn? What do you want to remember?

I call these “take aways”. When I teach in-person workshops, I challenge participants to find at least 10 takeaways per day of workshop. How many take aways can you get out of each video?

If you haven’t yet seen all of the videos, this is also a great way to catch up.

2. Daily Quick Write.
In Week 2, the idea of the Daily Quick Write was introduced.

This week, we will continue adding a 2-minute quick write to the sketchbook. Aim for five to seven days of practice. By the way, if you find yourself wanting to write for longer than 2 minutes, go for it! The idea is to establish the rhythm of creative practice right now simply by showing up at our sketchbooks for just a few minutes each day.

Week 4 Quick Write Prompt:

Creative practice is helping me to...

Remember the guidelines / suggestions for doing the Quick Write:

- Write the date and the prompt at the top of your page
- Set a timer for two minutes
- Keep your pen moving
- If you can’t think of what to write, keep writing the prompt until something emerges
- Forget about spelling, punctuation, grammar
- The writing doesn’t have to be prose, sometimes the writing will take the form of a list
3. **Harvest:** Use your sketchbook to document your creative practice process

Part of the creative practice is documenting what you are learning. Take a little time each week, before you start on the current week’s activities, to Harvest.

This helps to develop the observer mind, which is a powerful way to notice what is happening in your experience without criticism or judgement.

Either write the following prompts directly in your sketchbook (you can use colored pencils or markers if you have them and like to play with color) or print out the questions and then cut them out and glue them down in your sketchbook. If you have colored copy paper, use that to begin adding some contrast to the blank paper. If you like to play with fonts, make the prompts larger and put them in a font that pleases you. The idea is not to get it perfect, but just to get the questions into your sketchbook in a way that pleases you.

Then answer the questions longhand, in your own handwriting, with your favorite pen or pencil. Important: avoid the temptation to use the computer to type your answers. There is alchemy and magic when you make your own marks in your sketchbook.

**Week 4 Harvest Prompts:**

1. My experience with creative practice last week was: (tell a little about your experience)
   Did you do the practice? How many days? Did you not do it? Why? How is the Pairing working out so far?

2. How I felt about doing my creative practice (or not doing it):

3. In last week’s course material, I learned...

4. This week, regarding my creative practice I’d like to...
5. My intention for doing this class is... (write your intention from week 1 here)

4. Keep Collecting - stuff for your sketchbooks!

Really Good Questions

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I’m including Jan’s whole question in italic. It’s a good series of questions. Then I’ll include my answers (in bold, after).

Jan’s Question(s):
I’m learning that I can’t seem to make a decision!

I’m changing the time and place of where i do my C+P. I also cannot write straight on unlined paper (& it really bugs me) so I have 2 books - one lined for writing and a sketchbook.

Now, the lined book does have a blank sheet on the back of every lined sheet so I started to use it as my one & only but am finding it might not work. Lisa, what would you do?
I really want to do the right thing to get the most out of this class. Also, did you say we should stop writing at 2 minutes? What if I have alot to say....should I have a separate dumping journal?

And, I go days without leaving my house so collecting fodder for my sketchbook is light. I know this is long winded but see how I can make the easiest assignment into a big deal??? And then i get so confused i just give up!!!!

(not this time i keep telling myself not this time) I am loving this class! Are we putting stuff in our books once a week or every day?......every day, right? I’m going to watch the videos again (i love those too!) Thanks, Jan

Jan! I know others are burning with some of those very same questions and experiences. As you know, Creative + Practice itself came out of my own experiences with what you are describing.
Let’s break it down into small pieces. *Questions are in italic*, with my answer right below.

*I’m learning that I can’t seem to make a decision!  
I’m changing the time and place of where i do my C+P.*

That’s good. Keep experimenting. Keep looking for your own rhythm and your own way.

C+P is a guidebook, pointing you in a direction.

How you decide to travel...that’s whatever way feels right to you. And that will change over time. Because we change. Totally natural. For now, experiment.

You know how a dog will walk in circles trying to find just the right way and place to lie down? That’s what finding my C+P rhythm feels like.

We’re like an innocent pup just trying to get as cozy as possible. Think of this dog form of practice if you starting thinking you might be doing it “wrong”. No way!

*I also cannot write straight on unlined paper (& it really bugs me)  
so I have 2 books - one lined for writing and a sketchbook.*

Good! You are finding your own way.

Depending on the situation, I have more than one sketchbook at once, too.

For the purpose of learning C+P, it’s best to keep it all in one book and branch out further after the class, if you feel the need.

Other ideas:

Use a lined book as your “sketchbook”.

Paste in lined paper in your blank pages.

Draw (or Paint!) lines on your blank pages.
Now, the lined book does have a blank sheet on the back of every lined sheet so I started to use it as my one & only but am finding it might not work. Lisa, what would you do?

I would keep experimenting.

One caveat: from my own experience, I find that needing “the perfect form of sketchbook” can be a major procrastinating device.

In that case, I would experiment with filling very imperfect sketchbooks quickly, and keep trying other formats.

I’ve used many, many types of sketchbooks over these 30 years of working and have found some I like better than others. And I keep learning new ways to do C+P all the time.

*I really want to do the right thing to get the most out of this class.*

Sounds like you are doing just fine. See “laying down dog” reference, above, whenever you aren’t sure.

*Also, did you say we should stop writing at 2 minutes? What if I have alot to say....should I have a separate dumping journal?*

In the beginning of learning how to do C+P, setting a timer for a short time is helpful. We don’t want the writing to feel overwhelming. We want to get into the rhythm of practice.

If you have more to say and want to keep going: do!

I would, for the purposes of the class, try and keep everything together in one sketchbook - that way you have a document that reveals all the work you did in one place.

*And, I go days without leaving my house so collecting fodder for my sketchbook is light.*

Hmnn....In that case I would simply use whatever is in the house. Think: junk drawers, mail, recycling bin, old projects, whatever is in storage, your kid’s stash of art supplies, books, magazines....etc.
Use what you’ve got lying around.

*I know this is long winded but see how I can make the easiest assignment into a big deal?? And then i get so confused i just give up!!!! (not this time i keep telling myself not this time)*

This is the beauty of doing C+P. This process has teeth, because it meets us wherever we are and reflects our tendencies back to us.

I hope you don’t give up!

And if you do give up, come back.

Your creative practice will always be there for you. The very best kind of relationship.

*I am loving this class!*

And this is only week 3!

*Are we putting stuff in our books once a week or every day?......every day, right?*

It’s up to you. Whatever you feel works best. Aim for some sort of regularity.

Again, making space to practice is what teaches you how you work best.

Thanks, Jan! Your questions benefit us all!

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In Week 3, I loaded you up with about a half hour total of videos - including the tutorials about beginning to add full page images to your sketchbook and a look at my current sketchbook demonstrating these techniques.
Next week, I'll show you more ways of working with images in your sketchbook, as well as how I keep my sketchbook practice portable and accessible when traveling.

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Next: Share Your Learnings:
One of the easiest ways to integrate new learning is to look for what I call a "take-away".

A take-away is something new you learned about yourself, an ah-ha moment, or a a new concept or technique offered in the course content. You'll find these easily, if you do the Harvest activity.

Please share your take-aways in the comments, here: http://www.lisasonora.com/cpw3/ (you'll find your password in your Week 3 email).

What are your take-aways this week?

If you have more than one, and I hope you do, simply put a number in front of each so I know it's a different take-away.

What did you discover by doing the video treasure hunt? (note: even though I’m presenting this material, I’m constantly hearing new things when I go back and watch the videos, or just listen to the audio)

What there something I said in one of the videos that resonated? Please share that in the comments. This counts as a take-away!

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Do you have questions for me?

I want your questions as you participate in Creative + Practice. As you can see, there are some really good questions to be asked.
I’m open to questions as you participate in Creative + Practice. Due to the size and format of the course I kindly ask for two considerations:

1. Please submit your question as a separate comment in the comments area beneath the lesson that you have a question about. To help questions stand out from comments, please include the word "Question" in front of your question.

2. I won’t answer questions personally, but instead will answer questions in the context of the course material, for the benefit of everyone’s learning.

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With deep respect for you and the power of creative practice,

Lisa Sonora
More goodness for you to explore...

You’ll find loads of free resources, prompts and inspiration for your creative process on my blog, lisasonora.com

You can subscribe to get free updates sent to you via email.

Just go to the blog and enter your email to subscribe. The subscription box is on the first page, right hand column underneath my photo.

If you're curious about the sorts of things I tackle in my own creative practice, you can read excerpts from my own journals, published in Sketchbooks: My Personal Creative Practice.

Originally available only to subscribers in my digital apprenticeship series, it's now available as a downloadable book.