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JIM NATICHIONI, PATH GUIDE



I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Seventeen: “The imprint of Art, Music, and Courage on Right Livelihood” and helps you with a basic understanding of how to awaken creativity and mystery in any endeavor. To read more please visit [RightLivelihood.com](http://RightLivelihood.com).

**Finding your path and right livelihood:** As indicated in the previous chapter there is more to this world, more to you than what meets the eye. Instead of denying your reality and your talent, express it; synchronize with the world, don’t deny its mysterious power; and don’t conform to society, become a positive force in its transformation. We are encouraged to be creative, make original choices and express our unique talents but are discouraged to exceed our cultural bounds. The warrior’s way and the artists way is to say to hell with it and absorb all you can from the universe and create your own beauty. Following any path that doesn’t have the creative spark of originality and inspiration is fruitless. The gifts of art and music and philosophy are the noblest and most enduring of cultural achievements. Only when you find your own unique style or rhythm, which comes from deep inside your core, will you hit the sweetest notes of accord. The final section of the chapter is dedicated to the virtue of courage. Courage is what sets a path on fire and keeps it burning, whether you are an activist or a monk, a freedom fighter or a fire fighter, a salesperson or a single parent fending for your family, ones “life shrinks or expands in proportion to ones courage”:

**The Tao of art awakens the mystery behind beauty:** Art and beauty sensitize the soul and ennoble the human spirit. Creations meant to communicate to the senses can inspire you to live the life and do the work that you deserve. According to Huston Smith, the highest level of success belongs not to the wealthiest nation but to the state with the highest culture, the finest art, the grandest poetry, and the noblest philosophy. Such gifts to the world endure, unlike the ephemeral victories won in commerce, battle, or politics.

The power of Confucian works of art elicits spontaneous admiration, elevating both the human heart and the Chinese society. In China, restraint and simplicity measure greatness in art; the finest art intends to awaken a perception of what lays beyond beauty. The economy of brush strokes and words make this awakening possible. Without mystery art become only prettiness or depiction; mystery suggests something akin to our reality. Themes of Chinese art often include personal emotions, edification, and communion with nature; as examples they may portray mist, silence, or a hermit who has found immortality in a mountain hut.

Everyone possesses an extra sense of perception that lies beyond their five senses, a sixth sense. The more you dwell on the physical plane or the five senses only, the less you feel in touch with it. A developed imagination takes a certain eye or thought process

in which to convey concepts like ‘emptiness, openness, or depth’ in a picture, or the ability to *see* a statue in a slab of marble. Some people express this sense intuitively, some artistically, and others analytically.

### **Bringing imagination into your core brings creativity to any endeavor:**

Art is not restricted to the arrangement of colors, forms and sounds on a canvas or other element that affects our sense of beauty. Author Julia Cameron says that beauty and art can underpin and express in almost any work you choose. Bringing artistry and imagination into the core of your being will add creativity to any endeavor. When seeking your path look to that core part of you that yearns to create something that has never been created, something that uniquely expresses your self or your passion.

When I first met my wife Christina she asked me “what I did” and I told her that I was a painter. She was not surprised because her vivid image of me was that of an artist who painted pictures. I swelled with pride that she ‘saw’ me as an artist, although in reality my canvases were much larger objects (houses, barns, and office buildings). The funny thing was that I really believed my work was a work of art and I treated each home or building as such. When my customers called me names such as, ‘the magician’ or the ‘artist’ I enjoyed the comparisons.

At the same time I have never been close to becoming a watercolor painter, sculptor, musician, actor, or dancer. Only many years after Chris and I first met did I begin to *‘follow my art.’* Writing is my art. People may think of me as a pretender, a dilettante, or a shadow artist who hides on the fringes of where the real action is, but at this point in my life I refuse to pay attention to what society thinks. Unblocking years of indoctrination can feel quite liberating. So there it is I said it, “I Am An Artist.”

This statement alone is enough to raise the cockles of many of my peers who stereotype artists as lazy, eccentric, or flamingly flamboyant. Why? Because we scoff at the existence of other elements, other realities (internal and external) besides the one we have been taught. We’re encouraged to be creative individuals who make original choices and express our unique talents; so long as it conforms, at its core, to our societal norms. We can talk about extra sensory perception or what goes on in the Bermuda triangle or becoming an actor but as soon as we get serious we are considered odd or ‘subverters of the social order.’ And in our society odd is only accepted if you flaunt it and say, “to hell with it, here is who I am and what I believe, live with it!”

**The grid:** Take New York City as an analogy. The city streets are the foundation; the grid and the straight lines tell us that’s the way to go, no variation. As you move up (in consciousness) the structures express curves and softer lines, expressing the path of creativity and originality. That is what I’m trying to get across in this book. Whether you like it or not there is more to this world, more to you than what meets the eye. Your foundation is not the grid of mother culture but the diversity of Mother Nature and the limitless universe that spawned her. Don’t block your reality, your art, your talent, express it; don’t deny the power and mystery of the world, synchronize with it; don’t conform to society, be a positive force in its constant flux.

### **When we unblock the clutter we open to the flow of universal inspiration:**

The Artists Way, by Julia Cameron with Mark Bryan is not the kind of book that appeals to me, or at least was not until I became mesmerized by it. Julia Cameron wrote

for every media imaginable: film, television, magazines, books, periodicals, journals etc. Her writing crutch? Alcohol. Cameron's own lessons began when she had to learn to write without drinking. Abstinence forced her to find a new outlook for her creativity. One minute she was walking along in Greenwich Village the next she instantly knew that she should begin teaching people how to 'unblock.' She realized that creativity connects to our true nature, and that blocks act to "unnaturally thwart that natural process."

When we explore our creativity we open to the flow of the vast and orderly universe and the life it throbs with. Excellent writers like Cameron find their inspiration in that order, that overwhelming existence. She says that as artists we become "more the conduits than the creator of what we express." It involves diligent and attentive work, not magical genius. "We're not grasping for inventions; we're listening for inspirations." In other words, the artist's magic comes from that spark of existence many of us identify as deity, energy, or love.

To me making art feels like reaching up into heaven and grabbing a handful of stardust and sprinkling it onto thin sheets of cellulose pulp. Cameron says: "Artist's block is a very literal expression." Like feelings of limitation, "blocks must be acknowledged and dislodged." If the well of creative resources begins to run dry, think of "restocking the pond" with stardust and delight, not from a sense of duty. Since creative recovery can be a teachable spiritual process Julia now conducts workshops aimed at freeing people's creativity. In order to free *it* you have to find it first. Her suggestion of a way to find that creativity involves getting up and doing what she calls "*the morning pages.*"

My wife Christina for instance often takes a half hour in the morning to create her day. She meditates on what she wants to happen and then asks for signs of confirmation. Not just any signs, she wants them brought in a surprising way that she won't expect, so she'll have no doubt its from god or the universe. In this way she creates synchronicity in her daily life.

### **Commit to a path and the universe will respond:**

As Cameron's students work with the tools of the book the "chief among the changes they undergo will be the triggering of synchronicity." She says that when we answer the call of our most romantic notions we set in motion the principle of what C.G. Jung dubbed synchronicity. Cameron defines 'synchronicity' as *a fortuitous intermeshing of events*, and she believes that they can begin to crop up all around you. When you live in the moment and take steps toward your goal, expect that to support your dream. Jung alluded to these phenomena as *a responsive universe acting and reacting on our behalf*. "The moment one definitely commits oneself and moves confidently toward their dreams then Providence moves also." Cameron calls it "Leap and the net will appear." My wife Christina for instance often takes a half hour in the morning to create her day. She meditates on what she wants to happen and then asks for signs of confirmation. Not just any signs, she wants them brought in a surprising way that she won't expect, so she'll have no doubt its from god or the universe. In this way she creates synchronicity in her daily life.

The movie, "Field of Dreams," tells the story of synchronicity well. An Iowa farmer keeps hearing otherworldly messages and finally starts following the strangely coincidental leads. The voice keeps telling him, "build it and they will come." Yet none of the dots really connect and the leads seem to go nowhere. The former hippie turned

farmer faces a gut check. Somewhere inside him there is a surge of faith and he builds a baseball field and ghosts of former major league all stars appear from the cornfields. But it still doesn't make sense and the community, who can't see the ballplayers, thinks he is crazy and tells him to conform and sell the farm. Just as he is about to lose faith a miracle happens to his daughter and the most vocal nonbeliever also sees the separate reality. Hoards of fans follow in support of his vision. That is the kind of faith we need to follow our path. The message is what you hear in your heart, have the faith to build it, and the universe will act on your behalf; if you do all this, 'they will come.'