

The Artist's Way: Five Ways to Living a Creative Life in 2011

Where creative living abounds.
By Leona Beasley

I spend much of my day thinking about words, working on my novel, interviewing people, writing articles and examining films. I like to think of myself as a creative person—that is someone who seeks to build, design, and grow things or ideas from scratch, from blank pages.

In these economically difficult times it seems we need more creativity woven in our everyday lives more than ever; an artistic eye that can spot and make unique connections in the companies where we work, in the jobs that we seek, in the social media where we play.

So it seems appropriate, even savvy, to sprinkle and incorporate creativity in the New Year. Below are a few suggestions on how we might add a creative spin in our 2011:

- 1) This year, take that writing course, art, foreign language, or philosophy class that you promised yourself you'd do for years. This is what community organizations and continuing education courses at colleges and universities are for. Locally we have the [Hudson Valley Writer's Center](#), [Westchester Community College](#), and the [Warner Library](#).
- 2) Take yourself on creative dates. I got this idea from *The Artist's Way*. These dates can take you to the movies, a museum, to the park, and so on. Of course you can go with a group of friends or on your own. I find if I go out on a creative outing several times a month, it does wonders for my creative soul. If you need guidance I suggest *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* by [Julia Cameron](#) or books by [Eric Maisel](#).
- 3) Don't bother with New Year's resolutions, but if you must set them, take them in stride. The object of adding creativity is to spark ideas and it should be fun. Think of developing your creativity the way kids play with building blocks: they're colorful, they stack and if they fall down you can re-stack them.
- 4) Build a creative friendship. It can be with someone you already know or someone you don't know yet. [Meetup.com](#) has a plethora of groups formed to do almost anything you might be interested in. And of course you can start your own with the people you know and love.
- 5) Mix it up, do something different; take a different path, drive a different route. By all this I mean change up your routine. If you only go to movies maybe treat yourself to a play at a local theater. If you only read non-fiction try fiction. You get the idea.

For additional ideas, I asked two of the many memorable artists I interviewed this year to answer the question I asked myself: playwright and Sleepy Hollow resident, Staci Swedeen, and street photographer and archivist Charlene Weisler - *How can people add creativity to their lives?*

Charlene: "I think that there are many ways to add creativity to one's life. For me, I like to travel to new places - especially internationally. But I can find new exciting things to spark my imagination even within my own neighborhood. Meeting new people and pushing familiar boundaries all helps to make me more aware of the creative possibilities. My street art inspired photography came to me after numerous walks in nearby neighborhoods and a chance meeting with some street artists. It just hit me that what I was seeing was inspired, wildly artistic and ever changing and evolving. And this led me to expand the range of my art and capture history in the making at the same time."

Staci: "My first response to "How to get more creativity into your life" is to find ways to hang out with creative people. It's catching! I'm always inspired by my friends who take photographs, paint, make a killer turkey soup, or grow their own gardens. Their efforts and interests spark my own creativity. "Hey, I can do that!" I say to myself. Or "I want to do that" - and off I go.

People tend to think that creativity is something "out there," that some people have it and others don't. The truth is we are ALL creative. Sometimes all we need is a little extra wind to fan the flame." So on the first day of the 2011 take some of the above advice and go out to discover your creativity—the opportunities are all around you.

Charlene Weisler's work can be viewed at www.CharleneWeisler.com and her blog about urban art is tinyurl.com/charleneweisler

Staci Swedeen's contact and information about her work can be seen at www.staciswedeen.com

