



TAPPING INTO THE ARTIST WITHIN

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A PRO TO EXPRESS YOUR CREATIVE VOICE!

BY: CANDACE NICHOLSON
@INCANDESCERE

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Despite his extraordinary fame and success, Picasso understood how difficult it can be to express your inner artist in a world that tells you art is a youthful luxury that has no "real" contribution to a healthy, functioning society. It's even more difficult for those who don't see themselves as artistically inclined at all.

What if I were to tell you that not only does art and culture contribute a great deal to a healthy and functioning society -- to the tune of \$763 billion to the U.S. economy¹ no less, but you can also incorporate more artistic endeavors into your life without draining your bank account or adding to your daily stress? Whether your job title is an accountant, forklift operator or crossing guard, there is an artist within you. And here are just a few ways to embrace your inner creative spirit and incorporate more arts and culture into every day your life.

Start a journal

Art journal, dream journal, gratitude journal, you name it. If you can keep a calendar or maintain a schedule, you can take up the practice of journaling to connect with your artistic self. But don't feel pressured to confine it to the traditional book concept to capture your ideas. Your journal can be a new blog or Instagram account dedicated solely to images you've snapped throughout your day. It can be an audio journal, like your own personal podcast, recorded off-and-on during the week, or a collection of business cards you doodle on while you're sitting in yet another conference call. Journaling can take on any format, be used at anytime you feel comfortable, and be shared with anyone or no one. Such is the freedom and power of art.

Cook a new type of cuisine

Who says artistry is all about museums and ballets? Expressing yourself in the kitchen is a great way to not only improve your culinary skills, but it also helps refocus the mind on a task that requires all of your attention, thereby distracting you from life's stressors and minutiae. Whether you long to compete on a season of Master-Chef or you struggle to boil eggs, visit your local bookstore or borrow a cookbook from the library and work your way through it Julie & Julia-style. Simply try a topic or cuisine that suits your interests or lifestyle. The Southern Vegetarian? Meal in a Mug? 101 Asian Dishes You Need To Cook Before You Die? In the end, you'll learn a few new dishes and tap into your inner creative.



Develop your green thumb

From the kitchen to the garden, it's not a big leap, but you may be wondering, how is gardening artistic? Although it's unlikely you'll become the next Andre Le Notre, gardens play a major role in the field of landscape architecture, which believe it or not, is an art form. But don't worry. Your garden doesn't have to mirror the grounds of Versailles to speak to your urge to create. Between food, flowers, plants and herbs, gardening can be adapted for house, condo and apartment dwellers alike. And much like cooking, with the act of digging into the dirt, pruning the leafy, and learning at the feet of mother nature, you'll begin to tune out the outside world and listen to your inner artist. In this sense, your creative side is creating life and guiding it to express itself through your attention and upkeep. Not a bad way to manifest your aesthetic spirit.

Paint by sips

If dirt under your fingernails isn't what you have in mind for expressing your creative spirit, you might opt for the tried-and-true paint under your fingernails approach. Everywhere you look, Paint & Sip franchises are unleashing a whole new fervor for the world of acrylics and watercolors.

Great for birthday parties, happy hours, or a girls- or guys-night-out, a visit to a local painting class has joined Sunday brunch and 10K runs as the new normal. You don't need any artistic prowess to participate in a Cork & Canvas, nor do you need to be a fan of wine (many are BYOB anyway). You only need to be open-minded and willing to accept that any mistakes you make are really just "happy accidents."

Benefits beyond measure

From helping to bolster our national and local economies to providing a beautiful port in the storm as we move from one life hurdle to the next, the benefits of engaging in the arts and culture scene are plentiful and universal. That's why participating in the arts, either as a spectator or creator, can inspire just as much as it consoles and reassures. So even though you may feel intimidated by the artists who've turned their passion into a career, that doesn't mean that with a little time and focus, you can't pursue your creative urges and tap into the artist within.

1 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), "The Arts Contribute More Than \$760 Billion to the U.S. Economy," press release, March 6, 2018, www.arts.gov/news/2018/arts-contribute-more-760-billion-us-economy

