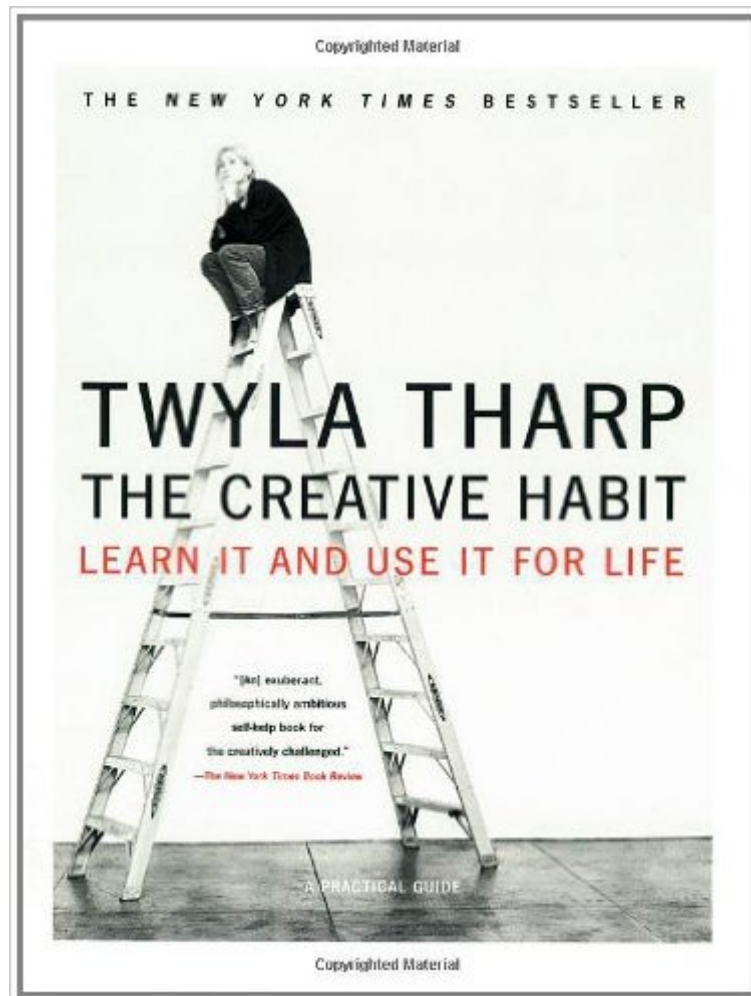




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The Creative Habit: Learn It And Use It For Life



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

Perhaps the leading choreographer of her generation, Tharp offers a thesis on creativity that is more complex than its self-help title suggests. To be sure, an array of prescriptions and exercises should do much to help those who feel some pent-up inventiveness to find a system for turning idea into

product, whether that be a story, a painting or a song. This free-wheeling interest across various creative forms is one of the main points that sets this book apart and leads to its success. The approach may have been born of the need to reach an audience greater than choreographer hopefuls, and the diversity of examples (from Maurice Sendak to Beethoven on one page) frees the student to develop his or her own patterns and habits, rather than imposing some regimen that works for Tharp. The greatest number of illustrations, however, come from her experiences. As a result, this deeply personal book, while not a memoir, reveals much about her own struggles, goals and achievements. Finally, the book is also a rumination on the nature of creativity itself, exploring themes of process versus product, the influences of inspiration and rigorous study, and much more. It deserves a wide audience among general readers and should not be relegated to the self-help section of bookstores. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Adult/High School--Tharp shows how and why artists must actively seek and nurture inspiration. The dancer/choreographer draws heavily on her personal experiences to guide readers into cultivating habits that give birth to success. In addition, she recounts the experiences of artists from other disciplines, including painting and cinematography. Vignettes from the lives of people such as Mozart underline the fact that even geniuses work hard to realize the fruits of their labor. A personable tone is carried throughout the book, and within the text is a gold mine of advice. Tharp not only promotes tried-and-true habits, but also encourages readers to dig deep within themselves and come up with their own answers. Most sections conclude with exercises; they are fun and almost seamlessly bring home the author's main points. The black-and-white illustrations and photos are few in number. Students from all manner of creative arts who wish to make their dreams come true would benefit from reading this book.--Sheila Shoup, Fairfax County Public Library, VA
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This is an excellent "work book" for exploring creativity. Twyla Tharp shares her knowledge and experiences in a very useful book. Not all sections will resonant with everyone. But for people seeking help in developing a methodology to their creative process, this book is an excellent resource.

Twyla Tharp's book is a great resource for the "left brained" creative. Although written by a choreographer, Tharp uses her experience as a backdrop to paint solid mental models, and does not beat the reader over the head with her trade. Interspersed with useful exercises and insightful

anecdotes, this is the book I recommend first and foremost to those who ask me for resources on creativity... especially my analytical colleagues in finance, accounting, and IT. Very solid depth yet very digestible for the casual reader.

This book is breathtaking in its brilliance. The word best to describe it may surprise you (or not) for a book about creativity, but to me, that word is profound. It is simply profound: witty, clever and mind-expanding. No matter what field you work in, it will re-energize your creativity. But if you are a writer, it will especially speak to your soul. -RG

This book will change your life. It's great for creative people, entrepreneurs, designers, and just about everyone. Twyla teaches the reader how to discipline themselves in their daily lives as well as how to achieve their goals over time and how to organize their thoughts. This is a must read/listen to.

As is my custom when a new year begins, I recently re-read this book and *The Collaborative Habit*. The insights that Twyla Tharp shares in them are, if anything, more valuable now than when the books were first published. It would be a mistake to ignore the reference to "habit" in their titles because almost three decades of research conducted by K. Anders Ericsson and his associates at Florida State University clearly indicate that, on average, at least 10,000 hours must be invested in "deliberate," iterative practice under strict and expert supervision to achieve peak performance, be it playing a game such as chess or playing a musical instrument such as the violin. Natural talent is important, of course, as is luck. However, with rare exception, it takes about ten years of sustained, focused, supervised, and (yes) habitual practice to master the skills that peak performance requires. Tharp characterizes this book as a "practical guide" but she also frames much of its material within a spiritual context. The creative process can probably be traced back to the earliest humans and yet so much of it remains a mystery. When Henri Matisse was asked if he was always painting, he replied, "No but when the muse visits me, I better have a brush in my hand." Of course, he was also prepared to transform an inspiration into a work of art...and did on countless occasions. In the first chapter, Tharp acknowledges what she characterizes as "a philosophical tug of war...It is the perennial debate, born in the Romantic era, between the beliefs that all creative acts are born of (a) some transcendent, inexplicable Dionysian act of inspiration, a kiss from God on your brow that allows you to give the world *The Magic Flute*, or (b) hard work." She adds, "Creativity is a habit, and the best creativity is a result of good work habits. That's it in a

nutshell."Throughout the remainder of her book, Tharp draws heavily upon her own personal as well as professional experiences (she would probably not make that distinction) while citing countless examples of other real-world situations that indicate "There are no 'natural' geniuses." However, there are immensely creative people in every domain of human initiative. Therein, I think, is her primary purpose: To convince everyone who reads this book that they can be creative if they are willing to work hard enough. Here is a representative selection of what she affirms:

- o "In order to be creative you have to know how to be creative."
- o "Build up your tolerance for solitude."
- o "Trust your muscle memory" when physically exercising.
- o "If you're like me, reading is the first line of defense against an empty head."
- o "You never want the planning to inhibit the natural evolution of your work."
- o "Work with the best."
- o "Never have a favorite weapon." (Miyamoto Musashi, A Book of the Five Rings, circa 1645)
- o "Build a bridge to the next day."
- o "Know when to stop tinkering."
- o "Creating dance is the thing I know best. It is how I recognize myself."

There is so much of enduring (and endearing) value in this book. Perhaps (just perhaps) this brief commentary helps to explain why I read *The Creative Habit* and *The Collaborative Habit* at least once a year and consult passages in them more often. Oscar Wilde once advised, "Be yourself. Everyone else is taken." Those who require proof of that need look no further than Twyla Tharp whose career is her art...and whose art is her life.

My talent is two dimensional rather than a performing art but Twyla's unique way of writing makes the challenges, downsides, upsides and win analogies across all lines of one's creative life. I found this book positive, heart warming, butt kicking, no excuses or denials to be right on for me. Thank you Twyla!

I'm in a completely different profession, not dance that is, but this book is creatively motivating! The writing is personable and direct, which is my preference. I felt a constant push and guidance, every time I would read and reread it, toward a productive habit. It worked! I'm slowly beginning to change my habits and be more productive and consistent with my time by staying on schedule. Highly recommend it to anyone who needs motivation to be productive and stay on task. Plus there are so many interesting references and personal stories. She doesn't try to be a writer here, it's her non-fiction.

I had to buy this after checking it out at the library too many times. It is a wonderful book to have on my night table to remind me of who I am and inspire me to maintain my practice as an artist. I dip

into it from time to time like talking to a dear friend. Thank you, Ms. Tharp for elevating life and demystifying the creative process.

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