

Be Your Creative Best

by Ally Castle

To create is to be human ...

When I first watched Dead Poet's Society back in 1989 as a teenager, most of the wisdom of Robin Williams' character, John Keating, was totally lost on me. But following the tragic death of the actor in August 2014, social media was awash with genuinely inspiring quotations from the man himself as well as from his best-known performances. One in particular resonated with me, now an adult with a professional and personal interest in creativity.

"We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for."

I love this distinction between sustaining life and giving it purpose; the difference between surviving and living. Of course, you need one to achieve the other. But the latter is surely the end goal.

The root of the word 'inspire' is from Latin, meaning 'breathe or blow into'. It was originally used of a divine or supernatural being, suggesting there is a spiritual basis to our creativity. In other words, that creativity serves a higher purpose.

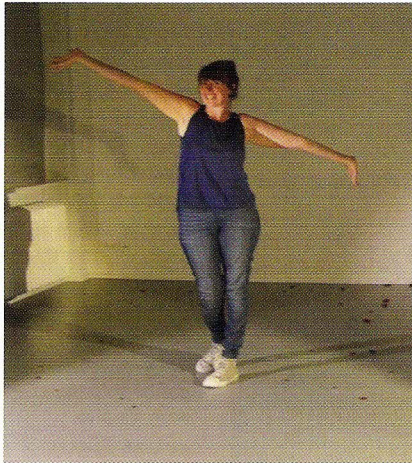
At a recent workshop for a TV company making quiz shows, I encouraged teams to think about why it is in our nature as humans (and indeed, animals) to play. What would the world be like without play? In the end, every conversation reached the same conclusion: we would die.

Without the desire to create and the pleasure we find in it, we would simply cease to exist. Not only would we have failed to innovate and develop the technology, machinery and industry which allow us to all live on this planet - and attempt to override the harm we do it and ourselves along the way - we would all be emotionally damaged.

As Stuart Brown, an American psychiatrist, clinical researcher and pioneer in research

on play says: "the opposite of play isn't work, it is depression". Ultimately, without being creative we would probably annihilate each other through a lack of empathy, self-awareness and practice at effective social living which play develops in us.

We only have to look at the fields of brain injury rehabilitation or mental illness therapy to see how the presence of creativity can heal. And then just look at your average play group or nursery class, and you just can't argue that creativity is an instinct within us all. It is what gives us purpose and makes us human. And we can all do it; there is no such thing as someone who is not creative.



So, let's crack open the watercolours, dust off the journal or have a sneaky go at the kids' felt tips and colouring books. Let's do something we've never done before, let's look at something differently, or answer a problem in a new way. And let's just do it for the sake of it, for the sheer pleasure of trying, even if we're not completely happy with the final outcome. Or, at the very least, maybe it's time to stop and appreciate the creativity of others all around us - from photography to animation,

to literature or the performing arts.

Let's be human. Let's connect. Let's create.

Ally Castle, who lives in Cirencester, is a creative strategist and director of Ideally Consulting Ltd, delivering content, communication and corporate strategies for clients in broadcast, digital and beyond.

Ally will be doing a series of articles for us every other month on creativity and positive thinking. over the next year,

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