

Momentum

Bonus Playbook

Summon Your Muse

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Bonus Playbook:

Summon Your Muse

Inspiration is Everywhere...But Is It?

Everywhere you look these days, it seems inspiration is on everyone's mind. Inspiration for your business, your family life, your soul. Heck, inspiration to help you find – and make – meaning in your world.

Two of my past clients inspire others in their own unique ways: one teaches mindfulness principles so that manic people can take a breath, shift perspective and choose healthier actions, leading to less anxiety, stronger relationships and better quality (and satisfaction in) work. Another is inspiring soulseekers to peel back the dusty layers and get back in touch with who they really are and what they really want by running creative workshops, soulful camp experiences and more.

The resources are out there, to be sure.

So why are we still so exhausted and starved for inspiration?

The hustle and bustle of work and life often leaves us depleted. Where are the places you go or people you seek when you need that motivational high? How do you structure your day to invite inspiration? It's not enough to keep your head down, locked on your work and your to-do lists: every human being needs to reflect, make space and see things differently in order to recharge.

If you're like me, you often need to find your inspirational vitamin boost through being consistent, taking breaks, surrounding yourself with insightful people or settling into special places. I call this **"Summoning Your Muse."**

In this week's lesson, you're going play around with some disciplined and pleasurable ways to rejuvenate our weary souls.

Ready to refresh?!

Don't Just Wait. Discipline Your Muse.

We like to think that inspiration and creativity will just strike us like a bolt of lightning. And we use the excuse of being uninspired or too busy to put off the things we really want to be doing in the world.

I get it. I have a toddler. I'm exhausted every single minute.

But as the author of several books, here's a truth bomb I learned: I didn't always feel like writing. If I wrote only when I was jolted awake by a brilliant idea? Well, let's just say none of my books would exist today.

Same holds true for other creative aspects of your work: writing blog content, creating marketing materials, re-doing website copy. And even less appealing tasks, such as balancing your books or strategic planning.

Inspiration doesn't always just "strike" especially when you're on deadline.

I used to write only when I literally couldn't stop the ideas from tumbling out of my head. That doesn't work well when you have a launch date or an expectant publisher. I thought the muse would simply strike at her own whim and I could just lazily wait for her arrival- when, really, she often comes when you discipline yourself and consistently sit down to write.

Remember when we talked about putting blocks into your schedule for creation or marketing? Make your writing schedule realistic like I did and break it up into doable chunks (i.e., this week, I'll complete the outline. Next week, I'll focus on chapter one.) If you sit down and just start, just like showing up to a job, some days you'll produce brilliance and others you'll produce crap. **And if you need to take a break one day, take it.** Ditch the guilt and then get back to the work tomorrow. The more you produce, the more you'll finesse, tweak, explore, hammer out, invent, - and the more likely those "A Ha!" moments will come. It's a probability game. The more you do, the more chances you'll find gems in the work.

Schedule your time to sit down and do the work and your muse will start knowing exactly when you need her to show up.

Recharge Your Batteries

The reason I love scheduling so much is that it also reminds us when to take a break. Humans are not meant to be machines. So while you do need to be disciplined for the muse to find you, you still need to have the energy to follow her advice once she arrives! That means planning when to work and planning when to stop.

Like a car, you have to properly maintain and fuel yourself so you can run smoothly. Otherwise, you'll break down.

Studies show that we as humans cannot function in the “performance zone” 100% of the time. Here's a great article on resilience that you need to read right now about this subject.

One part in particular is an epiphany:

... if you have too much time in the performance zone, you need more time in the recovery zone, otherwise you risk burnout. Mustering your resources to “try hard” requires burning energy in order to overcome your currently low arousal level. This is called upregulation. It also exacerbates exhaustion. Thus the more imbalanced we become due to overworking, the more value there is in activities that allow us to return to a state of balance. The value of a recovery period rises in proportion to the amount of work required of us.

The article goes on to state that recovery is not simply “stopping” a task. You need to actively engage your mind in something else to recover.

Step away from the grind and do something that brings you joy, moves your body or quiets your soul.

My good friend Melissa Cassera calls these *pleasure breaks* and she swears by them for business success.

What do you enjoy doing that takes your mind completely away from work or your to-do list? Where are you “in the zone” and simply forget about time? Build these activities into your daily schedule—whether 15 minutes or one hour. Shut down your computer and turn off your phone so you can recharge and come back more vibrant and rested.

Some of my favorite rest and recharge activities:

- Walk my dog...with no music or audiobooks
- Watch *Jeopardy!* (yes, I actually record episodes and binge on them during my official lunch break, that I always take. I know, I'm a dork.)
- Enjoy a mug of tea with a tasty treat, like a scone or cookie...without checking my phone.
- Doing Crossfit (one delicious hour just for me where I'd better be focused on the weights and not my to-do list or I will hurt myself!)
- Read to my son
- Take myself out for a coffee date...or phoning a friend for an impromptu one
- Catch up with a friend
- Sit on my couch in silence, petting my dog

Other ideas that may speak to you:

- Call a friend and catch up
- Buy yourself flowers
- Meditate
- Do yoga
- Cook
- Work out
- Light a candle
- Dance in your living room
- Listen to music
- Binge watch *House of Cards* or *Game of Thrones*
- Read a book or magazine

It all depends on what recharges YOU. The point is, recharging is the best way to clear out your mental clutter and invite inspiration in!

Four Questions to Ask Yourself

If you find yourself still stuck on how to recharge or get inspired, ask yourself for help.

When you ask the right questions, inspiration can find you.

- 1. Do you enjoy your physical space?** I firmly believe our environment affects our mood and creativity. Do you work in a cramped, messy corner of your living room, or do you have a small, cozy nook that lights you up? Do you need space? Do you need color? Heck, is your chair comfortable? I find that working outside my home office in a funky little coffee shop helps me focus better and sparks new ideas. Think about your physical environment and what you need to be your most productive and create or find that space for yourself.
- 2. Who is on your cheerleading team?** Do you have a team of people you can call of when you need inspiration in different parts of your life? I have a friend I call when I need quick-hit, practical advice about life, one I call when I need a soulful, spontaneous girl chat about love and desire, one I exchange email missives with when we need to work out angst or transition, one I turn to for business motivation when I'm stuck or feel down.....you get the idea. Who is on your team and do you have any gaps?
- 3. Can you make space in your schedule?** Again, give yourself time to think and create. I'm schedule sacred time on my calendar to write, plan for the business, take an afternoon off at the park with my boy. If you get all crazy and fidgety when you end up having some time on your hands, then you have a problem! We all need quiet, non-busy, reflection time. Your schedule won't magically open up for you so you have to put your foot down and demand what YOU want from your calendar. How do you want your day or week to look? What are you willing to give up, on what will you absolutely not budge? The weeks go faster as we get older—do you really want to look back and see that your year was filled with crap that you really didn't want to do?

4. **How can you shift your perspective?** A friend recently told me that I need to “change my conversation” about time. Time is, after all, a construct, and if I go in with the mindset that “I’m crazed! I have no time to do anything! I am way too overwhelmed” then, darn it, that’s my reality. But if I let go a bit and shift my mindset to “I have plenty of time to get everything done” or adopt a more curious or joyful approach, then I will indeed impact my reality. What is your mindset? Approach your work, life and relationships with joy, with curiosity, with abundance. Instead of “I have to...” think, “Wow! I get the opportunity to...” This could apply to working out, visiting family, attending a child’s school play. It sounds woo-woo but I swear, it really, really works.

Your Assignment: Time to Summon Your Own Muse!

On which days could you place a recurring appointment for creation time...and downtime? Do you want to schedule an entire day once a month, or simply a few hours every week?

What activities inspire you or enable you to take a break from your workday? List those out below. Use some of the examples above as inspiration!

Who are the people in your life that most inspire you? Can you make time to chat with them once a week or month? Could they become accountability partners? Here's a template you can use to ask them for help!

Dear so-and-so,

Hope you're doing great! I'm in a year-long course to help improve my business and pursue my passions, and I think you might be able to help me with one of the fun assignments, if you're game.

We're talking about how to take breaks and find inspiration. And when I think of you, I'm instantly inspired. [Our talks/Your work/Your outlook] energize me and always leave me with great ideas. You're like a 5-hour energy shot for my soul!

Would you like to [meet up/talk by phone/do a Skype call/go for a walk] with me once a month/week/quarter to help us energize each other? We could bounce ideas, cheerlead, hold each other accountable or just chat and keep in better touch. Nothing formal, something super easy.

What do you say? Does this sound like a good way to kick off the new year?!

Cheers,

First, identify your personal cheerleading team and then craft your invite to one of them below!

But wait, you're not quite done....

Please post your "muse-summoning" plans (or A-ha's or epiphanies) to the Facebook page by Friday. Can't wait to hear about what inspires you and rejuvenates your soul!

Remember, we are here to encourage you and provide any feedback. If you're like me, often it's fellow collaborators that help me polish my ideas to a glossy sheen.

Again, I'm going to reward you all year long, so don't lose your MOMENTUM: Post it now and keep that train moving!

One Last Thing...

At the start of this course, I talked about how we were not going to just be learning brand and marketing strategies, but also about how to take care of your most important business asset: YOU. If you run yourself into the ground trying to achieve your dreams, what are you doing it for? You'll be too sick, cranky or exhausted to enjoy it!

The most successful people perform daily or weekly rituals to keep them going strong. Your creativity can't flourish if your soul is depleted.

Your business, big idea or creative work won't succeed without nourishing and energizing yourself. The muse is much more likely to hang out with you more often if you're able to receive what she's offering.

Take care of you! xoxo

Maria

Goodies and Inspiration

Enjoy [five must-watch videos](#) to delight your brand, brain and heart. If you're a fan of some moving and witty videos, you'll love these picks.

Want to more fully, richly commit to giving your best in everything you do? Read [Empty the Tank](#) by the soulful Alexandra Franzen.

Looking for a snappy pick-me-up to make your spirit soar? Check out [9 Promising, Powerful Quotes Your Business Will Love](#) by the witty and wise Sarah Von Bargaen.

Need a heart-boost about the great content you put out into the world when you think no one is listening? Devour [Not getting the comments, likes and shares that you crave? Behold: the Silent Obsessor](#) by the feisty Melissa Cassera.

Looking for ways to shift your mindset about the things you "have" to do to make them more joyful? You will adore [Finding Prayer in All Things](#) by the lovely Jamie Greenwood.