



# Your Best Work Starts with Your Best You

AN ARTSPEAK GUIDE TO HEALTHY, EFFECTIVE CREATIVE HABITS



If you want to be an effective creative, it helps to be a healthy human first.

**IT'S HAPPENED TO ALL OF US.**

The blinking cursor. The blank artboard. Gigs of raw footage waiting to be edited. And they're all saying the same thing: "Time to be creative!" But there's nothing left in the tank. No ideas. No inspiration. Nothing.

Creating something out of nothing is no easy task. We've been there. Here at ArtSpeak we've experienced burnout, drained ourselves dry of all inspiration, and encountered that day when there's just nothing left to give.

So how do we get our creativity back when we feel we've lost it?

Creative energy is rooted in and pulls from our health as human beings. Replenishing our overall health is key to doing our best work the way God intended. We've found that building habits to replenish our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health leads to more effective creativity.

Over the years,  
we've discovered  
a few key habits  
for life-giving  
work:



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- 1 Start with Gratitude

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  - 2 Set Your Status

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  - 3 Take Brain Breaks

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  - 4 Block Out Your Time

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  - 5 Expand + Contract

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  - 6 Ask Questions Early and Often

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  - 7 Bonus Habit

We believe your work can be life-giving instead of life-draining. You can exert creative energy without feeling scattered, sluggish, or drained.

Let's dive in and see how these habits can help you recover your creative flow!



# <sup>1</sup> Start with Gratitude

Starting with gratitude is an upgrade to your personal operating system. Expressing gratitude consistently over time will improve your health and increase your creative effectiveness.

## **PERSONAL BENEFITS**

Decreases anxiety  
and depression

Reduces pain

Releases dopamine  
and serotonin

Contributes to  
better sleep (which  
contributes to  
overall health)

## **SOCIAL BENEFITS**

Builds connections

Improves  
relationships

Increases generosity

Enhances empathy

### CREATIVE BENEFITS

Activates the prefrontal cortex

This is the place where we solve problems, regulate emotions, focus, plan, and solve problems. [\(Source\)](#)

Builds neural pathways for seeing possibilities

Increases energy and enthusiasm

### GRATITUDE HABITS

Keep a gratitude journal

Write down things you're grateful for daily.

Smile

Smile your way to gratitude, regardless of circumstances.

Express gratitude in relationships and in teams.

(Don't assume people know you're grateful. Gratitude is only gratitude when expressed.)

Begin team meetings with gratitudes.

## <sup>2</sup> Set Your Status

Get clear on what you're doing for the day and make sure others know too.

### **BENEFITS**

Sets healthy boundaries with your team and clients.

Helps you plan your day, which can relieve stress

Helps hold you accountable: when you're off, be off

### **STATUS HABITS**

Post your status in relevant communication channels:

How much do you have going on today?

What projects are you working on?

Relevant details of times you'll be out, etc.

### <sup>3</sup> Take Brain Breaks

Creative work is all about problem-solving and that requires a ton of brain energy. Our brains need rest throughout the day to sustain creative output.

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#### **BENEFITS**

Reminds you of your human limits (This is about people, including you)

Relieves stress

Helps put problems into proper perspective

Improves creativity

Boredom during a brain break can spark creative ideas

Prioritizes your brain's health over projects, deadlines, and problems



## BRAIN BREAK HABITS

Take a walk.

Science has proven that moving your body literally makes you smarter. Standing up gives you an easy boost in dopamine. Being in nature is proven to increase creative problem-solving.

Do an unrelated activity for a bit.

Play an instrument or sing, read a book, or text a friend.

Just sit for five minutes.

No phone, no stimulus. Just be.

Take a guided break with the One Minute Pause app.

Resist the urge to jump from task to task.

Take a breather in-between to reorient yourself.

## 4 Block Out Your Time

Time-blocking saves a ton of headaches and energy. By scheduling events for work in your favorite calendar app, you're reviewing what time you have available. Assign tasks to those time blocks and see what's possible to get done this week.

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### **BENEFITS**

Task lists can get long. Blocking out your time can help you prioritize and focus.

It helps keep you flexible too!

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**TIME-BLOCKING HABITS**

Ask: What one thing can I do first today to make all the other things easier?

Be sure to add margin.  
Plan for breaks.

Batch small tasks.

Multitasking  
is a myth.

When you need to do deep work, turn off the noises and notifications.

Be aware of what kind of work you do best at what times.

When does your energy wane?  
What kind of tasks can you do then?

## 5 Expand + Contract

We hit the creative wall often because we're trying to get the final version done on the first round. This is a recipe for frustration and burnout. Expansion and contraction is a two-step repeatable process we use to explore all the possibilities, edit, and repeat until we have a solid direction.

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### **BENEFITS**

Saves tons of time and energy by allowing yourself to explore.

Exploring and editing are opposites. Doing both at the same time makes for slow, arduous progress on a project.

Creates better concepts and make new, unexpected connections.

Fun! Creativity starts with possibility!

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**EXPAND +  
CONTRACT HABITS**

Expand, expand,  
expand. Gather and  
consider all the  
options, good and bad.

No pressure,  
just dream.

Then, whittle it down  
through contraction.

What makes the  
most sense for  
this project?

What's going to be  
most effective?

## 6 Ask Questions Early and Often

One of the best ways to ensure effective creativity is to get crystal clear on the goal of a project. And the best way to get clarity is to ask questions, early and often.

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### **BENEFITS**

Avoids you doing great work in the wrong direction.

Nothing feels worse than finding out you're scrapping all you've done because you weren't clear on the project goals.

Saves you time, energy, and stress.

Maybe this project doesn't need all your creative energy: it might be a very simple task.

## CLARIFYING QUESTIONS HABITS

Ask great questions along every step of the process to ensure you understand the goal.

Goals can shift, so keep asking questions.

Develop a habit of asking a clarifying question when you first receive a request or task.

What do I need to know to finish this task?

How much time will it take?

Do I have everything I need?

This one's huge. If you ask for files the day before it's due, they know you're just starting now. 😞

Questions also are the best first reaction to any problem or frustration.

If someone is frustrated, lead with questions.

Questions let the other person know you value them and want to hear what they have to say.

It creates a pause between the situation and your reaction, so you are able to clarify the situation and your own mind before you respond.

Questions are a form of listening. A form of empathy. And, used well, a fantastic foundation for communication.

BONUS!

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## 7 Surround Yourself with Other Creatives

Nature is curiously consistent. In biology, as things get bigger, they also slow down. The bigger the organism, the slower its heartbeat. In fact, the rule is so consistent it can be calculated mathematically as “negative quarter-power scaling,” and researchers have found the same pattern repeated through all kinds of biological structures, from colonies of bacteria to human cities.

However, there are some data points that flip the trend, and actually accelerate as groups grow: innovation and creativity. A city 50 times bigger is statistically 130 times more innovative. [\(Source\)](#)





# Creativity thrives in healthy community.

All the other six habits are most effective within the context of healthy community in which shared values guide daily practices and bolster healthy habits.

We want to share the ArtSpeak culture of healthy and effective creativity with you.

## **THE ARTSPEAK CREATIVE COMMUNITY**

is a community of mission-minded creatives helping fellow creatives restore their health and rediscover their creative purpose.

Click below to get one free month of ArtSpeak Creative Community membership.

[Join the Community!](#)