



The Deliberate Creative Podcast with Amy Climer

Transcript for Episode #080: How to Decrease Anxiety Related to Creativity

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Amy Climer: Welcome to The Deliberate Creative Podcast Episode 80. Today's episode is about How to Decrease Anxiety Related to Creativity. I want to share with you all something really cool. As of today, The Deliberate Creative Podcast has had over 57,000 downloads! Wow! You all, I am so excited about that. That is just so cool.

Certainly, when I started this podcast, I had no idea what would happen and I did not really think about getting into five figures, much less, 57,000 downloads. But here is the cool thing about that. That tells me that there are a lot of people on this planet who care about creativity. And they know that creativity is important and they want to learn more about how to foster that creativity and innovation within themselves and within their team.

The thing with creativity is that it has this incredible ability to impact just about everything that we do. Creativity impacts the bottom line of your organization. Organizations that foster creativity make more money and they are more effective in the work they do. Even if you are a nonprofit where money is not your top concern, although you still have to have a balanced budget and make some money, creativity will help you enhance your mission and meet your mission more fully than it would be if you ignored it.

Creativity is all about, really, our ability to solve problems. And so the more creative we can be, the more innovative we can be, the better we will solve problems. We will solve them, perhaps, in different ways, in more unique ways, in ways that you cannot even imagine. That is what creativity is all about. It impacts our happiness and our productivity. It makes a big impact on the work that we do.

The cool thing about knowing that a lot of people are listening to this podcast is that a lot of people care about creativity, and that is really what this episode is about today. Today is about decreasing anxiety related to creativity. A big part of that is some of the causes for anxiety is

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that we care a lot, but also some of the solutions for anxiety is that we care about what we are doing. I will get into that.

What is Anxiety? [02:47]

First, let me say, what do I mean by anxiety? In this case, I am talking about that nervousness that we feel. It might be that we are blocked because we are too anxious, we do not actually do anything, we do not actually come up with ideas or we do not act on those ideas. Anxiety might show up as a form of procrastination, we put it off. I am not talking about clinical anxiety. That is not something that I am an expert in or could speak to in an intelligent way. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking more about that everyday anxiety that we get that can really prevent us from making forward progress.

Three Common Factors Which Cause Anxiety Related to Creativity

1. When You Have to Share an Idea With Someone Else [03:28]

What I have noticed is that anxiety or nervousness, that anxiousness, occurs in a few different ways, a few different times, related to creativity. It might show up when you have an idea that you want to share with someone else and you are not sure how they are going to receive that idea. Say, for instance, you want to share something with your boss, an idea that you would like to try to implement within the organization, and you are not sure if he or she will be open to that idea or if they will even listen or if they would want to implement it. And so there is a bit of nervousness around that.

2. When You Connect Your Idea to Your Own Identity [04:02]

There might be some anxiety when you share an idea and you see it get shut down. Sometimes that comes from because we connect that idea to our own identity. And so when that idea gets shut down, we feel like we are getting shut down. One of the solutions of that is really to separate that like hey, this is just an idea. My entire identity is not wrapped up in this idea. Actually, my dad is a great example of that, of someone who is very good at separating his own identity from his ideas.



My dad, his name is Ron Climer. You can check him out. He has got a bunch of [YouTube](#) videos out there. If you are into real estate at all, especially, in the state of North Carolina, I highly recommend those videos. He is a real estate instructor. But my dad is also an ideator. He always has ideas for just about any situation. If you ever meet him, chances are within the first 15 minutes of talking with him, he will give you an idea. But one of the things he is really good at is that if you are like, “No, I’m not doing that dad,” he is like, “Okay, well, whatever,” and he goes on to the next idea and he does not take it personally. If you can get to that place, that is really good because it means you will keep that creativity going without letting it affect your self-esteem or your self-confidence or who you are.

3. When You Connect the Result of the Idea to Your Own Identity [05:21]

I think another time that anxiety emerges is when you think of yourself as a failure just because an idea failed. In this case, I am talking about an idea that you already implemented and it did not go well. The key there is to, again, separate yourself from that actual idea or that creative project.

For me, an example of this is a number of years ago -- probably almost ten years ago now -- I spent a year and a half working as a full time artist. I quit my job. I had a fulltime job at the University of Wisconsin, and I gave notice and I decided I wanted to be a full time artist. I had been developing my art, so it was not completely out of the blue. Something I had been working towards. And for a year and a half I worked so hard. It was pretty typical for me to do 80-hour weeks.

After a year and a half, it just was not working and so I had to stop that and I had to sort of essentially go back to a “real job,” if you will. I had to go back to get an employer. I actually went back to the University of Wisconsin and I got a new job there. That was fine. It got me out of that situation of struggling incredibly financially. You could say that that experiment of being a fulltime artist was a failure, and I could think of myself as a failure or I could look at it as like I learned a ton, which I absolutely did. I learned so much that is helping me now run my consulting practice. Because being an artist is really about being an entrepreneur in a lot of ways and so I learned a lot in that regard.

I made a lot of mistakes and I grew a lot. Even though it was really difficult, I am so glad that I did it. It was a really cool experience and a cool experiment. If you can separate yourself from

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the experiment and realize this did not work in that way, what are some things I might do differently? I does not mean that you failed, it just means that that experiment failed.

Those are three times when I feel like anxiety is likely to emerge. There may be other times for you, but just to summarize that:

1. When you have to share an idea with someone else.
2. When you connect your idea to your own identity.
3. When you connect the result of the idea to your own identity.

Three Tips to Help Manage and Ease Anxiety Related to Creativity [07:55]

Here are three tips on how you can help manage and ease that anxiety. I first should say that having anxiety is not necessarily a bad thing. Being nervous about presenting an idea, or even procrastinating, is not necessarily a bad thing. I think the key is to identify what is happening and then reacting accordingly. Figuring out am I procrastinating for a reason? Do I need to incubate more, or is this just me avoiding doing something that I am nervous about doing? I think identifying it is the key first. I do not know that the end result is necessarily to get rid of all anxiety or nervousness. I do not know if that is realistic, but instead, just to be able to move through it and do whatever it is you want to do.

Here are three tips.

1. Know Your Purpose [08:45]

The first one is to understand why you are doing what you are doing. I find it really helpful to think about who am I serving? I am going to use an example of being a keynote speaker. I do a lot of keynote speaking and I talk about deliberate creativity and innovation on demand in my speeches. I talk to all sorts of organizations from YMCA staff to government executives to CEOs. It is a wide range of different types of people that I speak with and for.

That moment when I am about to get up on stage definitely makes me nervous at times and the way that I move past that is I always think about who am I serving. What is the purpose here? It is not about me. If I can stop thinking about myself and start thinking about the other people in



the room and why I am doing what I am doing, it is like I just feel so much more relaxed and I am more excited and I connect better with the people that I am working with. If you can get away from worrying about yourself and start thinking about the other people that you are serving, I have found that helps me be more creative and it helps me decrease that anxiety that I might feel.

If I go back to why am I doing what I am doing, in my case, I am trying to help people be more creative, but in your case it might be that you are helping the organization you work for make more money or better serve its mission or provide more amazing service to your customers. If that is your end goal, always start there. Knowing your purpose and why you are doing what you are doing and who you are serving, to me, that is an incredible driver and it helps me release some of that anxiety and nervousness.

2. Silence That Inner Critic [10:41]

The second thing is as best as you can, silence that inner critic. That inner critic is that little monster or person, however you imagine your inner critic, it is the one that is saying, “No, you are stupid. This is dumb. Don’t share that. It’s going to get rejected,” that is your inner critic. If you do not know your inner critic, that is probably because it is telling you that you do not have an inner critic. That is your inner critic.

Recognizing that inner critic and then just say, “Thank you, but no, thank you. I am not interested in your comments right now,” and talk back to that inner critic. Give it a name. Make a drawing of it, personify it and say, “No, thank you. I’m not interested.” Figuring out how do you silence that inner critic? Recognizing it is there and then start talking to it. I find that that is kind of a fun way to play with that anxiety and that nervousness that that inner critic is pushing on me.

3. Try to Identify That Resistance That You are Feeling [11:42]

The third thing is even though you feel that anxiety is do it anyway. Perhaps this is oversimplified, maybe seems obvious in a way, but one of the things that I love is this idea of resistance is love. This comes from Steven Pressfield’s book [The War of Art](#), which I highly recommend. It is a short book. He understands this anxiety, the inner critic, he understands the resistance we have to being creative. Even though like on one side we have this drive, like we

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are pushing on the gas pedal of our creativity and at the same, we are pushing on the brake. And he gets that. I highly recommend reading [The War of Art](#).

He talks about this idea that resistance is love and when we resist something, it often is because we really care about it. We really love it. For me, this came up a lot when I was writing my dissertation about a year ago. The writing process, it is hard. If you have written a book or if you have written a dissertation or something long like that, you know it is a ton of work. It is so much easier to do just about anything else. Doing my taxes was easier than writing the dissertation. And so my tendency was to do that easier thing and to resist doing this thing that really I loved. I cared so much about it and I wanted it to be so good that I resisted doing it. That is what he means by resistance is love.

If you are resisting moving forward with your being creative, think about what is happening there. Is this because you care so much and you are worried about failing or you are worried about not doing a good job and so you avoid it all together? For me, again, just recognizing that and getting it and being like, "All right, that's what's going on, I have to keep going." Because whatever you do, I promise you, it will not be perfect. And the more you try to make it perfect, the more likely it will be worse, really, I think.

I always appreciate when I feel like people are being genuine, this is who they are, they are giving me what they have. And it can be excellent, but there is a difference between excellence and perfection. Personally, I care much more about excellence than I do perfection. To me, perfection is fake whereas excellence is real. That is what I am striving for. I am not suggesting by saying do not be perfect, that you should be sloppy or not do a good job, but I am saying if you are striving for it to be perfect, you will always, always fail. Do not worry about being perfect. Just strive for good, good enough, excellent.

Those are three tips and I am going to add a fourth, little bonus tip, if you will.

4. Change the Approach of How You Share Your Idea [14:28]

This is specific if you are sharing an idea with someone else and you are nervous about how they might receive it or if they are going to like it or what they are going to say, maybe think about how you are presenting the idea and, perhaps, experiment with presenting it in a different way. Quick story about that, one of my own experiences that I had is that I once had this supervisor



who we worked really well together, we got along, he was great, but every time I brought up an idea to him, he said no. I could not quite understand it because a lot of the ideas were just pretty simple. They were not really big risks.

Finally, I decided to change my approach and I put the idea in writing. Because, usually, I would be like, “Hey, what do you think of this?” And I would just kind of shoot from the hip like throwing up this idea. I then decided I am going to put a little time into this idea. I wrote up just a short one page document of here is the idea, here is what it would take, here is how much it would cost and I sent it to him via email and I said, “Hey, here is something I’ve been thinking about. Take your time and when you get a chance, get back to me. I’d love to hear your thoughts.”

He came back the next day and he said, “Hey, I got your email and I read about your idea and I think it’s great. We should do it.” I was like, “What?” Because the way of presenting it to him in writing, that worked better for him. He was able to see it, he was able to think about it, he did not have to react on the fly. When he had to react in the moment quickly, his tendency was to say no. All I had to do was change my approach and how I presented the idea.

If you have hit some roadblocks and you are not able to get your idea across or you have been told “no” many times, especially if it is by the same person, try something else. Try a new approach. Do not keep doing what you have always done, mix it up a little bit. Get creative about it.

Those are the four tips.

1. Know the purpose; why you are doing what you are doing. Who are you serving?
2. Silence that inner critic. Just tell it to be quiet.
3. Try to identify that resistance that you are feeling. What is that about? Is that coming from a place of love, that you love, you care so much about what you are doing? Do it anyway. Recognize that resistance can help.
4. Perhaps, change the approach of how you share your idea, if that is where you’re having some difficulties and having more anxiety.



The last thing I want to say is that one of the reasons that there is some anxiety around being creative is that creativity is about doing something brand new, or at least, brand new for you and in your situation, your organization. Because it is brand new, there is always a risk it might not work. It might fail. That is the essence of creativity. That unknown is part of what causes that anxiety. We do not really know how things are going to work out.

My experience is that a lot of times, any anxiety or nervousness I have is completely unfounded. I make this up, I blow this up into something much more than it should be, and then when I actually move forward with it, it is completely fine. Everything is great. Or maybe I do fail, but it is not a failure in that big F word. It tends to be a place where I can learn from and I think of it as an experiment.

Again, like the time that I tried to be a professional artist for a year and a half. Even though that is sort of a big deal to do that for a year and a half, I did not feel like it was this huge failure. I can now say I was a professional artist. That is kind of cool. I learned so much from it and I do not think I would be as successful in my consulting practice now if I had not had that previous experience. Know that creativity is about taking risks and decreasing that anxiety is about recognizing what is happening and moving forward, anyway.

I hope these tips give you some ideas on how you can help decrease that anxiety and move into being more creative and implementing your creative ideas. We need you to be more creative. We need your input. Go for it!

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Thank you so much. If there is anything I can do for you or your organization to help you be more creative, please send me an email and reach out. I would love to talk to you. Have a wonderful creative week. Talk to you next time. Bye.