



WHAT ARE YOU WRITING?



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YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO REST



You Are Enough

What's Your Purpose?

- Journaling
- A creative project
- An academic project



Gratitude Journals



- Write down things you're grateful for
 - Writing occasionally, not daily
 - Motivation matters
 - Go for depth over breadth
 - Focus on people rather than things
 - Stimulate gratitude by reflecting on what your life would be like without
 - Unexpected or surprising events elicit stronger levels of gratitude

Health Benefits of Writing About Stress

- In April 1999 *The Journal of the American Medical Association* published a study that linked writing about stressful life experiences to improved health.
- Patients with asthma or rheumatoid arthritis wrote about their most stressful life event in 20-minute sittings for three continuous days.
- When tested four months later, **47.1 percent reported a reduction in disease symptoms.**
- As reported in *The Chicago Tribune*, Joshua M. Smyth, the study's co-author cautioned, **"It actually has little to do with raw catharsis, which, I think, is what most people assume."**
- The health benefits were actually a result of **cognitive restructuring**—learning to think about problems in a new way—along with **changing levels of stress and anxiety.**
- [FROM https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/writing-memoir-and-writing-therapy](https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/writing-memoir-and-writing-therapy)

Journaling for the Historical Record

Paul Theroux Recalls a Fear-Filled Lockdown

In 1966, the writer was in Uganda at a time of curfew and violence. It shaped his thinking about travel writing's imperative to bear witness.



Smoke rising in Uganda during the 1966 upheaval. Priya Ramratha/Getty

“In times of crisis we should all be diarists and documentarians.”

I Spent a Year in Space, and I Have Tips on Isolation to Share

Take it from someone who couldn't: Go outside.

By Scott Kelly
Mr. Kelly is a retired NASA astronaut who spent nearly a year on the International Space Station.

March 21, 2020



Scott Kelly inside a Soyuz simulator at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia, in preparation for travel to the International Space Station. Bill Ingalls/NASA

“...writing about your days will help put your experiences in perspective and let you look back later on what this unique time in history has meant.”

Joan Didion, “On Keeping a Notebook”

- “So the point of keeping a notebook has never been, nor is it now, to have an accurate factual record of what I have been doing or thinking.”
- “Remember what it was to be me: that is always the point.”
- “I think we are well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not.”
- DOING VS. BEING



Journaling or Memoir?

NARRATION & DESCRIPTION

- Tell a story; describe events
- Narrator's memory and perspective is central
- Invoke sensory detail

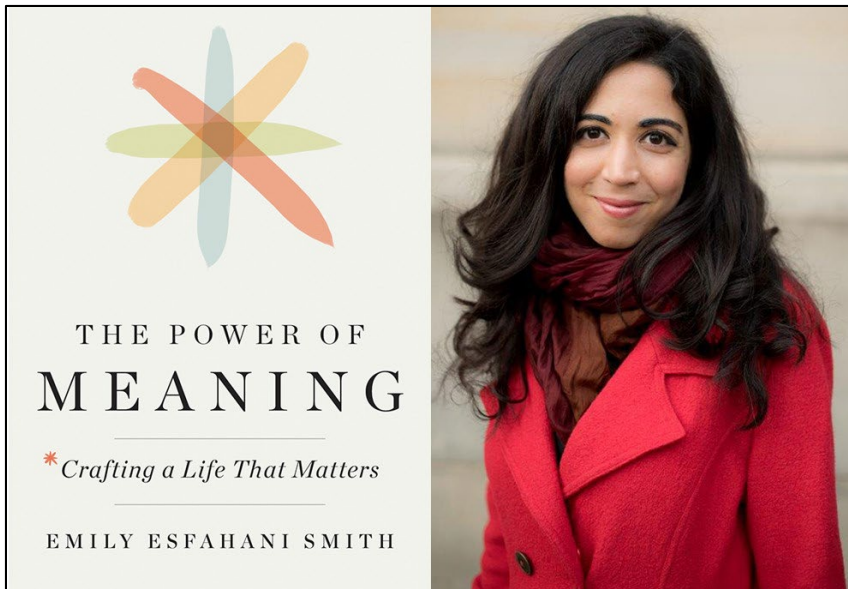
REFLECTION

- Narrator tries to make sense of the experience
- Can take years to gain perspective



What is Reflection?

Emily Esfahani Smith's "FOUR Pillars" of Meaning



- Belonging
- Purpose
- Transcendence
- Storytelling

Creating “Meaning” From Your Stories (Begin 6:30-8:45)



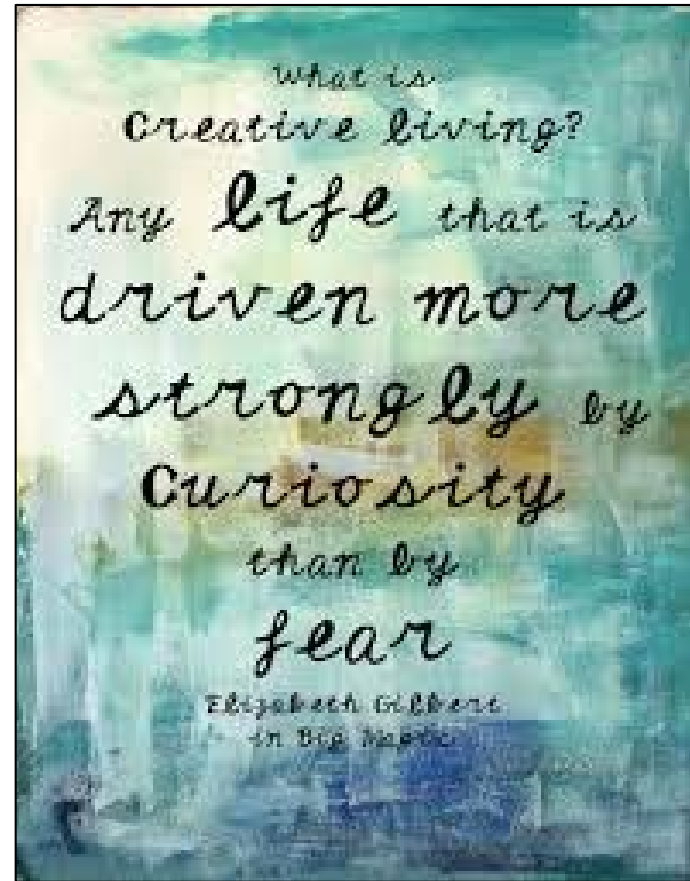
TYPES OF WRITER'S BLOCK

- Feeling Empty
- FEAR: Perfectionism/
Imposter syndrome/
Inner Critic
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Procrastination

Solutions
Ahead!



BLOCK: Feeling Empty



IDEA FOR GENERATING: Read!



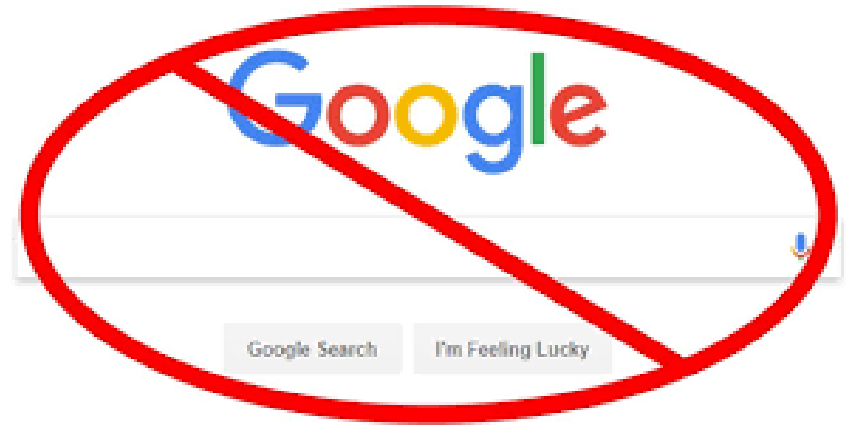
GRANT SNIDER



IDEA FOR GENERATING: Consult an Expert

“When you do actually know a bit about something, it is such a pleasure to be asked a lot of questions about it” (145-6).

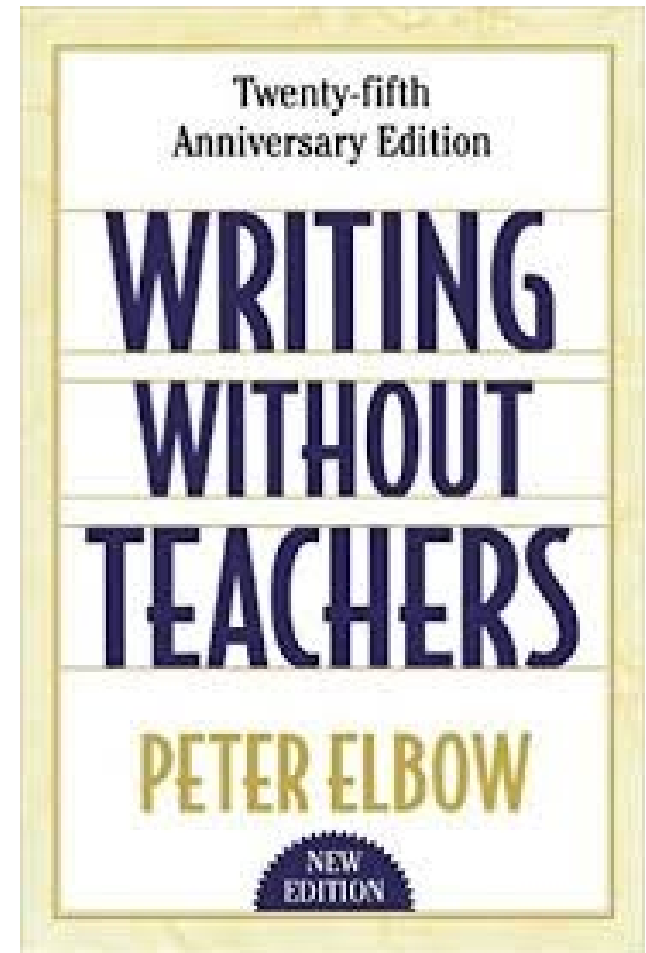
– Anne Lamott, “Calling Around,” *Bird by Bird*





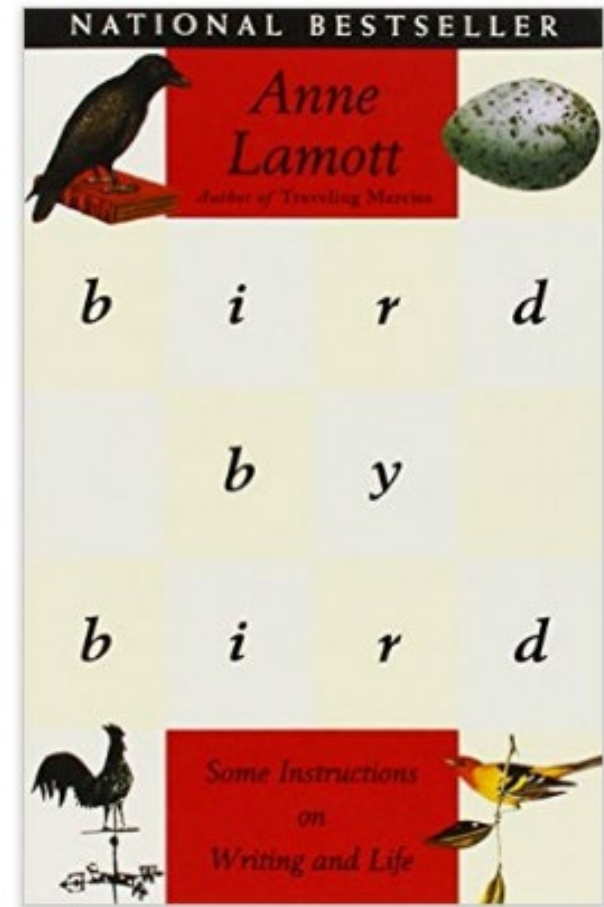
IDEA FOR GENERATING: “Freewriting”

- Write for at least 10 minutes
- Don’t stop to read or “correct”
- Separates generating from editing
- Structured or unstructured
- Look for “center of gravity” sentence



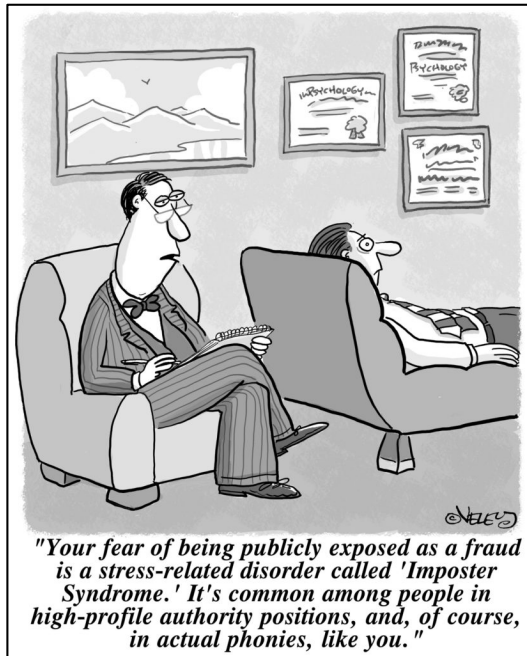
BLOCK: PEFECTIONISM

- “Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life, and it is the main obstacle between you and a **shitty first draft**. I think perfectionism is based on the obsessive belief that if you run carefully enough, hitting each stepping-stone just right, you won't have to die. The truth is that you will die anyway....”

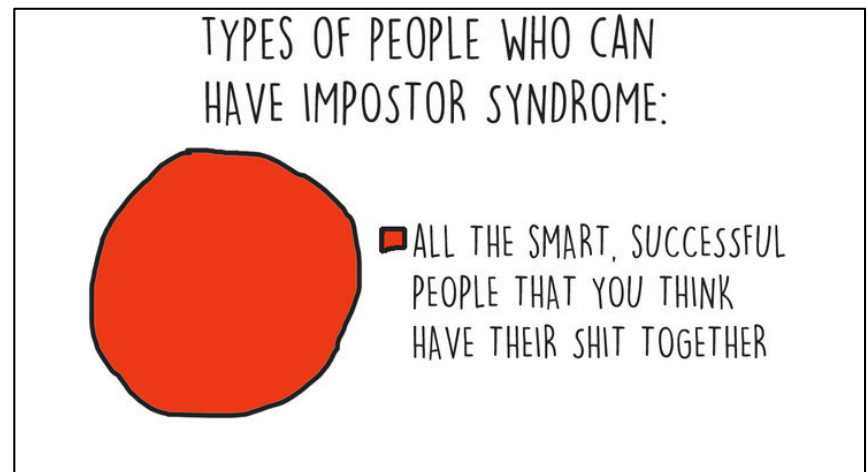


BLOCK: IMPOSTER SYNDROME

(our fear)



(reality)



QUESTION: How can we shift our mindset?



REJECT PERFECTIONISM



maximizers

exhaustively seeks the best

compare decisions with others

expend more time and energy

unhappier with outcomes



satisficers

accept good enough

don't obsess over other options

can move on after deciding

happier with outcomes

From Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice*

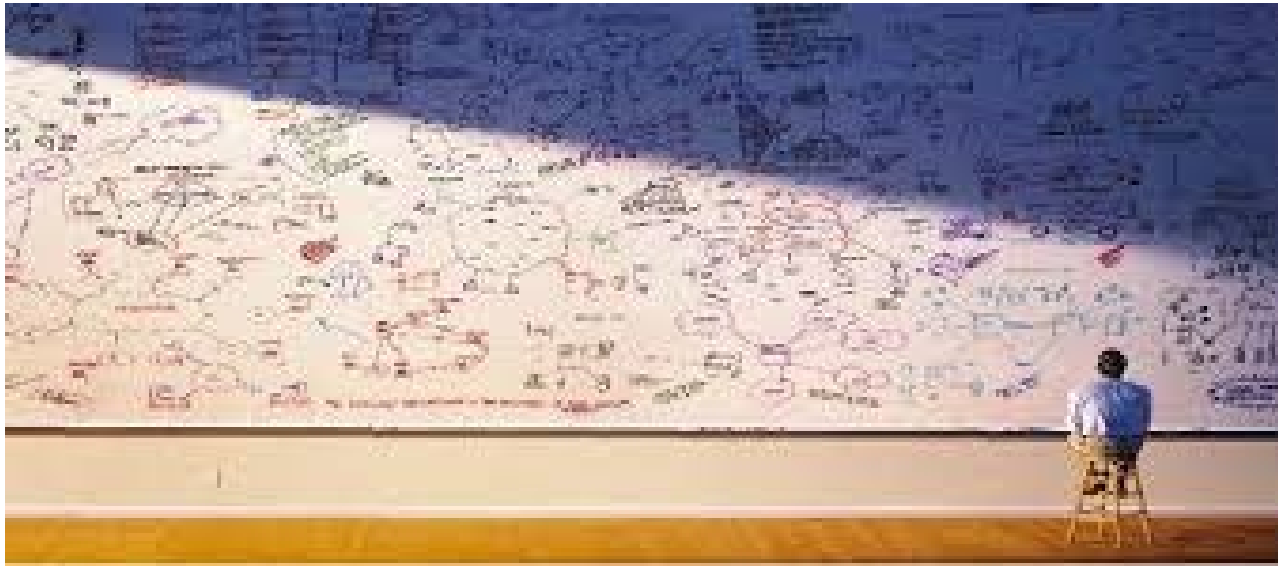
REJECT PERFECTIONISM: “Write Bad”



- **“When I tell students to write badly I am essentially relieving them of the burden of writing well. This causes them to relax, to stop judging their sentences, to surrender to the improvisatory storytelling mode that produces the most natural and effective prose.”**

~Steve Almond

BLOCK: Feeling Overwhelmed



IDEAS FOR GENERATING: Anne Lamott's "Short Assignments"

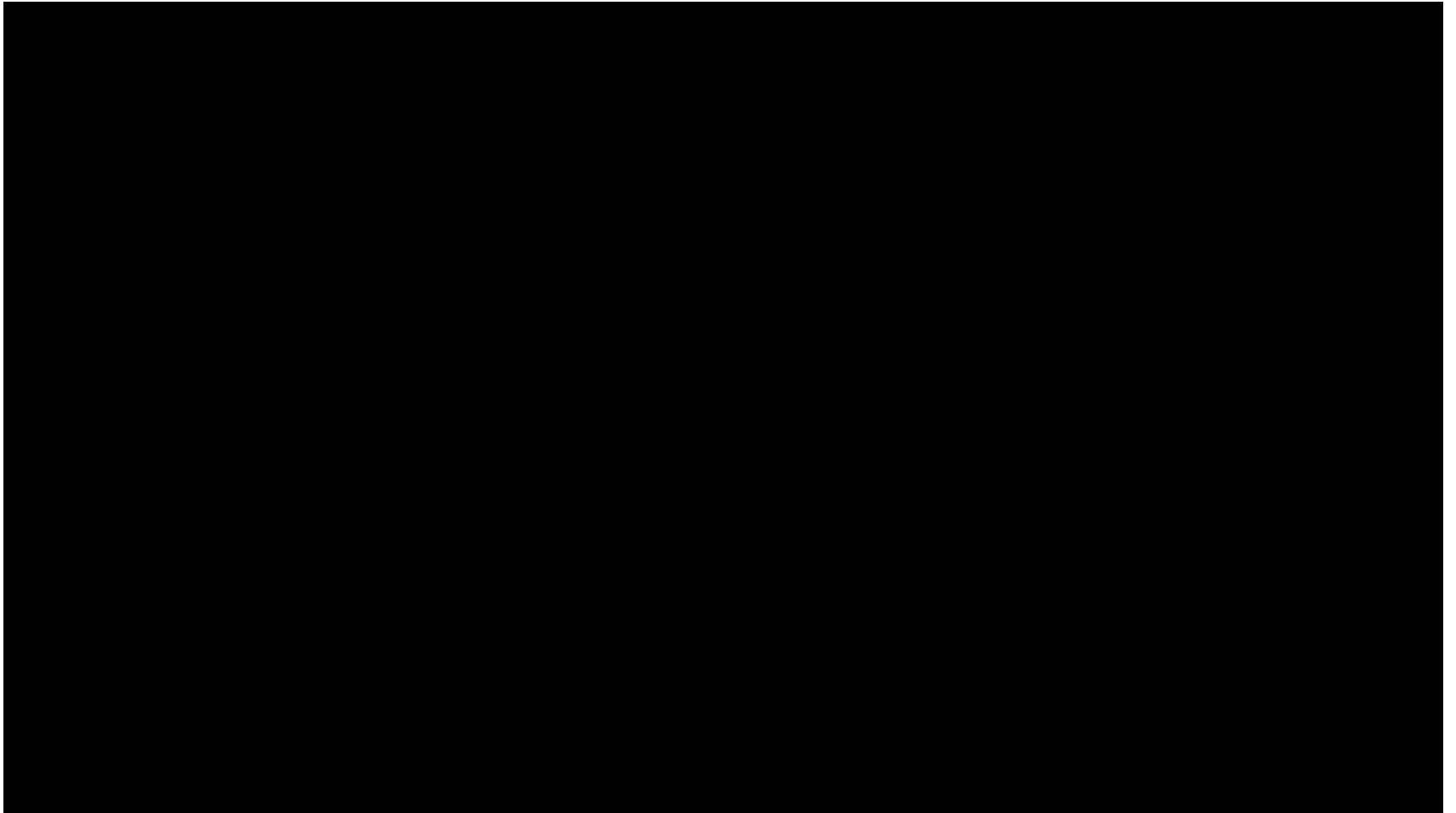


Writing a novel is like
driving a car at night.
You can only see as far
as your headlights,
but you can make
the whole trip that way.

E.L. Doctorow



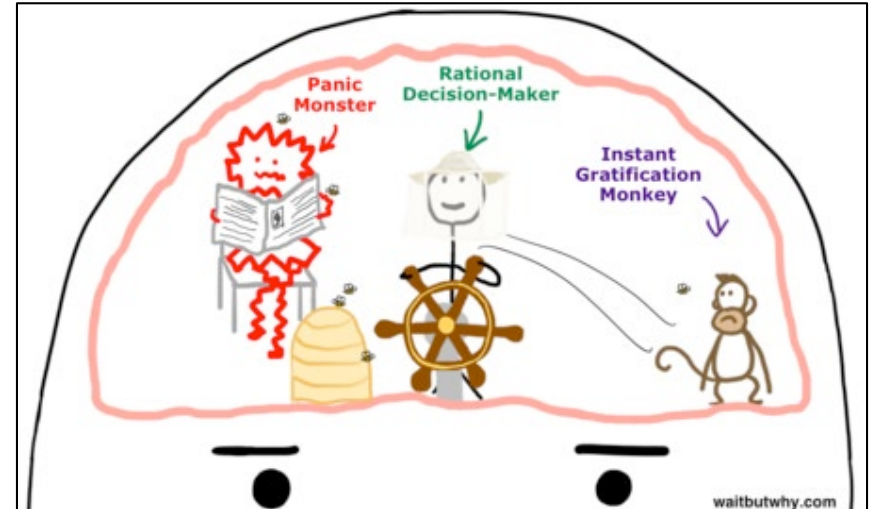
Motivational Soundtrack: “Do the Next Right Thing” from FROZEN 2



Why You Procrastinate (It Has Nothing to Do With Self-Control)

If procrastination isn't about laziness, then what is it about?

- “Procrastination is an emotion regulation problem, not a time management problem.”
- “...the momentary relief we feel when procrastinating is actually what makes the cycle especially vicious. In the immediate present, putting off a task provides relief — ‘you’ve been rewarded for procrastinating,’ Dr. Sirois said....
- This is precisely why procrastination tends not to be a one-off behavior, but a cycle, one that easily becomes a chronic habit.”



^^Tim Urban, [“Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator”](#)

←Charlotte Leiberman, [“Why You Procrastinate \(It Has Nothing to Do With Self-Control\)”](#)

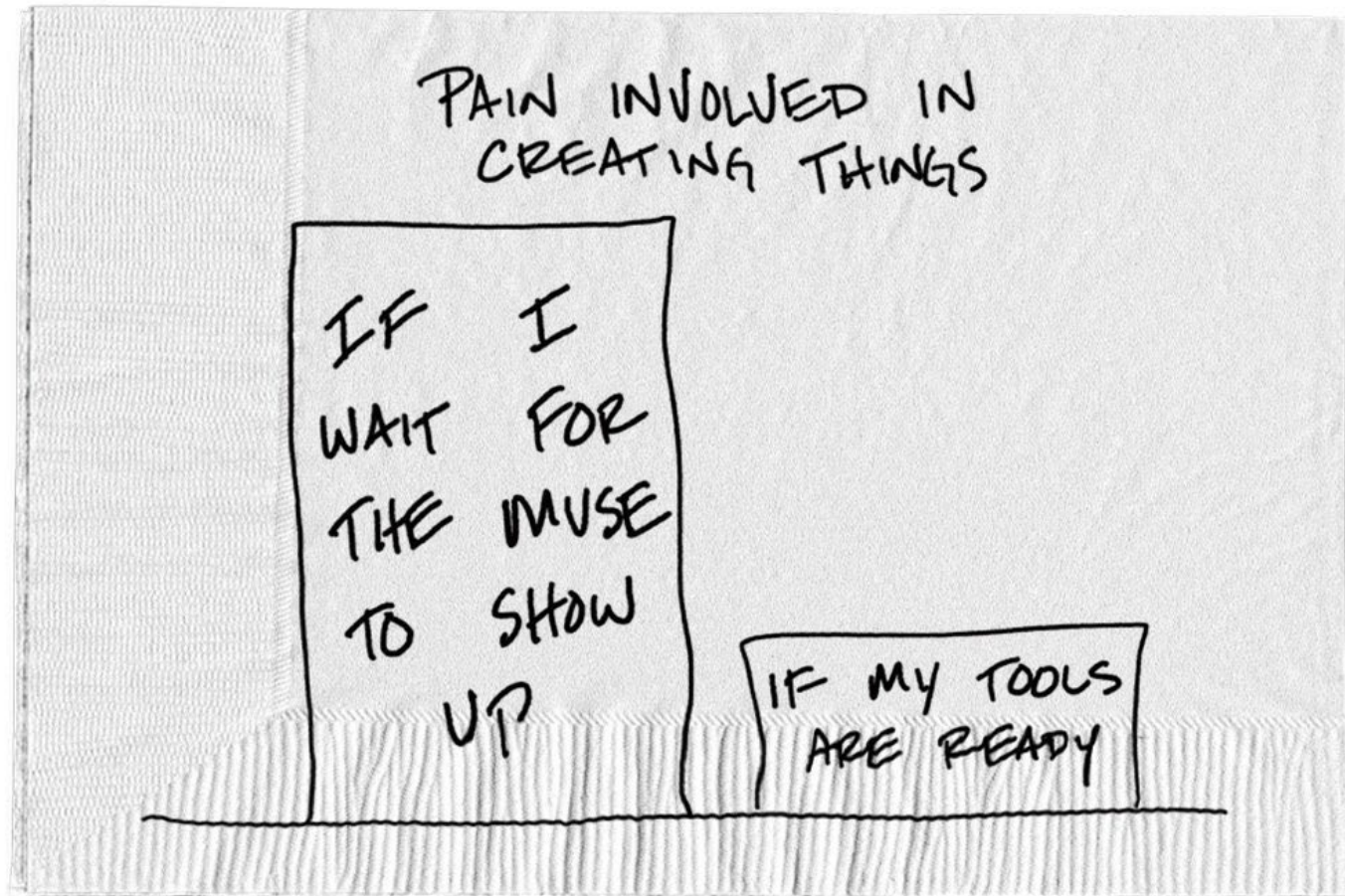


IDEAS FOR ROUTINE: Set the Mood

- Minimize decisions by creating routine
- “A Room of One’s Own”
- Music
- Time of Day & Brain Power



IDEAS FOR ROUTINE: SKETCH GUY, “Create Your Space...”



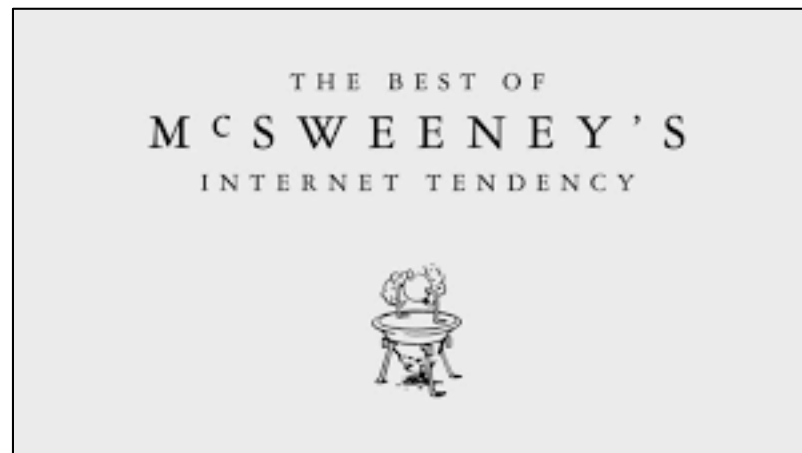
IDEAS FOR ROUTINE: Take Breaks



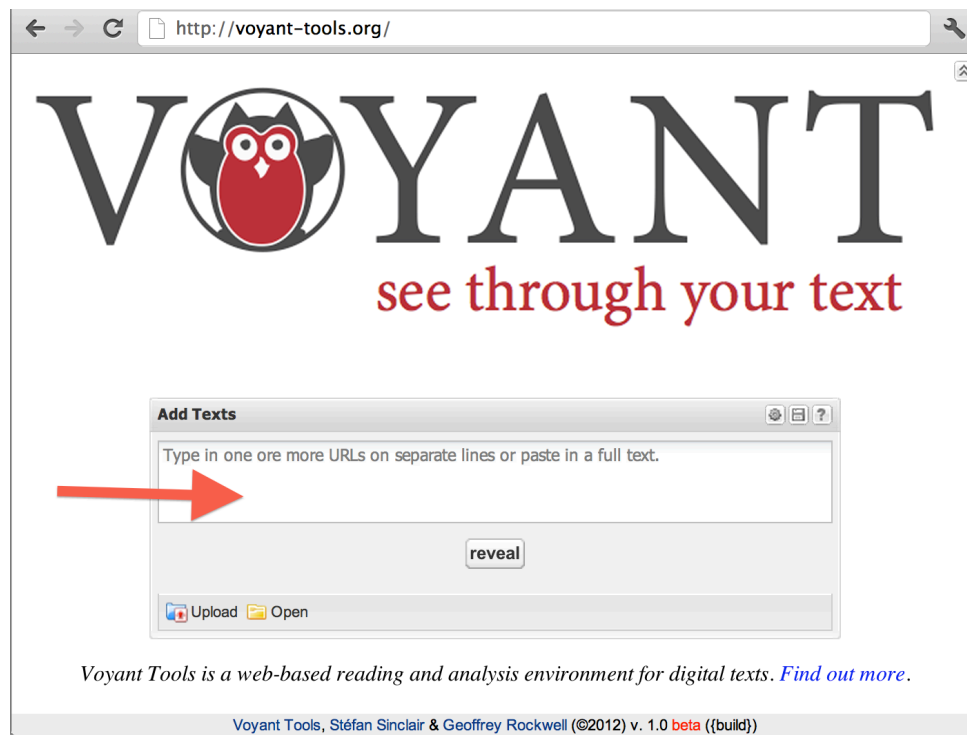
IDEAS FOR ROUTINE: Be Flexible!

“I will not write unless I’m swaddled in furs and am roosted to perfection upon the couch. Perhaps I could write upon the divan, but never a table. And there must be furs.

I will not write unless I am oriented perpendicularly to a large window. I’m not picky, but it must be quite large, and there must be sheets of cold rain pouring down outside. If the rain stops, so do I. I will not write without a bracing rain.”



IDEAS FOR REVISION: Distance Reading



IDEAS FOR REVISION: Play with Structure

- Outline the writing
- Outline on notecards and shuffle/reverse order
- Encyclopedia entries

LEAVING A TIP

When leaving a tip at the counter, I often do so with exaggerated gestures, or take a bit longer than necessary to place the dollar in the dish, just to make sure they know what a nice and generous customer I am.



BOWLING

It would be difficult to convince me that leaning has no effect whatsoever on the outcome of my bowling.



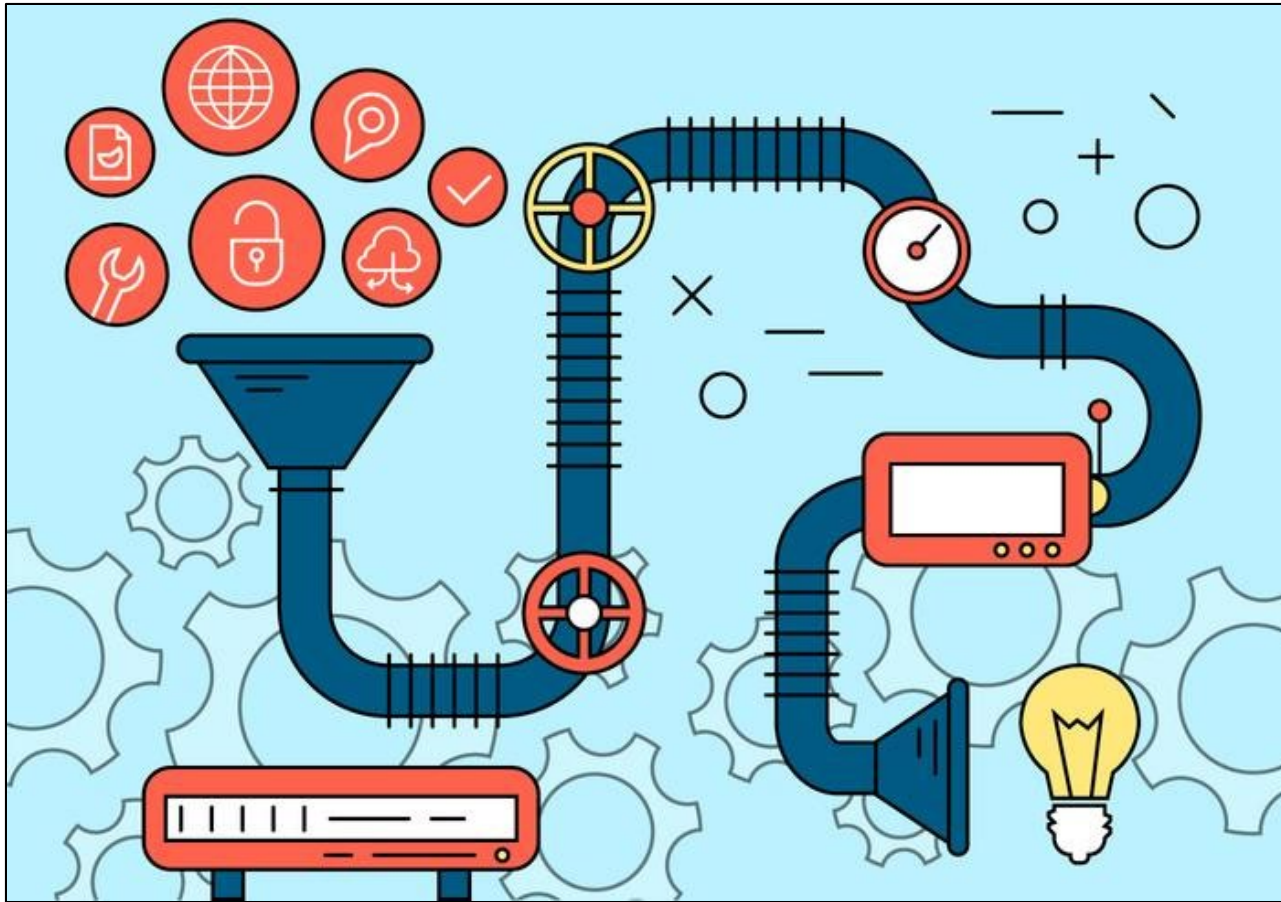
Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life

*I have not survived against all odds.
I have not lived to tell.
I have not witnessed the extraordinary.
This is my story.*

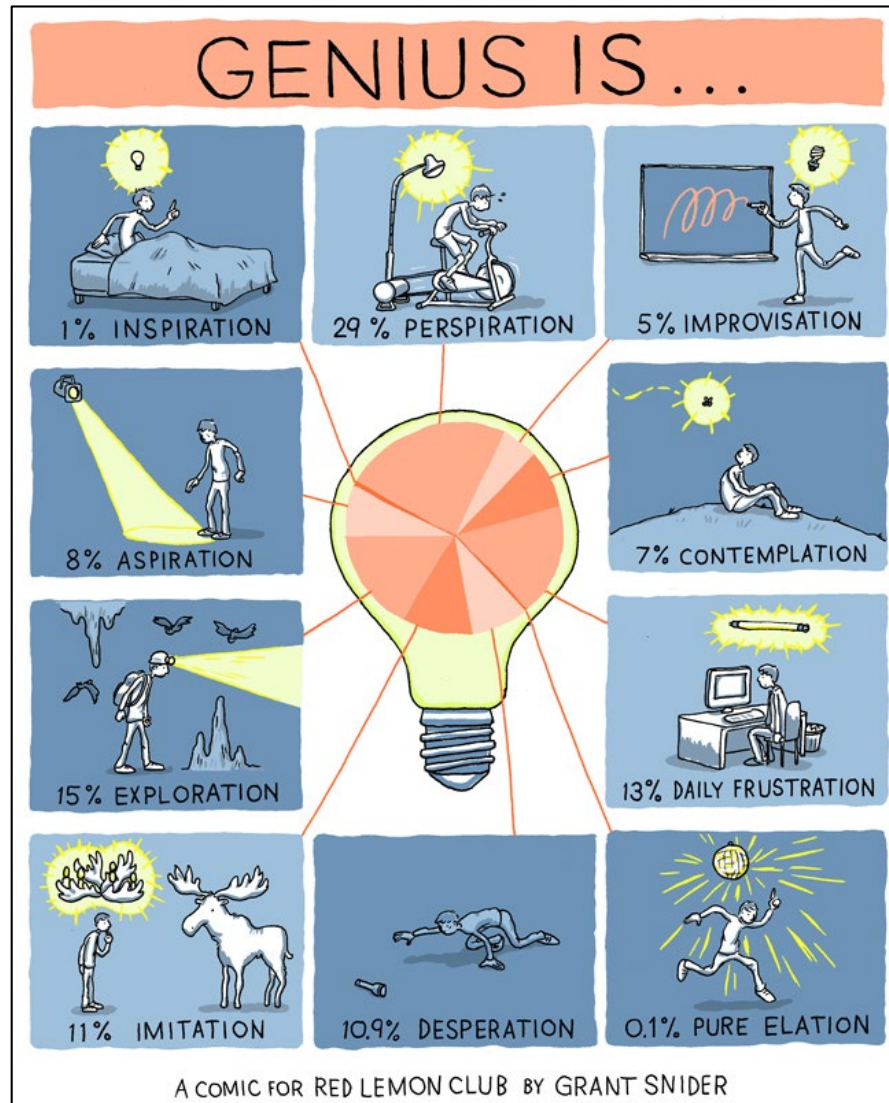


AMY KROUSE ROSENTHAL

Follow a PROCESS



The Process is the Reward

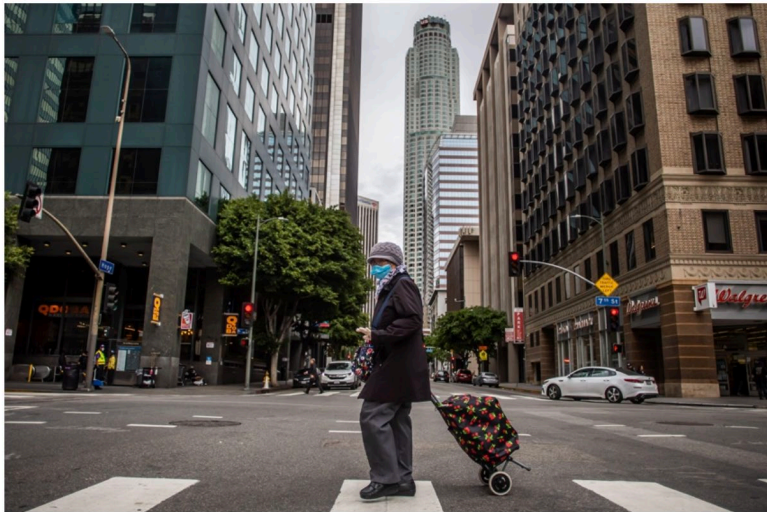


Prepare to be Forever Changed

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Why You Should Ignore All That Coronavirus-Inspired Productivity Pressure

By Aisha S. Ahmad | MARCH 27, 2020



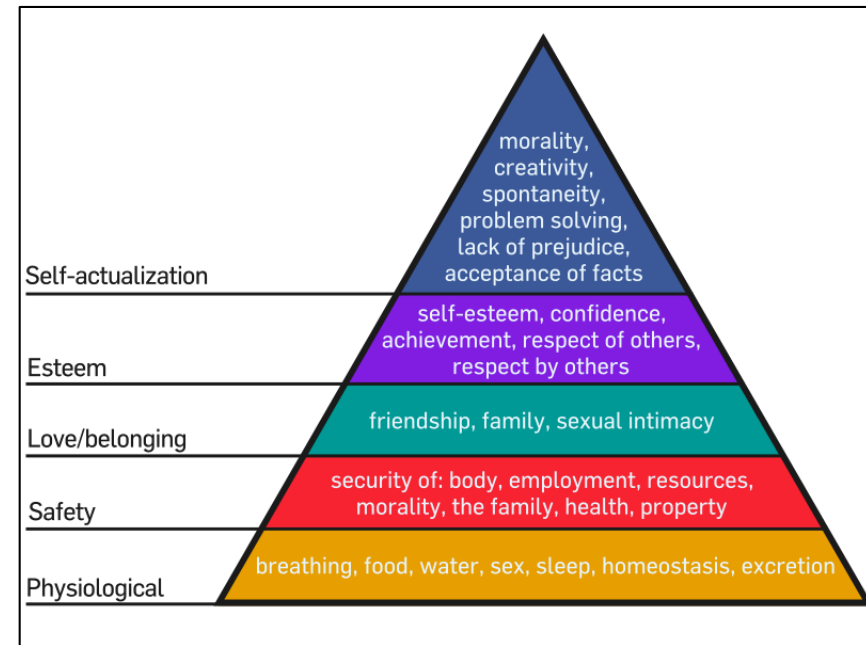
Apu Gomes, AFP, Getty Images

“...it is foolish to dive into a frenzy of activity or obsess about your scholarly productivity right now. That is denial and delusion. The emotionally and spiritually sane response is to prepare to be forever changed.”

Stage No. 1: Security

“At this stage, I would focus on food, family, friends, and maybe fitness.”

“If you do not put this psychological infrastructure in place, the challenge of necessary physical-distancing measures will be crushing. Build a sustainable and safe social system now.”



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Stage No. 2: Mental Shift

“Now more than ever, we must abandon the performative and embrace the authentic. Our essential mental shifts require humility and patience. Focus on real internal change. These human transformations will be honest, raw, ugly, hopeful, frustrated, beautiful, and divine. And they will be slower than keener academics are used to. Be slow. Let this distract you. Let it change how you think and how you see the world.”

Stage No. 3: Embrace a New Normal

“On the other side of this shift, your wonderful, creative, resilient brain will be waiting for you. When your foundations are strong, build a weekly schedule that prioritizes the security of your home team, and then carve out time blocks for different categories of your work: teaching, administration, and research...

New ideas will emerge that would not have come to mind had you stayed in denial.”



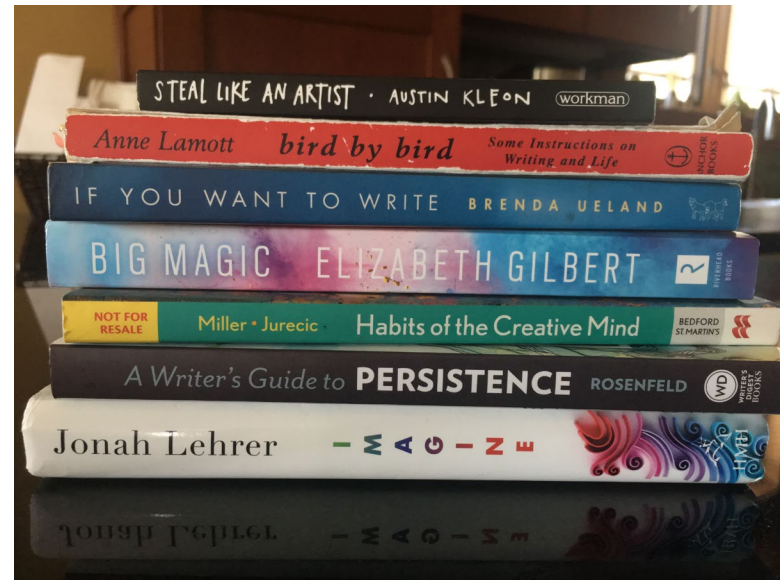
Be like RBG

America to Justice Ginsburg:
Just. Keep. Planking. #Scotus



SUGGESTED READING LIST

- Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*
- Elizabeth Gilbert, *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*
- Grant Snider, *The Shape of Ideas*
- William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*
- Betsy Lerner, *The Forest for the Trees: An Editor's Advice to Writers*
- Jordan Rosenfeld, *The Writer's Guide to Persistence*
- Lynda Barry, *What It Is*
- John McPhee, *Draft No. 4: On the Writing Process*
- Austin Kleon, *Steal Like an Artist*
- Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down to the Bones*
- Danielle Krysa, *Your Inner Critic is a Big Jerk: And Other Truths About Being Creative*



- Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*
- Kaufman and Gregoire, *Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind*
- Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice*
- Jonah Leher, *Imagine: How Creativity Works* (NOTE: book recalled due to fabricated quotations)