

WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?



Bust the 7 most common excuses for not following your dreams.

63 PAGE WORKBOOK

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The best way to use this book is to print it out and scribble all over it.

Underline the bits you like.

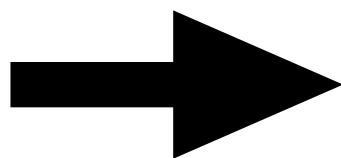
Write "*Is she crazy?!?"*" next to the outrageous bits.

Doodle in the margins.

Make it your book.

I know, I know, your mum told you that it was wrong to write in books. Well, I'm a mum and I'm telling you that this is *your* book and you're allowed to write in it.

I've even included a couple of extra pages at the end for notes so you can go crazy.



Be honest and
ambitious with your
answers - the more
outlandish the
better!

INTRODUCTION

What's your excuse?

I've heard most of them. Usually it's after I've told someone that I'm a maker. Then they say, "I couldn't do what you do because:"

"I'm not creative."

"I don't have time."

"I'm too old."

"I'm too busy."

Then they dismiss out of hand the possibility of doing something different. Of following their dreams and dancing to their own tune.

I want to shake them out shout "Is this it? Is this all you dreamed your life could be?"

And for some people it is. Or at least they've convinced themselves their life is all they ever wanted and this is as good as it gets.

For a lot of people, however, there's a part of their soul that yearns to be doing something different. They hear what I'm telling them and wish, for a fleeting moment, that they could be like me. But then the logical, rational side of their brain pipes up with the excuses that stop them chasing their dreams. This is the side that ultimately wins after thirteen years of being taught at school to follow the rules, take the tests, climb the ladder and succeed. Well, get along really doing the same as everyone else. Because that's what you do.

But when they sold us this dream, they left us out of the equation. All of the individuals who have their own unique dreams, passions, hopes and desires. They left out the fun and the joy. The feeling of dancing on the edge and making it up as we go along. The feeling of being alive to possibility, chance and discovery.

This book is for those people whose yearning voices are getting stronger. And for those of you for whom the excuses are starting to wear thin. If you are looking for some inspiration to get out of your rut, here is the place you need to be.

It's also a response to all the excuses I've heard over the years from people just like me who are doing just what I used to do. Holding down a respectable nine to five job, paying the bills and wondering what happened to all that excitement and promise of their youth. "Is this it?" a quiet voice in their mind asks.

"No, it isn't," I say. "There's so much more, when you can be bold and brave and free."

EXCUSES

Excuses are great tricks we've developed to avoid doing anything that feels scary or dangerous.

"I'm scared of heights" is a very valid and sensible reason for not jumping off a tall building.

"I'm scared of making things" isn't such a great excuse for not making things. It sounds kind of lame. So we come up with all sorts of other excuses to avoid doing the things that threaten our sense of security and take us out of our comfort zone to where the magic happens.

"I'm too busy."

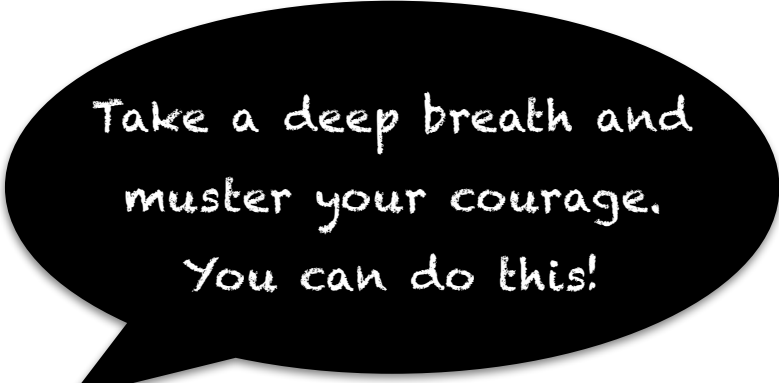
"I'm not creative."

"I don't know how."

Any of these sound familiar to you?

You may not even be aware of the excuses you are using to help yourself feel safe and let's face it, stuck right where you are. As you read through this book, some of the excuses will jump out at you. Pay attention to these ones - they're the ones you know the best because you use them all the time.

Be brave. Busting excuses requires patience, willingness and courage. If you are reading this, you already have the willingness to get cracking.



Take a deep breath and
muster your courage.
You can do this!

Over To You

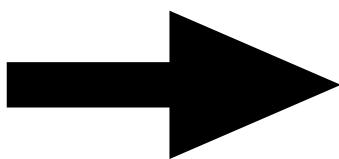
Okay, your turn to have a say now. Write it all down. Don't censor yourself – be brave and honest.

Tell me:

What does your heart long to do (no matter how crazy it may seem to you right now)?

What's stopping you from following your dreams?

(time, money, etc)



Right! Now you know what you're dealing with, let's meet the most common excuses for not doing what you love and blow those suckers out of the water.

I'M
NOT
CREATIVE

EXCUSE # 1

Write Your Own Life

.....

I'm Not Creative

.....

I hate to tell you this, but you are. The excuses you invent *not* to do something are *very* creative.

Humans are creative. We make things. It's what sets us apart from the other animals. Since time began, we have been expressing ourselves with cave paintings, songs and dances. We've made the tools, clothing and furniture we need.

And we've been making excuses.

Stop making excuses.

You are the story you tell yourself.

Tell yourself you're not creative and you won't be.

Tell yourself you *are* creative and you *will* be.

Just for a minute, ignore the fact that you know you're not creative.

Start making something.

And then something else.

And then something different.

It's as simple as one project after the other. Start small. The Mona Lisa wasn't the first painting da Vinci did. Like you, at the very beginning he started out small. He grabbed a pencil and paper and drew lines on a page. You can do that. You know you can.

Exercise #1

Draw a tree here (go ahead, don't be shy):



Look! You created a drawing with your own hand just like the young Leonardo! Now if you want to paint like the older Leonardo, get some paints and canvas and start practising.

Go draw, write, bake and create some more.

Before too long you will be proudly saying, "I made it!" to your incredulous and envious friends.

They'll respond by saying, "I'm not creative."

Lend them this book and say, "Yes you are!"

THE ONLY THING
STANDING BETWEEN YOU
AND YOUR GOAL
IS THE BULLSHIT STORY
YOU KEEP TELLING
YOURSELF

JORDAN BELFORT

I
DON'T
HAVE
TIME

EXCUSE #2

.....
I Don't Have Time
.....

Your time is precious.

It is finite.

One day you will die.

Read that again. Let it sink in.

One Day You Will Die.

Yes, that's right. One day you will die.

Sorry to be a downer but it's true.

We all know that we're going to die but it's the big scary thing that we all hide from and pretend isn't going to happen. At least not to us or anyone nice that we know. We pretend that we have all the time in the world. That we can wait until we retire or the holidays or the weekend to do the things that we love.

The reality? We're all going to die. And there's not nearly enough time to do all the things we want to do. So get started now on doing what you love. This life is the only one you're going to get so make sure it's a damn good one, full of all the things that you love to do. This life isn't your parents or your friends. It's yours.

Stop pfaing around doing stuff that isn't important or doesn't feed your soul. Get someone else to do your tax return and spend time doing the things that make your heart sing.

Exercise #2

Now we've faced that particular elephant in the room, answer these questions as honestly as you can.

Question 1: What do you wish you had the time to do? (eg travel, study, start a business)

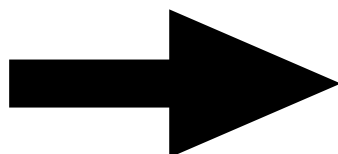
Exercise #2

Question 2: How do you want to spend your time?
(eg read books, play with the kids, go on a date)

Exercise #2

Question3: Now write down how you actually spend your time. (eg television, Facebook) and the daily amount of time for each.

Activity	Time / Day (Minutes)



Be brutally honest.
No-one else will
see your answers.

Exercise #2

.....

Making Time

.....

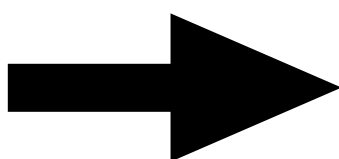
Now we're going to perform a magic trick and pull a rabbit out of a hat. Well actually we're not going to do that, the trick we're gonna do is much, much better. We're going to make time to do the things that make our hearts sing.

Get rid of as many of the unnecessary things as you can from Question 3 so that you make time and space for the things that add meaning to your life. Yep, cross Facebook off the list if it gives you more time to do the things you love.

If you can't bear to be without social media limit yourself to 10 minutes a day. Can't resist temptation? Take social media apps off your phone so you don't accidentally end up getting lost for hours. Like keeping track of your time? Get an app like BreakFree or Off-time that block distracting apps and log your daily phone usage.

Now circle three things from Question 1 and Question 2 that add the most value and meaning to your life. To start, pick the 2 of these and do them each day with the extra time you've just made for yourself.

You need to work. Eat. Sleep. Exercise. The time that is left over is yours. It is a gift. Treat it like gold.



Time to do what you
want is true wealth.
It's the only currency
worth having.

TIME FLIES.
IT'S UP TO YOU
TO BE THE
NAVIGATOR.

ROBERT ORBEN

I'M
TOO
BUSY

EXCUSE #3

Focus On Your Goals

.....

I'm Too Busy

.....

Excuse me, busy doing what?

Watching television, reading the newspaper, social media perhaps?

For five minutes a day turn off the television, put away the magazine, switch off the internet and make something. Five minutes here and there adds up to completed projects. A pair of soft soled leather boots. A watercolour painting. Some shelves for a cupboard. Whatever it is you want to make you can – just start with five minutes at a time. Too often we fall into the trap of thinking we need to spend hours doing something (which puts us off) but the reality is, we only need 5 minutes here and there.

Since having children I have a lot less free time. I look back at my life pre kids and shudder at all that wasted time. Having kids has given me focus. When I have spare time, I use it thoughtfully. I spend it doing things I love.

We've become fixated on being busy. Busy is the new successful. But a lot of the busy work we do is pointless or unnecessary. We do it to ignore the nagging feeling that our lives aren't quite what we hoped.

You know what?

Your time is limited, spend it doing the things you love.

Focus on what is important:

- you and the things you love to do
- family
- friends

The rest of the world can wait. It's always there.

Exercise #3

1. An exercise in seizing the moment

It's easier to be creative when the tools we need are easily accessible.

Get out your knitting, sketchbook or guitar and put them on top of your favourite arm chair.

The next time you sit down to have a cup of coffee, you'll have to move them to sit down.

That will trigger your brain to think "Oh, I should play a couple of bars of that new song I'm learning."

And look - you'll have reclaimed a moment out of your busy day to follow one of your dreams.

2. An exercise to focus your mind

When you want to concentrate on a task, try this simple breathing exercise to focus your mind.

Breathe in for a count of 4.

Hold for a count of 4.

Breathe out for a count of 4.

Pause for a count of 4.

Repeat this exercise 5 times for laser focus!

FOCUS
IS NOTHING MORE
THAN ELIMINATING
DISTRACTIONS

TIM FERRISS

I'M
TOO
TIRED

EXCUSE #4

Spend your spare time wisely

.....

I'm Too Tired

.....

I hear you. There's always so much to do and it's exhausting; the list never seems to end.

It's the payback for the cult of busy. We spend all our time doing in an effort to feel fulfilled and we end up exhausted with no energy or motivation to spare for our passions.

At the end of a full day's work and a long commute home the first thing you want to do is slump on the couch with a bowl of ice cream and the tv remote. It's what we all long to do but when we do it every day it ceases to be comforting or nurturing and instead become an unhealthy addiction to sloth.

I've got two great antidotes to the lure of the couch:

1. Exercise

Most of us spend all day sitting at a desk staring at a computer screen before sitting in a car or on public transport to get home. It's no wonder our energy is low - our bodies haven't had a chance to be physically active.

2. Rest

Rest is what all the great creative minds do. Charles Darwin wrote 19 books and worked an average of 4.5 hours a day. Make sure you get enough rest to recharge your creative batteries. And I don't mean sitting on the couch channel surfing! Do like Darwin and go for long walks. They're a perfect way to boost creativity and give your mind a rest.

Busy and tired have become badges of honour. Let's change that by looking after ourselves and getting rest when we need it.

Exercise #4

1. Exercise

When you feel tired, go for a quick 5-10 minute run.

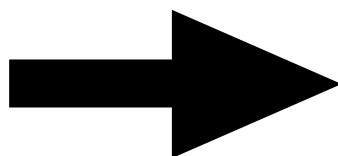
Come home and throw away the briefcase. Get changed and pull on your sneakers. Head outside and pound the pavement for a quick lap around the block. The fresh air and blood thumping through your veins will wake you up faster than a cup of coffee. You'll return home full of energy and enthusiasm.

2. Rest

When you feel tired, have a ten minute power nap.

Our bodies are wired to have rest periods throughout the day. It's why we start to nod off in the afternoon after lunch. Go with what your body's telling you and have a quick kip. Ten minutes is the perfect amount of time to rest your batteries without affecting your night time sleep routine. No longer than 26 minutes or your body will start secreting melatonin and you'll wake feeling groggy.

If you're still too tired, then go to bed and get some sleep. Getting enough sleep each night is an important part of the body's maintenance program. Sure you can pull an all-nighter every now and then but start doing them all the time and your productivity and creativity will rapidly decline.



*If you're not running
around the block or
having a nap, make
something!*

TAKE REST;
A FIELD THAT
HAS RESTED
GIVES A
BOUNTIFUL CROP

OVID

I'M
TOO
POOR

EXCUSE #5

.....

I'm Too Poor

.....

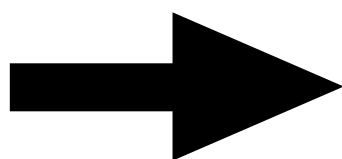
Being strapped for cash is tricky. None of us likes the feeling of not having enough or being able to afford the things we really want.

But being poor can make you resourceful and inventive. It forces you to use methods and materials you can afford to complete your project. To look at what you do have and use it in new and creative ways.

In fact odd as it sounds, having constraints and limited resources is much better for your creativity. A box of 500 coloured pencils is overwhelming. Which of the 30 browns will you use to draw the trunk of your tree? Too much choice and we freeze, paralysed by all the options and unable to make a decision.

On the other hand, when you have only 24 pencils, the choice is much easier allowing you to focus on actually drawing the bark on the tree trunk.

Make do with what you have. Recycle stuff, haunt op shops, garage sales and hard waste for lucky finds. You know the old saying – one person's trash is another's treasure. You'd be surprised at what people throw out.



IT'S ALL ABOUT PERCEPTION

Reframe your thoughts and see your lack of funds as a creative challenge rather than a limitation.

Exercise #5

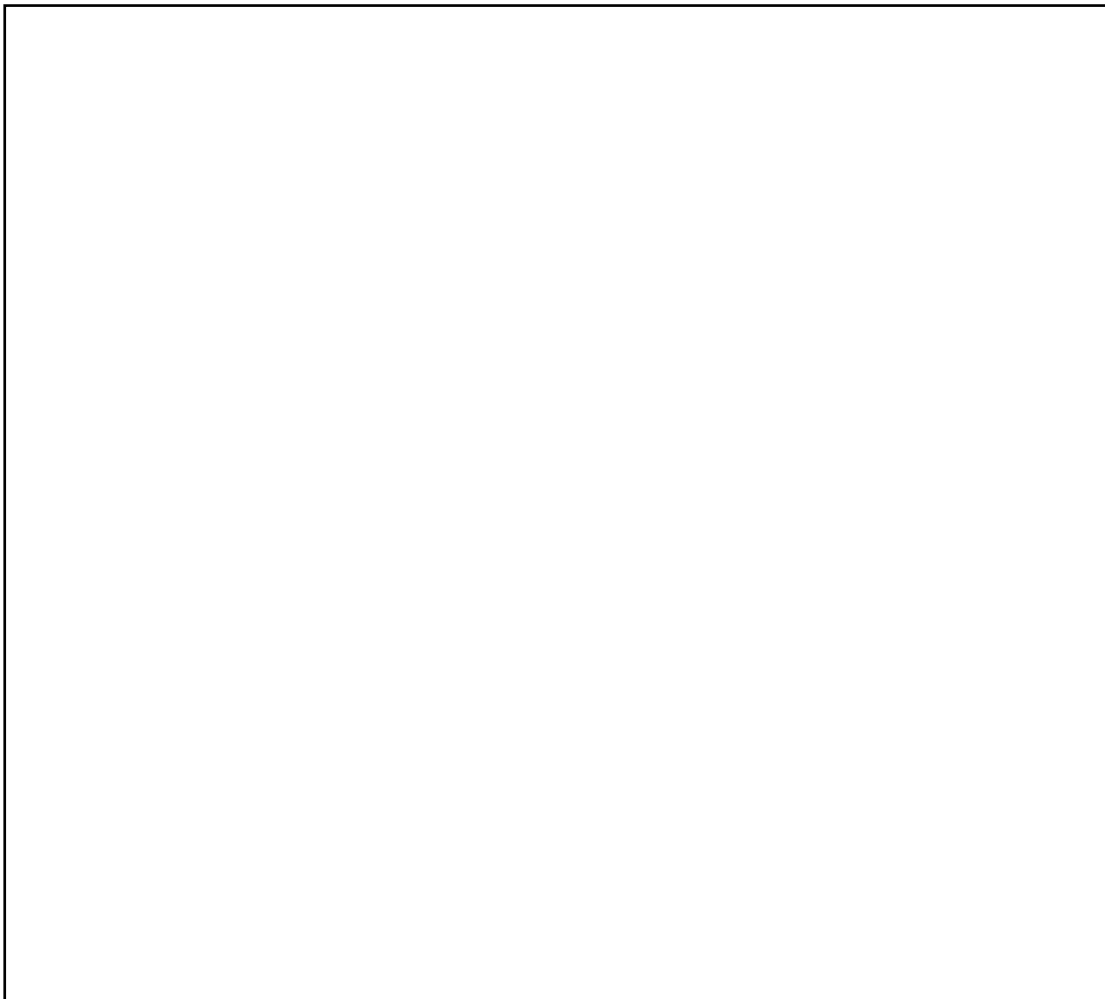
An exercise in creativity and making do

Look around you.

Grab the first five things that catch your eye.

Use them to build something.

Draw or paste a picture of what you made here:



WE CAN COMPLAIN
BECAUSE ROSE BUSHES
HAVE THORNS
OR REJOICE
BECAUSE THORNS
HAVE ROSES

ALPHONSE KARR

I
DON'T
HAVE
ROOM

EXCUSE #6

Make Room For Your Dreams

.....

I Don't Have Room

.....

All those Instagramed perfect home studios have a lot to answer for. They've raised the bar and made us feel as if we need to have a perfect studio too. If we don't, we can't possibly make stuff, be creative or successful.

I'm gonna let you in on a little secret. I haven't got a studio. I live in a 2 bedroom flat with a husband, two daughters and a fifteen year old cat. I've got a desk in the lounge room that's surround by clutter and mess (and often covered in it too). I struggle to keep a patch clean to work on as projects in various stages of completion pile up around the edges. Every now and then I have to clean it all because I can't see the surface any more!

If I waited for the perfect home studio before writing or making or living a creative life I'd be stuck in the daily grind and probably never get there.

Instead I write and do leather work at my desk, crochet on the couch, do woodwork on the kitchen bench with a makeshift vice and cut out fabric on my dining room floor. My garden is a collection of pots hanging off my balcony railing.

The trick is to use what you have and make it work for you. If you want it badly enough, you can always make room to do what you love.

Exercise #6

An exercise in decluttering

To make room in your life for new things, you're gonna have to throw out the old things you no longer need.

We collect and accumulate stuff. Got big cupboards? I guarantee you they're full of stuff, most of which you never use and probably have forgotten you even own.

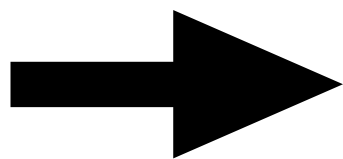
Yep, I know it's scary and tough. What if you're gonna need the things you throw out? What if Great Aunt Emma will be devastated there are no fish knives the next time she comes to dinner? Doesn't matter. Throw them out any way.

Here's a radical idea: keep only the things that bring you joy.

Having stuff around you because you feel obligated or scared has a bad effect on your psyche. It's true. Throw shit out and see.

Can't abide waste? Me neither. Give it to the local charity shop.

Worried you might need it? Chuck it in a bag in the garage and if in a month's time you haven't opened the bag, throw it out WITHOUT looking inside.



Keep things that
bring you joy

HAVE NOTHING
IN YOUR HOME
THAT YOU
DON'T KNOW
TO BE USEFUL
OR BELIEVE
TO BE BEAUTIFUL

WILLIAM MORRIS

I'M
TOO
OLD

EXCUSE #7

Age Is Just A Number

.....

I'm Too Old

.....

It's never too late.

You can start now.

Right now.

Scientists now know that our brains don't lose cells as we grow older. In fact, our brain cells are always capable of growing and we are always capable of learning new things.

My neighbour Peter is in his sixties. He's retired. I have no idea what he used to do but now he's writing. Books and screenplays. I've no idea if he'll get his books published. I think he hopes to. In the meantime, he is writing, writing, writing. Doing what he loves.

Here are some great authors who started writing late:

- Frank McCourt published his memoir, *Angela's Ashes* in his 60s,
- Raymond Chandler published pulp crime stories in his 40s,
- Harriet Doerr won a National Book Award for *Stones For Ibarra* when she was 73,
- Richard Adams wrote *Watership Down* in his mid 50s, and
- James A Michener won a Pulitzer prize with *Tales of the South Pacific* when he was 40.

Obviously no-one has told my neighbour or all those other authors that it was too late. Don't let them tell you that either.

This is your life.

You only get one.

Make it great!

IT IS NEVER
TOO LATE
TO BE
WHAT YOU
MIGHT HAVE BEEN

GEORGE ELLIOT

FOR MAKERS

Designed especially
for makers who want
to use their hands to
make the things they
need but have no idea
where to start.

BONUS SECTION

I DON'T
KNOW
WHAT TO
MAKE

EXCUSE #8

Finding Inspiration

.....

I Don't Know What To Make

.....

Right, you've got this far on our excuse busting adventure and you're keen to get stuck in and start making things. There's just one eensy weensy problem - what on earth are you gonna make?

When you're starting out on the making adventure, it can be a little daunting. There are so many options out there, which one do you choose? As we've already discussed, too much choice can be overwhelming and you need to narrow your focus. This is what we're doing in this section - nailing down what *you* want to make or create.

There are also lots of different reasons for being creative and making things. Using your hands, being productive, expressing creativity or meeting a need (emotional or physical). It's why there are so many different crafts and skills to learn. But they all boil down to one basic thing - they are a way of expressing your creativity and individuality. The best way to learn is to go back to being a kid and experiment and have fun.

The reasons for making often go hand in hand with choosing what to make. They are also very individual. I'm a maker who makes things that she needs or wants. You may be a maker who immerses themselves in mastering a technique. Or perhaps you are a maker who longs to push boundaries and see what's possible.

Work through the following pages to figure out what you'd like to make.

Exercise #7

1. Write down what you loved to making when you were young. These first loves stay with us. Go ahead and get reacquainted.

2. What has always fascinated you?
(Electronics, chemistry, metalwork, fashion.)

Exercise #7

3. Write down the materials you love.
(Textiles, paper, wood, metal.)

4. Write down something you want but can't afford.
You can often make something cheaper than an item for sale in a shop. We all have things on our wish list that we would love to buy but just can't afford.

Exercise #7

5. Think of something you need that doesn't exist.

There's so much choice out there, most of it a one size fits all variety. Got hips or big feet? Too Bad! Wouldn't it be great to make something that was exactly what you wanted and needed rather than making do with what you can buy or is currently fashionable?

Read back over your answers and circle the ones that jump out at you. These are the ones you should try first.

Exercise #8

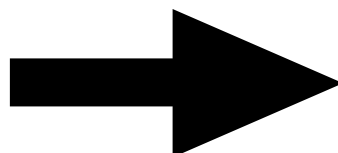
An exercise in experimenting and inspiration

Save up \$20 and go visit an art shop, hardware store, etc.

Buy whatever looks fun.

Take it home and experiment with no expectations.

Record your thoughts and feelings about the process here (what inspired you? how did you feel?):



Play and
have fun!

EVERY CHILD
IS AN ARTIST;
THE PROBLEM IS
STAYING AN ARTIST
WHEN YOU GROW UP

PABLO PICASSO

I
DON'T
KNOW
HOW

EXCUSE #9

Spend your spare time wisely

.....

I Don't Know How

.....

Learn!

There's only two things you need to be able to master a skill - learning and practicing. Learn the basics and then practice, practice, practice.

It's not rocket science, it just requires some effort on your part, a little patience and lots of perseverance.

Everything is easy once you know how.

Bunker Roy from the Barefoot College in India uses sign language to teach illiterate, rural grandmothers to become solar engineers. If they can learn to be solar engineers, *you* can learn to make something.

Exercise #9

Ways to learn basic skills:

1. Buy a kit

Go online or to your local craft shop and buy a kit. It will have everything you need to make something, including tools and instructions. And if you need help, the person at your local craft shop is a great source of knowledge.

2. Borrow a craft book from the library

The children's section is the best as the language is simple, the instructions are clear and easy to follow and the photos and illustrations are descriptive and helpful.

3. Scour the internet

There are many fabulous people out there in the digital realm, who write detailed instructions with accompanying photos on making just about anything. They will often answer your questions on how to do something. There are even YouTube videos on just about everything you can think of and then more you didn't even know existed.

Exercise #9

4. Do a course at your local community college

There are many enthusiastic craftspeople willing to share their knowledge and skills. Doing a course is a great way to learn insider tips and tricks that can take years to learn through trial and error. You can also make some great friends or create amazing opportunities.

When I was in my twenties, I did an adult learning course called *Getting Published* that was run by a local publisher. As part of the course we submitted our work for comments and review. The publisher, Steven Matthews, liked my work and I ended up getting my first book of poetry published.

5. Seek help

Ask your crafty friends and relatives for help or advice. They will be happy to teach you what they know and share their skills and craft. We all like to feel that we have something important and valuable to pass on.

Carlos Huber is a perfumer who uses a historical story or a place with an olfactory experience to create his perfumes. He trained as an architect and worked for luxury retail brands before becoming seduced by fragrance. At a party one night he met perfumer Rodrigo Flores-Roux. The meeting changed his life. Fascinated by fine fragrance he asked questions and Rodrigo offered to give him lessons every Thursday.

WHAT WE LEARN
WITH PLEASURE
WE NEVER
FORGET

ALFRED MERCIER

THE BIG QUESTIONS

PANDORA'S BOX

Open If You Dare!

.....

The Big Questions

.....

I bet you thought we were finished. We've busted all the excuses after all. But wait, there's more...

This is where we get to the nitty gritty. Where we find out what's *really* going on.

It's like the sealed section in Cosmo. It's for the truly brave. If you've got this far, then you're one of them.

As you've been working through all of your excuses you may still have felt like you couldn't possibly start following your dreams. You may have felt really scared and fearful of doing something new or different.

Fear of new and different is completely normal. We all get scared doing new things or stepping out of our comfort zone. After all it takes a lot of courage to change the habits of a life time. And even more courage to go against the flow of what people around you are doing.

But it's when we face our fears and do what scares us that we become fully alive.

Be brave and answer these last two questions brutally and honestly. Even if your answer seems silly. Especially if your answer seems silly. If these are the only two questions you answer, then my work is done.

We're gonna open Pandora's Box here people so take a deep breath.

Exercise #10

.....

Facing Your Fears

.....

Woah, big right? Take a deep breath, you're doing great!

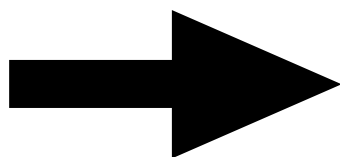
I know you're feeling kinda vulnerable right now and maybe a little bit scared but that's okay. All the magic happens outside your comfort zone so you're exactly where you need to be.

And just so you know, I happen to think that you're 17 different kinds of wonderful and amazing. You've had the courage to face your deepest fears. That my friend, is truly incredible.

Remember the lame excuse from the start of the book, *I'm scared of making things?*

"We're scared" is actually the truth behind all of our excuses. Yep, every single one. We dress up the fear with a bunch of other stuff because it's so big and terrifying. Instead of confronting it or sitting with it, we cover it up so we can't see it.

Fear is always what holds us back from following our dreams and trying something different. The best antidote for the fear? Start doing things that scare you, a little bit at a time and watch your courage and bravery grow.



You are amazing.
Yes, you!

Exercise #11

Simple exercises for facing your fears

1. Scared of speaking in public?

Thank the bus driver next time you get off at your stop.

2. Scared of being on your own?

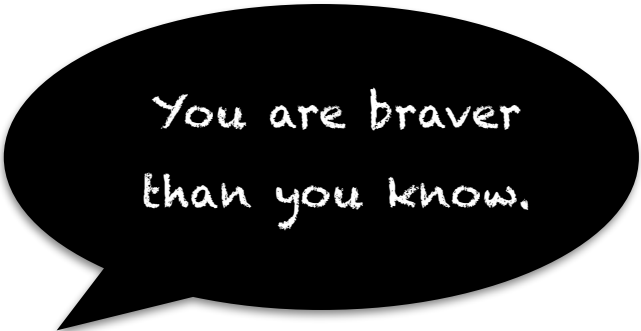
Have a coffee on your own at a cafe.

3. Scared of the dark?

Turn off the lights and sit in the dark for five minutes.

4. Scared of being laughed at?

Tell a dumb joke.



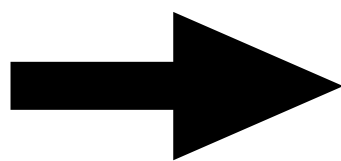
You are braver
than you know.

DO THE THING YOU FEAR
THE MOST AND THE
DEATH OF FEAR
IS CERTAIN

MARK TWAIN

WELL DONE!

You've busted your
excuses, faced your
fears and are ready to
follow your dreams.



Hold on, it's
going to be a
fun ride!

Notes

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Feel free to use #whatsyourexcuse and tag me (@indraniperera) with any thoughts or questions on Instagram.

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THANK YOU!