

For The Burnt Out Artist

by Amie McNee



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Hey, Tired One,

This book is here to read slowly. At your own pace. It is here to serve you. It is here to heal you. It is here to rejuvenate you. It is also here to witness you as you create your best work. It is here to validate your ambitions. To support you as you chase your dreams. As you read this book, make sure you do it leisurely. Make sure you have ample cups of tea as you peruse these words. Make sure you find a safe and calm space to do the journaling work. Make sure you sanctify this process, because it is sacred. We are about to undo the narratives of ‘hustle’ and create space for you to thrive as the creator you were born to be, and that is true magic work.

I know you’re so tired of being tired. I know you’re over the slog. I see you. It doesn’t need to be this way.

Let’s begin.

This book is about burn out culture, as it pertains to creatives, entrepreneurs and artists.

I am writing this book because it is the book I needed as I moved through my own journey as a creative. I bought into the hustle so hard. I burnt out so many times. I sacrificed my own body’s physical health and mental health to the Hustle Gods, desperately hoping that I might be rewarded by working myself into the ground.

So, this book is for us, the burnt out, the hustle addicts, the creatives who feel like we must earn our seat at the table by abolishing all rest and slowness. Re-programming our rest and hustle stories is a big journey. But we must take it. The

cultural narrative is strong, but it is not your burden to carry.

Throughout this book, there will be journaling prompts. This is because I am here to lead you inwards. All true growth is done by you, and you alone. The journaling prompts are integral to the magic of this book. Even if you're not yet ready to write, read the journaling prompts. The words in this book are intended to lead the creative horse to water. The drinking of the water looks like you, journaling. The journaling prompts are here to take you inwards so you can look at how creative hustle and burn out culture have personally impacted you and how you can personally heal. What stories do you have? How has your life looked different to other peoples'? And how has that created the burn out that you experience? The journaling prompts are arguably the most important part of the book. If you have not journaled before, that's okay. There are no rules about how they should be done. You can go as slow as you like, you can journal on your phone, on scraps of paper, on the computer, in a regular journal, or on sticky notes. If you feel really opposed to writing, then I recommend talking through the questions with a close confidant. (You could even talk it through on voice a recording app in your phone — an audio form of journaling.) However you choose to do it, the questions and contemplations are here as your key to true creative abundance.

Before we begin, I want you to understand that I am a -recovering- hustle addict.

I am not writing this book because I have got my rest stories, and hustle narratives fully under control. I witness myself resist rest every single day. Sometimes I forget to witness it all together, and next minute I am knee-deep in guilt for sleeping in. It's a

long journey, but it's the most important journey I've ever been on, and I could not wait until I was 'finished' with my hustle addiction to write this book.

Go slow, but stay the course. I cannot wait to go on this journey with you.

Chapter One. What is burn out?

Burn out is going to look different for each of us. But creatives, artists and entrepreneurs are experts at exhausting ourselves, pushing to prove ourselves, pushing to be seen, pushing to validate our choices, pushing to not be taken as a fool. We are particularly vulnerable to the hustle stories, and we are so susceptible to the fuckery that is burn out.

What is burn out?

I will start by explaining what burn out looks like for me. It's looked different at different times. When I was working muggle jobs that I hated, desperately trying to find a way that I could fit art into my life, it was a deep-to-my-bones lethargy. I couldn't get off the couch; not because of exhaustion but because of apathy to and lethargy from the whole experience of life. Emotionally, I didn't have it in me. Everything took so much energy, because my will to do life was just so low. It hardly mattered if it was art or if it was the mundane muggle stuff of life, burn out took the zest for life out of me. Everything took too much energy. Coming home after a day working at the cafe, nannying, personal assisting, or being a personal trainer, I would stare at my computer, trying to write and create, and I would feel totally empty and unmotivated.

By the end of my first year working full time as a creative coach, it was a whole different story. This burn out was different. I was no longer apathetic and lethargic, I was excited and fuelled by my life. I had so many ideas and I had the motivation to create. But by the end of my first year doing things I love, I started feeling this really

strange physical pain all over my body — an aching. Like I had pulled a lot of different muscles in the gym. Then came the overriding anxiety. This was new to me. I knew what it was like to be ‘anxious’ about stuff. But I had never experienced the irrational narratives that started popping up and flipping my tummy and making my heart hurt. With every pain in my body, my central nervous system would go into fight or flight. I could hardly breathe. I was dizzy. I was having panic attacks. At first, like so many others who have their first experience with anxiety, I thought something was seriously wrong with me physically. It felt like my body was shutting down. But when I finally mustered up the courage to see health professionals, they all came back with the same thing: you’re fucking exhausted, your body is tired and you’re having anxiety attacks. It took having a month off of work to rest and recalibrate before the physical pain and mental anguish finally backed down. To this day, both lethargy and anxiety attacks are a symptom that I have been working too hard and I need to take a fucking break.

I am still learning to notice the signs. That feeling in my chest, the tightening, the jumping at noises, my central nervous system being under attack. Resentment. Anger. Depression. Flaring of chronic pain. Pain in general. Apathy. That feeling when you’re past being tired and now you’re running on some bizarre energy that just keeps you going. Running on empty, I suppose. The complete sidelining of my creative vision. The inability to hope for things. Procrastination being my new art form. These are the things I am both learning to look out for, and learning to prevent altogether.

How burn out is medically diagnosed.

The World Health Organisation now considers burn out to be an actual diagnosable condition. Here is a list of symptoms that medical professionals would attribute to burn out:

- Exhausted and drained all the time.
- Headaches and muscle pain.
- Immunity issues.
- Change in appetite and sleep issues.
- No sense of accomplishment in work or creative projects.
- Cynicism and pessimism.
- Detachment from those around you.
- Consistent sense of failure.
- Chronic procrastination.
- Stopping work/creativity altogether.
- Using numbing techniques to cope.
- Desiring to get sick / be hospitalised in order to escape.

I see myself in a lot of these symptoms, but in my opinion — through my work with creatives and my own experience — the symptoms are far more extensive than this list suggests. If we want to know how to support ourselves and become vibrant and energised creatives, we need to learn and then respect the signs of what burn out looks like for each of us. And so without further ado, I welcome you to your first journaling

Journaling Prompt: What does burn out look like for you?

I would recommend detailing a time when you experienced burn out. Are you experiencing it right now? How does it feel? What signs does your body give you? What emotions do you experience? What narratives run through your head? Do you resist it? Do you feel shame about it? Anger? Was it scary?

If you are someone who resists the idea that you've ever actually experienced burn out, or exhaustion, I want to take a minute to be with you. For a very long time, I distrusted my body and feelings. I was never as tired as 'them' (everyone else that I ever saw/met/heard of.) I was never doing as much as 'them'. I never truly deserved to be tired or burnt out because, look at those people over there! They were "doing so much more" than me.

Watch out for these narratives. Write them down. It's important to witness these thoughts, because we need to deconstruct them. Hustle culture creates a competitive edge, and we all try to out-busy, and out-exhaust the next person. It can create a feeling of not deserving to be tired, or not being 'tired enough'. It's important to flag this way of thinking. Notice the thoughts around 'not deserving' to be tired, and make sure you write down how that makes you feel.

Chapter Two. Why do we burn out?

Let's get straight to it. Here is a big list of some of the reasons why creatives are fucking incredible at burning out and getting addicted to "the hustle".

- We want our creations to be seen, for our art to connect. So we push and push against systems that are not here to serve us. E.g. Gatekeeping institutions, which require "the best" but are essentially random and often highly biased.

- We hide behind perfectionism, and never let ourselves finish our projects. As a result, we are constantly trying to improve our work but never deeming ourselves good enough.

- We feel like because we have chosen to do something as 'indulgent' as art that we must prove our worth by working until we cannot work anymore.

- We feel that in order to be validated by our peers and non-creative family, we must look like we are working really hard.

- We buy into the story that only the very few 'make it' and in order to be the very few, we must work harder than the rest.

- We have issues following through, and so we procrastinate, and procrastination, my friend, is fucking exhausting.

- We jump from creative project to creative project, never finishing, because they are never "good enough". Never enjoying the reward of seeing our art finished, or our art connecting to others. We exhaust ourselves by buying into the belief that we are never good enough.

- We are chronically ill or disabled and try to 'keep up' with everyone else, when our energy levels or our physical experience do not allow for that.

- We create while feeling like a fraud and imposter, never truly owning our role as creator. I can assure you, this will fuck you right up and make you tired to your core.

- We are trying to balance art with our muggle (non-creative) lives. Leading these two lives — balancing them, managing them both — can be incredibly exhausting.

- Our creative boundaries are never respected, and we are constantly fighting for our creative space and time.

- We have found that one thing we are good at and that connects with others, and so we continue to create this one thing over and over again getting no creative variance and wearing ourselves down to ... you guessed it — burnout.

- We create only for external validation.

- We get addicted to the feeling of ticking off the to-do list, and we stop feeling worthy without it.

- We are already breaking social norms by creating and not going down the normal route. Following our passions takes more effort, and more resilience than playing it “safe”.

Of course, this list is not exhaustive. There are so many reasons why creatives are vulnerable to burn out. There is so much to go into here and baby, we are going to go into it. But I want this list to get you thinking about what resonates with you. What are your triggers? What is your own personal experience? Without recognising and respecting why you are haemorrhaging energy, you can never reclaim it.

In this chapter, we are going to explore the culture that influences our addiction to burnout. Because how the fuck did we get here? Why are we so reliant on productivity

to access self-worth? Why is rest so hard?

We are sold the story that hustle is the route to success. We are taught that being busy is the ticket to feeling worthy. It is soaked into our culture. Coaches, celebrities, teachers of all sorts feed us the narrative that hustle will put you above the rest. Not only that, but it is the *only* way to get above the rest. It's the only way to set yourself apart. Whether it's JLo sharing her own journey, and earnestly and inspiringly explaining that the reason she is so successful is that *she got up earlier* than all her competitors. Or it's famous Instagram coaches reminding us that procrastination is laziness, not a deeply complicated relationship with self.

We are sold the idea that artists **MUST** exhaust themselves, otherwise - you'll be left behind. Otherwise, you will be labelled lazy. Otherwise, you will be the starving artist. And the worst part is, if you don't succeed, you will only have yourself to blame. All of this is a lie.

The L word, *Lazy*, is the trait we all fear.

It is held up as the greatest of all sins for creatives. It is a death sentence to our art, but more importantly, it is the disfigurement of our own character. Far worse than being arrogant or cruel, is being lazy. This is the story. Lazy has been demonised by our culture. It's not an accidental demonisation either. The system needs us to be afraid of lazy.

The obsession with productivity has served industrialists and capitalists for a long time. Businesses, co-operations, they want productive workers. It is in the interest of the top dogs to make us feel like productivity is directly correlated with our worth.

The idea we can work ourselves to feeling worthy is an idea that has kept the rich, rich. It's terrifying, and it has seeped deep into our culture. The system doesn't want workers who are slow but invested in their jobs. They don't want intentional, thoughtful, rested workers. They don't need people who are energised, in love with the work and have a good balance. They want workers who will work, who will produce. "Lazy" workers are fired. It is no wonder that we get addicted to-do lists, to the feeling of getting stuff done, because the systems we've been working within reward this behaviour and punish alternate approaches.

Cool, but what about evolutionary, biological proof that we like to be productive?

I have had many conversations with people who speculate that we are biologically compelled to work hard. Maybe it's just who we are? Humans like to work. It's in our way of being. It's a compelling conversation but looking back, like *way* back, it doesn't seem to be an innate human trait. Ancient hunter-gatherers (and the few surviving hunter-gatherer tribes left in the world) are thought to have worked as little as 1-2 hours a day, and would rest and eat and be with family for the remaining hours. So, can we really say that it is an innate characteristic of humans? It was only when we turned into an agricultural society (a fairly recent development in the sweep of human history) that we had to work whole days. It's not a human prerequisite to work long hours. It doesn't seem to be innate to have an iron focus on production.

So then why do we feel so good when we are productive? Because we've been conditioned.

The addiction to productivity? The demonisation of lazy? It is learnt. And it isn't producing any more art, it isn't creating more and more magic, it is burning creatives out or stopping us from becoming artists in the first place.

Journaling Prompt:

Where did you inherit your own personal glorification of busy? Did you see it modelled in your education systems? Your parents? Has it soaked through the people you see online? Is it in your friendship circles? Is it in your jobs? Start investigating where you've seen hustle culture in your life, and start acknowledging how it has impacted you.

If you want to understand more about the evolutionary research around productivity, the cultural saturation of hustle, and industrialism, I would recommend James Suzman's *Work: A History of How We Spend Our Time* and Yuval Noah Harrari's *Sapiens* which were my main sources in writing this section.

The Great Lie: Art is Laziness.

Creatives are especially at risk of burning out. Not only are lots of us trying to balance our 'muggle' lives with our creative lives, but the very notion of chasing creative abundance can lead us to believe we have to hustle harder than the rest. This is not something to celebrate. This is what this book intends to remedy.

For me, I had to recognise and then deconstruct the story that being an artist was the ultimate form of laziness. I had an ingrained belief that wanting to create was me being lazy. I believed I was avoiding productivity through my desires to make art. I

believed that wanting to be an author full time was equal to being lazy. I was indulgent and spoilt because I didn't want to be in the office all day. I didn't want to work for The Man. I wanted to write and tell stories and make and create. The guilt I felt around that was mammoth. I compensated for this guilt in two ways: 1) I hated myself. 2) I worked unbelievably hard at my art. I could not convince myself to stay in the system, to continue working in my 9-5 job. But in recompense, I had to work unbelievably hard to prove my worth. If anyone was to see me trying to make it as an artist for a living, they were going to catch me absolutely burnt out and exhausted because I had been creating *that* hard. God forbid anyone asks me what I am doing and my answer is "I am writing books, and I am energised and happy!" Then they would see me for what I was — a lazy, entitled child.

That was my story.

I used 'hustle' as an antidote for my deep guilt that I was chasing my dreams. I believed I had to pay for the right to chase my creative vision. My currency was exhaustion.

Journaling Prompt:

How does your creativity intersect with hustle culture? Do you see yourself reflected in my story? If not, how is yours different? You are born to create, to impact, to connect with your art — how does that truth impact your relationship with hustle? How does it look different from those who are not creatives? In these prompts I want you to honour the fact that you are different, that living a creative life means that you are living a different life and that hustle culture is going to affect you in a unique way.

Begin the journey of investigating what that looks like for you.

Chapter Three. Balancing rest with our goals and ambition.

Understanding how hustle culture has developed and understanding how it has played out for us personally is crucial to healing and creating a life filled with rest and balance. BUT we still want to make space for creative ambition. So many people get so defensive when I say that rest is imperative, because they equate the idea that we need more rest and more pleasure in our lives with inaction and failure. People believe that if we divorce ourselves from hustle culture, we divorce ourselves from success, art and creativity all together. It's bollocks and It doesn't mean anything of the sort. We can and should have it both ways. In this chapter we are going to start looking at how addiction to ambition and goals can get in our way, but how marrying ambition and rest can actually call in success and make our dreams a reality.

One of the common patterns of addiction to hustle is a dependence on goals. Always wanting to achieve the next thing. Always hungry for future success. We need to be critical of this behaviour, because it can lead us to burn out. We are never able to rest because when we achieve our goals, we simply make new ones. Where is the space for celebration? Where is the space for rest? For peace? For pride? There isn't any. When we become goal obsessed, we never truly feel like we are successful. We move our goalposts as soon as we have achieved something on our to-do list. We are constantly chasing, never celebrating or enjoying. But we *can* dream big and achieve magic without getting addicted to the cycles of dopamine hits we get from setting goals. I don't believe that deconstructing our narratives around productivity means we must sacrifice our goals, our ambition, or our gifts. We can honour our large goals and chase our big dreams without it leading us to hustle culture madness and burning out

in a big pile of fuck.

But how? How can we balance rest, with the desire to make good art that connects? This is the work. The hard work; the work that takes a while.

I want creative abundance.

I want my art to support me financially. I want my creative magic to fill up all the nooks and crannies in my life. I want to *be* creativity. I want to make connections with other artists. I want to travel the world connecting with artists. I want to go to events. I want to publish dozens and dozens of books. Is it reasonable to desire all this abundance, and simultaneously want abundant, unapologetic rest? A lot of the stories we are told would suggest not. If we want to be on top, we have to work harder than the rest.

“You can’t just expect things to fall into your lap!”

“Opportunities have got to find you working.”

“Grind now, shine later.”

These are stories that might have some elements of truth to them but are nearly always oversimplifications used to convince us that we cannot be both ambitious and restful. But I truly believe that creative ambition and creative achievement can thrive alongside rest — ‘indulgent’ rest. Lazy rest. Lazy days. Slowness. Days off. Weeks off. Hell, months off.

We have to eliminate the idea that success is married to hustle. We have to embrace the idea that rest and success go hand in hand.

I want you to start getting critical about how these two ideas intersect. Are the stories

around how rest will impact your ambition true? Is it possible that, in fact, rest goals could support your creative goals?

Understanding that rest is integral to your creative productivity can be a useful stepping stone in reacquainting yourself with rest. There are lots of motivational quotes that go around the internet talking about how you've got to 'slow down to speed up'. They're true. Of course. We cannot go 100% all the time, just like athletes don't perform at their peak at all times. Creatives simply cannot go 100% all the time either. It is important to understand that we must rest in order to go harder, create more things, connect with more people. Rest will serve your ambition.

However, I think this concept can be a bit of a cop-out when it comes to a proper deconstruction of hustle culture. We need to realise that we can slow down just to slow down. Rest does not get a permission slip just because it can serve industrialism and production or even our personal dreams. Rest is not only allowed because it is the pathway to ramping back up. Rest can be there just to rest. This is a much harder concept to truly come to terms with. I want you to investigate whether you use rest simply as a means to ramp back up again, rather than a delight, a way of living, a way to receive joy and experience the enchantments of life.

Journaling Prompt:

Write down five rest goals and five ambitious creative goals. They don't have to be goals that can be realised right now. In fact, I would encourage you to have a few rest goals that are more long term, and a few that you could potentially implement straight away.

For example:

Rest Goals.

1) I work three days of the week. The rest of my days are for slowness, service to my body, mind and soul.

2) I sleep 9 hours every night.

3) I don't work past 2pm each day.

4) I spend time drawing, doing puzzles, playing every Sunday afternoon.

5) I take an hour away from everyone once a week to daydream and walk.

Creative goals

1) I am a world-renowned writer.

2) I collaborate with my favourite creatives.

3) I write every day.

4) I finish a book every year.

5) I am financially supported by my art.

Then, and this is the important part, I want you to write down any narratives or fears you have about how your rest goals could potentially impact your creative goals. Are you harbouring any fears that they are working against your ambition?

For example:

I am afraid that if I work only three days of the week, I would never write a book a year. I am afraid that I would also be disrespected within the creative

community, or look like I was not taking my art seriously. I am afraid that I will miss out on opportunities with people if I only work until 2pm.

Stress isn't a prerequisite to success. We don't need to live as a cortisol junky because we're worried we'll fall behind if we don't. You can be successful, lazy, rested creator.

Chapter Four. The motivation behind your hustle.

Now that we have begun the journey of integrating our rest goals and our creative goals, I want to take time to investigate the motivations behind our creative goals. If the motivation behind our hustling, and behind our goals are not in alignment with who we are, we will burn out quicker. We have to have a reason behind our work. Hustling because we ‘should’ be working hard, is going to exhaust us. Hustling because we want to drown out our sadness, will lead to burn out. This chapter is going to look at how we can be critical about the motivations behind our creative work, and make sure that we are working with a sustainable and thriving motivation.

I have met many people, both creative and non-creative, who have hustled their whole lives, who have worked their asses off, worked 80 plus hour weeks for years, and dedicated themselves to projects to the point of hospitalisation. And if you asked these people why they were hustling, a lot of them would have no idea. The classic story of this happening is the hard-working corporate man grinding his way up the ranks because that’s just what he thought he should do.

But we, as creatives, are not exempt from the hustling for hustling’s sake. Many of us are trapped in a cycle of working hard and making hundreds of goals for no real considered reason. I know creatives who make beautiful, impactful work — but their motivation to create is rooted in making themselves feel productive, or is inherited entirely from their elders, or is there to distract them from pain. If our motivation to work is derived from pain or from feeling not enough, we get more exhausted more quickly. Because the force that’s driving you is not in alignment with you. The force behind your hustle isn’t spurring you on. It’s hurting you. It’s exhausting you. The

difference in energy levels between a creator who, for example, is working hard because they want to bring enchantment and fantasy into the world and the creator who is working hard because they don't feel they will ever be enough in their parents' eyes — is vast. We want the calling of our art to be the driving force behind our work. We want the possibility of profound connection and impact to be spurring us on. Furthermore, when the motivation behind our creations is pure and in alignment, our ability to take rest is so much easier. We aren't under the thumb of the hustle gods any more, worrying that if we rest we will get left behind. Instead, we are the gods of our own creative world, making art that is in alignment with our soul. We aren't constantly chasing the next goal in order to feel worthy. We are simply doing what we are made to do, creating.

Journaling Prompts:

- What are the motivations behind your creative goals?

By the end of this prompt, I want you to realise WHY you create. This is a big question. It might feel hard to get to the truth of it, so here're some further prompts to really get to the core of it.

- When did the desire to create first come to you? Can you remember why you were first attracted to it?

- Do you move your goals as soon as you reach them? Or are you able to celebrate them? If you can't celebrate them, why?

- Are you able to validate yourself, and all the work you do before you receive feedback?

- How do you feel when you go without any validation? Try not to judge this. We are human and require connection. Validation from others does not need to be demonised — but are you dependent on it to feel okay?

- Do you need big ass goals to feel good about yourself? How does your ego react to making small creative goals?

The next question I want to ask is this:

- How do you feel when you're unproductive?

I want you to ask yourself this question because how we treat ourselves when we are not meeting our goals, is highly indicative of how we motivate ourselves to create and work.

- What stories play out in your head when you've got a big ass to-do list and have not done a single thing?

For this journaling prompt, I really want you to sit back into this thought exercise and ponder what language your inner critic adopts. How does your body feel? How do you treat yourself? How do you openly speak about yourself?

For example:

“When I have a big day of things to do, but all I get done is scroll the internet and watch tv, I feel deeply unworthy of good things. I will deprive myself of good things. I won't allow myself 'treats' of any sort. E.g., A glass of wine, or snack, tv. I will not feel that I deserve to ENJOY any of my restful activities either. Everything loses its shine because I haven't earned any of it. I feel physically VERY lethargic, with no

energy. My internal monologue says words like “Lazy. Spoilt. Unsuccessful.” I feel a twisting around my chest.

I might shut myself off to those around me. Anyone else’s talk about getting lots done, or being busy will trigger me to not like myself more.”

Once we’ve got a clear picture of how we react to feeling unproductive, I want you to start asking WHY. Are these inherited beliefs, taken on from parents? Teachers? Guardians? Is it inherited from culture? Can you recall any specific moments when productivity was deemed holy in your life? How did it impact you? If we know what causes our hustle stories, we can more easily see them for what they are: just stories

For example:

“I know that my family’s tradition of coming together and having a drink at the end of the day — while deeply enjoyable — was always built up as having to be earned by a hard day at work. Fun and joyous things in my family life were awarded as a prize for working hard. This has impacted my feeling worthy of joy and fun if I do not feel productive and worthy. I recognise that this was not intentional, or cruel but I can see now how much I want to work for joy.”

If you’re struggling with this prompt, that’s okay. Take a break, and just ponder it over the next few days. What’s for sure is this, you were not born believing productivity was crucial to being worthy as a human. You learnt this from somewhere; discovering where you’ve adopted these narratives is important so that

we can understand that they are not innate, or a part of who we are. It is also important to know that those who we inherit our stories from cannot be entirely to blame. We do not need to feel bad or guilty for recognising that our parents or loved ones passed these ideas down to us, for they, in turn, were taught it by someone else.

For the final part in this massive prompt, I want us to consider **how we can rewrite our hustle stories in a way that serves us**. There will be resistance. It is a good thing. The more resistance we experience when journaling, the more we know we are breaking old and well worn neural pathways. We are making room for healing and fresh ways of thinking.

Here is my example of rewriting my stories regarding hustle:

“I am allowed to enjoy, fully, wholly, and without guilt: relaxation, rest, good food, entertainment, an all other wonderful things — I am allowed to enjoy these things even when I haven’t done a single thing on my to-do list.”

This sentence still triggers me. This is still my struggle. Make sure you write down any resistance you are having, this is the work.

For example, here is my resistance:

“Even though I say this with such confidence, and I even logically believe it, I still find myself not wholly enjoying rest when I haven’t been productive. Why must dinner and a movie after a big day of getting shit done feel so much better than one after a day of not getting much done? I struggle with this.”

Okay, one last thing, before we leave the pages. I want you to mother yourself, especially if you found a lot of resistance in the last exercise. When I speak about mothering, I am talking about reassurance, permission, kindness.

For example:

“I know you still find this hard. That is okay. This is big work! Years of stories are being undone, and we can’t expect that to be done quickly. Be patient with yourself. You are doing so well. You are so deserving of abundance and joy. You deserve it always. Because you are you. And that is enough.”

The mother voice we cultivate on the pages is the antithesis of hustle culture. She is the mother of the tired inner child. She requires nothing from you. She loves you unconditionally, and she reminds you of your worth, whatever the circumstances.

What I want you to have taken from these two chapters is this: you are allowed to rest. There is no moral imperative to be productive. More, you can achieve your dreams and still find plenty of time to rest. The resistance you feel here doesn’t have to burden you.

Chapter Five. Burn out because our motivation is external validation.

Artists burn out because we don't know how to rest. Because industrialist culture has run us into the ground. But burn out can also happen when we're not being 'productive'. I have a clear memory of a health professional looking me in the eye and telling me I was burnt out. I remember staring at her in return and swearing I was not. "I am unemployed. I am doing fuck-all with my day. All I am doing is submitting my novel to publishers and that is literally it."

She just shrugged. "You're worn out," she said, looking at the blood tests. We are complicated beings and 'hustling' isn't a prerequisite for burn out.

In this chapter, we are going to look at how having goals that we have no control over will exhaust our poor little creative souls, and leave us depleted and un-energised.

I want to first, as always, validate big goals and big dreams. It's okay and GOOD to want to be a successful artist. It's okay to envision yourself living in your dream home, with your dream art space, with your highly-priced selection of ink pens and Seth Godin on speed dial (#SuspiciouslySpecific). I will always validate your big dreams. I do validate your big dreams. They're fucking profound and they're necessary. It's really important for me to say this because more often than not, artists are scoffed at for wanting to succeed. Same goes for young children, and teenagers; people don't respect their desires. They expect them to change their minds, or realise it's too hard, and just continue along on the system's pre-programmed, preordained paths.

I remember being in my early teens telling people I wanted to be an actor and tell stories, and make lots of money and have a big house with all my dogs and I have multiple memories of adults sneering at me, nodding unbelievably, appeasing me, or just downright levelling with me about how it ‘wasn’t realistic’. Vomit. We need space to dream. We are creative, imaginative beings and we deserve to DESIRE. We are allowed to want external validation.

So, envision what it is you want. And go big. You deserve big.

But we cannot create our art in the name of external validation.

The issue arises when we are working on our projects solely to achieve the dream.

When our art is here to obtain something that can only be given to us by others.

Working on a novel, for example, in order to get a publishing deal will lead to burn out. Because you cannot control whether you get a publishing deal. If you are writing a screenplay to get a Netflix deal, it will lead you to burn out. If you are starting a business to make a million dollars, you will exhaust yourself.

That isn’t to say you aren’t allowed to desire those things, of course you can and that isn’t to say you can’t achieve them with your art, of course you can, but you cannot control it — so having it as your main motivation will make you tired. Really fucking tired.

When we focus on what we cannot control, we disempower ourselves. It leaves us feeling without agency. It doesn’t matter how fucking brilliant your script is, if the producers at Netflix just randomly don’t vibe with it, then you will not get a contract. That’s not your fault, but this whole time you’ve been working under the pretence that

it entirely your responsibility. Bending the will of others is not what we are here to do. We are here to generously and vulnerably create art. It just isn't fair to look at your project and ask it to work miracles by bending the wills of others. It's not fair on you. Your creative practice, that should be held sacred, has been marred by this unfair expectation.

But how can we have big dreams, and also not put too much pressure on our art?

It is possible to honour our desire, to prepare ourselves for our vision, to expect abundance AND simultaneously approach our practice on a day to day basis. We are complex creatures with complex minds and we can handle this sort of dichotomy. On a day to day basis, we need to focus on the practice. Our success needs to be directly correlated to the fact that we are showing up and creating. Your day is a success, and you are a successful creator if you have created (irrespective of quantity and quality.) This is where your energy should go. We can control how we show up, we can control what we create, how honest and vulnerable we are. This sort of creating empowers us and defines us as Creators. You can even have goals within this process, but they need to be goals that empower you and that give you *agency*.

Your vision is important, your desires are valid. But it is not what makes you successful as a creator. Your success comes in doing the work each day. Just as it is for every famous, renowned artist's success.

After all, Beethoven's success cannot be that lots of people love his work, he had nothing to do with that. His success is that he showed up, practised his craft and created his work. He had everything to do with that.

This is a huge reframing of the concept of success, and I know a lot of us, me included, will find this hard. That's okay. The retelling of narratives takes time, but it is worth it. This is how we come home to the art. This is how we become excellent creators. Our visions and desires are sacred. But our success, magic and art come through showing up each day and doing the work. This is how we stay energised while making big goals. This reframing is integral in defending ourselves against burnout. If success is showing up each day and doing the work, we can win each day, we have power each day, we have agency each day. This fuels us. It does not deplete us by making us fight for something we are powerless over.

I'm going to suggest we separate our vision from our day to day creation, by differentiating between our vision and our goals.

Vision is the big dream.

Goals are directly related to your process, the art.

Goals are what we work on each day. Vision is something we validate each day.

Visions must be trusted. We must have faith that the path we are taking is winding in the direction of our vision. Goals are what we can work on daily. Goals are where we find success. Daily.

Our culture is obsessed with the idea of knowing where we are going.

Understanding what we want can be very useful. But it isn't mandatory. I want to de-glamourise the obsession with planning the future. If you don't know where you're going, that's okay. Don't waste your precious, precious energy thinking you *have* to know where you're going. You're allowed to take this a day at a time. You don't *need*

a plan to be successful. If this doesn't resonate and making plans are your jam, that is awesome. Being able to honour your differences and your individuality is crucial if you are to remain abundant and not burn out. If you find yourself feeling like all the goals and vision talk is exhausting, *honour* that. We all have our processes. Recognise that your differences are sacred and need to be given space to flourish.

Journaling prompt: What are your small process-driven goals for your art, versus what is your vision and desires for your creative life?

For example:

- My goal is to finish off writing and recording my album by December.
 - My goal is to show up and create each day for 30 minutes.
 - My goal is to make sure I am allowed to create shitty art.
 - My goal is to share my process at least weekly.
 - My goal is to write 500 words a day.
-
- My vision is that I get to play in front of hundreds of thousands of people.
 - My vision is that I get to collaborate and co-create with x.
 - My vision is that my art funds business class trips to exotic places.
 - My vision is that I can buy my parents a new home with money from my music.

I then want you to write about any pressure you've previously put on your art. Have you expected it to achieve your vision? Have you felt frustrated by the magnitude of

your vision? What would it look like to trust that the vision is playing out in the wings, just out of sight and to focus primarily on the goals? Write about all the resistance you feel in distinguishing this. What feels like it works for you?

Chapter Six. Burning out because of procrastination.

Artists can experience a great deal of shame when we realise we are burnt out but all we have done is procrastinate. This is because we may have little or no art to show for our exhaustion.

In this chapter, I want to investigate the deeply exhausting nature of procrastination. I also want to acknowledge and relieve you of that horrible, sticking shame that comes with this specific sort of burn out. Procrastination doesn't make you a bad creator, or a bad person. As I have said multiple times within this book, you are worthy *without* producing anything. But I also want to acknowledge the deep frustration of being exhausted without anything to show for it.

I honour that pain. I know that pain. It is extremely frustrating. It is okay to feel frustrated.

Procrastination is the persistent betrayal of self, if you've read my book *For the Procrastinator*, we go into this in-depth. But in essence, procrastination is the practice of promising yourself something and then ghosting yourself. It is something that we all partake in occasionally, but when the pattern of breaking promises becomes consistent, we have a real problem. If it was anyone else doing this to you, saying they'd catch up with you and then never showing, you would put a stop to the relationship. It is rude. It is inconsiderate. It is supremely disrespectful. But we can't break up with ourselves, all we can do is deepen our dislike and distrust for ourselves. This is what happens when we leave our procrastination practices unchecked.

Procrastination is one of the most exhausting businesses we can partake in. If you are exhausted because of procrastination, please don't gaslight yourself into thinking

that there is no reason to be tired. It makes perfect sense that trying to do something and never truly achieving it is exhausting. The turmoil that is occurring in your soul — as one half of you tries to follow through on your promise, and the other half finds absolutely anything else to do — is tiring. Whenever we have a war within ourselves, we haemorrhage energy. Procrastinating is more exhausting than creating.

Procrastinating is a valid reason that we burn out. The reason I am emphasising that it is valid, is because we need to rest and re-energize when we are burnt out. But we are not good at giving ourselves rest when the cause of our exhaustion is procrastination. We will not validate our exhaustion, saying things like “how can I be tired? I’ve not got anything done!” Your exhaustion is valid, and if you want to be creatively successful, you are going to need to do two things.

- 1) Start doing the work to undo your procrastination issues.
- 2) Rest. Unashamedly. Abundantly. With no guilt.

Not only does procrastination itself haemorrhage energy, but many of us — maybe most of us — have a habit of substituting rest with procrastination.

It looks like this: you plan to create. But instead, you get distracted, you’re on Instagram, you’re on YouTube, you dip into your creating for a few mins, but then you’ve dipped out again. You’re in and out and getting very little done; by the evening, you finally give up. You’re angry and frustrated with yourself. You’re tired too. Because, as we’ve just discussed, procrastination is exhausting. But instead of letting yourself rest. You punish yourself. You say ‘I’ve already rested. I was basically online and scrolling for 3 hours. I couldn’t dare dream of serving myself and

taking an intentional break right now.’ We pretend that distraction is rest. We convince ourselves that procrastination can replace rejuvenation.

It’s not good. It’s really bad. And it’s something a lot of us do daily. And then we wonder why we are burnt out. We wonder why creating is synonymous with frustration and pushing and pain. Look at the way we treat ourselves. Look at the cycles we are stuck in.

So what must we do?

Procrastination is an issue we must look at in order to make a creatively abundant life. It is imperative we start looking at why we are in a pattern of self-betrayal. The following journaling prompts are big, take your time with each question. If procrastination is something you really struggle with, I have a whole big mama of a book that examines this, and there are lots of journaling prompts within *For the Procrastinator* too. But take your time with these questions, they will challenge you. We are rewriting extremely potent social stories, and this is big work, but we need to do it.

Journaling Prompts:

- What is the story you are telling yourself when you procrastinate from making your art? i.e. When I go on my phone during a painting session, I am telling myself that I am not good enough to finish this project.
- When you want to turn away from your art, what is your inner critic saying?

We need to notice the process of procrastination so we can recognise the narratives that have got us stuck in a loop.

For example:

When I am writing, and I feel myself wanting to do almost anything else. I am telling myself a story that the work I am not doing is not good enough, and that it will never be good enough.

When I am trying to practice my guitar, and I put it down after only a few minutes, it's because I want to go on my phone. I worry I am addicted. It numbs me from my feelings that I am not good enough, or that I don't have the stamina to be good at this.

Take as long as you want with this, the more we notice, the more we are able to heal and change. I want you to really identify the stories that are holding you back. I know you want an answer to fix the procrastination; I know all the different tricks and attention apps seem so appealing, but I promise you the most important part is noticing. Just notice what you are saying to yourself in that moment of fear.

More questions to explore:

- Am I convincing myself that procrastination is rest time?
- Do I not believe I am worthy of rest if I have procrastinated?

Really try to understand if this is a problem area for you.

- How do you treat yourself after a day of procrastination?
- What language do you use? Does it tire you? Can you see that it could be a part of your exhaustion?

Chapter Seven. Perfectionism will burn you out.

I am devoting a whole chapter to this because perfectionism is a pandemic (sorry) in the creative community, and it is an *exhausting* way to create.

Let me start with this question: does the idea of making shitty art frighten you? Is it getting in the way of flow state? Flow state is that juicy feeling of ease as we create. When it feels like the gods are working through you. When creation spills from your fingertips. Creating with flow requires being okay with making shitty work. Whereas, requiring ourselves to make perfect art all the time will stop you every time you put brush to canvas, pen to paper, voice to music. It will. Don't argue with me.

If we create expecting and demanding perfect, or near-perfect art, we will — *make no mistake* — haemorrhage energy. It will bleed from us, because every single paint stroke, word typed, photo taken, text to a client cannot reach the standard you are asking from it. Perfection isn't attainable, and your obsession with it will lead to burn out. Pretty quickly too.

I understand that it will take energy to rewrite your perfectionist dialogues and give permission to make bad art, but over time allowing yourself space to be messy and play is going to energise your practice. You have to undo the stories in your head that say that your art has to be perfect. If you're getting an inkling that perfectionism is at the core of your burn out, my book *For the Perfectionist* is there to support you as you undo your stories, and indulge in your messy magic.

Journaling Prompts to play with. (In messy handwriting, with sentences that don't make sense, with imperfect grammar!)

- Where did I inherit the belief that I have to be perfect from? (Parents, school, guardians, siblings, society?)

- What do I believe will happen if I let myself make sub-par art? Is this a realistic consequence? Can I know this to be true? Am I telling myself this story to keep me safe from potential embarrassment?

- What would happen if I wasn't worried about making sub-par art? How could I look after myself? Could I recover?

- Am I secretly competing with someone, and that is why I have high expectations? What would happen if you were to let this go, and recognise that no one is in competition with you because you are unique?

We need to settle into the painful but magical realisation that we are very frequently, mediocre. And that doesn't mean we should stop trying, it doesn't mean that we should stop sharing, it just means we are human. Not only that, but mediocre and shitty art allows for good art. We need to create bad art in order to learn, in order to get better. Shitty art is a mandatory part of the journey to greatness! Once we have fallen in love with this truth, and recognised mediocrity and shitty art as a part of our process, the pressure on our art sessions will plummet. You will stop demanding perfection and start demanding the life of your dreams instead. You will stop asking yourself for the unachievable and start achieving your goals.

You don't deserve to be treated in this way. You're behaving like a relentless coach,

asking for -more - more - more. You are being cruel to your inner child, who is just trying to do their best. You don't deserve the constant demand of being infallible. It is exhausting and it is cockblocking you from true creative abundance and energy-filled creative sessions, endless flow state and moving with ease.

You don't need to be perfect in order to make art that connects. You don't need to be perfect in order to be the artist that changes the world.

In fact, you need to be messy, fallible, scrappy, and you need to be able to point to your big ass pile of crappy art.

If you struggle with perfectionism, in your next creative session, I want you to focus on the expectations that surround your current creation. What stories are you telling yourself about success and this project? What are your expectations? Write them down, even if they are a little shocking and shameful to admit.

For example:

- *I believe that the only way that this project will be successful is if it is better than XYZ's project.*
- *This project is absolutely crap and I've been giving it everything I have, which must mean I should stop.*
- *I will be fired, let go of, laughed at if I do not produce art of exceptional quality whenever I create.*
- *I delete every sentence that isn't perfect.*
- *I throw out every version that is not exactly what I want.*
- *I don't believe in crappy first drafts. I make it good straight away by*

constantly engaging in the editing process.

Once you've identified these things, I want you to recognise that these beliefs are stealing your energy and taking away your magic. Write it down.

I acknowledge that these beliefs are leading me to burn out and taking away my joy and magic as I create.

You might not entirely believe it yet, but it's true, and we need to come home to this truth.

Then I want us to start playing with some new affirmations that give us space to play and be messy.

For example:

- *I achieve flow state, and energy filled creative sessions by allowing myself to have unlimited mistakes.*
- *Once I've made a mistake, I remind myself this is a good sign! Artists must be messy in order to find success.*
- *In my first draft process, I never look back. I allow the muses to take over my pen.*
- *When I hear my mother's voice in my head saying it's not good enough, I remind myself that that is my mother, and not me.*
- *I know my inner critic's fears are a way of trying to keep me safe. But she is*

mistaken; I am only safe when I am making art and being vulnerable.

Chapter Eight. Burning out because of imposter syndrome.

Imposter syndrome: the feeling of being a fraud, the fear of being found out. I don't know an artist, or ... a human, who hasn't experienced this sensation at some point in their life. But creatives have a particularly bad time of it. It's because we are brave and vulnerable. It's because what we do is for others to see. It's because what we do is considered a little audacious, a little out of left field, a little ... magic.

When we create but are constantly afraid of being 'found out' we get tired. So, I want to spend a little bit of time, looking at this phenomenon and investigating how we plug this particularly vicious energy leak.

Here are some of the stories we tell ourselves when we feel imposter syndrome:

- Why would anybody need my work / my voice / my art? I am just a nobody, I don't actually have anything to give.
- People will discover that I am unremarkable / a liar / a fraud, and I will be embarrassingly exposed.
- I am foolish for creating, because I am not a creator.
- I am a muggle, trying to be magic and it's embarrassing.
- I am an imposter; I am not actually an entrepreneur. I shouldn't have this responsibility. I shouldn't be trusted by others. I don't deserve any of this.

I don't want to expand on it too much, because I don't want your inner critic getting any more ideas. But you get the gist, and you can imagine how god damn exhausting

these stories are. When we show up to our art, work, creativity, business and we bombard ourselves with internal rhetoric that suggests that we are undeserving, or fraudulent, we lose energy. Fast.

Have you ever watched those *on the run* movies, or stories where someone is pretending to be who they aren't, and the tension is all about when they will be hunted down /discovered? I'm thinking about Leo, in *Catch Me if You Can*, or Michael Cain and Steve Martin's fraudsters in the comedy *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Just consuming these stories *exhausts* me. The tension of being discovered is there to make you stressed, and stress takes your energy. And this is just fiction. When we believe that we are in disguise, dressed head to toe in 'artist' / 'author' / 'entrepreneur' costume, it will exhaust you. No matter how much rest you take, if you believe that you are a fraudulent artist, it will burn you out. You're living two lives. You're holding up a pretence. You've got too many balls in the air.

So, what the solution? Give up? Realise that you're a sham and go back to living your 'true' identity as muggle? No. This is a big topic, but we're going to dip our toe in for a minute. It's time to realise, you're not pretending. It's time to realise you're not a fraud, not an imposter — you're simply growing, healing, becoming the person you were meant to become.

Why do we feel imposter syndrome?

We convince ourselves we are frauds to try and protect ourselves from failure and embarrassment. It is trying to make sure you don't get 'too big for your boots'. You are saying to yourself, "Don't actually get caught up in this performance! Don't do

anything too dangerous (read: brave, courageous, vulnerable)! You'll be found out.” Imposter syndrome keeps you from going ‘too far’. These stories are trying to keep you ‘safe’.

But what is really happening is that we are experiencing growing pains. We are evolving, we are healing, we are growing. When we choose to take our creativity seriously, we are doing *serious* growing. We are following our calling. Imposter syndrome means you are levelling the fuck up. The feeling of being a fraud is a pallbearer to the coffin of your old self. When you feel like a fraud, you can rest easy because it is a sign that you are doing the work, and that change is afoot. It might not be comfortable, but since when has change and growth ever been comfortable?

We need to realise that the feeling of being an imposter is a good sign. Whenever you start hearing the story that you are “too much”, or you feel the fear of being discovered, instead of using all your previous energy to fight it, you can settle into it.

So instead of:

I am a joke and a fraud, I shouldn't be doing this.

Affirm that:

I am doing the work I am meant to be doing.

So instead of:

I feel like I am about to be discovered as a novice and an idiot.

Affirm that:

This feeling is a sign that I am levelling up. I can relax into it.

Being a creator and doing the brave and vulnerable thing takes energy. When we take our art seriously, we are faced with all our darkness and all our light. It is not only a technical and craft specific challenge. It is an emotional and spiritual practice that requires a shit tonne of inner work. But, it doesn't mean you need to be fighting yourself the entire time. Allowing yourself to see that imposter syndrome is a signpost to abundance and growth, should ease the energetic outpouring. It should stop making it such a fight. You can realise that the 'costume' you have on isn't from your mum's dress-up box, they're just new clothes — and you're not used to seeing yourself in them yet. Give it time. You look incredible.

Journaling Prompt: Is imposter syndrome taking my energy? When do I feel most strongly like a fraud?

This is an interesting question because it can indicate where big growth is happening. Does it happen when you speak about your art to others? Does it happen when you share your art? Or is it when you're in the middle of the creative process? Does it stop you creating altogether, and does the *thought* of creating bring on these feelings?

There is an opportunity for incredible growth and magic in the imposter syndrome space. Investigate it — witness your growth and levelling up in that arena.

Acknowledge, in your journal, that this feeling has the potential to not hold you back, but move you forward.

Here are some suggestions of ways you can support yourself during an imposter syndrome outbreak:

You could write a letter to yourself to re-read when you feel like a fraud. You could write mantras for yourself to use. You could reach out to someone. You could make protocols to follow. You could mother your inner child. How can you support yourself, and bring energy into your life when you're in the feelings? Can you create habits and routines to support yourself, so that you can combat your imposter syndrome with a defiant - I am doing the work?

Is anyone in your life contributing to the feeling of fraudulence?

I want to acknowledge that often, within a creator's life, there will be people who label you as an imposter. People expect you to stay stagnant. They will expect you to never grow or change. So, as you level up and chase your creative calling, they will label you "imposter" because of their expectation that you should never grow. This can be incredibly difficult. I want you to take time to notice if this is happening in any area of your life. Acknowledge the impact it has upon you. And then acknowledge the fact that you are not made for stagnancy, you are made for evolution. Can you create boundaries with these people who are determined to keep you the same, forever?

Chapter Nine. Relearning how to rest.

One of the biggest issues I have had with rest is that even when I would give myself time off I would have no idea what to do and I would end up spiralling in some sort of depressing, black hole of what the fuck is the point ... ya feel me? We've forgotten how to rest. We don't know how we refuel anymore. In a world of glorified production and hustle, where our focus is always on — what more can I do — we have neglected rest, delight and indulgence for so long that we no longer know how to take care of ourselves.

Certainly, scrolling, getting lost on the internet, and consuming media dump after media dump rarely leaves us feeling rejuvenated, yet it is where so many of us turn when we are exhausted and need rest.

It literally happened to me just now. I felt frustrated, tired and unmotivated. *I'll just take a quick break*, I said. I then grabbed my phone, and I wiled away over an hour, only to return to work feeling lethargic, annoyed and not rested at all. In fact, now I feel overstimulated. I know you know what I'm talking about, yet so many of us would declare 'media time' as rest time. Despite it very, very rarely giving us any rest. (Before we move on, I would like to add a caveat that social media and streaming services can be a good rest tool for me at times. If I am intentional about what I want to consume and have some boundaries, it is a place where I can be refuelled, but I've *got* to be intentional about it.)

The stories we are told about rest are that it looks a certain way. Rest is slothly, zoning out, not being present. Binging Netflix; binging the internet. It is an escapism from our minds and bodies. We are taught that rest is not being present, it's being absent. It's using the numbing tools, to fully opt-out of the present moment. In this chapter, we are going to look at how we can re-learn to rest. How we can connect to our inner child, and ask them — what do you need? What do you need to feel good and whole and energetic?

I want to indulge in some of my own personal story as we look into this. When I decided

to commit to my creativity, and take my writing seriously, my relationship with rest began to change. For many years I thought I was broken. I would go to my therapist and tell her, I cannot rest — I don't know how to. Something is wrong with me. Together, we would create lists of things that I could try and do in the 'rest times'. But literal pages of rest ideas were hardly making a dent in my burn out. I could've booked a six-week holiday in the Maldives, and I wasn't going to get any rest. Because I felt guilty about it. I felt I didn't deserve rest. I was constantly doing math in my head. *How long have I worked for? How productive had I been? How many minutes of rest will that translate to? If I work like a dog between 8-12, can I rest from 1-3? No! That's far too long. 4 hours can't equate to two hours off. That's so indulgent. You should be so embarrassed.* Things got very bad when I began working for myself, from home. I constantly viewed my work to rest ratios through other people's eyes. Projecting my own issues with rest and hustle onto others. I was convinced that my friends and family thought I was lazy and lost. It just didn't matter how peaceful the relaxing was if I was still buying into the idea that hustle culture was the only way I was 1) going to make it as a creative and 2) the only way I was going to be worthy as a human.

But even as I began to unpack the stories about hustle, even as I disentangled my own worth and brilliance from how hard I work, I still felt like I was missing something. *Maybe I'm just different*, I thought. Maybe some people just have to be always on the move. Maybe some people are born to always be *doing*?

I even began to fear rest. This is something I see in my clients all the time. We have spent so much time on the go, that the silence, the boredom, the absence of anything to give you a sense of worth becomes frightening. Much like many fear meditation, afraid of what they will discover in the quiet of their mind, I began to fear rest. I was terrified that I would find myself lacking and not enough without my work and craft. I was terrified past depression and anxiety would descend upon me in the quiet.

When I started my journey of intentionally implementing rest time, a lot of my fears came true. All of the stories about how I wasn't good enough or deserving of being an artist were louder in the quiet. All that I was masking with my addiction to busy would come tumbling out — and my antidote was media addiction.

But this practice of resting, feeling overwhelmed, binging out my phone to numb out the pain was leaving me *more* exhausted than just simply keeping on working.

I have met so many creatives and entrepreneurs who experience rest in a similar fashion. I know someone whose body physically decays when he rests. He takes a break and immediately he is vomiting, getting colds, his body just shuts down. We've developed an actual intolerance to peace.

It has to change. Rest is your birthright. We should be able to experience slowness, and quietness without panic, without guilt, without pain.

Journaling Prompt

So *how* can we fall back in love with rest? We need to bring this home to your own personal experience with rest. It will be unique to you. And before we begin the absolutely enchanted process of relearning how we rest. I am going to invite you to recognise what happens to your body, to your mind, to your soul when you take time off.

We've obviously been examining your reaction to rest this whole book, but let's ask some specific questions now:

- When you take time off, do you feel rested?
- Do you like resting? (Answer could be yes! Embrace it if that's so!)
- If yes, why? Detail all the delicious details about why you love to take time off. Ask yourself, why don't I do more of this? Is it guilt? Is it fear?
- If not, why?

- What about rest makes you feel uncomfortable? Really sink back into those moments where rest feels icky, and get investigating.

For example:

When I rest, I feel itchy ... I am so painfully aware of my addiction to devices and it makes me feel shame. When I am resting, I also become aware of how tired I am, and this upsets me and makes me feel like I can do very little. It makes me want to zone out and numb out and just ignore the whole world. But I know that spending my rest time on my phone or watching trash on tv makes me feel way worse.

Reacquainting ourselves with slowness and peace is bigger work than deciding what to do with your day off. This is a way of life.

On that note, what does rest mean to you? How do you envision it holding you and supporting you throughout life? This doesn't need to be a list of activities that help you rest, though if it feels in service to you, you're welcome to write a list. But more than a suggestions list of relaxing activities, this prompt is here for you to be abstract. It's here for you to be a visionary. How would you like rest to soak into the cracks of your soul? How would you like your life to look? What stories do you want to be telling yourself?

This prompt can be explored however you like. Journal about it. Use your words. But you might also want to create a Pinterest board about it, write a song about it, make art about it. Express yourself however you need to when exploring what a restful life looks like for you.

Rest to me is about sanctifying. It is seeing the holy in everything, even washing up. It is going slowly, at my own pace, continuously coming home to myself and the worlds within me. It is sea salt in my hair and serving myself by moving my body. It is treasuring the tiny things.

It's allowing myself nostalgia, and wrapping myself up in memories of Christmas and Italy, and the English walks with the trees and their stories. It is rubbing my hands together, and feeling my calluses, and sinking into this moment now. It is playing patience with a cup of tea. It is watching a movie with blankets. It's cheese platters and bottles of good wine. It is my coffee every morning. It is more who I am than what I am doing. I am rest.

It is a wooing and romancing of self. It is the constant reaffirmation and re-remembering that I do not need to do anything to be worthy of softness, and picnic blankets, and avocado on toast with chilli and lemon. It's dressing my long hair up in a bandanna, and loving how it looks. It is slowly brushing my hair and cleaning my face. It is Christmas adverts. It is rosé in Australian summers. It is visiting castles with my family and wondering at the history of the places we tread. Rest is the lens in which I view the world, Amie tinted glasses. It is realising that every moment is a chance to woo myself and cherish my inner child, delighting in her, and letting her eat the lemon sherbets in the sparkling wrappers. It is crying to music, because it touches my soul. Puzzles and tea. Being alone and daydreaming. Revelling in the change of seasons, and letting Mother Earth wrap me up in the way the breeze smells different at this time of year.

My rest is found in fireplaces and the fact that most of nature chooses to be green.

I choose the path of continuously reminding myself that I am worthy. Like a lover, doting on their One. A relationship of wooing and delights. I to I. Dancing, and resting, and delighting. Stress makes us old, exhaustion makes us sick. Why do we aspire to it? When we could conjure enchantment after enchantment that feeds us and bathes us in the sunlight our cells have been craving.

Chapter Ten. Do we need to take action?

In one of those delicious ironic moments, this chapter is going to be about taking action. Because we cannot thrive as artists and creators without assessing why we are burning out, and then - making change - and whilst so much change can happen internally, external change is mandatory too.

This chapter is a call to action, a call to rest. For so many of us, we are burning the candle at both ends and the only way to stop it is to extinguish one side. Or to, at least, create some fucking firm boundaries with one or both flames. This requires action.

What is the thing that takes most of your energy?

Whether it be your muggle job, a relationship, or your particular art project — I'm going to do the scary thing and ask *the* question. Can you cut it out of your life? Can you quit? Can you leave the relationship? Can you stop? Can you walk away?

I don't know your circumstances, so this question might seem absurd or a little extreme. But it should be asked. We should always be brave enough to ask this question: can you walk away?

For the time being, I just want you to notice whether or not it is possible — not whether you want to, or whether you ever could.

Is it possible for you to quit? Leave? Stop?

Yes or No?

If you believe the answer is no, I'm going to ask you one more time just to make sure you're being totally honest with yourself here. Can you quit? Leave? Stop? Is it physically possible for you to do this?

The reason I am hammering this home so hard is because we create so many stories that make us feel imprisoned. Trapped. Absolutely without choice. I want you to take some of the agency back. So, whether stopping, leaving, quitting would mean there were difficult or even dire consequences - are you able to? Recognise your agency and power.

For example, my 16-year-old dog exhausts me. He takes so much of my energy, gives me anxiety, and he takes up a lot of my time. Could I leave him? My first instinct is, “No! He’s been by my side since I was 13 years old. He would be confused. He wouldn’t know where I had gone. Fuck I have to stop thinking about it because it destroys my heart.”

BUT I *could* walk away from him. There are options, I could find someone to adopt him and take care of him in his old age.

Do I want to do this? Literarily, I don’t want to do anything less. But I could do it. It is my CHOICE to stay with my old boy and take care of him. I have agency in this.

Let’s take the agency back. When it feels like it isn’t a choice, it can feel even heavier. When we acknowledge that we are here because of choice. We are powerful. We are not imprisoned. Obligation is an energy sucker; we are not obliged.

If this is about quitting your job.

If this is about quitting a job, I want to remind you that quitting a job is a very very possible thing to do. So many of us get stuck in jobs, we are committed to the belief that our work is the only thing holding our lives together. And that might be partly true, but there is nearly always a way to make it work. Again, I want you to start

claiming the power of agency and choice here.

I also want to nuance this conversation by reminding you that a lot of people use their jobs as a scapegoat for all the issues they are not addressing. So, is it your actual job that is causing exhaustion and unease, or are you projecting other issues onto it? I have worked with and witnessed many people who label their muggle work as the thing that stops them from being able to create. I have then proceeded to witness them quit their jobs to follow their calling. It is only then that they notice that it wasn't their muggle job that was in their way, it was themselves. They had perfectionist stories stopping them from creating, they had issues with feeling worthy of making art, they were chronic procrastinators. A plethora of issues made themselves known and it became painfully apparent that it wasn't work that they needed to quit, they needed to do the inner work. Muggle work was the scapegoat. This is a nuanced conversation. We need to open and honest with ourselves. Quitting a job that is hurting you, and stealing your creative spark can be life-changing and liberating, but we must be honest with ourselves and look at the situation from all angles.

If this is about quitting a creative project.

Yes a lot of the time, we need to push through, finish the project. See our babies through to completion. But sometimes, we need to quit. Again, we always need to give ourselves permission to quit. We are often caged by the belief that we cannot quit because of all the time we've already invested. The sunk cost fallacy. We want to follow through on what we've started because we believe the cost of the time and money we have invested is worth more than the potential of what would happen if we

quit. I want to remind you that the time is gone, you cannot get it back. If you invested money in it, the money is gone. Sinking more time and more money into a project that you resent, that is holding you back, that is burning you out is not the price to pay. What's done is done. Do not martyr yourself. There is no benefit to pursuing it in the name of lost time.

Quitting is something we are discouraged from doing as a creative, but always consider what room the quitting might give you for more joy, creativity, art, and magic.

Just as with quitting your job, this is a nuanced conversation. We have to get very real with ourselves. Too many of us quit on our art because we are unwilling to witness ourselves at anything less than perfection. Quitting is complicated, and we need to be honest with ourselves about the motivations behind our desire to stop.

If this is about a relationship.

Relationships that burn you out take away your zest for life and dampen your creative abundance need to change. Action needs to be taken. Whether it's your babies, your partner, your boss, your friends. It doesn't matter. Action needs to be taken.

Boundaries need to be made, and they need to be put into effect. You deserve to feel energised and you deserve to have time and energy to do what you are called to do and love to do. Recognise and journal about all the resistance you are having to the idea of taking action here. Start noticing the stories you have that are holding you back from action. For example:

I couldn't because I'm a parent and it's my duty to be there all the time.

I couldn't because he'll be so angry and won't understand.

I couldn't because I'll lose them, they'll laugh at me, I'll be alone.

This is big work, go as slowly as you need. But start writing down some action points. Write down the ones that you're pretty sure you'll never actually do, read them over and over again and ask yourself what's in your way. You deserve to be surrounded by people who support your creative calling.

Now actually creating these boundaries is going to require you to take ownership of your creative calling. It's going to require vulnerability and bravery as you say things like this:

I am taking my novel writing seriously, and I need your support and respect.

I am choosing to invest more of myself in this business. It's going to be more than a side hustle, can we discuss how this can work for us? Because I need more time without the kids.

I am an artist, and I don't feel like you are respecting my studio space.

I cannot see you on Saturday's anymore. I am busy. (No explanation needed!)

Boundary setting is a very vulnerable and scary process. Take care of yourself as you do take these brave steps. But remember, we need you. We need your art, and boundary setting is an integral process that you need to go through in order to ensure your creative dreams have space to become manifest.

We've looked at taking actions through boundary setting and protecting our energy. Now I want to look at how we can take action and add rest into our lives. Let's start truly indulging in some action items that will bring us peace.

Can you carve out extra time for yourself?

I want you to think about both finding time during your regular schedule, and

carving out long extended rest. Yes, you deserve both. You will always deserve long luxurious holidays *and* ample rest time during the everyday schedule.

I want you to, once again, put down all those obligations, and start dreaming about where you'd ideally like to implement some time for yourself. When in your week would you like to have time off? Would you like to take all of Friday off of work? Would you like to take a slow morning before work begins? Would you like to have three weeks off in the summer?

Give yourself permission to daydream, and every time the 'Oh but It's just not possible with the way my life is' voice rears its head, just tell it to take a quick break for a moment. Just ask it to take a time out. We are dreaming here. It's good to dream.

Now that we've done that, I want you to let the doubts and scepticism have some time on the page. Listen to what this voice has to say. Listen to its protests. I want you to try to **witness** them, rather than **be** them. Listen to the protestations about why you can't have the time to rest that you've just been daydreaming about. Once it's had its say, I want you to re-read what you've written.

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you re-read, write down the answers:

- Is this voice being reasonable? (They might be! They might be somewhat reasonable, but simultaneously be being a bit dramatic. That's okay. Get curious. But I really want you to seriously ask this question.)
- Are they being overly pessimistic?
- Does this voice perhaps secretly enjoy the idea that you're too busy to rest? Do they love the idea that you're a hustler? I.e. is there a sense of pride hidden under the words?

- If you listen to this voice, will there ever be any change in your life? Will you ever find a more sustainable and nourishing way of living and creating?

- Can you notice fear in this voice? If so, what is it afraid of? Losing income? Losing the appearance of being busy? Not being a 'good' parent? Letting people down? Seeming indulgent? Fear of not deserving rest? Fear of not knowing what to do with rest? Identify the fear.

We are doing this exercise because often that voice thinks it is being 'practical' and 'responsible', but in reality, this is the voice that holds us back from a truly abundant life. It gets in the way of true change that will call in rest, creativity and joy. We must start learning to identify this voice so that whenever it pops up, we can recognise it for what it is.

The final journal exercise for this section is negotiating with this internal voice. I want you to commit to a change: adding rest into your week, adding a movie night to your routine, adding a card game with friends on a Thursday, adding meditation to your mornings. Look back to your notes from the 'we've forgotten how to rest' chapter and start implementing rest into your week.

By the end of this journaling session, I want you to have action items, and I want you to do one today. It could be really small.

Like putting up a sign on your study door that says: between 7-8pm it is my alone time — please leave me to rest.

Or it could be big, really big, like quitting a job.

Take action today.

Today.

Today.

Today.

Remember that resistance, pain and emotional unrest is a sign that you are on the precipice of change and magic. You just have to follow through. Change happens when we take action.

Chapter Eleven. Willpower versus habit

We are now going to talk strategy. How can we write bestsellers, make art that changes people's lives, impact people with our creativity, whilst staying energised, alive and joyful? Habits. Ritual. Structure. This might seem like a somewhat boring chapter, but it is terribly exciting.

There is a story, (yes, another one,) that creators need a huge amount of will power to get art *arted*. The story goes that everyday we awake and go into battle to combat our demons and face our craft. The Muses might visit us one Tuesday a month but other than that we struggle and battle to get thirty minutes of productive creating into our day.

And this might very well be what creativity has looked like for you, because you have been using will power and will power alone. It's not fair to ask yourself to show up and create using only willpower. It's not fair to you. It's not fair to the art you are endeavouring to create. We need habit, we need ritual, we need structure.

Procrastinators need it more than anyone. Because when we create habit, we repair our relationship with ourselves. We prove to ourselves that we can show up for ourselves when we say we are going to. We believe in ourselves again. We don't feel like we are holding our lives together by the power of the mind.

We can relax.

The entrepreneur that has strong structures and habits supporting her can take days off without worrying that her whole business will collapse on itself. She can trust that she will get back into the swing of things, because she has systems and habits to fall back on. She doesn't need to expend huge amounts of energy worrying that because

she's taking a break, she might never return to her projects. The habits hold her, they give her space for re-cooperation. They allow for rest. They allow for trust.

The cost of using willpower to complete creative endeavours is too high. There is an easier way. It might be challenging initially, in fact, it will be. But then, you can start doing -the- work. You can start reaching higher, impacting more people, discovering things about your practice that are more magic than you could ever imagine. The business will grow, your creations will expand, and you will not be PUSHING. You will just be creating. There will be Ease.

So, what's the actual difference between habit and willpower? Habit is the brushing of your teeth before bed. Habit is the coffee you make in the morning. It requires little thought. There is no debate as to whether you will or won't brush your teeth, or drink the coffee. You do it every day, so you do. The decision fatigue is eliminated because there is no decision. The "should I or shouldn't I" conversation is fucking exhausting. This is what we want to eliminate. Of course, you're going to go be with your paints every weekday from 6-7, because that's what you always do. You show up. Habits are consistent. It doesn't necessarily mean every day. But it means regularly and usually on a schedule.

Habits don't mean perfect art — perfection is anathema to habits. Habits don't mean you don't take breaks. Habits don't mean that you are productive all the time. It means you show up consistently for your endeavours. It means your creativity is a pattern in your life. It means you can stop forcing yourself to create and save some energy. Habits can save you from burn out.

If you don't resonate with the words habit/systems/structure, I understand. As

creators, I think we can be hesitant to sterilise our process with words that are typically reserved for more corporate-like matters. The language we use is important. Find language that supports you. I personally enjoy the word 'ritual'. It allows the magic to stay with me as I create art practices that are routine, and part of my day to day.

I also want to acknowledge that a lot of creators want to work solely with the muses. They want to work only when inspiration strikes. This sort of creating is neither wrong nor right. I think the concept is, however, romanticised. It leads to inconsistent art and often abandoned projects. If it works for you, it works for you. But I have met very, very few that it serves. I promise you, the muses will visit you more and more, the more you show up when they're nowhere to be seen. Simultaneously, the more consistent and habitual you are with your practice, the more energy you are going to have.

Steering away from using force and willpower to create and moving towards habit is going to preserve your precious energy, but the habits need to serve you. YOU. Your habits need to look unique, because you are unique. They need to incorporate rest. Because you need rest. Having habits will allow you to get your energy back, but having habits that are mirroring other creators that you know, or having habits that you feel you 'should' have, can be just as exhausting as solely using willpower. If you are a creator, entrepreneur, or artist that already has habits, this is the time to check in with them. Do they serve you? Do they honour your rhythms? Are you still tired? Do they need to be re-looked at? Working twelve hours a day isn't a useful habit. For most of us, writing 5000 words a day isn't useful either. When I look at the habits I

implement, they are small, always achievable, and always in service to me.

Here are the habits that I have implemented in my day to day life:

1) I do breathwork in bed, three rounds of Wim Hoff breath work before I get up. I can be on my phone whilst I do it!

2) Journaling. Everyday. One page minimum.

3) If I am writing a book in first draft, 500 words a day after journaling. ONLY 500. And they are allowed to be shitty. If I am editing, I designate small amounts to get through each day.

4) I have a cold shower, minimum 15 seconds, at the end of my warm shower.

Every day I ask myself, why would today be the day I don't do it?

5) I get into the sea once a day. I only have to run in and run out. This is still hard. I'm on day 31 at time of writing, so she's still being ingrained as a habit.

6) I meditate for 5 minutes minimum before I get into bed.

None of these habits require perfection. All of them are doable on days when I am feeling like shit. Which means, my habits set me up for success. Every day. And on my good days, I do more. And I feel like a fucking genius. These habits fuel me, they energise me. None of them use willpower any more, because they are so ingrained in my routine. It is ... dare I say it, easy.

And even on the days it doesn't feel easy, it's doable.

This chapter might seem to be a lot about work. And it is. But it's about working wisely. It's about making sure our creative process isn't draining us of our magic. I want to finish this chapter by talking about integrating REST habits. Because just as exhausting as it is using solely willpower to work, using willpower to rest is also

exhausting. Can you use the power of habits to integrate daily peace times? We'll investigate this further in the prompts below.

Journaling Prompt: Do you use willpower to create? Or do you use habits and rituals?

For some of us, it will be both. Unpack your creative processes and look at how they're playing out. What does the feeling of decision fatigue feel like to you? When does it happen? Get curious.

If you are yet to have habits supporting your art, what habits would serve you? How can you implement them? Make sure the habits aren't too big. We do not need to make such big changes that we set ourselves up to fail. Ask yourself what small habit can you integrate each day that would support your creative process.

Are your current habits not serving you because your boundaries surrounding the habits aren't respected? E.g., your habit of writing 500 words each day before work is not respected by your family, and you are constantly interrupted. Do you need to make firmer boundaries around your habits? Do you need to take your habits more seriously?

Are your current habits asking too much of you? Are they in service to you? Or are they in service to hustle culture?

Could you look at implementing rest habits? Reflect back onto your rest goals from earlier in the book. Just as it is exhausting to use willpower to work, it can be just as exhausting using will power to rest. Can you implement habits where you do things that bring energy in? As you saw from my previous example, most of my habits

surround supporting my body and mind. Breathwork, meditation, time in the sea.

Could you implement reading hours? A time where you watch your show each day?

Crossword time from 7-8 each Saturday and Sunday. Just as with your work habits, your rest habits should be non-negotiable.

Chapter Twelve. Chronic illness and disability.

This is an important discussion to have. Chronically ill people and the disabled are constantly dealing with the glorification of busy and productivity, with little to no consideration for those who do not have the ability to be productive like those with able bodies and consistently good mental health.

I have been so hesitant to write this chapter. But after a particularly bad battle with my own chronic illness over the past few months, I decided that this chapter needed to be written. To honour those of us with fewer spoons than the rest.

I want to share a little bit of my own story, something that I've not done publicly yet. I have always been a tired creator, and I have always had issues with energy. I have also dealt with pretty consistent and chronic pain since around the age of eleven or twelve. I think for so many of us with chronic health issues and disabilities, we need to acknowledge that this plays a big part in our creation process, in our relationship to productivity, and in the experience of burn out.

I trigger myself when I ask the question, “but why am I so tired?” or “So many other people can do so much more than me.” I have always felt woefully inadequate as a ‘doer’ simply because I cannot do as much as others do, I get too tired. I have to sacrifice my own health in order to keep up. I have to pay so much more than many others do, when I do. This is a journey for me. Sometimes I think I might only be at the beginning, but it is a journey of accepting the realities of having a chronic illness and therefore having less energy, and having less time to give to 1) social activities 2) work 3) creativity.

I want to write this chapter to give those who experience anything like this the

ability to create space for themselves. To understand that it's okay; that we can't give as much as others can. And most importantly, to understand that it doesn't make us any less important, magical, brilliant, needed.

This past month I have tried to take care of myself. I postponed the release of this book. I pulled back on all my commitments. I pulled in a plethora of self-care practices. I am meditating, on a million different supplements, taking pain relief, I am doing my breathwork, I am resting, I am doing all the things that all the professionals tell me to do. But I have only got more and more tired. As the new year approached, people started asking the regular questions—what are you doing next? What are your goals for next year? And I could hardly look at these people, because my body and my mind had taken such a toll. I was so fucking tired. So unable to maintain this sort of visionary energy. I needed permission for that. I needed to ground myself in the understanding that my body is not like most bodies, and rest doesn't necessarily equate to health and energy. And that didn't mean I was doing it wrong. It is just the way my body is.

For lots of bodies, rest won't mean rejuvenation.

I have spent a lot of my life blaming myself for being unable to create and maintain energy like others. I believed I was inherently lazy, not ill. I believed that if I just went to another doctor, just ran another test, just changed my diet, then I would be energetic and healed, and it was my fault that I was staring at nothing for hours on a Tuesday at 11 am. There was so much self-blame.

I write this feeling woefully unqualified to talk to the many creators who are chronically ill and disabled. I know only my own experience, and I am still only just

undoing the stories around my health and wellbeing. But I still really wanted to include this chapter, even though my thoughts are early in their development, because so many creators move through these situations, and we deserve the acknowledgement that we move through it differently — all of us to varying degrees — but all together in the fact that we just don't have as much to give as most, and we don't deserve to beat ourselves up for that. We have fewer spoons, and that is okay. We still create magic. We are still artists.

Chapter Thirteen. Your own divine pace.

I am so proud of you. Wherever you are at right now, I am proud of you. In your stillness, as you read this. I see you. You are here to create magic. You are here to create magic at your own divine pace.

To finish off this journey, I want to bring us home to the fact that there is no time cap on your art. Your art will not expire. It's not a race. Your pacing is unique and holy. You are allowed to go slow.

As I've said a dozen times in a dozen different ways in this book, we are not taught to honour our own timing. But it's time to relearn what works for us. Are we slower 'than the rest'? Do we prefer to create in the evenings? Do we like to create lying in our beds? Or in the company of our kin? Whatever it is, I hope we can all go on the journey of falling back in love with our unique way of conjuring magic. And I hope we can go on this journey slowly, leisurely, and luxuriously.

Fuck the glorification of hustle. You can achieve all your wildest creative dreams without burning out. Without swearing off rest. Without sacrificing your gentleness.

Now go, take a nap. Watch your show. Read a book. Just Be.

You are so very worthy without doing a thing.

Amie

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To my husband Jimmy. Who is the King of resting. Thank you for reminding me of the joy that there is to have in the quiet moments.

To every precious soul who has followed me on this journey, who knows what it is to be a creative and who has witnessed me as I navigate my own artistry. I am so grateful for you.

I also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where I work and live, the Guringai people and pay my respects to Elders past and present. I celebrate the stories, culture and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of all communities who also work and live on this land.

A note about sharing For The Burnt Out Artist.

I am so grateful for your patronage and that we can go on this journey together.

You are always welcome to share words from this book, as long as I am credited clearly.

Thank you for respecting and understanding the work that went into creating the this book. I ask you not to steal or pass on my work without paying for it. This is the culmination of years and years of work. Thank you for respecting that and for seeing me.