

When Creativity Flourishes

Description



This summer I walked out my back door and groaned. The mulberry tree dropped a plethora of berries on the patio. There was a berry every two inches in each direction. Some berries get mercifully eaten by wildlife. Most

just seem to await their fate of returning to soil.

Iâ??m tempted to be annoyed because such a great quantity of mulberries begins to cause unpleasant aromas to oneâ??s nostrils during the process of returning to soil. Not to mention they attract a multitude of insects Iâ??d rather not have invade my property. And they turn your feet purple when you walk on them. But then I remember. Mulberries are just another invitation to enjoy the nature of seasons.

Spring is an invitation to plant gardens and tap maple trees for their sweet sap, summer is an invitation to collect hickory husks for dyeing linen (and picking mulberries to eat), fall is an invitation to chop down trees for firewood, and unlike the others, the dreaded winter is a special invitation for creativity.

Recently I read something my sister, Anna, wrote describing the importance of being truthful in creative nonfiction writing. She had a very interesting insight. She said that creativity doesnâ??t thrive in the absence of boundaries, rather, creativity flourishes within the constraints of boundaries. Limits are actually the best fuel for creation.



Thatâ??s why winter is a special time. The long dark nights, the bitter cold, the absence of color on the snow laden landscapes, the absence of signs of life among the plant speciesâ?¦ it can all be quite depressing. Those are the boundaries, the limits that winter imposes on us. But instead of viewing them

as burdens to endure, I wonder if we can view them as channels for our creativity to flourish within.

My town is nestled among the rolling hills next to the Mississippi. There is a popular path that goes along the river. If you go for a walk, most evenings you will find young and old couples enjoying the sunset together, groups of kids who are impressively good at skateboarding, the cyclists zooming by, and the heavy breath of joggers as they approach from behind and bounce about as they pass. Sometimes when Iâ??m walking, I think about how if the river wasnâ??t pooled up by the boundaries of its banks, the barges couldnâ??t carry grain up and down the river, and we wouldnâ??t bother building this nice path here where we meet friends and enjoy the sunset. If the water was free to go anywhere, there wouldnâ??t be enough in one place to have a river at all. Boundaries sometimes create opportunities.

If winter is an especially difficult season for you, if the increased hours of darkness gnaw at your inner sanctum of joy as if each day is one step closer to the barricade being broken, thatâ??s so hard. Iâ??m sorry this struggle is something you have to go to war with each year.

This season as we get closer to the depth of darkness, I want to encourage you to add a new weapon to your arsenal. Practice viewing the darkness and cold as a limitation that is inviting you into increased creativity. Press in. Perhaps there are ideas waiting to be picked in the winter just like the mulberries waiting to be picked in the summer.

What are some other ways you have learned to cope with the darkness of winter?

CATEGORY

1. COMMUNITY
2. WELLNESS

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Date Created
December 24, 2020
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