

Everyday Creativity

by Dewitt Jones

1. Creativity is the ability to look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary-

“What is creativity? Having spent my life in one creative endeavor after another, I can tell you it’s not something magical or mystical. It’s something very simple. To me, it’s just a moment—a moment where we look at the ordinary, but we see the extraordinary. It happens all the time in my photography. Look at the ordinary. See the extraordinary. We’ve all done it. We’ve all had those moments when the world was extraordinary. And we all know how good it feels when it happens.”

2. Every act can be a creative one-

“I think many of us were raised thinking that we couldn’t be creative. When I was growing up, creativity was always related to art, and art to painting and sculpture. If you weren’t an artist, forget it, you weren’t creative. But, if creativity is just falling in love with the world, then everything I do can be a creative act. My life can be my art — whether I’m taking a photograph, or working with a client, or raising a family, or volunteering in my community. In every act we have the potential to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.”

3. Creativity is a matter of perspective-

“Creativity is a matter of perspective. Let me explain. The first thing I have to decide as a photographer is: What lens do I have on my camera? In other words, what perspective am I going to view a problem from to find that extraordinary view? And if I don’t have the right perspective going in, I don’t have a chance of finding something truly extraordinary.... The lens we choose when we view a problem is critical. Our perspective is what holds the key to whether the solution is ordinary or extraordinary.”

4. There's always more than one right answer-

"In fact, that's probably the most important thing about creativity that I've learned from my photography. There's more than one right answer....But it seems so simple, but it is the key to creativity. There are a thousand ways to come at a problem to find a creative solution. And I know that so clearly from my photography but sometimes it's just so hard to bring over into the rest of my life.

You can't stop with the first right answer. Hey, the first right answer is just doing your job. Anyone ought to be able to come up with one right answer. When we work from that perspective, then as we press out looking for the next right answer, we do so not in terror, but comfortably, knowing that it's going to be there for you."

5. Turn problems into opportunities-

"When you come at the world with a sense of abundance rather than scarcity, you get more and more comfortable reframing problems into opportunities, finding new angles, coming at the same elements from a totally different direction, and being confident that the next right answer will be there."

6. Don't be afraid to make mistakes-

"If I were afraid of mistakes, this is the kind of photograph [the first picture of his daughter] that would cause me to put my cameras in the closet and never take them out again. But I don't even think about it. I'm just looking for the next right answer. Do you know that the average Geographic article is shot in 400 rolls of film? That's over 14,000 images to get 30! I'm not worried about making a few mistakes.

"If I were afraid to make mistakes, if I never took the risk to think out of the box, to press the edge of my envelope, to search for that next right answer, I'd still be back here at the beginning wondering why my didn't work."

7. Break the pattern-

“When we’re not afraid to make mistakes and when we believe there’s more than one right answer, that’s when we begin to break the patterns in our lives.

Patterns, systems — they’re incredibly important. We can’t function without them. But, we all know that if we let those patterns go too long unquestioned, they become our prisons.

When we begin to break the patterns in our lives, then everything is always in question, even when it’s going well. That’s the very basis of creativity. You’re always saying, ‘Why do we do it this way? How could we do it better?’

8. Train your technique-

We have to train our technique. That’s critical, because vision without technique is blind. In photography, I want my technique honed to a razor’s edge, so that when there is a decisive moment, I’m not worrying about what film is in my camera. I’m there, ready to capture that extraordinary view.

So I have to train my technique, then I have to put myself in the place of most potential — the place where I have the most possibilities of finding multiple right answers.”

9. You have to really care-

“Creativity isn’t just about vision and passion. It’s about technique and perseverance as well; a balance of emotion and intellect that springs from really caring about what you do, really caring about the people you work with and the projects you work on.

When the people I photograph know that they are as important to me as my pictures, they open like flowers. And, I find that the light that really illuminates my pictures is not the light from the outside — it’s the light from within.”

10. Closing comments by Dewitt Jones-

I've shared with you some of the techniques that I use to access my creativity. And I hope that you can take them and apply them in your own lives. Because by being creative, we really do fall in love with the world and in that act, we transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

When I'm being creative, I see that life really is all around me, all the time, presenting me with endless possibilities. Showing me a world full of light and beauty.

That perspective, that window, is always there if we're open enough to see it. And when we see it, the world truly is ... extraordinary!