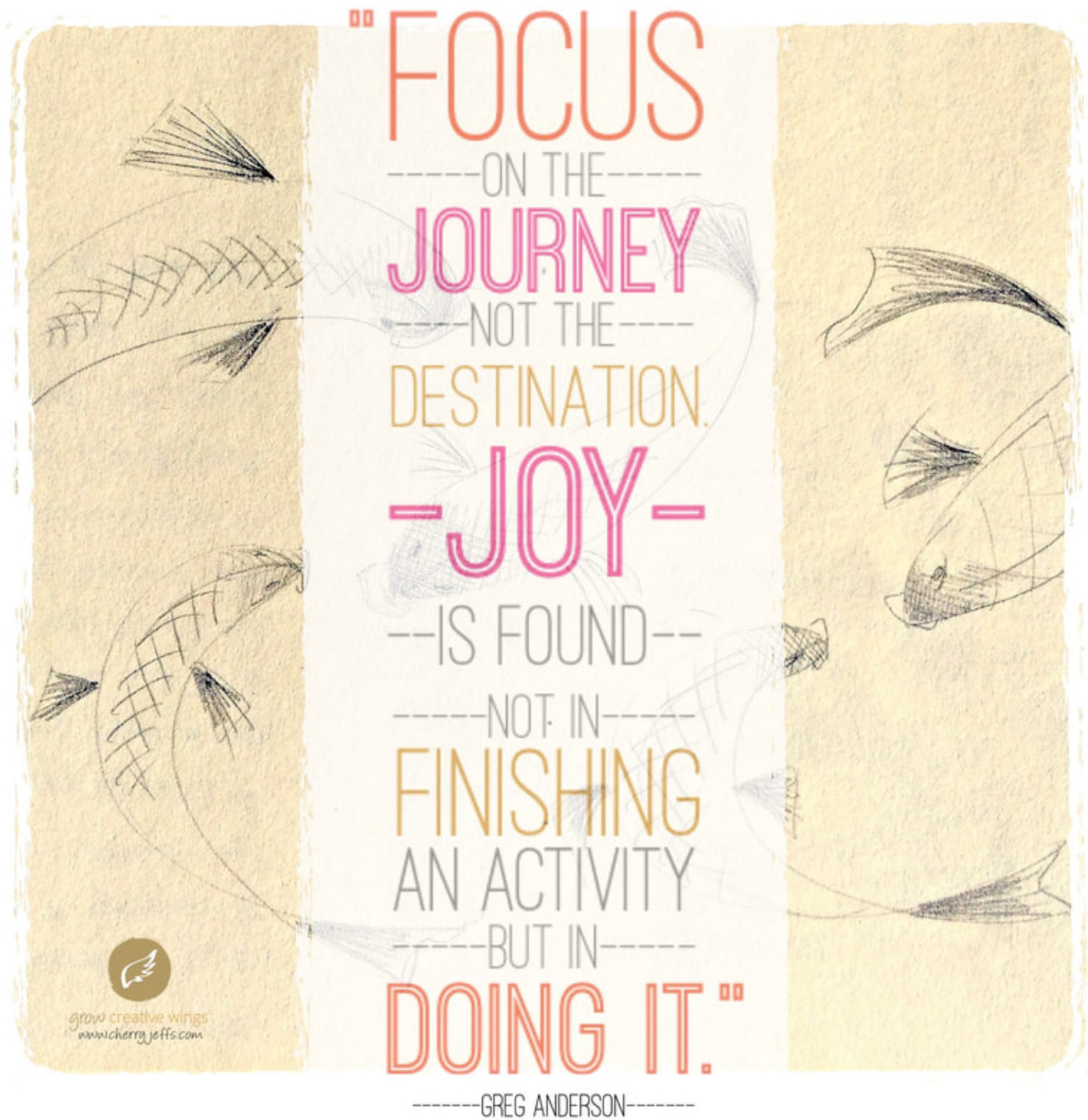


# Why You Need to Infuse Your Creative Practice With Joy

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**We're hard at it, right? We're clocking up hours in the studio or at our writing desk. But are we present? Are we experiencing JOY?**

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Or are we instead worrying about meeting an upcoming deadline? Or the slowness of our progress? Or whether that character really adds anything to the plot or that blue bit at the bottom left really belongs there...

We fail to notice that JOY has gone out of the room.

You remember Joy, she's the one who's always hanging around when you start something new. She wears bright clothes and she's full of optimism and excitement.

Just when did she leave?

When you finally realise Joy's gone, it's like someone turned the light off in your studio. Or the sun off in your world.

Earlier this week, I was working on my second artist's book and everything felt kind of *heavy*. I was forcing myself to work but I'd rather have been anywhere than in the studio. I was literally dragging myself in there.

I sat down and took a break. I looked around. Where was Joy?

As soon as I realised that the joy had gone out of my work, I knew I couldn't go on in the same vein. Something needed to change.

## **The hardest moment to take time out is when you most need it**

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It's so hard to take time out when it already feels that you're way behind with everything. Yet it's the most essential time to do it. What's the point in knocking up hours or ticking off tasks if there is no joy? That's not creating, it's debilitating!

Plus I bet that like me, when you're joyous you can work at warp speed. So there's no point in saying that you don't have time to stop and analyse what you're feeling!

You can save yourself a lot of time if you don't spend it doing something that's making you miserable...

We need to stop in our tracks every time we find ourselves not enjoying the process and ask why.

“With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy, we see into the life of things.” William Wordsworth

So I took a long hard look my ideas for the project. And the work I'd done so far.

I thought about which part of the project was the most exciting for me - and why. I decided to ignore everything else for the moment and start working with that part.

I bet you can guess what happened can't you?

Joy came back into the room.

My motivation returned and I worked quickly and decisively and *well*.

“Joy acts like a trampoline, everything that touches it bouncing right back off it.”Mariella Frostrup

Happy accidents occurred and sparked a new idea. Suddenly even the bits that had felt burdensome and lugubrious before, began to energise.

“...when I stand back and look at my work I can sometimes feel that side of my brain, the left side, too much in the finished work. It makes my art look like I have been trying too hard...A casual observer might say, 'It looks like, in this painting you didn't have as much fun' and in truth, they would be right.”Nicholas Wilton



Work in progress: Like a Fish in the Desert © Cherry Jeffs 2016

I accidentally placed a fish on the sky area of one of the side pieces and suddenly it came alive!

So next time your creative work starts to feel like a millstone round your neck, take a break. Look around and see if you can spot Joy. If you can see her, make a beeline in that direction.

If she's left the room, ask yourself why.

Think about what you can do to entice her back in.

Go do that.

“Joy is prayer; joy is strength: joy is love; joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls.”Mother Teresa

Does your creative work feels like a millstone round your neck? Take a break and use this worksheet to recover your joy!

<https://creativecoaching.cherryjeffs.com/creative-joy-worksheet>