



*Celebrating Life Through Art*

*Paintings & Sculpture*

# Acrylic Layers

## Creative Inner Dialogue & Perspective Aids





## Introduction ~ Our Brain Power... Use it for good or...

You know, sometimes we need to slow down, sit still (I know that's especially hard with our lists of "do's" to be done screaming at us!), and honestly assess our relationship with ourselves, especially as creatives and artists.

We typically put on confident faces for the world but as creatives we all wrestle inside with our inner voices; the inner child, the creative muse, and the nay-saying bully critic! I'm always shocked to learn artists I admire are just as human and vulnerable as I am when it comes to the art making, the art sharing, and our own identities as creatives...

I want to share some of my own discoveries from my creative growth journey that make a huge difference in my art practice and life overall. I hope you will find at least a tid-bit or two that resonate with you so you can nurture your artist and whole self. We need you and your art bringing beauty and creativity into this crazy world from a place of peace, joy, and confidence!

### What we say to ourselves MATTERS GREATLY!



*What words  
are you  
speaking  
to yourself?*

WORDS HAVE POWER and should be chosen carefully, once stated, they cannot be taken back! We've heard that since childhood, but have we applied it to what we say to ourselves as artists and our creations? Our thoughts, if allowed to "take root," create actual neural "thought highways" in our brains! Check out the science... this is REAL!

So, if we keep saying negative or destructive things to ourselves like "I'll never be able to..." or "I'm not a real artist" or "This will never sell..." these thoughts become the ingrained pathways in our brains, growing bigger and stronger each time we allow them to go uncontested! They leak over and contaminate our entire outlook on ourselves, our creativity, and our art. This introduces helplessness and hopelessness... do we really want to hang out there? This "art-making" is supposed to bring us joy which then brings joy to those around us!



*Your thoughts  
build actual  
pathways in your  
brain... Choose  
them wisely!*



## What we allow to become established in our minds also MATTERS GREATLY!

Similarly, as our thoughts frame our attitudes towards the world around us, ourselves, and our art; they become self-imposed “filters” for viewing EVERYTHING! Since our attitudes determine whether we or our circumstances define us, our mood, our outlook, and our focus, they too hold great power over our creative practice and the resulting artwork.



Hmmm, so we have the influence since our attitudes are of our own choosing... so that means WE HAVE POWER over them should we decide to use it! I don't know about you, but perpetual pity parties, nay-saying, and self-bashing sessions in my head are a real drag, especially when trying to create in the studio!!! Even worse, if allowed to stay, they often become self-fulfilling prophecy! YIKES!

*“A bad attitude is like a flat tire, you can't get very far until you change it.” – Anonymous*

Bottom line, the thoughts and attitudes we allow to take “residence” in our subconsciousness determine whether we self-sabotage ourselves or set ourselves up to walk boldly and with enthusiasm into each new day and artistic endeavor... We owe it to ourselves and those we intersect to take our self-talk and perspectives seriously!



*Thoughts Create Superhighways!*

*“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.” – Maya Angelou*

*“Believe you can and you're halfway there.”  
– Theodore Roosevelt*

## Creative Inner Dialogue & Perspective Change Aids

Awareness is the first step!

Learning to LISTEN to our self-talk is key to ensuring we are building ourselves up instead of tearing ourselves down. I am not condoning being puffed up and arrogant, but we need to continually reinforce and build the solid foundation from which we operate in all aspects of our life and art... That foundation is the state of our minds; our thoughts and our attitudes...



ACK! I just caught myself slipping into that “rabbit hole” of self-defeating negative self-talk... What do I do now?



I have found four key methods to help me counteract negative or unconstructive thoughts and poor attitudes I catch myself falling into. These approaches work in our creative practices and life overall! I'm sure there are many more ways to consider, but these four areas are a good place to start:

- Affirmations ~ Create your own to address your unique challenges
- Reframing / Restating ~ The lens you use and where you focus are huge!
- Speak to myself as to a best friend ~ You encourage your bestie, why not yourself?
- Inspirational Quotes ~ Reinforce what is good and what you want...

## Affirmations

### The Power of Positive Affirmations

The creative journey is not for the faint-hearted! Creating is a very personal expression of an idea or vision from our imagination and bringing it into some tangible form. Compound that with having NO control on the external responses from intended or non-intended audiences can make for a turbulent internal journey! It is no surprise then, that we creatives often wrestle with vulnerabilities, doubts, fears, and limiting beliefs related to our creations and ourselves. Do not despair! We have access to a powerful tool to help navigate these challenges... *positive affirmations*.



We all approach and experience our daily lives and creative activities based on what we believe and think. Becoming aware of what we think about ourselves and our art and ensuring our thinking is aligned to our desired vision is critical to fully enjoy the journey and realize our goals.

So how does this apply to our inner dialogue and its impact on our daily activities and creative pursuits? Consistent daily use of

positive affirmations has been shown to have immense positive effects on how people perceive themselves and approach achievement of their goals.

What is a positive affirmation?

#### **Affirmation - noun**

- the assertion that something exists or is true.
- ... a statement or proposition that is declared to be true.
- confirmation or ratification of the truth or validity of a prior judgment, decision, etc.

Positive affirmations are concise statements declaring a specific positive future state or goal as already true. They have conscious and subconscious impact when used consistently. We as creatives can use them to counter the inner critic, areas of frustration, and fears that are keeping us from realizing our creative and life goals.

Whether fact or imagination, our brains cannot tell the difference! Our thoughts create actual pathways in our brains... so if we are constantly thinking negative or fearful thoughts, those pathways are being reinforced and growing bigger. Yikes! Instead, use your imagination to experience your goal as if it is already real... How exciting!



### **Robyn's Personal Application...**

*As a recovering chronic "self-condemner" my application of positive affirmations have made a huge impact on my thought life. Awareness of toxic thoughts and the damage they do was key to making the commitment to "renew my mind". When I catch myself thinking in negative ways about myself, my art, my life, and others, I now deliberately replace those toxic narratives with declarations of positive affirmations. It's my choice! I can choose to see and focus on the best (in myself, in others, in my art, in my circumstances) or the worst... and what we focus on is magnified... what we focus on is what we give power to...*

*I keep my affirmations where I will encounter them throughout my day: In my planner, in my journal, hanging in my studio work-space, on my mirror, on the refrigerator... (Stickies everywhere!) I use them...*

- *To start my day off and ensure the inner narrative is focused on what is good, what is excellent, and on positive impacts*
- *Throughout the day when I get stuck, frustrated, or tired to refresh my attitude*

Here are examples of affirmations that I've found useful (I adopted/adapted these from Jack Canfield's Success Affirmations to reinforce getting "unstuck" from some negative patterns):

- I am choosing to change my thoughts, images, and behaviors to respond differently and produce better outcomes.
- I am passionately and joyfully pursuing the unique creative calling in my life ~ Everyday moving closer and closer to my goals.
- I joyfully create unique artwork that is distinctly recognizable as mine.
- I am empowered to live an artful creative life full of joy, appreciation, and serving others.
- I am passionately pursuing my innate purpose to create art which brings beauty and joy into this world.
- I am fearlessly and creatively making my artwork available so others can discover and acquire it.

### **Application:**

Using affirmations is a powerful tool for re-aligning your internal dialogue to create a positive attitude about yourself, your purpose, and your art. This builds your ability to move through the inevitable creative and personal challenges we all face and trains



yourself to foster constructive attitudes towards your creative life and artistic endeavors in general.

Here are three examples of how you can employ specific affirmations into your creative practice:

**Scenario 1:** You get stuck in the middle of painting, not knowing what to do next... You slip into self-condemning thoughts about your artwork like “This painting sucks, it will never turn out”. Replace negative thoughts about your artwork by creating a specific affirmation to counter the challenge area. Example:

**I am happy and thankful I have the creative tools I need to decide what to do next!**

**Scenario 2:** You get frustrated over a misstep or mistake in your painting... You let yourself slip into self-condemning thoughts about yourself as an artist or your artistic abilities like “I can’t do this”, or “I call myself an artist? Really?” Replace negative thoughts about yourself as an artist by creating a specific affirmation to counter the self-condemnation area. Example:

**I am excited I am always learning and growing in my joyful calling as an artist!**

**Scenario 3:** You are going for it! You are preparing a submission to an exhibit you have always wanted your art to be accepted into. You are experiencing feelings of doubt and fearing rejection, so you are excited for the opportunity but nervous too. Bolster your self-confidence with an affirmation reinforcing your value as a creative and the reality that the world needs your art regardless of the outcome. Example:

**I am secure and confident in the relevance of my art and its positive purpose!**

These examples give you a framework for creating your own personal affirmations to directly address challenge areas you encounter. Take advantage of these powerful tools to keep yourself encouraged, inspired, and empowered throughout your creative endeavors!

**Now try it yourself and create your own affirmation!**

**“I am \_\_ <active feeling word(s)> \_\_  
\_\_ <Present Truth Statement replacing the negative> \_\_ ...”**



## Reframing / Restating

The choice is ours... We can choose to dwell on the problem, the discomfort, the “not enough-ness,” burying our minds in all that we see as wrong or bad... OR we can choose to take a different perspective and see the challenge from a different angle. We focus our minds like a camera lens or pair of glasses... What lens are we choosing to use when looking at a particular subject? Which pair of glasses do we use to see more clearly?

Instead of focusing on the WORST and BAD aspects of “it” and cementing that negative thought pattern into our brain pathways, why not shift the perspective to focusing on the BEST and GOOD aspects. Choosing to focus on the “sunny-side” makes creating and living a much more pleasant experience!

How do we do this? By either “reframing” or “restating” something negative with the positive.

Reframing: Applying a different perspective or lens, viewing from a different angle to focus on possibilities instead of barriers...

Restating: Replace the negative words with ones that are encouraging, focus on the best not the worst, what IS good us. what is bad...

### Reframing example:

EVEN IF that painting really isn't working... find 3 good things about it like:

1. There is a really nice passage or section that IS working... why is it working? What did you do differently in that section you could harness for future painting?
2. Lessons learned from this piece... what worked, what didn't, why... Your efforts are never wasted so long as you learn from them!
3. What parts did you really ENJOY making even if the outcome wasn't what you were going for? Note what brings you JOY when you create and foster more of it!

Focusing on WHAT IS WORKING, on WHAT YOU LEARNED about what worked and what didn't and WHY, and on WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY in the process are three great starting points to practice re-framing creative challenges. Just these three questions can turn discouragement into possibilities moving forward.





## Restating examples:

Instead of focusing on negative words that block, stunt, and discourage, restating with positive and constructive words creates a path forward, an opportunity to move out of the current challenge toward a better outcome.

Restating even a harsh truth can open avenues to move forward instead of bludgeoning yourself. This is not lying to yourself; this is finding different words that allow for possibility instead of final defeat! Here are four types of statements I've heard artists use when talking about themselves as artists and their art that are destructive. Restating is a powerful rebuttal tool to stamp them out before they spread!

1. The Panic Statement: "Oh NO! I got that perspective ALL WRONG!"

Replace with "Oh, now I see it, looks like I need to adjust that line so the perspective will be correct."

2. The Ugly Critic Statement: "There is no focal point!"

Replace with "I was having so much fun making patterns, now I need to decide where I want the focal point to be."

3. The Nay-Sayer Statement: "I just can't do this technique!"

Replace with "This isn't turning out like I expected, I think I'll practice the technique on some scratch paper to figure it out first."

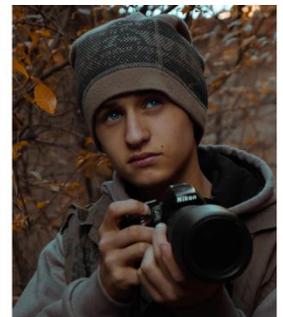
4. The Insecure Statement: "I'll never be able to paint like that..."

Replace with "Wow, I really love \_\_\_\_ about this person's artwork. I'll keep making my art, building my toolbox and skills until I also make art of that quality, I just need to keep at it!"

Restating doesn't deny reality, it does provide a way forward out of the challenge at hand.

Try it, what have you got to lose except being discouraged!

*What are you  
choosing to  
focus on?*





## Speaking to myself as if to my best friend

That sounds strange doesn't it? This is an interesting strategy focused on giving yourself grace and being kind and pleasant to yourself, just like you would be to your best friend, right?

At times we can just be SO AWFUL when we talk to ourselves... that saying about "being our own worst critic" proves true FAR too often! I'm amazed how mean and unkind we can be to ourselves and that sucks because we can't escape!

Why do we do that? Speak harshly or unkindly to ourselves? If we speak to others that way it typically results in negative or destructive reactions... hurt feelings, resentment, lost trust, defensiveness, and emotional barriers...

We all screw up and make mistakes! When has being lambasted about it ever solved anything! Yes, there are consequences from the screw up, but that doesn't mean we have to be mean or unkind to ourselves... honest and constructive, YES... harsh and unkind, NO...

Next time you catch yourself giving yourself a hard time about something you thought, said, or did... PAUSE... Take a moment to assess, would you speak to your best friend in the same tone, with the same words and intent to punish? Of course not!

So, remember, even if you screw up, don't forget to treat yourself kindly and with grace, using kind and constructive words, just like you would to encourage your best friend in similar circumstances.

*Speak to  
yourself like you  
are encouraging  
your best  
friend!*

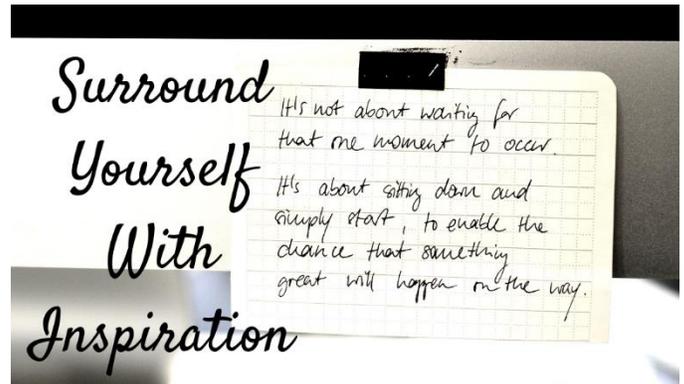


## Inspirational Quotes

Surrounding myself with inspirational words helps reinforce a constructive mindset. I now collect quotes and sayings to review when I need a pick me up and to share and encourage others!

Collect them, display them, review them often to feed the positive thought pathways and counteract the negative.

Here are a few of the quotations I have collected related to creativity and being an artist. I'm sure you have other favorites to add that resonate for you. I also like to categorize them to help me find one's the ones I need on a given day...



## Creativity

***"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." — Maya Angelou***

***"Every creative endeavor we have experienced from childhood forward has planted the seeds we are reaping the artistic harvest from today..." — Robyn Ryan***

***"Can I just be honest? Creativity is a gift. It is a gift to all of us. Whether you consider yourself creative or not, you express in some creative way no matter your roles in daily life. We receive creatively because it is how we are designed. Creativity just makes life richer. Draw, sing, dance, make, live, dream, rest, work... creativity is a beautiful layer in our everyday and I am grateful." — Tina Lawver***

## Reconnecting My Inner Child

***"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up." — Pablo Picasso***

***"The most sophisticated people I know - inside they are all children." — Jim Henson***

***"The child is in me still and sometimes not so still." — Fred Rogers, The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things to Remember***

***"We nurture our creativity when we release our inner child. Let it run and roam free. It will take you on a brighter journey." — Serina Hartwell***



## Mapping How I Got Here

- *The Pilgrim's Progress...*

*"It is always hard to see the purpose in wilderness wanderings until after they are over."* — John Bunyan

*"Our old experiences, memories and fears guide us down the present path. It's not so much that you are the artist; you are the conduit."* — Nick Bantock

*"You can't get there by bus, only by hard work, risking, and by not quite knowing what you're doing. What you'll discover will be wonderful: yourself."* — Alan Alda

## Assessing "HERE & NOW"

*"Remember, the work of art lives in the experience, the journey within the process, not in the resulting monument to be presented in a certified art-place."* — Eric Booth

*"If you keep following your own footprints, you will end up where you began, but if you stretch yourself your artwork will flourish."* — Donna Baspaly

*"Allow yourself to enjoy the journey. Everything you draw or paint does not have to be a finished masterpiece."* — Michele Cooper

## Dreaming Forward

*"There are roads out of the secret place within us which we must all move as we go to touch others."*  
— Romare Bearden

*"The trodden path of an Artist is paved by passion and commitment. It is a journey which eventually leads to the joy of bringing forth creativity in others."* — Patrice Donnelly

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."* — Eleanor Roosevelt

## What Now?

*"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."*  
— Andy Warhol

*"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."* — Lewis Carroll

*"Even if you fall on your face you're still moving forward."* — Victor Kiam



## Artistic Fingerprints

*“Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.” — Dr. Seuss*

*“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.” — Oscar Wilde*

*“If you really have your own identity you’ll keep on doing what you think is really right for you, and you’ll also understand the next step you want to take.” — Helmut Lang*

## My Artistic “Why”

*“People lose their way when they lose their why.” — Gail Hyatt*

*“To know what you prefer instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive.” — Robert Louis Stevenson*

*“Whether you succeed or not is irrelevant, there is not such thing. Making your unknown known is the important thing.” — Georgia O’Keeffe*

## Building My Creative Life

*“You will never find time for anything. If you want the time, you must make it.” — Charles Buxton*

*“If we wait for the moment when everything is ready, we shall never begin.” — Ivan Turgenev*

*“Inspiration is for amateurs – the rest of us just show up and get to work.” — Chuck Close*

## Caring for my Artist

*“It doesn’t matter how slow you go as long as you do not stop.” — Confucius*

*“Successful people say no to almost everything.” — Warren Buffett*

*“Sometimes, the most productive thing you can do is relax.” — Mark Black*

*“Have no fear of perfection, you’ll never reach it.” — Salvadore Dali*



## Summary & Final Thoughts

I hope you have found this a refreshing review of how to direct and keep your inner creative dialogue and perspectives focused on the positive and encouraging side of the spectrum.

Perhaps you already use some of these approaches... If so, that is fantastic, keep it up and incorporate anything else that resonated! If not, I encourage you to give these a try, you have nothing to lose but discouragement and angst!

Remember, any new habit, including intentionality about our mindsets, will take practice so don't beat yourself up if you find old negative thoughts arising... Just pause, then employ the approaches here to replace and renew your thinking towards the positive. What you focus on multiplies!

Happy Creating!!!

P.S.

I forgot one! You can also incorporate the practice of "Gratitudes" into your daily routine as another powerful aid in your creative inner dialogue and perspective toolbox!

Simply review any and all things you are thankful for, both big and small, art related and across the board!

Keeping a "Gratitude Journal" is a great way to capture these thoughts and remind yourself of them over time. It is also a wonderful way to both start and end your day in a positive place!

If you are filling your mind with thoughts of gratitude, it prevents you from focusing and dwelling on the negative. Remember, the focus of your thoughts create superhighways in that direction in your brain!

*“There is no joy without gratitude.” – Brene Brown*