

## The Joy of a Creative “Yes”.

### Free Expression

- Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche

When we speak about natural creativity and its expression, we are not talking about something separate from our own mind and experience. All that we call “existent phenomena” is experienced by mind. This awareness is primordial and omnipresent—is there ever a time when we don’t experience?

Experience can be dull, we may be asleep, we may be ignorant or distracted, but we are always “awake” in one way or another—experiencing our thoughts, our emotions, our state of mind, experiencing our dullness, our distractedness or joy. There has never been a time when we have been inanimate, like a rock. This creative energy never leaves us, whether we turn toward ignorance or enlightenment; whether our intelligence is obstructed or not; whether we operate from the ego or from a bigger state of mind. It remains in its own naked state at all times.

Even if we aspire to enlightenment, if we don’t appreciate and trust the potential and expression of our natural creativity—which is all phenomena—and we look for enlightenment elsewhere, our spiritual path will become dualistic. It is an egoistic tendency to try to arrange phenomena according to our preferences rather than appreciate them for what they are. This approach leads us to resent certain experiences and search for an enlightenment—or a creativity—divorced from what we directly encounter.

Resenting experience is resenting the natural vitality of mind and prevents us from having a trust in the fullness of the way phenomena unfold. So we need to see this primordial potential in all of our experiences in the same way a doctor sees the health and well-being in his patients. If a patient didn’t possess a fundamental well-being, what would be the point of prescribing such antidotes as medicines, exercise, or new diets?

In truth, enlightenment is always grounded in our own direct experience of mind and its activities, no matter what they may be. When we trust our creative energy, we encounter a supreme kind of enjoyment—an amazement at the natural unfolding

of life beyond our ordinary way of looking at things. When we talk about being creative—or more importantly, the art of living a sane life—it means trusting our basic nature and its natural creativity.

Natural creativity is something very large, the essence of everything. We may make such a big deal about creating something “good,” something “pleasing.” We want everyone to love our creations in order to confirm our existence. Our insecurities, hopes, and fears haunt us. Either we feel we lack the ability to be creative or we use our creations as a means to solidify ourselves. Don’t let your insecurities rob you of your trust! Just remember, this natural energy created the entire universe—a humbling thought that puts our own creative efforts in perspective!

Think: “The universe is here! Where did it come from?” Then have some trust and let your natural energy express itself.

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### Follow the Trail of “Yes”

(from Spontaneous Creativity)

-Tenzin Wangyal

Shifting our attention from life’s failures to its joys primes us to seize inspiration when it arises.

How can you champion and cultivate your creative fire? By bringing your open and warm attention to it. Invest your attention in the right places. Reflect on what brings you alive. Talk about what you love in your life. Reflect on what you love in your family members. It is so easy to focus and talk about what we don’t like. That is often the default pathway. I have heard many detailed life stories from my students, and with some of them, I don’t even know how many family members they have, because I only hear about one person—the sister or mother who never seems to love and accept them.

I want to hear about all the people you love. Who do you encounter at your work? You tell me who you have difficulty with, but I want to hear who you have a nice relationship with, who you work well with, who you enjoy collaborating with. Let’s talk about what is alive in your relationships. Let’s talk about what is

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alive through your senses. Let's talk about what moves you and inspires you in your life. If you don't reflect on what brings you alive, you could lose the connection to it. Every time you remember what brings you alive, it activates something in you—changes occur in your brain, in your body, in your breath. Recognizing what brings you alive brings positive energy and joy. We all experience sparks of inspiration and connection, but often we don't acknowledge them or reflect on them because we are too busy.

When the joy of inspiration and connection comes, notice the qualities that are present. You may feel a sense of freedom, curiosity, freshness, vividness. You may feel energized and inspired. When this happens, action becomes effortless and joyful. Instead of draining you, your actions give you strength.

So often we do something because we think we are supposed to. Then life becomes a chore. We feel heavy, tired. There is no space, no light; we feel no enthusiasm or warmth. We somehow believe we need to be in control in order for life to go well. Ego is always trying to take charge. But if you follow the path of inspiration rather than your agenda, you might discover that something else is available. But first, you have to go into that space of being that is truly unbounded and trust it. When you go into that space, ego is not being fed. All forms of ego—thoughts, feelings, ideas—release their grip. There is naturally more space, and when you nourish the space with your awareness, a new sense of yourself arises, with fresh thoughts and fresh emotions.

If you have a new idea you want to express, just do it. What is holding you back? We may think: It might not work. I might mess it up. Don't follow those voices. Just do it! Start right away. Don't be afraid of failure. If something works, great! If not, that's fine, too. It's much more fun to live life joyfully than to always be afraid that something might not work. Things don't always have to turn out the way you planned. If you look through eyes of openness and freshness, you will see goodness in whatever you do. You just haven't allowed yourself to see it before. Ego has prevented it. Ego has a diminished view of things. Consider self-respect, self-value, for example. Someone may pay you a compliment for something you have done, but often you meet it with, Well, I was lucky there. Or, I'm surprised that turned out as well as it did. It is as if we feel we have to qualify our successes or protect ourselves from the simple enjoyment of our accomplishments. We feel too naked or exposed. We need to embrace our fear of being seen and being acknowledged.

The causes and conditions for new thoughts to emerge are space and awareness. Since they already exist within you, you don't even have to exert much effort to access them. Just say Yes! to the fresh idea that arises. When you feel energy and inspiration, fearlessly take action. Even if it is a familiar idea that didn't quite work before but you would like to try it again, take action. It might not work this time either, but guess what—it doesn't have to work. By giving your idea the space to not work, there is a greater chance that it will work, that a solution will be found. So, take action! Trust your inner intelligence. It is unscripted, improvisational. Dance with it. Recognize the distinction between what intuitively and spontaneously arises and what ego manipulates. When you recognize the difference, you will wholeheartedly say Yes!

When those moments happen in my life, I don't want to be the obstacle to what life is offering me. I say, Let's do it! How much effort does it take to say yes to a good friend's invitation to Saturday night dinner? Many things in life are no more difficult than that, because the right causes and conditions are already present. But even when we think a project is valuable, it may not manifest because the right causes and conditions are not present. There have been times when I had difficulty implementing an idea, so it didn't work. Why feel bad? Not everything works. Giving energy to something that is not working or not giving energy to what is working is fruitless. If you put energy into what is working, so much can flow.

When you recognize that the causes and conditions are supporting your vision, at that point it is your commitment that counts. Don't hold back. Look at some of the decisions you have made that changed the course of your life. Can you see where you were open, where you said yes and something happened as a result? Follow the trail of yes. Don't dwell on what didn't happen, or what could have happened but didn't. Remember the times you followed your inspiration and bring your attention there. When inspiration arises, even if it is only a flash, your open attention will nurture it. A flash can spark a revolution. Take the leap and say yes!