

How To Be The Person Your Idea Is Looking For

BY KERI MANGIS

You might already be familiar with the story Elizabeth Gilbert frequently relates about how she passed on an idea to her friend Ann Patchett through an exchanged kiss. I was lucky enough to get to hear the story firsthand at a conference in Colorado. I can still remember the thrill of “Yes!” and the vibration of truth that ran through me, that still runs through me whenever I think of this story. If you haven’t heard it, you can listen to it [here](#).

The gist of the story is this: each idea that is birthed on this planet begins as a tiny, invisible seed of potential. It travels around the universe, hunting for a home, a body, through which it can be made visible and manifest.

These ideas, though anxious to be birthed, are not indiscriminate. There are certain qualities that they look for in us, their life-giver. If we exhibit them, the idea comes knocking on our door (or tapping at our subconscious). The more regularly we exhibit these qualities, the more ideas that come knocking. Idea creation begets idea creation, and on and on the circle goes.

Like single people looking for a good match, ideas also have some “relationship” needs. Here are six ways to be the person your next idea is looking for:

1. An idea needs someone who can love it for exactly what it is, without needing to make it more acceptable/appealing/mainstream.

Ideas don’t care about fitting into normal society. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The purest, most game-changing

ideas (versus recycled ideas) are made of a kind of raw energy that, by nature, will disrupt normal society. Great ideas, and the inventions and inspirations they invoke, carry a society forward through its evolution. Trying to cram one through our funnel of normal will thwart it, distort it, demean it, and ultimately destroy it.

Mix-and-match ideas or recycled versions of already assembled ideas might fit in a little easier, but they won't leave any lasting impact on society.

To be creative, by definition, means to operate at least one full standard deviation away from the norm.

2. An idea needs a fearless advocate.

Ideas – the best of the best – aren't seeking the faint of heart. They're looking for the most passionate heart, the person who can present the idea without letting fear of judgment, criticism, or even failure hold them back.

Even if an idea "fails," it doesn't mean it wasn't meant to be. Our changing cultural concepts of "failure" and "success" lie well outside the cares and concerns of grand ideas, anyway. Rewards and accolades matter little to an idea, and therefore, we can let them matter a little less to us, too.

3. An idea needs someone who is available and ready.

If, when an idea comes to us, we blanch, deflect, or belittle, the idea might simply move on to someone more awake or enthusiastic. It's not personal. It's creativity.

We've all had that experience of stumbling upon a great idea, but then, a few hours later when we try to recall it, we can't. Chances are, the idea wasn't sure we were going to claim it, so it moved on to someone else. Then, we see it later, and say to ourselves, "Hey, I had that idea!" Yes, we did, for a moment.

For this reason, if I get a good idea at an inconvenient time, I let it know right then and there that I saw it.

I say, "Alright, I've got you, I'll write you. But I'm busy now – I'll get to you this afternoon/tomorrow/Friday." If I keep my promise, the idea is right there waiting for me when I'm ready, all of its components intact.

Not all ideas are in such a hurry, either. Some can be quite stubborn about who they choose as their advocate. I've gone on walks before, trying to shake off an idea that I didn't want to own, batting it away like a mosquito. I've even tried saying out loud, "No, I don't want you, find someone else to write you," only to come home with the idea still nipping at my ankles like a stray dog. Only when I sit down to shape the idea into consonants, vowels, sentences, and paragraphs does it finally release me.

4. An idea needs an unselfish sponsor.

Most of us will manifest thousands of ideas in our lifetime. None of them were meant to define us. They just spoke through us, temporarily. Let us not be so attached to what works and doesn't, or what others praise or don't. We can find comfort from our role as creators, rather than trying to find it from society's fickle opinion.

Then we can be free to create simply for the sake of creating, much like the universe itself does, which has created anything and everything from black holes to shooting stars. If the universe is not still harping about that one silly, lopsided planet it created, why should we grow so attached to our creations?

It's not an idea's job, nor its priority, to make us famous, or rich, or popular. If these things happen, that's all well

and good, but like Pinocchio who wanted nothing more than to be a real boy, ideas want or need nothing more than to experience some time as real, tangible manifestations.

5. An idea needs promoters who do not see themselves as perfectionists.

Ideas, by nature, are rough around the edges. I'm not suggesting we forgo basic habits of revision or spell-checking, but at some point, we need to trust that our work is "ready enough" to be unveiled. Once it's in the world, it will appeal to different people in different ways, given their circumstances.

Think of how a piece of writing, or a piece of art, means different things to different people at different times in their lives. It's not the work that changes – it's the viewer. So rather than trying to hit a moving target, if ideas stay still and steady, people will find them when they need them – even if it's long after the creator has left this world, even if it was far from perfect.

Take it from a recovering perfectionist – perfectionism is no virtue. It's an idea killer. Let it go. Your ideas (and your mental well-being) will thank you.

6. An idea needs someone who does not force themselves into schedules.

"Should I write in the morning or the evening?"

"How much time should I spend writing each day?"

"Must I write each day?"

Conversations about when and how to write abound in my writing circles. They are helpful as inspiration. I understand that our lives are busy, and without consciously carving out some time for our creative pursuits, we may never attend to them.

But if we push too hard to try and schedule or discipline our creativity, we might unintentionally scare off, rather than conjure up, the magic.

Scheduling is an activity that comes from our left brain – the logical, analytical, organized side. Creativity, on the other hand, springs from our right brain – our imaginative, intuitive, artistic side. It makes sense to me that we should not use our left brain to dictate to, or even try to discipline, our right.

Creativity cannot be scheduled. It does not respond to pleas or begging. It cannot be summoned. Creativity is spontaneous, even impulsive. To be a creative person means that we have to accept its spontaneous nature.

If we want to truly usher in creativity, then we must acknowledge that we human beings are in service to it, not the other way around.

To some degree of reasonableness, this means being willing to jump ship from a party because we got an idea, or put the laundry down mid-fold, or pull the car over to write down a great sentence, or turn the car around entirely to get back home and write the whole thing down.

People who manifest divine ideas in our world are called artists. They are sometimes seen as “different,” “eccentric,” or even “called.” I think that artists are simply everyday people who have chosen to avail themselves to the divine ideas that court all of us every day. Anyone who is willing to make these sacrifices in the name of creativity is an artist.

Think of Vincent Van Gogh. I can't imagine he said to himself, “Tomorrow, I'm going to paint The Starry Night, and on Wednesday afternoon, from 3:00-5:00 p.m., I'm going to

finish Irises.” He simply showed up at his canvas, opened himself up to the world of ideas, and turned his brush and hands over to the magical, mysterious force of creativity.

Whether our canvas is a blank page, a business, a dance floor, or something else, we too can choose to remain open to the swirl of ideas around us. We can trust that we know, deep down, what needs to be birthed next and when. And we can bring it under our tender care, shape it, work it, and present it.

Ideas are divine potentialities, just looking for a creative person through which they can be birthed. We can each choose to be that person.

For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [52 Ways to Live a Kick-Ass Life: BS-Free Wisdom to Ignite Your Inner Badass and Live the Life You Deserve](#) .

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