

Recap Series: Episode 5

[00:00:00] Hello, and welcome. I'm your host, Tricia Duffy, and this is the fifth episode of a special miniseries of the podcast I'm calling *In Ten Minutes Time*. I'm diving into the back catalogue and giving you some bite-sized ideas on how to live a creative life.

My philosophy is all about how to find a balance of creativity that works for you. But what if ten years feels too far away? I'm revisiting the ideas we've explored in the show and combining them with new research and a new idea of how you can be more creative right now.

You know, when I researched the episode we're going to revisit today about why our friends don't support our art, it really helped me.

[00:01:00] I found looking into the reasons behind the perceived lack of support from so many people allowed me to see that it wasn't always about me, or them, or indeed intended to hurt me. But over time, the way the actions of others affect me finds new ways of poking me in the ribs.

Earlier this year, I released a song, and on the morning it was out, about 12 of my closest friends wrote messages to say that they loved the song. Now, it's possible that some of these friends listened on my website, but I'm pretty sure most of them use Spotify, and I could see that I'd only had six listens that morning.

So either the app doesn't pick things up that quickly, quite likely, they listened on another platform, or they lied and said they liked it, even when they hadn't listened. Why would they do that? I guess there's a strong desire to be seen to support me.

Maybe they listened to the episode I'm about to share when it first came out. The gap between the support my friends were trying
[00:02:00] to give me and the support I perceived arose in another situation. A couple of people then wrote to me to say how much they'd liked my voice on the song. Now, this is a compliment, but it hurts me.

And I know what you're thinking, "You're nuts, Tricia. You're a singer, and they like your voice. What's the problem?" Well, the problem, quite possibly of my own making, is that the song is so much more to me than the singing. It's a profound part of a storytelling album. And to have someone only notice that dimension of the song cuts me deep. But I can't help feeling that this one is definitely a me problem. Let's see what else we can remind ourselves of about how to navigate the issues of support and feel better in just 10 minutes. Let's jump in.

RECAP START

So why might your friends not support you, your art or your choices. The first reason is out of love and concern [00:03:00] for your well-being. Every one of us has a nuanced relationship with security, particularly financial security, and it's one of the most difficult things for us to predict about our friends. Talking about money and our attitude to money is one of life's great taboos. Our views are often deeply held and not always visible even to those closest to us. I have a friend who over the years I've come to realise prioritises saving for the future above all else.

She has a mature attitude to money and a very low threshold for risk. When I told this friend that I was planning to reduce my working hours and go all in for my creative life, I could see her literally biting her tongue. She wanted to support me. But found it very hard to do that without asking me questions about how the mortgage was going to be covered and what my plans were for keeping some paid consultancy work going. Now this was actually very helpful. Having her risk averse perspective allowed me to [00:04:00] express what I was planning and what I was comfortable with. Just the very act of saying it out loud offered me a chance to hear back and test my own levels of comfort.

So even if it made me uncomfortable having to justify myself, I can see, looking back, that it was incredibly supportive and came from a place of love. That's eased us in nicely, hasn't it? Our friends care so much about us. They can't be as supportive as we would like because they

love us and they don't want us to be broke or sad or fail at what we set out to do.

But what about the less pleasant side of this? My research for this episode took me down a lot of alleys. One of the areas I thought was comparable to back up my argument were the reasons that sometimes friends may not support a new partner or lover. Just like a new boyfriend or girlfriend, this creative life is changing you and it's absorbing your free time. You're less available to hang out. You're prioritising things differently.

[00:05:00] We listen to our friends' views about the most important relationships in our lives. So I think it goes without saying that we would also want them to back us up when we're putting ourselves out there in creativity. Now, our friends may have experienced partnerships, lovers, other romantic relationships in the past. They have relevant experience to impart or advice to share. They have gut feels and they know you well and your past patterns in love.

When it comes to branching out into a craft, art or creative pursuit, their experience may or may not be so relevant. It's going to be very difficult for them to support you if they have limited interest in your area of exploration. A couple of years ago I posted on Facebook that I was starting my Masters in songwriting and the post generated a lot of comments. Many were incredibly supportive and said things like, "you're such an inspiration", "congratulations, this is amazing."

But there was another type of comment that cut me really deep. I'm talking about the backhanders. [00:06:00] The comments that read, "congrats. Must be nice to be able to give up work and follow your dreams." Or, "great news! Shame not everyone can relinquish their responsibilities and go back to university." Of all the comments I got from that post, these were the ones that played over and over in my mind.

When I look back on it now, perhaps the comment wasn't to be read the way I did. Perhaps they really *did* mean it was nice that I could go back to university. Or perhaps there are elements of this interaction that say something about them. Maybe there was some envy in their words.

These comments triggered a deep-rooted shame in me that taps into all sorts of my own issues, that I've somehow abandoned my roots. That I'm not deserving of opportunities. That I'm not being a good feminist if I give up traditional career ambitions to pursue my creativity. That I'm not being a good mother if I choose to write songs when I could have spent more time caring for my kids. [00:07:00] The list goes on.

Comments like this cut to the heart of the things that prop up our sense of self, the values that we see ourselves living and the way we want to be perceived by those we care about or admire. I don't want to live a life of regret, never trying to follow my creative path. But I also don't want to be seen as selfish, uncaring, privileged, or, yes, let's come back to it, selfish, selfish, selfish!

Let's just park our own internal issues with this for a moment and look at what's happening with our friends. These comments reveal a lot about the person who left them, and I sympathise. Before I embarked on my life-changing transformation, I was guilty of feeling envious when I saw other people publishing books, releasing songs, performing in shows, or signing up for art classes.

I would say "I wish I could do that". Believing it wasn't possible or that I lacked the time to think about how I could change my creative balance. [00:08:00] So maybe these friends and acquaintances are revealing something about themselves when they issue these backhanders. They reveal their own unfinished business, their envy.

How then should we take such comments going forward? Perhaps reframing with empathy and understanding. This is all a lot easier said

than done. I've spent many a morning pages journaling on this and it helps. Choosing to be empathetic in the face of criticism like this is empowering and I'm trying it on for size. For my own part, I was hurt by my own expectations.

I allowed myself to build a view of how things would be in my head and then when that didn't happen, the frustration of my expectations were the thing that actually hurt me, rather than the actions or perceived actions of others. But what's happening on the other side of the relationship?

Well, I can't ever really know, but I do know what life is like. Life is crazy sometimes. [00:09:00] We might have great intentions when it comes to engaging with all kinds of art and creativity, not least that produced by our friends, but it isn't always possible to find the time.

I know that I've been invited to friends' exhibitions and I simply wasn't able to make it, whether because I was on holiday, or away with work when the event was happening. Sometimes I haven't attended because as much as I would have liked to have supported my friends, I had other priorities at the time, whether that be the health of someone in my family or simply that I wanted to take time back for my own artistry. Back to selfish again. Does that make me a bad person? No, it doesn't. But cut your friends the same slack you're cutting yourself here. They're not bad people either if they don't show you the support you hoped for.

There is another, potentially trickier scenario here that we need to address, and that is: maybe they're just not into it. My friend in the rock band was a lifelong heavy metal and rock fan. [00:10:00] My music is folky Americana. It's highly likely that they just don't dig it! Taste is personal, and it really doesn't matter how much we love a person if we don't enjoy the thing that they're making. There's no point getting upset about that. Perhaps in some ways we should celebrate them more for sticking to their authentic taste and not mollycoddling us with fake praise.

Another scenario we should tackle head on here is that your friends *are* into the type of work you make, but they don't think your version is very good. There are a couple of things going on here. The first is that art and craft is incredibly personal. Back to the taste thing.

The quality of your work is entirely subjective. Let's use Tracey Emin's work titled 'My Bed' to help us dissect this a little bit further. In 1998, Emin became a media sensation when she took her real-life bed, surrounded by [00:11:00] crumpled tissues, period stained clothing, empty bottles of vodka, used condoms and a pregnancy test, and called it art. She'd been through a bad breakup and spent four days in the bed, drinking herself into a semi-conscious state. When she emerged, she decided that the bed, and all its surrounding artefacts, was art.

There are roughly three schools of thought here: one says it's not art, and the whole thing was just a stunt. The second says it was autobiographical storytelling and utterly profound. The third, and this is where I sit says: I can see why it was important politically and culturally and how it contributed to society, but I don't want to display it in my house.

Love it or hate it. Emin's bed changed perspectives in the art world and beyond. It takes huge bravery to stick to your guns and push ahead. We're all entitled to our opinion. We're entitled to think that her bed is a pile of [00:12:00] self-indulgent crap. We can say it isn't really art, or we can celebrate it with gushing praise. What we think matters very little.

RECAP END

I'm still of the belief that Emin's bed is worthy of celebration. How about you? Let's wrap this recap up now with the *Ten Minutes Time* challenge. What can you do in 10 minutes that would help your friends see you for more of who you are? An invitation, perhaps a walk and a chat. One small thing can make a difference.

The question is this, who can you take 10 minutes to support in their creativity today? It will really make a difference.

And the updated recommendation is to check out this fascinating YouTube episode from Graham Cooling at Yelling at Concrete on the response that he got to a painting at an art salon event recently. Graham felt misunderstood because someone commented on his work on [00:13:00] face value and didn't see the concept he was trying to convey, and this really brings home everything we're talking about here.

He asked, is it his responsibility to manage the way his audience interprets his work? It's the one thing we really can't control as artists of any kind. A lesson in letting it go.

I have a final recap episode coming next week, *Embracing the Fertile Void*, a crucial part of the creative process, and I can't wait to update this with you.

Until then, find me on Instagram or Facebook @intenyearstimeofficial to keep chatting, or book a workshop or email me via the website, in10yearstime.com. If you've enjoyed this episode and you know someone who needs this, please send them a link, as I'm sure they will appreciate that as much as I will. Until next time, peace and love.