

# Recap series: Episode 2

[00:00:00] Hello, and welcome. I'm your host, Tricia Duffy, and this is the second episode of a special miniseries of the podcast I'm calling *In Ten Minutes Time* diving into the back catalogue and giving you some bite-sized ideas on how to live a creative life. My philosophy is all about a way to find a balance of creativity that works for you.

But what if ten years feels too far away? I'm revisiting ideas we've explored in the show and combining them with new research and a new idea of how you can be creative right now. Today, I want to revisit a theme that crops up for us all at various stages of our creative journeys and indeed our lives [00:01:00] generally: finding time.

I'm going to draw on three previous episodes to bring this topic back into centre stage. the very first episode of the podcast series, "Making Time," an episode entitled " Perfectly Imperfect," and a more recent episode called "Compound Creativity." If you want to revisit the full episodes, a link to them is in the show notes. But let's dive in.

When I run the How to Live a Creative Life 10 Year Plan workshop, I talk about how important it is to live with creative practice for our long-term health, and how having a 10-year plan can help us feel more connected in our day-to-day lives. At these sessions, the topic of how to find time to invest in our creativity and to make the change inevitably comes up.

There's a nuance to this question, though. It's not as simple as it seems on face value. Even a few weeks ago, when I was speaking at a session for people in midlife career transitions who call themselves 'the nexters', [00:02:00] I was asked two specific questions.

One was related to tiredness and how after a long day at work, even though there's a desire to invest in creative practice in the evenings when the responsibilities of the day are behind them, they found the prospect daunting and frankly exhausting. This person was a songwriter like me and felt that writing a song after a long day was just too much to do and wanted advice about how to fit it in.

The second question I was asked is also pertinent to this topic, how I gathered the courage to take a leap of faith to so dramatically change my own creative life. Those of you who've been with me since the beginning of this podcast know that it's not been an overnight transformation.

The life that I live now has been built brick by brick, day by day, minute by minute, with a collection of actions and decisions that, when examined together, make a much bigger[00:03:00] whole. My advice to both these individuals was to take a tiny step. For the person who's exhausted and daunted after a long day at work, don't set a target to write a whole song. Set a goal to write four lines of lyric or eight bars of music. Set a timer for 10 minutes at the piano and leave it at that. You might have heard of the term minimal viable product in industry, But I'm proposing adopting a variation to that.

My MVP in this context is minimal viable practice. One of two things will happen. Either they'll do their 10 minutes, eight bars or four lines and leave it at that, or they will start with the small task and get engaged and energized by the process and want to stay longer at their craft. It's a win-win. For the person who was scared to make the leap, my advice was to not leap, but to step just a tiny bit.

[00:04:00] Instead of focusing on the risks associated with wholesale change, instead focus on how they could incorporate some of their 10-year dream into day-to-day life. Back to the MVP. What's the minimal viable amount of time they could invest in their practice? Because practice makes masters. Let's dive back into the very first episode, *Making Time Now*, where I discussed the steps you could take to claw back some time for your creative practice.

## **RECAP START**

In 10 years, how would you like to be spending your most precious commodity? Your time.

Besides the definition of success in financial terms, there is another success seduction lurking in the shadows ready to pounce when our defences are low. This is what I call the "who's the busiest award".

There's something about our society that glorifies being busy. In a single week, I lose count of the number of times someone answers the question, "How are

you, " with the word "busy". When the topic comes up, I have to fight with every single part of me not to reply defensively with [00:05:00] a "me as well!" type statement. Sometimes I manage it, sometimes I succumb to rattling off all the things I'm doing.

But the truth is that I am sometimes busy and sometimes not. And I try as hard as possible not to reward myself for being busy so that I can defend time to create, even if that's only a few minutes some days. When I can, I schedule my busy time into chunks so that I can protect larger chunks of time for writing, music practice, research, developing new projects, creating this podcast, and giving back to my creative community.

And I want to start a revolution to stop rewarding ourselves for running around like headless chickens, trying to be everywhere and everything to everyone. I want to give ourselves permission to breathe and exercise and stare at the wall, thinking our profoundly unique thinks because this is where the ideas and the creativity and the originality of art and creative passion resides.

There has been much research into why we're so addicted to being busy. Studies suggest that individuals connect how busy they are to their own sense of self-worth and to how others view them. Essentially, being busy makes us feel valued, needed, important. It reinforces our social standing. The more we do, the more value we are bringing to society.

[00:06:00] There are two things to consider in this debate. One is the busyness trap, as we've discussed, and the other is the genuine limit on your time. We all need to ask ourselves whether the choices we make are as necessary as they appear. Even the most fraught and busy people managed to clock up at least 45 minutes of screen time looking at Instagram on their phone, something to consider.

Oliver Burkeman, the author of *4,000 Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*, describes this mass machine of social media addiction as 'making you care about things you don't want to care about.' He suggests embracing boring technology, removing social media apps or switching your screen to greyscale. If that's too hard, and believe me, I totally get it. Try switching off your notifications as a small step. Without notifications, you get to choose when you check social media, not the algorithm.

Another tool that I use, which may work for you, is a 'don't do' list. Alongside my to-do list, I identify things that are not urgent and put them on my don't-do list. That could include changing [00:07:00] the towels. They can wait another week, or cancelling a meeting or engagement that isn't serving me.

Don't allow your creative self to be limited by the amount of time you have available, because at the risk of sounding a bit like a YouTube self-help guru, pressure creates diamonds. You can create if you set your mind to it in as little as 10 minutes.

You can find time. Look hard. You are enlightened, so beware the "who's the busiest competition", and proudly protect some time to create.

## **RECAP END**

Hi again. If you're successful at finding time and escaping the attention economy, what happens if your efforts in a session are less than perfect? You've made your ten-year plan, you know the direction of travel, you find the 10 minutes each day to practice your craft, and on three consecutive days, the results are frankly rubbish.

[00:08:00] It's easy to get disheartened and think about giving up, but pushing through this discomfort is where the good stuff lies. Let's join episode five of the third series, 'Compound Creativity', to learn a little bit more about how our creativity grows with each of these tiny endeavours, and about how applying the economic term 'compound interest' to our creativity makes sense for our creative practice.

## **RECAP START**

So why do I bring this up here? Well, compound interest is really about exponential growth. And I believe we can view our creativity in exactly the same way. A little bit of investment in our writing, painting, photography, music, ceramics, and so on, will grow over time, bit by bit, slowly gaining momentum before growing beyond belief.

And this mindset, this way of thinking can be the difference between committing to five minutes of creative practice each day or not. [00:09:00] If you find yourself lacking time or motivation, just thinking about the compounding effect of a tiny, and I'm talking minuscule investment can

sometimes be just what we need to get going and keep going. And before long you'll be looking back, amazed about how much you and your creative practice have grown.

Just like our financial investments, if we make a few pounds from short-term compound interest, thanks to a confident market and withdraw that money, its potential to grow is immediately stifled. It's keeping going that's the key to success.

If you are at the start of your creative journey, or one of the early middles, discovering or rediscovering your creative self, I would like to invite you to really think about your practice as compound interest as I've described it here. It is easy to get discouraged when you pick up the paintbrush for the first time, or invest in a guitar and find that the strings buzz and your fingers hurt.

Every strum, every note, every change of position in your hands is developing muscle memory, building calluses on your fingers, and making neural connections in our brain: what the medical community describe as 'brain plasticity'. [00:10:00] One study found that when adults over 60 learned to play the piano and continued for six months, they showed improvements in memory, motor skills, and perception speed. That's the speed at which we process visual information. Further studies showed that music or dance involving movement and rhythm can be linked to positive influences on gait and equilibrium in seniors, reducing the likelihood of falls.

Here's the question though. If you are a musician, does knowing this make you more likely to invest in your practice? Artists, does understanding the impact your craft has on your stress levels inspire you to paint today? Writers, does this investment in your craft inspire you to apply arse to chair?

Perhaps not. When you're faced with the daily stresses of life, there's always tomorrow, right? Well, the five minutes practice you do in your [00:11:00] craft today - the five minutes when it all went wrong - is worth so much more in 10 days' time. You only got to day 10 when the craft started coming together because you practiced on day one to nine. See?

**RECAP END**

Convinced yet? You find the time, but you're creating in a vacuum. Before we finish today, I just want to touch on the power of sharing your work and how that can help you keep up the compounding creative practice.

## **RECAP START**

Let's join episode five from Series five, Perfectly Imperfect.

At any stage of our creative journey it can sometimes feel difficult to embrace the idea of sharing and receiving any kind of feedback and when we do get feedback we can sometimes feel quite misunderstood.

The secret to navigating sharing and feedback is the way you deliver and receive the opinions of others. [00:12:00] It can feel like a scary step sharing your work with others and often you'll question why it's even worth it.

But by sharing your work, sharing your art, even works in progress, you will enhance your learning journey by engaging with audiences and your family and friends and people whose opinions you value, you'll start to understand what resonates with them. Even if you don't agree and you are your own audience for the work, which I advocate for entirely by the way, you will both be clearer on your own taste as well as allowing yourself to consider challenges to your own creative mindset, which you can choose to use or ignore entirely at will.

If you have perfectionist tendencies, this may be even more important. I often use the term coined by American author and professor Brené Brown in *Daring Greatly* to describe myself as a 'recovering perfectionist.' More on that in a second. I find I flit between two states when it comes to sharing my work, either blind faith in what I'm sharing or a deep-seated fear of failure.

By routinely sharing my songwriting, and even early demos of this podcast, I've been able to gather the views of people I trust to improve my work, give me some direction and also give myself confidence when things are hitting the mark.

[00:13:00] In *Daring Greatly* and on her blog, Brené quotes the artist Nicholas Wilton who talks eloquently about art and perfection. He says, "Art most closely resembles what it is to be human, to be alive."

It is our nature to be imperfect, to have uncategorised feelings as emotions, to make or do things that don't sometimes necessarily make sense. Art is all just perfectly imperfect. Once the word 'art' enters the description of what you're up to, it's almost like getting a hall pass from perfection. It releases us from any expectation of perfection.

Empowering words indeed. If you have anything in your life that's a mess, just call it art and you're off the hook! No, I'm being silly. But I think the real learnings from Brené and Nick are that all art, creativity, innovation comes from failure. From trying something new. From seeing what happens if. From experimentation.

## **RECAP END**

[00:14:00] In all these original episodes, I offered a challenge, a question, and a recommendation, and to draw these themes together, I will offer you the same now. My challenge is this: What can you do in 10 minutes' time?

Identify and put into practice your *MVP*, Your minimal viable practice. Do it today. Break it down. Ten minutes, four lines, a hundred words, ten rows of knitting, whatever works for your creative passion of choice.

The question is this. If I told you that you can transform your life one step at a time from failing and getting back up again, what tiny step are you willing to take?

And the recommendation is this, to explore whether the Pomodoro Technique might work for your creative practice. The Pomodoro Technique is designed to be an antidote to procrastination and to help with productivity. It reduces interruptions and [00:15:00] distractions, but I also believe that it lowers the stakes and makes it easier to get started. The basic principle is that you choose a single task to complete and set a timer for twenty-five minutes.

You work intensively for twenty-five minutes on that task, and when the timer rings, you take a five-minute break to stretch, hydrate, or move. Then you repeat the process around three or four times, and after three or four Pomodori, you take a longer fifteen or even thirty-minute break.

You might find this technique useful in all aspects of your life, day job, chores, and more. Link to resources and more information in the show notes.

I have a new recap episode coming next week, which explores creative blocks and imposter syndrome. Until then, find me on Instagram or Facebook at In Ten Years Time Official to keep chatting, or book a workshop, or email me via the website, [inteyearstime.com](http://inteyearstime.com). If you've enjoyed this episode and you know someone who needs this, please send them a link. I'm sure they will appreciate that as much as I will.

Until next time, peace and love.