

## Episode 2 - Transcript

[00:00:00] Hello and welcome to series two, episode two of *In Ten Years' Time: How to Live a Creative Life*. Thank you so much for being here. I'm Tricia Duffy. I'm a songwriter, a media consultant, a singer and a podcaster. And I'm here with an aim to inspire you to live a creative life. To find a balance of creativity that works for you and to encourage you to make that creative dream a reality.

With a combination of small daily steps and the heady power of ten to help us, we will live a more satisfying life. If you'd like to engage with this conversation, please follow me @intenyearstimeofficial on Instagram or Facebook, or @intenyearstime on Twitter or TikTok. I respond to every direct message, and if there's a topic or question you would like me to research and discuss, I would love to hear about it.

[00:01:00] I've spent the last two years trialling ways to live a more creative life and I'm distilling all I've learned in thousands of hours of research into this podcast series so that you can embark on a similar journey.

Michelangelo said, 'Every block of stone has a statue in it, and it's the task of the sculptor to discover it.' I love this quote because it reminds us of our potential. There's infinite possibility in all of us, and with the right tools, support and belief in ourselves, we can set our creative potential free.

Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander have written a book called *The Art of Possibility*. As always, I will put a link in the show notes. Benjamin Zander is a teacher and the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra. In his class, he noticed a great deal of competition at the start of each semester. His students would be constantly comparing themselves with each other, [00:02:00] and each student not only had the challenge of weighing themselves up against

their fellow musicians, but of course they also had their inner critic to remind them that they probably weren't as good as they thought they were.

So Mr Zander - as he's known to his students - began an extraordinary experiment with his class. Aiming to eradicate this unhealthy comparison and self criticism, he would start each new academic year by welcoming his class and going through the necessary information about timetables and locations and all the rest of it.

Then he would tell the entire class that he was going to issue their grade now, before he had heard them play a single note and that they were all being given an A. He then asked each of the students to write him a letter. The letter had to have two specific stipulations. The first was that it should be dated May the following year, the end of the academic year.

And the second that it must [00:03:00] start, 'Dear Mr Zander, I received my grade A because...' And then they were instructed to write a letter from the perspective of the person they will have become during the following year. He would tell them during the process of writing the letter to describe the reasons they have justified the grade and to fall passionately in love with the person they had become.

It's a joy to read the section in Zander and Zander's book about this because they include some of the letters Benjamin received from his students. What he found was that when they came to class, every single time after that, he met the students they described in their letters. Now there are no teachers here, and I am not grading you.

But I believe we can use this practice, originally created in an educational setting, to our own ends. As I'm recording this episode, it's a sunny day in summer 2024, and I'm now going to read you a letter

that I wrote on the [00:04:00] 17th January 2023. It's addressed to Chris Evans, the host of the Virgin Radio Breakfast Show.

And it starts:

*Dear Chris, I wanted to just write you a note to say a massive thank you to you and the whole team for inviting me on the show last week. It was quite literally a dream come true for me to be on the show that I've woken up to for so many years, and to be counted as one of the inspiring people that you've interviewed or talked about is beyond my wildest imaginings.*

*As you know from our chat, I was in my 50s when I decided to change my life entirely and embark on two creative projects: to form a career as a songwriter, while simultaneously encouraging others to find their own creative passion. I can't say exactly how it happened, but at some point in 2022, I became completely engaged in the concept of In 10 Years' Time. As we're all living much longer, we can do many interesting things in our lives, and so [00:05:00] many of us in our generation, Generation X, have been so conditioned and socialised in our early days to discount creative pursuits as a viable way to spend our time. But I really believe that everyone is inherently creative and I also believe it's never too late.*

*Giving me the chance to come on the show and tell everyone they can do it, to embrace a creative life, is the most incredible gift. My job as a creative coach is to enable every person to unlock one thing at a time to enable them to start creating. It is similar to what you say about running. It's never too late and it's surprisingly easy to start.*

*Just focus on the process, on the moment, putting one foot in front of the other. And before you know it, you're running 5k, 10k, a marathon. By the way, I don't think I mentioned that I'm a runner too! And I always*

*try and get my schedule aligned so that I can run with you in my ears before 10am. Anyway, I know I said this when we met, but when I first started [00:06:00] scoping out the podcast and the book, I allowed myself to quietly describe what success would look like.*

*And one of my BHAGs. That's big, hairy, audacious goals, was to be on your show. So thank you again for the amazing opportunity to come on the show and the invitation to Car Fest. I'm really looking forward to sharing whatever I can with the wonderful creative people, whether they realise it or not, who come to see us.*

*Lots of love, Tricia*

Now, I've never been on the Chris Evans Breakfast Show. Well, not yet. But when I do, and I believe I will, I'm going to give him a copy of this letter. I'm sure he'll get a kick out of it. When I wrote it, this podcast was just an idea. By putting myself in the future and looking back at possible achievements from that perspective, I was able to do a number of key things that will serve us all well as creatives.

Before we explore that, I want to talk a little bit about [00:07:00] modesty and humility, because apparently nobody likes a show off. I was with a friend a few months ago talking about this podcast. I think it's important to state that he's a man and I'm a woman. This man sometimes tells me that he loves to see me doing well and embracing my dreams. But on this particular day, he told me that sometimes hearing me talk about my future, my ten-year aspirations, was kind of a turn off. That I should be more modest and humble and count my blessings and stop talking about my dreams, because getting excited about the future in ten years' time sounded like I was bragging or showing off. I should keep that to myself.

It's hard to unpack, but I think there's some deep socialisation at play here. There's a great article I found in Glamour magazine of all places

written by Stefanie O'Carroll Rodriguez. She's writing a book about ambition, money and power. I'll include a link to the article in the show notes and also to her Instagram feed.

She draws on [00:08:00] multiple studies which explore why women who are seen as ambitious are held back. Stefanie articulately draws on evidence that shows that the lack of advancement in the corporate world is not because women are less ambitious, the so called 'ambition gap'. It's more likely what she describes as an 'ambition penalty'. Women who are ambitious are seen as aggressive and demanding, whereas men are labelled as assertive and bold.

Now Stefanie is in the US, but there could be a cultural dimension at play here, as there's something very British about not celebrating our achievements. This doesn't just happen in the boardroom. I believe a version of this same condition exists when we come to celebrating our creativity. Perhaps this applies to all gender identities. Society likes artists to be humble and struggling, especially when they get recognition. And perhaps in moments of great achievement, that is fair enough. But what about the journey? How on earth are we able to describe our work, give [00:09:00] ourselves permission to dream, and aspire to be better at our craft and enjoy the positive things we get from our art, when we're not permitted to celebrate it for ourselves?

I'm not sure I have the answer to this conundrum, except to tell you that I believe in you, I believe in your art, and I believe you have a right to celebrate it. To dream, to share what you do, without any risk of being told you are a turn off. Your art positively turns me on! So there!

Okay, let's get back to the letter and this idea of giving ourselves an A and think about why it's so empowering.

In the context of humility, writing to Chris quietly by myself on a cold January day allowed me a safe, unconditional way to celebrate my

potential without the risk of being judged or perceived as immodest by others. Remember at the time I had no intention of sharing it as I have today. It gave me permission to embrace the possibility of creating [00:10:00] a podcast and a brand that would help others fulfil their potential. It allowed me a practical way to embody who I want to be, to put down in writing my dreams and hopes for the future. Whether it comes to pass or not, the very exercise of writing it allowed me to articulate the potential impact of this work on those who would encounter it. The letter allowed me to physically feel in my body, in my senses, how I would feel when I released my podcast. And I liked it. I felt excited, generous, authentic, happy, and yes, proud.

Jungian psychologists would say that the reason this felt so joyous is because when we write a letter in this style, we're engaging in an act of self-expression that allows us to bypass our conscious defences and allows unconscious material to emerge. Those of us who journal may experience a version of this every time [00:11:00] we pick up our notebooks. But writing a letter either to ourselves or to another person is slightly different. Without the actual pressure of someone else being at the receiving end, it can bring up details that will encourage us on our journey day to day. The letter might even inform our ten-year plan when we come to do our next iteration.

You can use the idea of giving yourself an A on a daily basis too. If you journal in the morning, you could build it into your daily practice. By starting the day with a statement, telling yourself why you got an A or a gold star, you set expectations for that day.

If you'd like to try this ritual, simply write in your journal, 'Today I got a gold star because...' and imagine all the things you can achieve. What you said, what you did, who you helped. There's a fun article on the psychology of giving yourself credit on the website of Tony Robbins, who's a coach and author. I'll post a link, which expands on research

that [00:12:00] shows how giving yourself credit can actually increase the drive to make changes in your life and take personal initiative.

Okay, it's time for this episode's challenge, question and recommendation. And I'm going to start with the challenge this week. I want you to write a letter dated at least one year from now, either to another person thanking them for your A grade or equivalent, or to yourself congratulating you on your achievements.

As Benjamin Zander describes, I want you to fall in love with a version of you who has made such incredible strides and explain why you've got your A grade. Take the time to really enjoy the process. Tap into your senses and just notice how it makes you feel to imagine the things you're writing becoming a reality.

What's the sensation on your skin when you read back what you've written? Do the hairs stand up on the back of your [00:13:00] neck? What kind of day is it? What can you smell? Is there fresh bread baking somewhere nearby or has the grass recently been mowed? What's that future you wearing? How do your clothes make you feel? Like an artist? A creative?

It's maybe something you need to come back to over a few sessions and I would encourage you to really take your time with this exercise. If you invest in the senses you're experiencing, you'll be able to return to this feeling more easily. It can be a useful device when you're encountering a low spot or a confidence knock.

The question, what is your BHAG? As I mentioned before, BHAG stands for Big Hairy Audacious Goal. It's an idea that originated in a book called Built to Last by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras. It was published in 1994 and it's all about what can make some companies great. As you know, I'm a big fan of applying what we can learn in the business world

to our [00:14:00] personal lives. After all, it's how my ten-year plan originated in the first place.

So I'm inviting you to apply this idea of the BHAG to your own creative goals. It is liberating because it is big, hairy and audacious. This is not the time for a small, clean shaven, timid goal. I want you to write down the biggest, hairiest, most audacious thing you can possibly imagine. I want your version of this to make my letter to Chris Evans look cautious. Good luck! And if you would like to share your BHAGs, there's a community page on Facebook that anyone can join and participate in. Be kind and respectful, and celebrate each other.

I'll put a link in the notes. Finally, the recommendation this time is to follow @inspiredtowrite on Instagram. Amie McNee writes little love letters to artists every day. She is bold, ambitious, and generous. [00:15:00] Confident, swears and exciting. She gives us all permission to shout about our creativity from the rooftops. I love her and I will do as she suggests and say, 'I'm a creative, you're a creative, we are creatives!'

Thank you very much for joining me this week. If you've enjoyed the episode, please tell a friend all about what you loved and don't forget to sign up for my newsletter via the website [intoneyearstime.com](http://intoneyearstime.com).

I send recommendations and creativity tips every fortnight. On the website, you can also buy me a coffee if you'd like me to keep this podcast ad free. Next time we're going to get into the murky depths of imposter syndrome. So until then, peace and love.