

There's an essential component/step in the creative process we, in our busy-ness obsessed culture, often miss:  
Completion.

I don't just mean finishing the task, writing the last sentence of the novel, or taking the final bow of a performance.  
I mean being complete in yourself.

"Completing" on something in this sense is a term I learned while taking personal development courses through Landmark Education. Though it's a bit jargony, it's a very useful tool, perhaps the *most* helpful one I know.

Why?

As creative people, we have so many ideas! So many projects! So many dreams and passions! If you're at all like me, then you have (at least once), picked up a book and not finished reading it before you start another one. Or you're writing two novels at once. Or you're learning how to be a mime while also trying to schedule play dates while doing laundry while making sure you go on dates with your significant other.

I don't feel the need to "complete" on every single one of these tasks, but I definitely need to do it for the BIG ones. The ones that brought up resistance, that took courage, that need to be praised and recognized.

So, what am I talking about when I say "completion?"

You can think of it as a debriefing. So often, we rush on to the next thing. We think because something is *finished* it's *complete*. But think back to a task you've done in the last week or so. Some events, feelings, opinions linger. What have you continued to mull over or relive? That's what's incomplete.

You can also think of this as a grieving process. The end of anything is a death. Though the end of a semester won't necessarily hit you as hard as the death of a grandparent, it matters. It lingers.

What I've noticed is that when I don't debrief after an event, say, the Artist's Roundtable group I'm currently facilitating, I go over and over it in my head for the next 6-48 hours. I keep on telling Jay about it. I keep on thinking, *what if* and *maybe I should've...*

Debriefing, or completing, is nothing fancier than a structure in which to put all those thoughts, assessments and ideas down on paper.

Why do this? Does it sound like one more thing to add to your busy life?

This one thing will free up so much brain capacity and emotional space that everything, *everything* else will work better.

Tell the truth: you will continue to think about X long after X is over. (And if you don't, if this doesn't actually sap your energy, firstly, hurray!, secondly, you can still gain a lot of insight and good ideas by trying this).

Here's what I do:

After my Artist's Roundtable (or any other class or performance), before I leave the site (or in my car), I answer the following questions. I also look at my notes, if there are any, and check off what tasks got done.

1. What did I accomplish that I set out to accomplish? (aka: what worked?)
2. What did I not accomplish that I set out to accomplish? (aka: what didn't work?)
3. What actions are there to take? What communications are there to give/receive?
4. Any other comments/changes/thoughts for the future?

That's it. It takes about 10 minutes. It clears up any confusion. I make a note to next time allow twice as long for discussion. I make a note to contact the director to make sure the heat gets left on for next week.

There's the risk that I won't refer back to my notes. Ever. But for me it is still far better and kinder to store all those thoughts and feelings on paper rather than in my head.

What are some BIG tasks you might want to try completing?

- Doing your taxes
- Buying a house
- Moving
- Having a baby
- Trying a new recipe
- Going on a date
- Giving a speech
- Writing a grant
- Meeting a potential, new friend
- At the end of every day before you go to bed

These are just as important as completing on creative endeavors:

- Writing a book
- Submitting something to be published
- Giving a performance
- Taking a class in a new skill or with a new teacher
- Trying out a new camera
- Collaborating with other artists

Notice what nags at you.

Give yourself the gift of letting it go, seeing it for what it is.

Doing this opens space for you to be present. And when we are present we are at our greatest power— in all areas of life.