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**LIAT BERDUGO + LEORA FRIDMAN +
EMILY MARTINEZ PRESENT**

**RITUALS
FOR
REMOVING
CREATIVE
BLOCKS**

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ONE.

you are blocked. you are blocked because there are are so many books to read. so many people are Expert. who are you to make this art?

take the books. put them in a bathtub. if you do not have the physical book, print an image of its cover from google image search, and put that in the bathtub, too.

get in. the tub should be full.

sit there. you will know when to get out.

TWO.

you are blocked because someone doesn't like your work. someone out there: your mother, your grandmother, your first grade teacher. someone doesn't "get it." someone made fun of it. someone critiqued it. someone made you doubt whether you should ever have started this whole making of things in the first place.

print out a picture of the person who you feel likes your work the least. using a pin, a fork or another instrument with small tines, poke many (more than ten) holes in the face of this person. then, using whatever paper you have at hand, write down ten words of praise that have been applied to your work. cut each word into a single strip of paper and roll it up as small as you can. slide each thin roll into one of the holes in the person's face so that it is suspended there. tack the person's face + rolls of praise up above your bathroom mirror, bureau, kitchen sink — somewhere where you will see it daily. leave it there until the paper changes color.

THREE.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you are making Art, but what is the meaning of Art anyway? even as you think of this, you remember that your sister once told you that what you make isn't even art, it's just dumb. what is the meaning of Art? what is the meaning of Life?

since you seem to be thinking existentially, cosmically even, its time to look at the stars.

first, put your phone into "moon" mode. second, wait until the moon is new. third, go outside, locate the general vicinity of mars, then look to the left of it a bit, until you can make out the seven stars that shine in the shape of a lightning bolt — Sigma Librae, Spica, Alpha Virginis, Zeta Centauri, SAA 204 132, and the Beta Sigma Octantis Trianguli Australis — recently registered as the David Bowie constellation.

now, from the tip of Bowie's bolt, connect 8 more stars into your own constellation — one iconic to you and your Art, but fed by David's lightning. hold it there in your vision: your constellation and David Bowie's, uniquely positioned in the galaxy, together, mattering, cosmic, important, everlasting.

repeat every new moon.

FOUR.

so you're blocked because you're distracted, and you just can't dive into your work because of all the other flashing lights. we don't blame you, but we do have a solution.

find a ceramic mug and place it in front of you. disable the closest wifi, and/or turn off wifi on all nearby devices. place your hands over your eyes, lightly resting your fingertips over your eyelids. Keep your hands in place for ten seconds.

gather together the middle and forefinger of each hand, and use those to make a circle around each closed eye with the tips of your middle and forefinger. first with your right hand and then with your left, rub those same fingertips around the rim of your mug. smell the inside of the mug. smell the rim of the mug. select a tea (caffeinated or herbal is fine) that closely approximates the smell of the rim of the mug. make yourself a single cup of that tea with freshly boiled water. drink the cup with your eyes closed. turn back to your work, and begin.

FIVE.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you lack motivation. in particular it is difficult for you to get out of bed in the morning. it is difficult for you to get out of bed in the morning and make work.

you are to buy a puppy.

go to the kennel and bring home a dog. listen very carefully, because even if you already have a dog, this one will be different.

it is very important that you and this dog like the same kind of art. therefore, you are to take your favorite art to the kennel. if you are a poet, take your favorite poems. a painter? print out your favorite paintings, in full color (color is important). if you are an internet artist, you can pull up sites on your iphone.

you are to show this dog your favorite art, and he must love it.

you are also to show this dog your least favorite art, and he is to growl. you must be in agreement.

in particular, show him your work. his tail must wag furiously.

test all the dogs in the kennel. bring home the right dog, the one who will love your art and lick your face in the morning.

SIX.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you have fallen in love, and all you can do is think about the being that you love. you are going around all 😍😍 and you can't get any work done.

drive to the nearest gardening supply store, and locate the section where seeds are sold. purchase three packets of radish seeds, but do not spend more than fifteen dollars. if it costs more than fifteen dollars to purchase three packets of radish seeds, purchase two and steal one. everyone will forgive you because your heart has been stolen, too.

when you arrive home, lay your three packets of radish seeds out on the table. picture your own lovestruck eyes all 😍😍 and select the packet of radishes that, fully grown, will most resemble the hearts in your eyes. plant these radishes immediately before the next rain is predicted to come. water them well. there is no need to fear overwatering them.

SEVEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you lack a very specific advanced skill needed for your art. for instance, this could be the knowledge of advanced mathematics.

gather every object you own that plays videos from the internet — a minimum of five. borrow friends' objects as well. tell them this will only take twenty minutes.

navigate to www.ted.com, that modern-day clearinghouse of ideas. queue up one video per screen about the specific, advanced skill you lack.

position the screens side by side, and press play. sit facing away from the screens. your brain stem should be close to the ted talks.

now relax. for eighteen minutes or less, allow the information to seep in through the most mammalian part of you, and let the ideas worth spreading spread all over you.

EIGHT.

oh god, you are blocked because so many other people need you, and their needs are very very important. this leaves no time for your art.

gather these other people that need you. line them up in height order, shortest to tallest. give each a balloon. have each inflate the balloon with the size of their need.

stand in front of the shortest person. look them in the eye, with kindness. then, with a sharpened pencil, key, fork, or other object of your choice, pop their balloon. tell them you care, but that it's time for them to pick up their balloon pieces and exit the room.

repeat until you've reached the tallest person.

NINE.

you are blocked because you're sick. you might have been sick for a long time, or only a short while, or because tis the season.

spend five minutes google searching home remedies for the common cold, even if a common cold is not what you have. select three ingredients for home remedies for the common cold from your research, including two that you currently have in your home and two that you do not. if you do not find two that you currently have in your home, use Whiskey, Honey, and Turmeric.

weigh out 1/2 ounce of each home remedy into a bowl and mix them well. find a felt-tip marker the color of this mixture. open a new page in your notebook and, using the felt-tip marker, write "I am well. I am well. I am well enough."

TEN.

you are blocked because you might be in love, and you can't stop thinking about your lover. are you *really* in love? is your lover in love with *you*? oh god, who is going to say it first? who can make art at a time like this?

picture your lovers lips in your mind, in a slightly parted position. make sure this image is clear as a bell. close your eyes and trace the outline of your lover's lips. your mind is already obsessed, so this should be easy for you. if it is not, you may look at a photograph.

now, go outside: find an open field, park or abandoned lot. walk the outline of your lover's parted lips. make this outline huge — at least twenty feet wide. with each step, say out loud, "i might be in love, i might be in love, i might be in love."

when you finish pacing the outline, lie down in the center of your lover's parted lips and look up at the sky. you might be in love. there you are in the middle of that feeling.

imagine your lover's lips slowly saying, "i love you." you are lying there in the middle of them, so as the lips move, you feel every word. it feels so good! your lover loves you.

but now imagine your lover opening their lips wide. you tumble into their mouth and your lover swallows you. your

lover consumes you. it feels so bad! you are gone. your art is gone. your lover ate you.

now get up from the field, walk home, and get back to work.

ELEVEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you have reached a decision point. you want to do what is best, but you don't know what is best.

should you kill off your novel's main character, or let her live and marry her lover? should you paint that circle red and shiny, or black as tar? you remember Borges. you remember that poem about the Road Not Taken. nothing helps.

get one bottle of wine, two pots, and two apples. cut each apple open, and with a sharp knife, score each apple with the name of your potential decision. RED SHINY, BLACK TAR. in each pot, mull wine with the one scored apple. let the wine rest.

blindfold yourself. then taste test: sip your mulled wine, let it linger in your mouth. you will know the right choice. now get up from the field, walk home, and get back to work.

TWELVE.

you are blocked. you are blocked because your computer crashed, your notebook got dropped in the toilet, your dog ate your sculpture, your hard drive short-circuited: you lost your work. what's the point of making it all again? life is so fragile! nothing will last! how will you ever recreate what you did?

first: estimate the weight in ounces of the work you lost.

second: get yourself hired at a doggy day care. do not spend more than three days applying for this job: if necessary, take even the worst paid position at the doggy day care. if you must volunteer, do so, though a paid position is better. on your second day working at the doggy day care, select your least favorite dog.

third: feed your least favorite dog some dog treats, but feed the dog exactly the same weight in treats as the weight in ounces of the work you lost. stay with the dog as the dog eats, and listen carefully for the first sound the dog makes immediately after finishing all of the treats. write down your best estimation of that sound using English language characters — only one single word. begin there.

THIRTEEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because the house is dirty and you can't work in such a filthy house. you need to clean it but you need to work on your art. if you do neither you will remain in this state of limbo.

navigate to www.taskrabbit.com. hire yourself out to clean the house of someone else who lives within a five mile radius of you. it is imperative that while you are cleaning their house you make use of at least one cleaning product you have never used before. spend no more than four hours cleaning their house.

return home. draw a picture of the cleaning product you used that you had never used before at 10x the actual scale. use that picture to cover over the dirtiest, messiest spot in your house. make an attempt to work on your art. if you are still blocked, clean up that one dirtiest, messiest spot, and try again.

FOURTEEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you've been asked to present your work next week. it's a very exciting opportunity: a solo exhibition, a reading, a feature story in a newspaper — it is whatever you can currently imagine that would be a very exciting presentation of your work. still, you are blocked. it's a lot of pressure, and you need to create some new work, and fast.

email everyone who you know who is not an artist. (be very careful about not emailing any artists.) ask them to send you the most shocking thing they have ever seen on the internet. it cannot be something they have heard is shocking: it must be something they have already seen and been shocked by.

create a list of all the responses you receive. review each of them, and select the one you find least shocking. send it to your mother or father, and ask them what they think.

FIFTEEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you are broke. you are good at math, at moving numbers around, but these numbers are out of control. your cortisol levels are out of control. serotonin is low. dopamine too. the wrong pathways are firing. the hemispheres no longer communicate. your block is not a block. your block is an entire system, living inside of you, moving inside of you, an electrical storm in a vat of congealed neurochemical soup.

you will make soup.

use the biggest pot. the ideal pot should be at least as wide as your torso. you will need lavender, ashwagandha, passionflower, lemon balm, tulsi, saffron, turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, ginger, and sage. add water and any other ingredients you find soothing or energizing. raise the temperature very very slowly. take a deep breath.

on your smartphone, login to your mint.com account. locate the page with your negative net worth. note this number on a small piece of paper. carefully place this note inside the pot.

photograph your soup and post it to all of your lending institutions' facebook pages. hashtag #freedomsoup

toss your phone into the soup.

stir counter-clockwise, using big sweeping motions. alternate hands and/or direction at least once every eleven seconds to increase cross-lateral movement.

if the fire alarm goes off, remove the battery and toss the alarm into the soup. take the soup outside. resume stirring.

stir until your arms feel like jelly, until you can no longer tell which arm is which, until the boundaries between the left and right sides of your mind and body flow into and from one another like a möbius strip.

SIXTEEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you keep getting distracted. you cannot focus.

go to the bank in which you have a savings account. take out \$500 in gold sacagawea one-dollar coins. (if you live in europe, euros. if elsewhere, currency convert.)

buy a maximum-security piggy bank with a lock and key.

think of an enemy — someone you absolutely despise, and would never want to be generous towards. this should be someone you know, and resent if you so much as buy them a coffee. give this person all the keys to the piggy bank.

place the piggy bank in your workspace. every time you are distracted, you must place one gold sacagawea one-dollar coin into the piggy bank. now start working.

SIXTEEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you are tired, so tired. you woke up at 4 am and couldn't fall back asleep. you couldn't get to sleep in the first place. you are so sleepy.

lie on your back on your office floor. if you do not have an office, designate one. this will work best if the office floor has wall-to-wall grey carpeting. if it doesn't, place a dull #2 pencil alongside you to evoke the wall-to-wall grey carpeting.

lying on your back, imagine your feet encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your feet in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your calves encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your calves in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your knees encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your knees in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your knees, calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your thighs encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your thighs in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your thighs, knees, calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your entire pelvis encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your entire pelvis in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your entire pelvis, thighs, knees, calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your entire torso encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your entire torso in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your entire torso, entire pelvis, thighs, knees, calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your arms encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your arms in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your arms, entire torso, entire pelvis, thighs, knees, calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

now imagine your neck, shoulders and head encased in a block of ice. picture the block of ice, perfectly rectangular, and feel that way it freezes your neck, shoulders and head in place, icy cold. now imagine a blast of hot air melting the block of ice, and feel your neck, shoulders, head, arms, entire torso, entire pelvis, thighs, knees, calves and feet relax as the ice melts.

feel your entire body relax as the ice melts. nap. if you cannot, simply rest there for at least 45 minutes. it's that simple.

EIGHTEEN.

you are on an artist residency, and you are blocked. this, this is exceptionally bad. all the other residents are making tons of Art, and you are doing nothing.

now is a time for impersonation. at the next residency gathering. select a resident who seems exceptionally productive. take her mannerism. take her intonations. if you can, also take her pen, the fork she ate with at dinner, her reading glasses (she probably has many, don't worry), and an item of her clothing. perhaps you could also locate her dental floss? use all of her things as frequently as possible. you are to cease being yourself, and to commence being extravagantly her.

NINETEEN.

you are blocked. you are blocked due to negative thinking and negative self-talk about your art. "this project sucks." "i can't do this." "i lack the skills." "this a regurgitation of something that bruce nauman did better."

write each statement on an index card in pencil. oil these cards. any oil will do — we recommend canola oil because it's cheap, and the government subsidizes it, unlike art.

oil the cards, and adhere them to your body until the graphite transfers to your skin.

remove the paper. remove your clothes.

shower with pumice, scrubbing yourself (kindly, angrily, your choice) until all the words are off. towel yourself. turn back to your work.

TWENTY.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you are heartsick. you miss your lover, you miss your friend, you miss your pet: whomever it is, they were your muse. they were everything that made you feel the spark of life within you, and they are gone from you now.

search your medicine cabinet for the most gel-like substance you can find. not a liquid: a gel. a paste or salve will do. create a model of your former muse roughly the size of your middle finger. go to sleep and do not awaken until the following morning.

beginning at 8 am on that following morning, tie the model you made of your former muse to your left middle finger, using dental floss. go about your day doing all of your normal activities, but do not remove the model of your former muse from your left middle finger.

at 8 pm that evening, remove whatever is left of the model of your former muse from your left middle finger. wash your hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap. sing the song 'she's got the whole world in her hands' to yourself twice through.

TWENTY-ONE.

you are blocked. you are blocked and you are not sure why, but it feels like every piece of your life has been placed on pause.

you are to call comcast customer support. their phone number is 1-800-934-6489. you are to listen carefully to their hold music. if you do unexpectedly reach a human, ask that human to put you on hold. ask them to transfer you. tell them your internet is fine, but your life has been placed on hold, and you need to feel what holding feels like.

if you have two phones, call them with with both lines. hold in stereo.

you are to stay on hold for as long as you can stand it. this could be minutes, hours. you might need to sleep on hold, with your phone cradled in little spoon.

when you cannot stand it anymore, hang up. breath out. you — everything about you — is no longer holding.

TWENTY-TWO.

you are blocked. you are blocked because you're waiting for a phone call. or an email. you're waiting for what you think might be some very good news, and until then you can't concentrate.

imagine that you have received that very good news, and that you are throwing yourself a party to celebrate. decorate your house, cook an excellent meal, make some fancy cocktails: the particulars are up to you, but you must throw the party. do whatever you would do for a party to celebrate that very good news, but invite no one but yourself.

enjoy the party.