ForeWord Reviews

SELF-HELP

Mastering Creative Anxiety: 24 Lessons for Writers, Painters, Musicians, and Actors from America's Foremost Creativity Coach
Eric Maisel
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Many imaginative people, especially those who make a living in the arts, experience anxiety associated with competing in a profession that demands near perfection. Horrific scenes from the recent movie *Black Swan* serve as a powerful warning. Though fear of failure is perhaps the most common angst, the artistic mind does not always accurately define what is wrong when unable to create on command. This unnamed condition may sabotage a thriving career, as well as limit the capacity of a driven individual who cannot proceed beyond a stagnating level of achievement.

For those truly serious about living up to one's full potential, plunging into the realm of mediocrity is a frustrating experience to avoid. *Mastering Creative Anxiety* examines every type of psychological barrier that could prevent a person from succeeding. Dr. Eric Maisel explores both the deepest and the most superficial problems that could make an unwelcome appearance at any stage in life, inhibiting innovation and disrupting performance. Blaming parents, family, religion, or education may be the least effective way of dealing with professional difficulties, but even these trite scenarios are covered in this encompassing book for those who believe their childhood really has incapacitated them. Targeting productive artists of all types, Maisel also addresses complex issues such as fear of ruining work in development and reluctance to complete a project, as well as various states of procrastination and promotion, both of which involve that excruciating act of waiting, the former self-induced, the latter often controlled by others.

This valuable text is divided into twenty-four chapters with self-help exercises at the end of each. The author includes short teaching tales, parables with fictional characters demonstrating a key point in a unique situation, with titles such as “The Painter with the Painfully Blank Canvas,” or “The Arrival by Camel of the Best-Selling Author.” Arranged like an instruction manual, this work advises readers in the importance of not succumbing to a variety of mental traps when planning to enter high-risk artistic occupations.

A resident of San Francisco, Maisel is a familiar name among innovators and the author of thirty books, including the popular titles Coaching the Artist Within and Fearless Creating. His work involves existential cognitive-behavioral therapy, delivered here with a perceptive sense of humor. No reader will fail to appreciate this original approach toward training and counseling.

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