

Windows Within: Insight, Creativity, and Transformation

Jan-Marie Esch

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"Creativity is not just an end product; it is also the energy we use and the processes we go through to get to the outcome," Jan-Marie Esch writes. In *Windows Within*, Esch, an educator, artist, and creativity coach, lays out her ideas about the role of personal energy and how it affects one's creativity.

The bulk of the book is taken up by the first part, titled "Personal Energy." This section introduces the author's Sphere of Awareness model, which she says is "the interaction of spirit, experience, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors." The Sphere incorporates core values of truth, exhibited through discernment and teachability, and love, which is demonstrated through caring and courage.

The book's second part is a short discussion of what the author calls the "Creative/Performance Cycle" (CPC), which begins with concentration and relaxation, moves to insights and intuitive leaps, and can circle around again for increased awareness before moving on to creative action. "Concentration Techniques and Ideas," the third section, presents techniques that include sensing, emotion, and thought. A simple description of each technique is provided, with one or two examples that suggest how to achieve or practice them. The final part, "Applications," offers areas where the Sphere of Awareness can be applied, including personal life, relationships, business, education, and the arts.

The book also includes a suggested reading list and several illustrations of the author's Sphere of Awareness model as it develops throughout the book.

While the author's model provides a new way of looking at the creative process and offers some interesting insights about the effect of labels and the role of love, the book presents a two-fold challenge to the reader. First, the book's physical layout sometimes impedes readers' understanding. In several cases, the illustration of the model is not included on the page where it is explained, and readers are forced to flip between pages. Although the book is divided into four parts, the first is too lengthy to be read in one sitting. Dividing each part into clear chapters with subheadings would provide guideposts along the journey through the book.

Second, because of redundancies and some instances of circling back, readers can easily lose a sense of where they are within the model. Additionally, the author periodically inserts anecdotal material to illustrate ideas, such as a poem, a journal entry, a recipe, and a brief story. These pieces could be valuable in supporting the author's points, but since they are dropped in with no explanation, they only distract from the explanation of the Sphere of Awareness.

The ideas in this book beg to be explored with more practical and anecdotal examples. These additions, along with better design and editing, would make the Sphere of Awareness more accessible. Even so, Esch's methods certainly have the potential to help readers transcend "limitations to achieve self-insight and using energy to do amazing things."

PAULA SCARDAMALIA (May 18, 2010)

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