



Summary of The War of Art

Original book by Steven Pressfield

Do you feel a calling inside to create or inspire the world? Do you struggle to follow that calling because of doubt, fear, or lack of motivation? *The War of Art* spells out the reason you struggle to reach your dreams and provides strategies to help you overcome the obstacles. Each creative person experiences resistance in the form of fear when they approach their true work. When you understand where that fear comes from, how it manifests in your life, and how a commitment to your work can give you the strength to push forward, you will be successful in living your dreams.

This document is restricted to the personal use of the individual owner of the email account thinkstopeth@gmail.com (the "Subscriber"). No part of this document may be reproduced or distributed by any means other than for personal use of the Subscriber, nor shared with individuals other than the Subscriber, without prior written permission of Shortform Inc.

1-Page Summary

What's stopping you from fulfilling your dreams? Is it time, family, motivation, fear, or one of several distractions you face on a regular basis? In *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield says it's all of these things and places them under one umbrella—*resistance*. Although the book mostly discusses resistance surrounding creative pursuits, **the book speaks to anyone trying to attain personal growth and satisfaction in their life by following their heart's desire.**

Pressfield breaks down the enemy within that holds you back from reaching your potential, how to reframe your pursuits for success, and how to tap into your creative power. Understanding resistance and how to push past it is important not only to honor the genius you were born with, but also to ensure you don't spiral into a state of dissatisfaction with yourself and life.

What Is Resistance?

Resistance is an internal sensation that is more powerful than any external force in stopping you from achieving your goals. It's the little voice in your head that says you aren't good enough, strong enough, or motivated enough to start your creative journey. It is a faceless, formless, and heartless energy with the sole purpose of ensuring you never start the work that will lead to your true nature. Whether you're an artist, inventor, or scientist, **resistance flares up each time you start or think about starting the work you were born to do.** If left unchecked, resistance will lead you down a road of psychological instability.

Resistance is activated by fear and gains strength every time you give in to that fear. Resistance takes on many forms: procrastination; a fixation with self-soothing or instantly gratifying behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use or entertainment; or a gravitation toward trouble or drama in your life, since they help distract your mind from the important work. **Resistance manipulates you by providing what you need to continue avoiding the work you know you must do.**

When Do You Feel Resistance?

You only feel resistance when you pursue work or behaviors that will enrich your soul and help you rise to your true calling. The unique talents and desires inherent inside you make up your *genius*, which is Latin for "inner-guiding spirit." If something inside of you says you were born to be a writer, an entrepreneur, an advocate for social justice, or the person who will cure cancer, that voice is your genius calling to you. When you hear that call, resistance joins the chorus. Resistance is like a compass needle—it always points due north toward your most important work.

The following are examples of the type of work resistance wishes to thwart:

- Creative arts, such as writing, music, visual art, and performance art
- Entrepreneurial endeavors, such as a new business venture, an invention, or a non-profit organization
- Spiritual or religious awakenings
- Activities aimed to break habits or overcome addiction
- Educational pursuits
- Social or political actions motivated by moral or ethical values
- Personal and emotional growth, including commitments to relationships
- Behaviors that oppose adversity, especially those requiring courage

Resistance targets these pursuits because they mean something to you. They speak to your larger being and purpose in life, so your heart and identity are wrapped up in them. In contrast, resistance doesn't care about lowly pursuits, such as those explicitly pursued for money or power, because you don't care about them. Lowly pursuits are ego-driven and embedded in the external world. They do nothing to lift you into a higher plane of existence.

A good rule of thumb—if **your heart is not on the line, the work is not the work you were meant to pursue.**

How Do You Know Which Pursuits Are the Right Ones?

An imposter doesn't think twice about their work. They believe they have everything figured out, and they don't question whether they are good enough. They also don't put in the work to master the skills required in their endeavor. They assume the persona of a master and move forward like a bull in a china shop. If this is how you feel about your personal pursuits, you're headed in the wrong path.

Self-doubt, love, and fear are important indicators that your work encompasses your inner genius.

When you question whether you have what it takes to be an artist, you signify your passion for the work. True artists have everything to lose, and your self-doubt is the embodiment of that emotional sensation. When you feel doubt, you know you're getting close to your genius.

Love is the same way. When you love the work you're doing, you know you're doing the right work. Loving something with all your heart is terrifying. The risk of losing it makes you feel vulnerable, which is uncomfortable. Resistance will use this to keep you from starting or following through on the work. But you can use this love to bolster you. When you feel love for the work, keep working. That is the only way to overcome resistance.

Fear is tricky because, as stated, fear is what triggers resistance and gives it power. You can use that fear to your advantage, but you must understand what it is you fear. Common fears include loss of freedom, loss of community, loss of stability, and loss of the certainty you feel about your calling. If you fail, you will have to accept that you're not who you thought you were.

However, the biggest fear is fear of success. Why would anyone fear success? Because if you follow your calling and reach your potential, you will have to do the work to maintain that life. The pressure is on to live up to the success. And you may worry that success will change the comfortable life you are accustomed to.

These fears tell you that what you're doing or want to do is significant for your life. **You can feel the pendulum starting to swing toward your authentic self, and it scares you.** That is why fear can be your friend. You will know you are pursuing the right work when you're surrounded by fear.

Reframing Your Life for Success

The only thing you have to do to win the battle against resistance is do the work. The work is where your creative power lives. You fall into a timeless space where the rest of the world drops away. You are alone on your creative island, and only you have access to this part of yourself. The person you show the world is not the person working with your internal genius.

To reach this creative space, you must be a professional in your work, not an amateur. When you're an amateur, you dabble in your art whenever inspiration strikes or you're in the right mood. You're not committed to your art, and your goals center around fun, money, and status. Resistance loves an amateur because you are easily distracted from the work.

When you're a professional, you create art because your soul demands it. Your art is a full-time commitment, even if you aren't getting paid. You sit down to face your art daily because it is part of who you are. You shape your life to include the work as a priority. **Resistance hates the professional because you are less likely to cower to fear.**

The great thing about being a professional is the access you have to your muse. Each time you sit down and face your art, you open the portal to your artistic space, where the muse resides. Within this universe, your muse conspires to bring you inspiration because you are committed to your art.

How to Become a Professional

You become a professional the moment you decide to commit to your art. But what does being a professional look like? The answer lies in how you approach your day job, or "money-making work."

- You show up daily and work hard.
- You take criticism from your boss with a grain of salt.
- You are detached from the work because it doesn't define you.
- You keep working because your livelihood demands it.

Approach your creative work with the same attitudes, and you will be prepared for resistance when it shows up.

Why? Because the only way to defeat resistance is by working. You can't be precious about the work. You must show up to greet your muse every day. You must learn about your craft so you have the skills needed to use the inspiration the muse provides. You must put the work into the world and be open to criticism. You must detach from the work personally so you can complete it authentically.

A professional understands that fear is part of the work and failure part of the road to success. You know that **you must love being miserable because each time you sit down to do your work, you will have to overcome resistance.** It is not easy to remain motivated in the face of this formidable foe, but you must if you want the life you were meant to have.

Working like a professional gives you the power to work through fear. Resistance, like any bully, doesn't know what to do when its target stands up for herself and no longer fears them. When you do the work, you stand up to fear, and resistance slips away. You've won the battle for the day, and you are prepared to keep winning in the days to come.

Consciousness and Art

You have a muse waiting in your creative space to give you the inspiration you need to do your work. Some call the muse talent, and others think of it as an angel sent from the gods. However you look at it, the fact remains that **when you tap into your creative space, you open your consciousness up to mysterious forces that conspire to serve your work.**

When you acknowledge the muse in your artistic life, you counteract feelings of ego that hinder the authenticity of your work. The muse knows things that you don't. It sees your potential and wants to give you what you need to reach it. The muse rewards the commitment of the professional. Therefore, the only way to summon the muse is simply starting to work.

The muse is just one mysterious force working in your favor. The other comes from you and exists in higher planes of existence, called the *Self*. When you harness the energy of the muse and power of the Self, you will

shove resistance to the side.

Your Self vs. Your Ego

Your *Ego* is the embodiment of the personal “I,” or the surface mind. The ego operates in the real world. The *Self* is the larger conscious entity that comprises the individual and collective unconscious minds. Your dreams, intuition, and visions live within the realm of the Self.

The Ego is where resistance lives, and the Self is where the spirits live, including yours and that of your muse. Both the Self and Ego are powerful and battle for position in your mind.

When you are led by your Ego, your main priority is to maintain the status of “I” in the world. The Ego believes that life is finite, so you live in a constant state of fear of losing it. The Ego lives on the surface and manages your day-to-day activities. This aspect of the Ego is valuable in continuing life, but it does nothing for continuing art.

The Self believes in life beyond death. It wanders in a realm where everything is connected through love, and space and time are artificial constructs. Your psychic power lies in the sphere of the Self, and anytime you try to alter your consciousness, you seek to access this higher sphere. **The Self does not lie and cannot disguise itself as something it’s not. The Self encompasses the deepest form of who you are.**

Your Artist Self

When you sit down to create, you are attempting to access the plane of the Self. You gravitate toward art because you want to grow, evolve, learn, and tap into internal truths. You seek a spiritual awakening to become more enlightened.

The more enlightened you become, the less you rely on Ego. The *you* that exists within the Self is more powerful than the physical *you*, so resistance tries to block the path to your awakening. **The Ego would rather you didn’t become your authentic self.** But your authentic self is the only person you can be if you want to be happy.

Claiming Your Artistic Identity

Identity is important to all of us. We have an inherent need to know where we fit in within society. **You define yourself based on your connections, which inform how you act.** There are two main forms of connection in society: those based on hierarchy and those based on territory.

Hierarchy vs. Territory

Hierarchy defines you based on your position along a certain social ladder. Territory connects you to certain environments or activities. To reach your creative potential, you must seek your identity from territory, not hierarchy.

Hierarchy is death for the artist. It narrows your scope regarding the work. You strive to find your place within your field, so you measure yourself against those achieving success. You try to shape yourself according to the rank you wish to become. **When you look to the outside world to define your worth, you will never be content.**

When you look outward instead of inward for validation, you stop doing the work for the sake of the work. You write, paint, or develop your ideas based on what you believe people want to see and will accept. You force yourself to travel down an unauthentic path, and you and the work suffer.

The territory of your art is the creative space inside you. You connect with your muse and higher mind in your territory. Some examples of territories include the canvas for a painter, the stage for a performer, or the blank page for a writer. The only way to claim your territory is by doing the work.

When you work within your territory, you invite their mysterious forces in and promise to serve as a patient servant. **You do the work for the sake of the work, and you will be rewarded with insight and guidance from your higher planes of consciousness.**

If you're not sure which place you work from, ask the following questions:

If you're suffering psychologically, what do you do to make yourself feel better?

- If you call a bunch of friends to receive reassurance, you're more hierarchical.
- If you turn to the work for solace, you are territorial.

If you were the last person on Earth, would you still create your art?

- If your creations lose meaning because there's no one to validate your work, you're hierarchical.
- If you gain sustenance from the act of doing the work without accolades, you are territorial.

A major advantage of the territorial foundation is that it banishes fear. **When you work because it is part of who you are and commit to the work, you can never fail.** Claim your territory through work, and intruders have no choice but to move on to unclaimed land.

Living Your Creative Life

The only thing that will stop you from achieving your calling is yourself. If you let resistance stop you from doing the work, you will never reach your potential. You will suffer because you know you are meant for more, and the world will suffer because you have not provided the gift you were chosen to give. **You can't predict the outcome of your work, but you can ensure nothing happens if you don't try.** Trust the process, trust the muse, and trust yourself to work like a professional, and you will never fail. Every day you choose to follow your true path in life you win.

Introduction: The Unrealized Life

We all have a part of ourselves that is unrealized—a dream or calling that encompasses our true selves. But many of us struggle to live those authentic lives. What stops us is something called *resistance*. **Resistance is the enemy of achievement.** Artists who don't create art, innovators who don't innovate, and healthy people who live unhealthy lives are all losing their battles with resistance.

Resistance is a toxic force and the cause of many negative psychological issues. When you lose the battle with resistance, you likely experience some form of depression, discontent, and unhappiness as a result.

Like everyone else, you have genius inside you. Genius is Latin for “inner-guiding spirit.” Your *spirit* is the force that encompasses your truest self. **It is the voice inside that tells you what your true calling is.** Your unique brand of talents and desires, whether you are a writer, fashion designer, or scientist, is your spirit. When you don't act on that spirit, you are giving in to resistance.

Many have fallen before you under the weight of resistance, and many will fall after you. The sad part is that you likely won't know that it's resistance holding you back.

Think of someone who is diagnosed with terminal cancer. With nothing left to lose, he finally does all the things his heart has always desired. He starts a travel blog, takes up painting, volunteers at a homeless shelter, or starts a non-profit for runaways. He is happier than he's ever been because he is finally living his dream.

You don't want to wait for the prospect of death to move you to follow your heart's desire. You must learn to wage war against resistance if you want to accomplish your dreams.

Part 1 of this summary will show you what resistance is, how it appears in your life, and how to overcome it. Part 2 will show you how to commit to your art like a professional and win the battle against resistance. Part 3 tells you what a muse is, where it comes from, and how to summon it in your work.

(Shortform note: This book was written specifically for artists struggling to create art. Therefore, the summary focuses mostly on strategies to help artists overcome their fears. However, the term “artist” can be replaced with any category of person who feels a calling to be more than they are. Whether you're a scientist, entrepreneur, inventor, or chef, the ideas surrounding goal achievement and fear apply to you, as well.)

Part 1: Resistance—The Formidable Foe | Chapter 1: What Is Resistance?

Resistance is hard to overcome because it is sneaky, clever, and unflappable. But you can alleviate the power of resistance by understanding what it is, which behaviors it attacks, and how it does so.

The Characteristics of Resistance

The following principles regarding resistance will help you understand what it is and where it comes from. When you understand these principles, you can learn to push past resistance.

Principle 1: Resistance has no form.

- None of your senses will detect resistance. It is not tangible. **Resistance is a deflecting force. Its sole purpose is to repel you from fulfilling your potential.**

Principle 2: Resistance is not an external force.

- You may think outside sources are the obstacles to success, but this is not true. Resistance is an enemy existing inside you. You create it and perpetuate it, regardless of external struggles.

Principle 3: Resistance is cunning.

- Resistance is the most formidable opponent you will encounter. It manipulates, lies, and deceives you anyway it can. It will present argument after argument for why you should not follow your instincts or dreams. It is a conman with one goal—to stop you from succeeding.

Principle 4: Resistance is unyielding.

- When you live with resistance, you live in a totalitarian world. Resistance is a tyrannical dictator that cannot be persuaded and shows no mercy. It will never stop doing what it can to thwart your endeavors because it doesn't know how to stop. You can only aim to overcome it on a day-to-day basis.

Principle 5: Resistance doesn't discriminate.

- Who you are and what you have been through is superfluous to resistance. Its attack against you is not personal or motivated by malice. Resistance is like a tornado—a powerful force that destroys whatever is in its path.

Principle 6: Resistance is a compass.

- Think of a compass needle that is magnetized to always point North. Resistance is that compass needle. **It will always point in the direction of your most significant calling.** You can use this unwavering accuracy to your advantage. Whatever you feel resistance toward is exactly what you should go after. The appearance of resistance tells you the goal is important to your true spiritual fulfillment.

Principle 7: Everyone experiences resistance.

- You are not alone in your struggle with resistance. Anyone with a soul experiences resistance.

Principle 8: A war with resistance is a battle to the death.

- Resistance doesn't play nicely. Its aim is not to merely distract you or throw a wrench in your plans. Resistance is out for blood. It wants to destroy your genius and ensure you never succeed. Knowing this will help prepare you for the fight.

Principle 9: You give resistance its power.

- Resistance is not a foreign body implanted inside you. You give birth to resistance through fear. When you feel a pull toward your true calling, you feel fear. Resistance uses that fear as sustenance, and **the more you give in to your fears, the more powerful resistance becomes.** (We'll cover fear in detail in Chapter 5.)

Principle 10: You only feel resistance on the rise.

- You will only feel resistance when you attempt to seek a higher version of yourself (your *true self*), whether through enterprise, spirituality, or creative expression. If you pursue goals that don't feed your spirit, you will feel no resistance because there is nothing personal to gain or lose. There is no fear.

Principle 11: The last hurdle is the hardest to cross.

- When you reach the point in which your dreams become a reality, resistance doubles down on its attack. Resistance is the most powerful when you are about to defeat it. Be ready for this final surge of power, and double your resolve against it.

Principle 12: Resistance uses reinforcements.

- Although resistance is self-made, your efforts to defeat it may cause trouble in your external life. The people around you will notice a change in you. That change will appear as achievement or fortitude as you pursue your true calling. If others are losing their own battles with resistance, they may resent your success in defeating yours and become allies with resistance. Their efforts to make you feel bad or guilty about succeeding can weaken your drive, thereby strengthening your resistance.

Targets of Resistance

Resistance is only activated by pursuits that gratify your higher calling and lead to long-term growth and good health. Some examples of these types of pursuits are the following:

- Any creative art: writing, dance, film, music, visual art, and performance art
- Entrepreneurial endeavors, such as a new business venture, an invention, or a non-profit organization
- Health pursuits, like diets or workout regimens
- Spiritual or religious awakenings
- Activities aimed to break habits or overcome addiction
- Educational pursuits

- Social and political action, especially those motivated by moral or ethical values
- Philanthropic endeavors
- Personal and emotional growth, including commitments to relationships
- Behaviors that oppose adversity, especially those requiring courage

An example of how resistance differentiates between higher and lower callings is the life of Adolf Hitler. Hitler wanted to be a painter and architect. He applied to art school, but the resistance standing between him and his goal was too great. He struggled with criticism and was scared to put his dreams on the line. In the end, it was easier for Hitler to start a world war and oppress an entire population than go through the pains of committing to his art.

The Signs of Resistance

You now know what resistance is and what behaviors it targets, but how do you know when resistance is affecting your life? The following symptoms are all signs that resistance is winning the war for your soul. When you recognize one or more of these symptoms, take action. You must treat resistance the same way you would treat an illness.

Symptom 1: Inaction

- The most common form resistance takes is procrastination. You want to achieve your dreams, but you put off starting. For example, you want to write a book, and you intend to write it. But instead of starting to write your book, you put it off until tomorrow. You rationalize this decision as a lack of energy or time. Really, it's resistance manipulating your motivation.

Symptom 2: Inaction as a way of life

- Procrastinating one day is normal. **Procrastinating day after day is a habit. That habit can become a personal character flaw if you let it.** You have the power every day to stop resistance in its tracks. All you have to do is take the first step toward achieving your goal. If you put that first step off again and again, you have made procrastination a lifestyle and resistance your best friend.

Symptom 3: An unnatural fixation with instant gratification

- Sex, drugs, alcohol, television, eating, and shopping all provide immediate gratification. Resistance uses these things to distract you. Of course, these behaviors are not always the work of resistance. The trick is to pay attention to the value of the pleasure. If your pleasure-seeking behavior was truly to experience pleasure, your gratification will be pure. If your behavior was the work of resistance, you will likely feel empty or guilty afterward. **The more flimsy the gratification, the more likely it is that resistance manipulated your behavior.**

Symptom 4: A gravitation toward trouble

- When you make trouble for yourself or engage in activities that are high-risk, you willingly create an environment that detracts from positive work. Trouble draws your attention away from the scary act of pursuing your true nature. Resistance takes the shape of jealousy, emotional or physical infidelity, tardiness, or illicit substance abuse. Hypochondria or a complacency with poor health are also forms of resistance. When you seek trouble, you seek an escape from the work required to reach your full potential.

Symptom 5: Dramatic behavior

- Have you ever known someone who acts like a drama queen? How productive is that person? Likely not very. When you create drama in your life, you open the door to distraction. **Resistance loves drama because it gives significance to everything besides the important work you need to be doing.** A happy life is a productive life. A life of drama is a life of overinflated emotional investment. There is no room left for your spirit to shine when all you experience is drama.

Symptom 6: Self-soothing behaviors

- The world is full of guidance on how to reduce anxiety and depression. To be clear, this is not an attack on mental illness. Mental health disorders are real, and medications can help. But many people experience smaller and infrequent versions of these afflictions and choose to self-soothe instead of self-improve. For instance, drug use, whether with prescription, over-the-counter, or illegal drugs, helps assuage feelings of despair and anxiety. Instead of working to reach a stable place of satisfaction and positivity, you allow resistance to lead you to the quick fix.

Symptom 7: Playing the role of victim

- The willingness to be a victim is a form of resistance. When you jump from illness to illness, blame your inaction on others, or always feel injured by the actions of others, you are playing the victim and your behavior is passive. No work is achieved through passive behavior.

Symptom 8: Supporting another's dream

- You will always experience a lack of resistance when you put energy into the dreams of a loved one. You have no higher connection with another's fulfillment of their calling, so there is no risk. For instance, if your spouse fails at his dream, your lifestyle or relationship may change, but your personal spirit is uninvolved. You may even choose a spouse who is winning the war over resistance because it makes your calling seem insignificant in comparison. **Supporting another's dream is resistance giving you the perfect excuse to not put energy toward your own dreams.**

The Consequences of Resistance

Perhaps you believe never achieving your true calling is not a big deal. You've found a way to be content with life, so why rock the boat? You may think you're content, but what you don't realize is that **allowing resistance to have power in your life eventually leads you down a path to profound unhappiness.** The author's experience writing this book serves as a useful example of the damage resistance can cause.

The Author's Journey

When Steven Pressfield decided to write this book, the voice in his head criticized the decision. He was a fiction writer, not a nonfiction writer. He would fail at his attempt to expose resistance and the related principles. The voice also said he wasn't a true authority on resistance, and claiming to be would ruin his career. The voice told him he would come off as vain, untrustworthy, and conceited.

Pressfield was scared and nervous. The voice presented some good arguments, for which he had no comebacks. He started to develop symptoms of resistance and became unhappy. The only thing that made him feel better was thinking about writing this book. He decided to push through the resistance and start to write. Once he did, the fear dropped away, the voice faded, and he was able to finish.

When Resistance Wins

When you don't live up to your true potential, you feel an undertone of discontent in life. You become unhappy. You get bored or anxious. You experience a deep sensation of guilt, but you don't understand why. You crawl under the covers because you don't know what else to do. Or you seek activities that will help you continue to live with resistance, like drugs, sex, or entertainment. **You start to feel ashamed and hate your life because somewhere inside you know you should be doing more.**

Over time, these feelings grow and invite trouble into your life. Left unchecked, resistance can lead to mental disturbances, such as a quick temper, depression, or reduced functionality. You may harm yourself or others.

This is what feeling trapped under the power of resistance is like. You must revolt against these feelings and symptoms. You must cut the ties with get-help-quick schemes. You must realize that the external world cannot help you fight resistance. Only by taking the steps to fulfill your calling will you be able to beat resistance and become happy with yourself and life.

(Shortform note: The author includes a section on resistance and fundamentalism, whether religious or political. He draws a parallel between the search for the meaning of life for both the artist and fundamentalist. However, this section provides little information regarding your relationship with resistance, so we haven't included it in the summary. If you are interested in learning more about how resistance relates to fundamentalism, we encourage you to read the original text.)

Exercise: What Role Does Fear Play in Your Life?

Fear is a powerful emotion capable of stopping you in your tracks. Now that you know how this fear works, how does that change the way you see its role in your life?

Name one thing you wanted to do that you didn't out of fear.

What did you fear the most and why?

What were two symptoms you experienced because of this fear? For example, did you procrastinate? Seek self-soothing behaviors?

What internal consequences of giving in to your fear did you notice? For example, did you feel anxiety or shame you couldn't explain? Discontent?

What work do you feel the most resistance toward? Do you consider this work to be related to your true calling in life? Why or why not?

Chapter 2: Resistance and Your Personal Life

You've learned about what resistance is and how to recognize it in your life. You've also learned the consequences of allowing resistance to guide your behaviors. But there are other ways in which resistance influences you. The following section provides a more comprehensive understanding of how resistance shows up in your life.

Emotional Resistance

As opposed to the behavior symptoms presented in the above section, these symptoms all present as attitudes founded in emotion.

Criticism of Others

When you criticize others, it's a good indication that resistance is strong in your life. You may feel envious of people who are living their dreams and attempt to tear them down. This behavior only masks how scared you are to begin your own journey. **Resistance is a personal sensation, but it can cause you to harm other people.** Be careful of moments when you feel the need to criticize others. Likely, the problem is with you, not them.

If you are working within the power of your true spirit, you have no reason to feel threatened or offended by another's success. You understand how hard it is to push past resistance and follow your dreams, so you provide encouragement, not criticism.

Self-Doubt and Fear

Any artist following their calling is going to experience doubt about their talents. The little voice in your head saying you're not good enough is resistance. But you can use that voice to empower yourself.

Doubt is a sign that something is important to you. **When you express doubt, you're signifying your passion about reaching your potential.** If you ever wonder whether you're really an artist, know that the answer is yes. Imposters tend to be overconfident because their souls are not on the line. True artists have everything to lose. If you experience doubt, it's a good sign that you're on the right track to your heart's desire.

Likewise, fear is a huge indication that you're headed toward personal growth. Fear can be tricky because, as mentioned, it activates resistance and gives it strength. But you can counteract the relationship between fear and resistance by using fear as a guide. As a general rule—the more you fear the work, the more you should pursue it.

Many actors only take roles that scare them. They do this because these roles challenge their abilities and push them out of their comfort zones. They see an opportunity to grow and get closer to their full potential. The same is true for you. **You feel so much resistance when you're scared to pursue something because the work means something to you.** If it didn't, you'd feel no resistance. Use your fear to propel you forward because the deeper parts of yourself and talent lie on the other side.

Vulnerability

Like doubt and fear, you only feel vulnerable when your heart is on the line. When you feel a deep emotional connection—something akin to love—to the work, failure feels visceral. Therefore, you feel vulnerable, and feeling vulnerable is uncomfortable. Resistance uses that feeling to drive you away from

your work.

When you're overwhelmed by resistance, you know you're doing something you love. The joy and satisfaction you feel when you accomplish your goal will be immense because of how much you love it.

The antithesis of love is indifference, not hate. If you don't love the work you're pursuing, it's probably not the right work for you.

Misplaced Priorities

Resistance will distract you with grandiose ideas about rewards and status. You must ignore those ideas—they are false motivators.

A true artist understands that work is required for success. There is no way around it. So when grand ideas enter your process, accept them as resistance and push forward with the hard work. The joy you find in the work is what will help you reach the potential, not external commendations.

Leaning on Others

Resistance makes you believe you need motivation to start your work. It tells you that you must get support from others to achieve that motivation. Therefore, you spend time and energy attending conferences and workshops, reaching out to loved ones, and discussing your fears with colleagues. None of that time is you sitting down to do the work.

We all need support from family and friends. **But the work has to come from you, regardless of how much or little support you have from your personal network.** If you wait to start your work until you have a suitable amount of encouragement, resistance is winning.

The Power of Rationalizations

When you rationalize something, you are trying to justify your choices. Imagine what resistance could do with that! In fact, rationalization is the operational mode of choice for resistance.

Resistance is fear, as you've already learned. But if you only felt fear, you might recognize it as such and maybe start to feel ashamed for letting it get in your way. That shame could be enough motivation to jump start your work. Resistance can't have that, so **it presents you with rationalizations to push you farther away from the work you're afraid to start.**

You can justify not starting your work for a number of reasons. The day job takes up too much time. The kids need your attention. Whatever it is, you rationalize that it's simply too hard for you to start your work now, so you put it off for a more convenient time. What makes the situation worse is that those rationalizations are valid. You may have a lot of "real" work, and you might have children. But those things are not what's stopping you from following your calling. Fear is.

Don't buy into the rationalizations. You always have the power to make art, even if it's after the kids are in bed.

The Artistic You vs. the Public You

There is a difference between the *you* who works within your spirit genius and the *you* who you share with the world. Resistance wants you to believe the two are the same person. This belief distracts you with concerns about losing the public *you* when you choose the artistic *you* (i.e., your *true authentic self*). But who

you are with the rest of the world is separate from who you are in the artistic world. The two worlds will never collide, so you don't need to worry about it. You can live with both easily. The following concepts show you the difference between the two worlds so you won't fall for resistance's tricks.

Isolation

Most artistic pursuits require solitude. This understanding is important because resistance tries to convince you that isolation is a bad thing. You fear losing your community or place within it. You fear the sensation of loneliness.

The key is to remember that when you're doing the work of your calling, you're never alone. When you engulf yourself within your true work, your muse comes forth to keep you company. (We'll talk more about the muse in Part 3.) **The act of committing to your work is an act of courage, and courage opens up deeper parts of your soul.** Those parts are creative, raw, and magical. They pull you out of reality and immerse you in a timeless space where your heart is full and the outside world ceases to exist. The artistic you lives in this space, and you're the only one who can access it.

Timelessness

You only experience the sensation of timelessness when you are working within your passion. Your mind and soul are fully engaged when the outside world disappears. Hours go by without you realizing it, and the work doesn't feel like effort. If you find yourself within that timeless space, you know you are doing work that fulfills your true calling. This knowledge can help you keep working when resistance tries to intervene.

Healing

One of the ways resistance tries to manipulate the barrier between the artist and the person is through healing. You may have personal demons or past traumas you struggle with emotionally and psychologically. Resistance makes you believe you need to heal those parts of you before you can start your important work. But this is not true. As stated, your artistic space cannot be touched by the outside world because it lives deep within your spirit landscape. This space is safe from external influences, even those that affect you internally. The part of you affected is the public sphere, which has nothing to do with your true artistic pursuits.

What's interesting is that healing the psychological mind does not impact the artistic mind, but healing the artistic mind *does* impact the psychological mind. When you tap into your spirit and pursue your calling, the positive effects seep into your total being. The emotions you tackle in the work are emotions you want to understand more. When you connect with the work, you are working toward an understanding of those emotions, which leads to personal growth.

When you make the first step toward your artistic calling, you cast a vote in favor of your life. By proxy, your whole being becomes empowered. On the other hand, when you focus your psychic energy on psychological healing, you're taking it away from the work, and resistance has won.

Of note, not all desires or attempts to heal your psychological self are bad. They are only negative when they stop you from getting to work.

Exercise: Understand What Your Emotions Mean

Your thoughts are excellent guides regarding your relationship with your true calling. What do your emotions say about your calling and the work you put into it?

In what ways are you critical of other people? Can you list one example of a time when you criticized a successful person?

What does your criticism of others tell you about your emotions regarding your own work?

Do you conflate your artistic self with your public self? If yes, how do the two overlap? If no, how do you keep them separate?

Name one thing you do that allows you to slip into the timeless space. Does this work speak to your true calling? Why or why not?

Part 2: Winning the War Against Resistance |

Chapter 3: Commitment Is Key

The previous chapters make resistance sound like a scary monster lurking around every corner. You may be feeling overwhelmed and ill-equipped to manage it. But remember, everyone pursuing their calling experiences resistance. If it couldn't be beaten, there'd be no art, no novels, no vaccines, and no Internet. When the journey to defeating resistance seems impossible, just remind yourself that people have been defeating it since the beginning of time. Here's how to become one of them.

Be a Professional, Not an Amateur

Artists who fold under the pressure of resistance have one thing in common: they're amateurs. You might say, "Well, I don't get paid to make art, so I'm an amateur by definition." In the world of sports, that distinction is true. In the world of artists, the distinction between amateur and professional falls under different categories.

When you're an amateur, you dabble in your art. You venture into the foray of art when the mood suits you or to have fun. Art is your hobby or a part-time commitment. You may love to create art, but the love doesn't come from the depths of your soul. It's a fair-weather love that fades at the first sign of fear. Resistance loves an amateur because you are easily distracted from the work.

When you're a professional, you create art because you *have to*. You turn to art because your soul demands it and because you feel incomplete without it. Your art is a full-time commitment, even if you aren't getting paid. You sit down to face your art daily because it is part of who you are. The transition from amateur to professional is akin to having your first child. Your priorities change, and how you approach your life changes. **Resistance hates the professional because you are less likely to be thwarted from the work at hand.**

The great thing about being a professional is the access you have to your muse. Each time you sit down and face your art, you open the portal to your artistic space, where the muse resides. Within this universe, this mysterious force conspires to bring you inspiration because you are committed to your art.

Why You Must Love Misery

When you're a professional artist, you live in a world fraught with resistance. Fear, doubt, passion, vulnerability, and struggle are present every day of your life. These feelings make you miserable, which resistance is counting on. If you feel miserable, you won't want to dwell in that world for very long. You'll search for ways to self-soothe or get instant gratification. But **a professional understands that his world is a living hell and accepts it as part of life.**

A typical day of your professional life may follow the sequence below:

- You wake up each day feeling unsatisfied. Fear follows shortly behind and lodges in your gut.
- You perform your daily rituals: breakfast, children, day job, laundry, emails, etc. You are physically there, but your mind is not. However, you aren't focused on your artistic work. You're focused on resistance, and you will be until you start your work.
- You can busy yourself all day with menial or urgent tasks, but your subconscious knows this is not

the work you should be doing. It's not what's important to your ultimate survival. If you don't do the work, you're basically a tiger tied to a leash.

- You muster the courage to face resistance. You settle into your artistic work, strapping on your muck boots and armor for the battle ahead.
- At first, the road is muddy, the conditions are harsh, and your feet and back hurt. But you have to keep putting one foot in front of the other. As you get farther down the road, the conditions improve. You make better time. You still feel pangs of discomfort, but you know how to keep moving despite them.
- You make it to your destination after a few hours. You feel satisfied and accomplished. Your heart and soul are full. Resistance is gone. There is nothing more you need to do. You finish out your day with ease and go to bed content.
- Before you fall asleep, you feel a pang of fear. In the morning, resistance will greet you again, and the battle will continue.

If this life sounds unpleasant, it's because it is. **When you commit to following your true spirit, every ounce of resistance will place roadblocks in your path that you must overcome.** There is no getting around it. You have volunteered to be miserable, and you must learn to love it.

Learning how to be miserable is essential for any artist. You will have to give up things in your public life so you can be present in your artistic life. You have to come to the battle every day knowing you will be tired and possibly injured from doubt, humiliation, and rejection on a regular basis. But you can wear your scars like a badge of honor, because at least you were in the battle and fought. You are a soldier in the war to fulfill your artistic calling. You win the war every time you show up to the front line.

Your "Real" Profession Informs Your Artistic Profession

You are already a professional in one aspect of your life—you get paid for your services in your day job. The attitude you bring to your day job can help strengthen your role as a professional artist in the following ways:

1. **You work every day**—Even if you don't feel like going to your job, you do it because you have to. You have responsibilities and obligations, and if you didn't show up, you'd get fired. Even when you're sick, you manage to drag yourself to the office, store, or factory.
2. **You work long hours**—You're probably not mentally focused all day at your job. But when a customer needs help or your boss needs certain documents, you get the job done. You do the work because your workday isn't over until you clock out.
3. **You will always work because you have to**—Your job title may change or you may move to a different job, but you will work year in and year out because you have to support yourself. There are no other options short of winning the lottery.
4. **You deal with immense pressure**—Your job pays for rent, mortgage, children's tuition, food, and clothes. The pressure of keeping these things afloat is intense. It motivates you to show up and work hard.
5. **Your job is not your identity**—You can enjoy your job and be proud of performing it to a high degree. You may put in overtime and stretch yourself thin to complete the work. But at the end of each day, you go home to your personal life. You are not your job, which means you are detached from it personally. When you're detached, it's easier to put your head down and finish your duties without fear.
6. **You trained to become efficient at your job**—You've put in the time and effort to learn how to do

your job well.

7. **You don't take it so seriously**—Your job is what you do for money, not the end-all and be-all of your existence. You can have a sense of humor about the work because it's not personal.
8. **You receive feedback during evaluations**—You've experienced praise and ridicule for your job performance. You know the evaluation is about the work and not about you.

Although your artistic work is done because of love, becoming a full-time artist means treating your creative work like a business. If you can carry these attitudes about your day job over to your artistic life, you will reduce resistance and increase your commitment.

The Creative Professional

The idea of treating your art like a business may make you cringe, but it is the main way to separate yourself from the amateurs. You must be committed to showing up for your art in the same way you're committed to showing up to your job. You must put in the training to hone your craft. You must be willing to put your art into the world for judgement.

Whether you believe it or not, you need real-world validation as an artist. It's what pushes you to grow and helps you understand how to grow. **Failure is part of life for an artist. You have to learn to take it in stride. If you're afraid to fail, you won't try.** Receiving a rejection or a poor review is just as valuable as an acceptance or rave review. You've completed a project and put it into the world. You have joined the battle. You are a professional.

Another useful aspect of your day job attitude is the idea of working simply to support yourself. As stated, your creative work is a product of love. If it isn't, it's not your true calling. But you can't focus on love. Loving your art too much leads to fear. You become too precious with the work and take it too personally. These feelings can make you freeze when it comes time to create.

If you can think of yourself as an artist-for-hire, meaning you do it for the money, you can be detached from the work. You also view the work as a process needed to create a product, rather than an extension of your character. This level of detachment is resistance's worst nightmare because it diminishes fear.

Exercise: How Committed Are You?

You likely have an unrealized dream you don't know how to achieve. Now that you have an understanding of what is required of you, how does this change your approach to fulfilling that dream?

What is one calling you feel and wish you could pursue? What is stopping you from fulfilling that dream?

What would committing to your dream like a professional look like? (For example, would it mean showing up every day regardless of whether or not you feel like it or putting your work into the world for judgment?)

Name two things you can change today to start working like a professional toward your dream.

In what ways do you feel miserable when you do try to pursue your dream?

How can you learn to love this misery?

Chapter 4: The Psychology of the Professional

Making the shift from amateur to professional artist is not only about having a committed attitude. Professionals encompass several traits that help them maintain their commitment, sanity, and power over resistance. When you're a professional, you are the following:

Patient—You understand that real work takes time. You know that rushing to finish a project or being overambitious will cause you to flame out. You make time for your muse to inspire you and the stars to align. You know that slow and steady wins the race and that your job is to keep working. The finish line will appear when it's ready to appear.

Organized—You like for things to be in order. Disorder creates chaos, and you don't want a chaotic environment to create a chaotic mind. You keep your workspace tidy so your muse can move about freely.

Focused on craft—You know your job is to focus on craft and leave the art to the muse. You don't wait for inspiration to start working. **You study technique and practice your craft so you are ready to perform to the highest standard when inspiration eventually comes.** You don't concern yourself or others with the mysticism behind the art. You keep your head down and work.

Realistic about fear—You know there's no such thing as destroying fear forever. You don't wait until fear subsides to start working. You understand that fear is the other side of the artistic coin. You march forward scared to death because doing the work is what diminishes fear.

Unflappable—You know resistance is working hard to find ways to make you give in and quit, so you never do. **You know the moment you give in, resistance regains its power.** You do the work without fail and never make excuses for why you can't work.

Resilient—You know there is no perfect scenario or guaranteed success in your chosen field. You don't let adversity or barriers stop you from moving forward. You take the hits as they come and keep working.

Prepared—You understand that resistance is a formidable opponent and are prepared for its assault. You are ready for whatever typical or utterly unique ways resistance will try to derail you and take each one in stride. Your goal is not ultimate victory but the ability to maintain composure and keep believing in yourself and the work.

Humble—You don't brag about your work. You let the work speak for itself. You use your skills to enhance the work, not to show how talented you are.

Studios—You respect technique and the value of studying the work of those who came before you. You don't pride yourself as a master of your craft. Instead, you continue seeking knowledge so you can understand your craft fully and have all your skills at your disposal. **You understand that by sharpening your skills, you open the door wider for the muse to provide genius.**

Open to help—You never assume you know all there is to know about your craft. You recognize that revelations happen when you open yourself up to assistance from others, and you ask for help when you need it.

Detached—You see your talent and skills as instruments that help you work, not things that define you. You feel grateful for the tools you've been given. You identify as someone who works to make art, not as the art itself.

Realistic about failure—You know criticism is part of the artistic process. You don't take it personally, but rather see it as a way to learn and grow. A rejection will not derail you because you know that's what resistance wants. You recognize that editors and critics don't know you and that their thoughts are about the work, not your character. You know that a fear of failure will stop you from working, so you accept the inevitability of failure. You accept that your best is good enough and that the reception of that work is out of your hands.

Impervious to humiliation—You do not let humiliation stop you from working. You endure insults and adversity because you know resistance is waiting for you to give up. You recognize that your artistic space is untouchable unless you allow it to be touched. You pay your dues and keep working because you know it's better than not working at all.

Self-confident—You don't need the approval of others to feel good about yourself and your work. You understand that opinions are subjective and often disingenuous. **You recognize that critics are the external representation of resistance and neither have a bearing on whether you continue to work.** You determine your own worth and keep working.

Adaptable—You are willing to leave your comfort zone and allow the muse to lead. You notice when your way is not the best way and follow the muse, even if it's into strange territory.

Aware of your limitations—You recognize that your job is to do the work and hire other professionals to handle what you can't. You hire agents, publicists, and editors to support your work and respect their contributions.

Be Your Own Boss

Being a professional means you come to the work with serious intention. You commit to the work as a professional, and that commitment is what guides you to your destiny. One way to concretize the transition from amateur to professional is to become a corporation.

Whether legally or metaphorically, creating a corporation for the artistic work helps in several ways. You become both the boss and artist. This mindset strengthens the idea of artist-for-hire, which further allows you to see the work as work and not a personal representation of your life. **As a boss, you are more objective about the work. As the artist, you're more resilient to resistance because you're not personally attached to the outcome**, which is for the boss to worry about.

Another beneficial aspect of corporate life is organization. In almost every company, Monday morning begins with a meeting to organize the needs of the company and delegate duties. You can hold this meeting with yourself and create a schedule of work you need to accomplish for the week. Again, this takes the ethereal out of "creating art" and makes it a business.

The Main Benefit of the Professional

Resistance is a bully. Like all bullies, it feeds on the fear of its target. The more you cower in the face of resistance, the stronger it becomes and the more frequently it will pester you. When you are a professional, you take that power away by standing your ground, sitting down, and doing the work each day. You refuse to have your lunch money stolen and get shoved into another locker. You look resistance in the eye and say, "give me your best shot."

A bully doesn't know what to do when their target stands up to them. They suddenly have no more hold over their weaker opponent. **Resistance also doesn't know what to do when you ignore its efforts to derail you.** When you refuse to back down in the face of resistance, you become stronger and more persistent than resistance. You've defeated the bully. You will gain confidence in your strength. You will know that you don't have to be afraid anymore.

There is no special formula to follow to become a professional. Make the decision to turn pro, and just like that, you'll be one.

Part 3: The Other Side of Resistance | Chapter 5: A Powerful Ally

(Shortform note: The author suggests that the muse is the Lord's helper and bestows God's work unto you. However, in the foreword, Robert McKee states that his interpretation is that the muse represents biological talent. The concepts of the muse are applicable to your work regardless of which form you choose to give it. Therefore, we'll discuss the muse as a psychic force without distinction between science and religion.)

If resistance is the force working against you, then the muse is the force working in your favor. Access to your muse is another aspect of what makes working like a professional so important. Something mysterious happens when you come to your art every day. The forces of your artistic power accumulate around you. **The muse sees your work and commitment and rewards you with inspiration.**

Some refer to professionalism as the "artist's code" because they know the artist works in service of the art without arrogance. Others call it the "warrior's way" because, like warriors, you must slay dragons and fight the enemy daily to win the battle for your work. The muse is what enhances your power during the battle and helps you find your way to the gates of your destiny.

To form a strong relationship with your muse, you must first understand what a muse is, where it comes from, and how to harness its power.

What Is a Muse?

A muse can be considered a mystical force that inspires artists. Some refer to the muse as an angel, and some think of it as talent. Whichever form suits you best is fine as long as you understand that some psychic force is supporting your work as an ally. This force, when experienced, is stronger than resistance at its best.

The concept of the muse is not new. Almost every ancient culture, from Greeks to Native Americans, has an identified embodiment of this force of nature. For the Greeks, their force was the gods. The father of all gods was Zeus, and in Greek mythology, his nine daughters were the muses.

Some believed that the gods took an interest in the affairs of mortals and interfered for either good or bad (perhaps better understood as rewards or punishments). William Blake, an 18th-century poet, believed the muses delighted in the creations of the living. Others suggested that artistic creations already existed in this higher plane, and the muse simply provided the path for the mortal to bring them forth.

You may not believe in this mythological mumbo jumbo. But once you understand how the muse works, you may begin to see the benefit of having this force in your corner.

How the Muse Becomes Your Ally

When you acknowledge the muse in your artistic life, you counteract feelings of ego that can hinder the authenticity of your work. The muse is not just from a higher dimension, the muse wants to help you and knows things that you don't. It sees your potential and wants to give you what you need to reach it. But for that to happen, you must be open to hearing the muse and listening. Basically, you need to get out of your head so you can hear the inspiration when it comes. The only way to summon the muse is simply starting to

work.

Beginning Your Work

When you have an idea and commit to creating it despite fear, you clear the path for the authentic *you* to come through. Starting is like the first contraction after the long gestation period of your idea. The muse works like a midwife to help bring the person you were meant to be into this world.

The small act of sitting down to write that first sentence or paint that first stroke or draw that first blueprint is an invitation to your muse. You invite the muse to sit at your table and give them the space to do their work. They're happy and you're happy. When you're both happy, you will receive the guidance you need to bring your work to fruition.

When you sit down to work, recognize the muse and show gratitude for the gifts it will bring to you. Be humble in what you ask for. **The muse's job is not to give you fame and fortune. The muse gives you inspiration, which helps you continue to work.** That is all you can hope for and all you should ask for—the ability to maintain your work. If your goal is anything else, you are not yet a professional, and the muse will know it.

Harnessing Your Potential

Opening yourself up to the force of the muse is helpful, but just as important is opening up to the concept of higher planes of consciousness. This belief is imperative if you want to keep moving forward in your work.

There are different planes of consciousness at play inside you. Too often, you're distracted by the external world or the myriad of thoughts racing through your brain to notice. You can't see past the flesh to the soul.

Pressfield gives an example of this higher consciousness at work. When he finishes writing for the day, he takes a hike. Hiking clears his mind and allows other planes of consciousness to come through. He receives notes about the work, information stored in these different arenas that he could not access on his own. For instance, a voice tells him he's written the same sentence hundreds of pages apart in his novel. Through no effort of his own, this guidance appears to help show him the way forward.

This process happens to you all the time. It is mystical and profound when it occurs, but you must be willing to shut down your surface mind enough to receive it. This part of your consciousness knows more than you do. It's always working alongside your surface mind, even when you're not physically working. **It processes and organizes your ideas and brings you solutions as insights when you forget to think,** like when brushing your teeth or hiking. It enjoys the work and waits patiently for an opportunity to share what it's done.

Many artists are humble about their work because they understand that they are not wholly responsible for it. They receive help from this other conscious sphere. They become mere tools to dictate what this mystical mind tells them. They can't explain what's happening, but they know that it is beyond the power of their surface brain, or what is called Ego.

The Self and Ego

This duality of consciousness is best understood as the *Self* and the *Ego*. Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in the early 20th century, was one of the founders of this concept. He believed the Ego is the

embodiment of the personal “I,” or the surface mind. The Ego operates in the real world. The Self is the larger landscape of consciousness. Your dreams, intuition, and visions live within the realm of the Self. Jung called it the mind of the soul.

Pressfield uses Jung’s theory to describe the mind of the artist. He posits that **the Ego is where resistance lives and the Self is where the spirits live**, including yours and that of your muse. Both the Self and Ego are powerful and battle for position in your mind.

The Doctrines of the Ego

Your Ego believes in what is tangible. It runs the day-to-day operations of life, which are essential for survival. According to your Ego, there is nothing beyond death, and the physical world is the only realm of being. Time and space are real entities that dictate your movements, and you cannot override them. You are separate from everyone else, and your only goal in life is to keep living. Because of this, you live in a constant state of fear of losing your life. Your Ego desires to leave a legacy behind, whether through children or your impact on the world.

The Doctrines of the Self

Your Self believes that the soul is eternal and remains after death. Time and space are illusions manifested to create order. You have the power to traverse various realms of consciousness at all times. You are connected to everyone, and love is what guides life. All things carry the spirit of the interconnected universe and are connected through it.

Finding Your Self

Anytime you try to alter your consciousness, you are seeking to access the Self, or higher mind. Drugs, alcohol, meditation, fasting, and prayer are all ways in which people attempt to reach the divine ground where ideas and dreams live and your authentic being resides. **The Self does not lie and cannot disguise itself as something it’s not. The Self encompasses the deepest form of who you are.**

Any artist that sits down to create is attempting to access the Self. You gravitate toward art because you want to grow, evolve, learn, and tap into internal truths. You seek a spiritual awakening to become more enlightened.

The Ego hates the Self. **The Ego would rather you didn’t become your authentic self** because the more enlightened you become, the less you rely on the Ego, or the public personification of you. To block your path to this more powerful mind, the Ego shuffles in its artillery as resistance.

The Original You

You were not born a blank slate. You were born with a particular soul and brand of characteristics. You were told the world is your oyster, but that’s a lie. You have a specific purpose in life—your true calling—and your job is to discover what it is and follow it.

If you were born to be a leader, you must become a leader. If you were born to nurture children, you must seek out positions that require nurturing, such as a mother or teacher. If you were born to be an artist, you must create art.

If life is this easy, why are so many people miserable? What stops you from following your destiny. Once again, the answer is fear.

Understanding Your Fear

You've learned that resistance feeds off fear and that the Ego exists in a constant state of fear. But what is this fear about and why do you let it control you? Fear, as detrimental as it is to your progress, is comforting. You're used to living with it, and if you're honest, **you have to admit that it's easier to do nothing out of fear than put your heart on the line for what you believe in.**

The most common fear encompasses your relationship with the external world. What will people think of you if you seek internal fulfillment? You're afraid you will lose your tribe. You're afraid of failing and the humiliation that comes with it. You fear a loss of financial or social stability. You're afraid of wasting your time, which you believe is finite. You're afraid of the "I-told-you-so's" from people who don't understand your dreams. You fear finding out you're a fraud or not capable of living up to your calling. You're afraid to find out you've been wrong about your calling.

These are valid fears, but they're not the main fear that halts you in your tracks like quicksand. You never talk about this fear, not even to yourself. This fear is the fear of succeeding.

What happens if you gain your full power and become the person you believed you were? If you discover you do have talent, drive, and passion and can achieve your goals, will you be able to live up to it? **The pressure is now on for you to be that person and stay enlightened in the higher plane.**

Also, you fear success will make you lose the life you've grown accustomed to. The truth is, you *will* lose some or all of that life. And that's not a bad thing. The parts of your life that are true will continue to support you in your new fulfilled soul. The ones that drop away are not the parts you need. You can't change who you are meant to be. Once you become that person, the life you're meant to lead will open up to you and will include people and environments with which you truly belong.

Exercise: Tap into Your Higher Self

The mysterious forces at play in your creative space are not always easy to identify. The information in this chapter can help you become more aware of the powers conspiring in your favor.

Name one time you've experienced the sensation of timelessness when working on a project. For instance, you sat down to work then suddenly looked up to realize that three hours had passed without you noticing.

If you haven't experienced this sensation, why do you think that is?

If you have, what did it feel like? Did you receive guidance from somewhere you can't explain?

What is one way you can open yourself up to both your muse and your higher mind?

Chapter 6: The Artist's Identity

Identity is a vital part of who we are. We all have a need to know where we fit in within society because we want psychological stability. **You define yourself based on your connections to others, which inform how you act.** There are two main forms of connection in society: those based on hierarchy and those based on territory. Hierarchy defines you based on your position along a certain social ladder. Territory connects you to certain environments or activities. You must understand the difference to learn which truly supports you as an artist.

Hierarchy

It's easy to define yourself based on hierarchy. You've been doing it since childhood. As a kid, you found a band of friends, and everyone knew who the leader, the mediators, or the followers were. You knew your place in this group and defined yourself by it. You grew up to be a leader, a mediator, or a follower. Cues from the social and public spheres reinforced this identity with the message that others' opinions mattered.

The problem is that hierarchy only works in small clusters. High school is a small pond, so rankings abound, and everyone knows where they stand, from quarterback to the head of the math club. But in real life, this type of hierarchy can't function. Metropolitan cities, universities, and corporations are too big to structure everyone in this way. **When you define yourself based on hierarchy, you lose your distinction within these larger groups and become lost.** The psychological effects of this loss of identity are severe, especially for an artist.

The Hierarchical Artist

Hierarchy is death for the artist. It narrows your scope regarding the work. You strive to find your place within your field, so you measure yourself against those achieving success. You also cut yourself off from those below you. Your worth becomes entwined with where you land within that group of artists. You lose the ability to see the larger tribe and make positive connections. You try to shape yourself according to the rank you wish to become.

When you look to the outside world to define your worth, you will never be content. Look at Vincent Van Gogh. He was fully engaged with his Self and pursued his calling as a professional. But the world didn't recognize his art as worthy, and he suffered psychologically.

When you look outward instead of inward, you stop doing the work for the sake of the work. You approach every connection through the lens of how it can enhance your position. And worst of all, you become a hack.

A hack is someone who shapes their art to improve their ranking within the hierarchy. You write, paint, or develop your ideas based on what you believe people want to see and will accept. You become afraid of creating what is in your heart because you fear it won't be received well. You force yourself to travel down an unauthentic path, and you and the work suffer.

You might achieve financial success as a hack because American culture loves a good panderer. But you'll have sacrificed your muse and not fulfilled your calling. Therefore, **the success will only be external and the work less than what you're capable of.**

The Author's Personal Experience

Pressfield struggled as a screenwriter in Hollywood for many years. To his and his agent's dismay, his next big idea was a book. They both knew that first novels took years to finish and were hard to sell. Plus, his novel was about golf, not the hottest topic in the world.

But Pressfield felt the story in his heart and decided to write what he thought was interesting regardless of how it would be received. His first novel, *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, became a success as both a book and adapted film.

He reasons his success came from writing what he thought was worthy and leaving the fate of the work up to the gods.

Territory

Just like animals, humans have certain turfs. You feel more comfortable on your home turf than you do in a foreign place. You likely feel stronger when surrounded by your family than a group of strangers. **Your turf is your territory, and you roam your territory freely and confidently. As an artist, you also have a specific turf.** If you're a painter, it's a canvas. If you're a writer, it's a computer screen. If you're a scientist, it's a laboratory. You belong there and receive many gifts from the territory in return.

Territories fill your soul with sustenance. And you don't need anyone else to feel sustained. Think about your home. Your home provides comfort with or without anyone else in it. You've put in the work to make it your home, and it rewards you with warmth and stability.

Putting in the work is the key to creating a territory. **You can only claim a territory you've worked for.** You might want to claim a home as your territory, but if you don't decorate it or put any work into making it yours, it won't be. It will just be a building with four walls and a roof.

You can't simply dwell in a place and hope to receive anything from it if you do nothing in it. A territory only gives back what you put into it. (Shortform example: Think of a territory as interest in a bank account. The more money you put in, the more interest you'll accrue. If you open an account and never put any money into it, you can't expect to make any interest in return.)

The Territorial Artist

The territory of your art is where you connect with your muse. If you try to claim your territory without doing the work or, worse, try to create a shortcut in the work to serve an external purpose, you anger your muse. As a result, your muse will not bestow the sustenance you desire.

When you work within your territory and fulfill your end of the arrangement, you show respect to the muse. You invite their mysterious force in and promise to serve as a patient servant. The muse, in turn, gives back by providing the inspiration you need to bring your work to completion.

A territorial artist does the work for the sake of the work. From this vantage, you also harness the energies of your higher consciousness. If you do the work for some external reward or recognition, you're working toward a hierarchical goal. You are presuming to know more than your muse and higher mind because you think you can manipulate the work for profit. This presumption is an affront because you're allowing your Ego to infiltrate their territory. As a result, you will receive no guidance.

Are You a Hierarchical or Territorial Artist?

The distinction between the two identities comes down to motivation. To know which foundation you're working from, ask the following questions:

If you're suffering psychologically, what do you do to make yourself feel better?

- If you call a bunch of friends to receive reassurance, you're more hierarchical.
- If you turn to the work for solace, you are territorial.

If you were the last person on Earth, would you still create your art?

- If your creations lose meaning because there's no one to validate your work, you're hierarchical.
- If you gain sustenance from the act of doing the work without accolades, you are territorial.

Working from a territorial perspective means truly doing the work in order to fulfill your calling. A major advantage of this foundation is that it banishes fear. **When you work because it is part of who you are and commit to the work, you can never fail.** Claim your territory through work, and intruders have no choice but to move on to unclaimed land.

Exercise: What Kind of Artist Are You?

Now that you understand the difference between amateurs and professionals, which identity fits you best?

What type of activities fill your soul?

Do you put in work every day on those activities, or do you dabble when the mood strikes?

Would you find the work meaningful if no one was around to admire it? Why or why not?

What is your territory, and what are the specific steps you must take to claim it? List three. For instance, if your territory is science, what activities do you need to perform to become a scientist?

Chapter 7: Life as an Artist

Only you know what your true calling is—what you were born to do. And only you can decide what to do with the genius you've been given. You can do the work or not do the work, it's up to you. But if you choose not to write a novel, paint a mural, cure cancer, or develop the Internet, realize you are hurting yourself and everyone else that may benefit from your gift.

Using your gift to create your art is typically an isolated enterprise, but it is not a selfish one. You're following through on the life bestowed to you. You are using your unique spirit to create the work you were meant to create. This gift wasn't given to you by mistake. If you feel it, you're meant to use it. A muse waits in your divine space to provide you with the many blessings they have to offer. All you have to do is call upon them and be grateful.

What If You Don't Succeed?

You can't predict what will happen with your art once you create it. But if you don't create it, you guarantee the answer is nothing. Your only certainty is that doing the work fulfills your destiny. The rest is out of your hands. If the idea of doing the work for the sake of the work is too hard to swallow, think of other ways to measure success.

For example, territorial work becomes a form of meditation and healing. You have been given the tools you need to live a harmonious psychological life. That in itself makes you fortunate. When you work as a professional, you open the doors to higher forces and can experience the magic of divine intervention. Not many people can say that. Therefore, **the work becomes a portal to reaching a spiritual place only you know how to find.**

What Now?

Now you must decide what you believe and how you will use those beliefs to become your authentic self. You won't be able to document or prove that forces from higher planes conspire in your favor. You won't be able to name the moment the muse speaks to you. You won't be able to differentiate between what is your work, the muse's work, or the work of your higher mind. **All you can do is trust the process and receive your rewards. Those rewards will be happiness, fulfillment, and purpose.**

If you can let go of your Ego, you can succeed. If you can stand up to resistance, you can succeed. If you can be humble and accept your role as servant to the muse, you can succeed.

You must become a warrior in the fight for control over your life. You must be willing to share the spotlight with inspiration and view yourself as an instrument it works through. You must remember that you are an artist, not the art. You must commit to doing whatever the work entails. If you can do these things, the rest will take care of itself.

Exercise: Can You Win the Battle for Your Soul?

This book helps you name the enemy that works to hold you back from your dreams. It also provides information to help you succeed. How will this book change your life?

How has reading this book changed how you approach creativity in your life?

What are two ways you feel more prepared to achieve your goals now?

Why is it important for you to achieve your calling in life?

Name two ways you will move forward with the information in this summary to change your life.