Artists in Crisis

Rethinking the Mental Health Challenges of Creative and Performing Artists

Edited by

Eric Maisel, Arnoldo Cantú, and Susan Raeburn

Artists in Crisis is the seventh volume of the Ethics International Press ***Critical Psychology and Critical Psychiatry Series***

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Contents

Editor's Introduction

Eric Maisel

Artists in Crisis in a new addition to the Ethics International Press Critical Psychology and Critical Psychiatry series. At first glance, it may seem an odd addition, in that it spends little time critiquing psychiatry, psychotherapy, or any of the other current helping modalities. But we had our reasons for including it.

We have included it because we want to underline the fact that any ostensive helping profession, insofar as it fails to recognize the realities of the creative or performing life, will not be helping its creative and performing artist clients enough. Understanding those challenges is vital.

This is not a technical, theoretical or programmatic book. Nor is it a book where we directly take psychiatry, in particular, and the other helping professions, more generally, to task for failing to understand (or even take a lukewarm interest in) the special challenges that our millions of creative and performing artists face.

It certainly does the latter between the lines, when a given artist expresses how little her psychiatrist or psychotherapist seems to understand her concerns. It does the former, a little, by the occasional presentation of tactics that the contributor has learned helps to meet these special challenges. Primarily, however, it is a book that hopes to paint a vivid picture of the creative person's realities.

If your client is a writer, painter, actor, musician, filmmaker—or simply cultured or bohemian—the realities our contributors speak to are exactly the realities you need to understand. We hope that you will come to understand, for example, how deep the identity of singer, playwright or performance artist runs. Or how negative familial and cultural messages—about a child's lack of talent, about the unimportance of art, about the difficulties of a life in the arts—derail not only careers but drain a creative's life of meaning and purpose. These are important learnings.

One set of contributions comes from creative and performing artists who share their firsthand experiences. Another set comes from helping professionals who work with creative and performing artists (and who often are creative or performing artists themselves). This amounts to a rather loose distinction, however, because very often these are one-and-the-same people.

For example, an actor becomes a coach who decides to work with actors. A therapist who works with writers starts to write. Virtually every contributor, whether painter or marriage counselor, filmmaker or mental health coach, has experienced the particular set of challenges that come with the creative personality, the creative marketplace, and the creative's need to be seen and heard.

Because these are typically one-and-the-same people, and because there are no neat categories into which to put the book's contributions, we have decided to simply present them in alphabetical order, according to the first letter of the contributor's last name. We preferred this method to creating arbitrary categories; and we likewise think that doing so underlines the uniqueness of each contributor's journey in the arts and their response to the challenges they have faced and continue to face. As an exception to this rule, we've put my chapter

first, to anchor the book and to paint a picture of the territory we're exploring.

Creatives find themselves in regular crisis for all sorts of reasons. They may be in crisis because the career they have chosen provides them with too little money, opening them up to challenges of poverty. They may find themselves in crisis because they are out of step with their society and feel rejected, isolated, and misunderstood. They may be in crisis because the work they attempt—say, to write a novel or compose a symphony—is hard to pull off and regularly fails.

They are also in crisis because they are typically not heard by or seen by their putative helpers. A psychiatrist who simply affixes a "clinical depression" diagnosis to a writer who has had none of her novels published and is living in chronic despair is hardly serving that writer. Handing her pills isn't and can't be a satisfactory answer to her profound disappointment. How could it be?

While individual psychiatrists may take these matters into account, the profession of psychiatry does not. This shortfall has been well-documented and we will not spend time looking at the problems with the current "mental disorder" paradigm in this volume. That "diagnose, treat, and medicate" model has been examined elsewhere at length and in depth, including in multiple volumes in this series, among them *Critiquing the Psychiatric Model*, *Humane Alternatives to the Psychiatric Model*, *Theoretical Alternatives to the Psychiatric Model of Mental Disorder Labeling*, and *Practical Alternatives to the Psychiatric Model of Mental Illness*.

Psychiatry is not inclined to pay any particular attention to the special challenges of creative and performing artists. The other helping

professions—to include psychotherapy, psychological testing, neuroscience, school counseling, et cetera—are likewise not very attuned to the special challenges of this particular group. A brain scan will not register the despair a dancer is experiencing when an injury ends her career. A Jungian analyst may have a feel for the creative impulse, but still not understand the identity commitment an actor has made to acting. The folks who understand these matters are those with lived experience: our creative and performing artists themselves.

That's why we've invited creative and performing artists to describe their challenges in their own words and to share ideas about what they think can help folks like themselves meet these challenges. This volume is more about voices than programs. I think what you will take away from this impressionist tapestry is a deeper sense of who creative and performing artists are, how they live their lives, and what they have learned—through hard-won experience—about what can help them survive as a poet, a sculptor, a singer, or whatever their chosen métier may be.

We anticipate that we may zoom in even closer and produce subsequent volumes that look at the special challenges of, for instance, musicians, writers, and visual artists. If you think that you might like to contribute to a volume of that sort, please drop me a note to ericmaisel@hotmail.com and let's chat. We look forward to our further exploration of the realities of the creative life and the performing life, with an eye toward validating the lived experiences of our creative and performing artists and provoking their mental health helpers to take those realities into account.

Schematics of a Lifelong Crisis: The Special Challenges of Creative and Performing Artists

Eric Maisel

In this chapter, I'd like to present some anchoring ideas about the characteristic challenges that creatives and self-identified creative and performing artists regularly face. Let's begin by considering the trajectory of a typical creative person's life.

Many lineages combine to make the newborn. We have no idea who this new person is, how their particular nervous system will work, how their particular brain will work, whether they are already good at math or angry at their fate, whether they received the strange thing called "talent" from their particular DNA or prenatal experiences, or anything along the lines of understanding their original personality.

An understanding of this infant's original personality is completely unavailable to us and beyond us. You and I understand this and are willing to frankly admit it. Psychiatry is so silent on this profound matter that we must conclude it is avoiding it, and its implications, on purpose. Ask psychiatry about original personality or the place of DNA in human affairs, and it will not even blink. You will be met by perfect professional silence, rather than by an honest "We have no idea."

And what about whether or not this infant has been born with a "creative personality"? What might we even mean by that? Much has

been written about "the creative personality" and what that might look like, especially in terms of a collection of traits which together form it. But is that the truth of the matter? Is there such a personality and do we want to say that a Mozart is "already Mozart" at birth? And if so, what does that portend?

We can certainly create a long list of traits that we think combine into "the creative personality," traits like curiosity, passion, stubbornness, imagination, and as many as seventy-five others. But is that an accurate list or the right way to think about the matter? Can there really be just one "creativity personality" and "where would it have come from"? And, to add to our wonders, did, for example, Mozart's father contribute so much by way of pressing young Amadeus that we feel inclined to say that Leopold "made" Amadeus? Was Mozart born or made?

This child, however we might describe him, her or them, experiences life. Let's leap ahead a few years.

A certain seven-year-old falls in love with what books can do. They are always with a book. They read all the Harry Potters, then all of a certain detective series, then all about space exploration, then one adventure novel after another, then a heartbreaking young adult novel set in WWII, then *Alice in Wonderland*, then *Huckleberry Finn*, then *The Color Purple*. They read and read. And maybe they already start writing, either internally spinning tales or actually getting them down on paper.

They take care of the rest of life, too, like brushing their teeth and trudging to school, and maybe rather poorly. But what matters most to them is that half-finished book that is crying out to be read as soon as possible. Isn't it fair to say that this seven-year-old is already a

writer, for better or worse? Can't we sense that and predict the world of pain and maybe pleasure that is coming? Really, is anything clearer?

Because we are seeing identity formation at work, and because psychiatry should care about what identity signifies and where it leads, psychiatry should take an interest in this. But it does not. It announces that its only concern is illness, not personality or identity. So, when, for example, this child is bored and restless at school, handles his school assignments poorly, focuses well only on what interests them and not on what doesn't, and so on, psychiatry has only one response: a diagnosis.

Now psychiatry takes an interest and a label is coming. Can't you see the ADHD writing on the wall?

Let's leap ahead a bit. This child, being the person that she is, wanting her independence but also wanting to fit in, being bored, feeling melancholic, having no outlet for all that she is feeling, has a troubled adolescence. One day she is enthusiastic. The next day she is in despair. Her mind, having lots of voltage, races. What will psychiatry do with this picture? Well, likely assign a bipolar diagnosis, don't we think?

This child, who was perhaps already an artist from birth, whatever that might mean, who must have tons and tons of genetic instructions that can only be played out in the ruthless and conventional real world that she finds herself in, who is already burdened by a forming personality and identity, is bound to feel and to be misunderstood; and to be misunderstood by herself once she is told that she has a mental disorder.

Where did that simple, deep love of reading go? Into the vortex of life and our ubiquitous mental disorder paradigm.

And what if our already-troubled adolescent has had and continues to experience the kinds of difficulties that are called "adverse childhood experiences," experiences like verbal abuse, psychological abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse? What if she has grown up in a cult or among alcoholics? What if she is repeatedly informed that she has no talent and no chance in life? What if her father hits her mother and she has had to hide under the stairs during their fights? What if …

Presuming for the moment that there is such a thing as a creative personality, and that this child has it, and given how real lives are lived and experienced, where will that love of reading go? How can this child "manifest" her creative personality? How will she deal with all those competing forces within her, that stubbornness butting up against the world's intractability, that curiosity running headlong into mainstream indifference, that energy confronted by the everyday dullness of school, messaging, games, and all the rest?

We could create a thousand scenarios. One artist will play this out as reckless sex and wild experimentation leading to messes, misadventures, and addiction. A second will grow meek, hide out, and aim herself in a direction as safe as she can conjure, maybe into a world that skirts the creative and doesn't demand that she step up as creative herself. A third will opt for smart over creative and choose a direction that values cleverness and pays large rewards. And so on. Aren't all of these possibilities predictable?

When the Demands of a Creative Personality Meet the Real World

The creative personality, which we tend to define by its traits without really being able to capture its particular quality, is a rather paradoxical one. It is fueled by desire, enlivened by imagination, prone to sensitivity, and hungry for originality. Yet it is also peculiarly

vulnerable to overwhelm, self-doubt, and chronic existential questioning. Strengths and vulnerabilities interweave.

Creative individuals tend to be imaginative, sensitive, open to experience, and intrinsically motivated. They are often driven by a sense of vision or purpose that goes beyond conventional goals such as financial stability or social approval. They hunger for meaning, depth, and authenticity. As part of their gift or burden, they feel the world's pain. Out of this may come a gorgeous poem, or despair, or both.

They likewise struggle with competing tendencies: a need for solitude versus a longing for connection, boldness versus insecurity, playfulness versus seriousness. These traits are sources of both strength and vulnerability. The creative person sees possibilities others overlook, but that same capacity for imagination can breed anxiety and self-doubt. Sensitivity fuels empathy and aesthetic insight, but it also makes creatives vulnerable to criticism and rejection. The desire for originality can foster innovation, but it can also leave one feeling isolated in a culture that prizes conformity.

The creative personality makes certain demands: to be allowed freedom, to pursue its vision, and to live authentically. Sadly, the world in which the creative person must live is not designed to nurture any of this. It is structured around productivity, efficiency, predictability, and conformity. Workplaces reward reliability and rule-following more than originality. Markets value products that can be scaled and sold more than ideas that challenge or transform. Families, communities, and institutions often encourage safety and stability over risk and exploration.

For the creative person, these real-world pressures show up in certain characteristic, concrete ways:

- *Financial insecurity.* A poet or painter rarely earns a steady income from their art, and the jobs available to support themselves may sap their energy.
- *Lack of recognition.* Creative work often goes unnoticed or undervalued, leading to discouragement.
- *Time pressures*. Daily obligations, from paying bills to caregiving, crowd out creative time.
- *Cultural marginalization.* In societies where art is considered frivolous or secondary, the creative person may feel invisible or dismissed.

When the creative personality's deep demands—for freedom, expression, meaning—collide with these pressures, a predictable set of struggles arises: self-doubt, depression, burnout, blocked creativity, or a sense of alienation from ordinary life.

Psychiatry's Blind Spot

When this complex personality type collides with the realities of the real world—with economic pressures, cultural indifference, institutional barriers, and so on—the characteristic results are tension, frustration, and, often enough, outright suffering.

What is striking is how little attention psychiatry and mainstream mental health providers care to pay to these specific issues. The struggles of the creative personality are often misdiagnosed, misunderstood, or ignored altogether, as if they were eccentricities rather than central aspects of their client's life and wellbeing.

Psychiatry, in particular among the helping professions, tends to ignore or misinterpret these struggles. Its orientation is diagnostic: it classifies behaviors and moods into categories of disorder. Depression, anxiety, or mood swings in a creative person are typically seen

through the same lens as depression, anxiety, or mood swings in anyone else. The fact that these symptoms may arise from the tension between a creative personality and an unaccommodating world is rarely considered.

For example, a composer whose depression stems from repeated rejection of her work may be prescribed antidepressants, without any attention to the existential pain of living in a culture that doesn't value her music. An actor struggling with identity confusion may be diagnosed with a personality disorder, when in fact the turmoil reflects the difficulty of balancing the demands of performance with a coherent sense of self. A novelist who experiences intense mood swings might be labeled bipolar, when those swings may be closely linked to the natural rhythms of creative inspiration and depletion.

Psychiatry's neglect of the creative personality means that the very dynamics that make life difficult for creative individuals—the mismatch between inner drives and outer realities—are disregarded. As a result, treatment often fails to address the true sources of suffering.

The Clash of Inner Demands and Outer Realities

Let us look more closely at some of the ways in which these clashes manifest:

The need for freedom vs. the demand for conformity

Creative personalities need room to experiment and deviate from norms. The world, however, often punishes deviation, whether socially ("Why don't you get a real job?") or institutionally (e.g., gatekeepers rejecting unconventional work).

The hunger for meaning vs. the world's emphasis on survival

Creative individuals often experience a deep longing to live purposefully and expressively. Yet rent, groceries, and bills demand attention. For many, this tension leads to chronic dissatisfaction and the sense of leading a double life—artist by night, wage-earner by day.

The drive to create vs. the fear of rejection

While all people fear failure, the creative personality experiences it with particular intensity because their work feels inseparable from their identity. When the world rejects the work, it can feel like it rejects the person.

The desire for recognition vs. the reality of invisibility

Art needs an audience, but audiences are fickle. Many creative individuals pour years into their work only to find little acknowledgment. This invisibility gnaws at their sense of purpose.

The need for authenticity vs. the world's rewards for compromise

Markets and institutions often reward predictable, conventional outputs. Creative individuals who want to remain true to their vision face the painful decision of whether to compromise in order to survive or to resist at the cost of recognition.

The cost of neglect

When psychiatry ignores these dynamics, the cost is high. Creative individuals often leave clinical encounters feeling unseen or misunderstood. They may accept diagnoses that frame their sensitivity, intensity, or nonconformity as pathology, rather than as natural outgrowths of their creative makeup. They may be medicated

without ever exploring how their struggles are tied to blocked creativity, thwarted purpose, or existential frustration.

Worse, they may begin to doubt themselves even more. If the psychiatrist says the problem is a "mental disorder," the creative person may internalize the belief that they are defective, rather than recognizing that they are living out a difficult but honorable negotiation between their personality and the world.

Toward a More Nuanced Approach

What would it look like to seriously address the creative personality in mental health care?

Acknowledging context. Instead of only asking "What symptoms are present?", clinicians could also ask: "What creative needs are going unmet?"

Normalizing struggle. Rather than labeling doubt, mood swings, or restlessness as pathology, these could be framed as common features of the creative life that require support, not suppression.

Encouraging meaning-making. Creative individuals thrive when encouraged to connect their struggles to their larger vision and purpose, rather than reducing them to chemical imbalances alone.

Supporting process. Creative work is often the best therapy for creative people. Instead of sidelining it, clinicians could integrate creative practice into treatment as a tool for resilience and healing.

Such approaches would broaden the frame to include existential, cultural, and personality-based dimensions of suffering.

50 Challenges of the Creative Personality — and How to Meet Them

We started this chapter by beginning to think through what would naturally occur when someone possessing a "creative personality" is dropped into the real world of ordinary pursuits, predictable challenges, and inevitable conflicts.

We haven't the space to play out the countless scenarios that will occur, each made different according to whether the person is a classical pianist or a jazz musician, a member of an unsupported minority or a privileged majority, a poet or a screenwriter, highly anxious or just ordinarily anxious, and so on. There are just too many combinations, permutations, and possible scenarios.

We can however provide a list of characteristic challenges that helpers, to include psychiatrists, psychotherapists, and coaches, ought to consider when they work with a self-identified creative, performing artist or any creative individual.

Internal Challenges

1. Self-Doubt

Every creative person wrestles with the voice that whispers, "You're not good enough." This voice rarely disappears but can be managed. Clients can be helped to recognize self-doubt as part of the creative terrain and reminded that confidence grows through action.

2. Perfectionism

Perfectionism stalls progress by insisting that every detail be flawless. It's an impossible standard. Clients can be invited to adopt the

principle of "done, not perfect" and helped to picture creative work as iterative—as, for instance, drafts and not monuments.

3. Procrastination

The urge to delay starting or finishing a project can mask fear or overwhelm. Clients might be invited to break tasks into smaller, concrete steps, and to celebrate incremental progress. Deadlines, even self-imposed ones, can help tame procrastination.

4. Fear of Failure

Fear that one's work will flop can prevent trying at all. Clients can be helped to reframe a "failed project" as a brave experiment or as valuable feedback. Each attempt could be considered a stepping stone toward mastery, not a verdict on worth.

5. Fear of Success

For some, success feels as threatening as failure. With success comes more pressure and more eyes watching. Clients can be helped to anchor their work in their personal reasons for creating, not in the expectations that come with visibility.

6. Over-Sensitivity

Creatives often feel criticism deeply. Sensitivity is a gift for perceiving nuance, but it must be balanced by solid self-protection. Clients can be helped to accept the feedback that helps them grow and discard the rest without a second glance.

7. Mood Swings

The phase "mood swings" covers a huge range of states, from mild ups and downs to very dramatic and challenging psychological and biological events. "Simple" creative highs and lows can themselves prove exhausting. Yet instead of seeing these mood shifts as personal flaws, they can be treated as weather patterns. Clients can be advised to build routines, track cycles, and use low periods for research, rest, or incubation.

8. Overwhelm

Creative minds brim with ideas. But trying to juggle too many projects can lead to paralysis. Clients can be invited to maintain an "idea journal" that honors possibilities while at the same time focusing on just one or two active projects.

9. Isolation

Solitude is essential for creating, but too much solitude can lead to loneliness. Suggest to clients that solitary work can be balanced by intentional connection: by joining a creative group, by mentorship, or by friendships outside of art.

10. Identity Confusion

Many creatives and would-be creatives wrestle with the wonder if they are "real artists." You can suggest that identity is claimed through practice and that doing the work regularly is the best way to ensure and maintain the identity of artist.

11. Inner Critic

That relentless inner voice of criticism can sabotage progress. One tactic to suggest is that, instead of trying to silence it, externalize it—give it a name, even a silly one—and then choose whether to listen. This can help an artist remain in charge.

12. Impulsiveness

A rush of inspiration can lead to abandoning projects midstream for new ideas. To manage this, clients can be invited to keep a log of new ideas while committing to finishing the project in front of them before leaping away.

13. Obsessiveness

Creativity requires focus, but obsession can lead to burnout or neglect of life's other parts. You can suggest to clients that they build stopping points into their day and keep in mind that sustainability supports continued artistry.

14. Lack of Discipline

Without consistent practice, creativity becomes a wish rather than a reality. You can help clients establish rituals, create schedules, and acquire accountability partners, so that they provide themselves with structure without stifling their spontaneity.

15. Self-Sabotage

Sometimes creatives undermine themselves through delay, distraction, or destructive habits. You can invite clients to observe and note patterns of sabotage and to replace them with healthier rituals—

with, for example, exercise, journaling, meditation, or community support.

External Challenges

16. Financial Insecurity

Making a living from creative work is hard. Instead of seeing side jobs as failures, clients can be helped to view them as scaffolding that allows them to maintain their practice. Likewise, you might invite clients to consider diversifying their income streams, say by teaching or running workshops, while adamantly protecting their creative time.

17. Lack of Time

Life's demands crowd out creative work. Help clients see why it is so important that they schedule creativity first—even small daily sessions matter. Invite them to protect their creative time as they would any other essential commitment.

18. Gatekeepers

Publishers, galleries, and agents often say "no." Remind clients that persistence is vital and that in the meanwhile they consider seeking alternative routes—self-publishing, independent shows, online platforms, et cetera—to reach audiences.

19. Technology Distractions

Digital noise fragments attention. Suggest to clients that they protect their focus by setting boundaries: phone-free work sessions, distraction blockers, or tech-free hours. Creativity thrives in deep focus.

20. Market Pressures

Creating for the marketplace risks diluting authenticity. But the bills must be paid. Invite clients to consider how they might balance commercial considerations with personal projects that reflect their true voice—aiming, if at all possible, for a satisfactory coexistence.

21. Cultural Undervaluing of Art

When society treats art as frivolous, indulgent, unimportant, or dangerous, that saps artists' morale. You can help clients remember that art shapes and even saves culture—whether or not it's valued by mainstream society—and invite them to connect with communities that honor creativity.

22. Burnout

Overproduction or overwork drains joy. Invite clients to respect cycles of effort and rest, to allow time for play and renewal, and to consider paying attention to their other life purposes—those important areas of life that also deserve their attention.

23. Resource Limitations

Not having ideal space (or any space) or the necessary tools, technology, or supplies can frustrate your artist clients. Invite clients to make as good use as possible of what they do possess, and to reframe constraint as an opportunity to test the power of limits.

24. Health Issues

Physical or mental health struggles interfere with, and often curtail, creative work. Present clients with a big picture of what physical, emotional, psychological and existential health might look like, and a

sense of how they might create their own personal wellness plan to include exercise, rest, and a solid relationship with meaning and purpose.

25. Competition

The income gap between the haves and the have-nots in the arts is huge and demoralizing. Clients need to be helped to minimize the time and energy they spend comparing their career trajectory to the successes of their peers—and be helped to focus on their own needs, opportunities, and successes.

26. Rejection

No creative or performing artist escapes rejection. The trick is to expect it, normalize it, and not let it define or defeat the artist. You can help clients think through how they intend to respond to rejection, including helping them understand why it's important that they not burn bridges.

27. Invisibility

It's frustrating and demoralizing to create or perform without achieving any recognition. You can help clients work to acquire the recognition they crave, stay active, persistent, and resilient, and peacefully accept "where they are" even as they strive to become more visible.

28. Creative Exploitation

Artists may be asked to work for "exposure" rather than for pay, to sign contracts that favor the publisher, the gallery, or the label, to engage in marketing efforts that feel onerous and unfair, and to experience exploitation in other ways. Clients can be helped to do a

better job of negotiating, setting boundaries, paying attention to the contracts they sign, and whatever else they can do in order to stand their ground.

29. Disorganization

Messy systems waste energy and frustrate the creative process. Making notes that you can't find, losing lyrics, keeping projects in a jumble, all demoralize and defeat creatives. Clients can be helped both to understand the importance of organization and helped to create systems and practices that promote organization.

30. Lack of Feedback

Working in a vacuum—without any interactions with or feedback from the outer world—can stunt a creative's growth. Solitude and complete divorce from the world are different things. Invite your clients to both carefully and boldly venture into the wider world—in order to learn what is happening in their art discipline, their art marketplace, and the marketplace of ideas and current practices—and develop some relationships for trustworthy feedback.

Relational Challenges

31. Family Pressures

Creatives can find themselves in very complicated, often negative relationships with their family, friends, and loved ones. Their mate may want them to bring in more income; their parents may wish they were in a more stable profession; their friends may not really care, may envy their success, or may dismiss their efforts as mere indulgence. Clients can be helped to understand these dynamics and taught how to navigate them more effectively.

32. Jealousy and Envy

Seeing peers succeed can spark envy. Clients can be helped to understand how normal this envy is and helped to create tactics for dealing with what is one of the most painful challenges they face—tactics that might include "turning a blind eye" to news about successes in their field.

33. Collaboration Conflicts

Collaborators often clash, whether it's about who's in control, who's not doing his or her fair share, or whose vision ought to "win." Clients can be helped to air these disagreements, learn better communication skills (like clearly and unambiguously asking for what they need), and clarify group roles and the group's decision-making process.

34. Lack of Mentorship

If you work at an office, someone may be assigned to mentor you. In many lines of work, someone is there to show you the ropes. There is no equivalent for creative and performing artists once they leave school. You can help clients recognize, process, and accept this reality—and help them come up with ways for self-mentoring and ways for seeking out real-world mentoring.

35. Balancing Relationships and Art-Making

Given that there are only so many hours in the week, and given that a typical creative may have to work a day job along with carving out time to create or perform, how will relating find its way onto the calendar? Will your client find time to talk to her elderly mom, oversee the kids' homework, and spend time with her partner? You can help your client acknowledge these realities and strategize solutions.

36. Feeling Misunderstood

The people around a creative or performing artist may not understand the depth of his self-identifications, the importance to him of the work he is trying to do, or the logic of what he is trying to put forth. Why is he making strange-looking things from garbage or researching Babylonian genesis myths? Clients can be helped to realize the extent to which they may not be understood or have their work respected—and helped to accept that reality.

37. Creative Rivalries

Creatives can get entangled in one particular rivalry that begins to consume them. Maybe there is one other actor with whom your client always seems to be competing and with whom your client has had words. You can help your client try to release the grip of such unproductive obsessions and return to paying attention to her multiple life purposes.

38. Social Anxiety

Creative and performing artists are obliged to put themselves out in public, whether to network, to market and promote their work, or to perform. A significant number experience social anxiety and/or performance anxiety. Clients can be helped to create a toolkit of tactics and strategies—somatic ones, cognitive ones, breathing ones, et cetera—that can help them minimize anxiety before and during social encounters.

39. Alienation with Respect to Non-Creatives

Creatives often feel deeply alienated from the values, pursuits, and conversations of non-creatives. Creatives may abhor chitchat and

small talk, the blandishments of late-stage capitalism, and everything superficial and conventional. Clients can be helped to make peace with life's ordinariness while at the same time seeking out and interacting with members of their own tribe.

40. Overstepping Boundaries

No one would say to a surgeon about to enter the operating room, "Let's go get a cup of coffee!" But a majority of people might say that to a painter about to enter her studio, believing that the painter has "all the time in the world" and "no real schedule." Clients can be helped to conceptualize, set up, and maintain solid boundaries with friends, acquaintances, online contacts, relatives, and day job bosses.

Existential Challenges

41. Meaninglessness

It is hard to maintain meaning if, for example, you are a musician with few opportunities to perform, an actor who is never called back, a painter without collectors, or a writer who must self-publish because traditional publishers are not interested. Opportunities for periods of meaninglessness abound. Clients can be helped to better understand the concept of "making meaning," the notion that "meaning returns," and the relationship between life purpose choosing and the maintenance of meaning.

42. Imposter Syndrome

Even accomplished creatives can feel like frauds, in part because they know how each of their efforts, as fine and as successful as it may have been, could have been even better. Creatives often measure their efforts against the high-bar standard of a masterpiece—and anything