



Centered Path

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Centered Path Interviews- Angela Allen

Interviews with creative people who share their experience, wisdom and enthusiasm for the creative journey.

Interviews also appear in the monthly Centered Path newsletter.

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Interview with a Creative

Questions answered by Angela L. Allen, CVA (Vice-President of the International Virtual Assistants Association and Owner of A Wicked WordCraft and CumberlandDunes Consulting Services)

CP: Can you give us a brief overview of your life as a creative?

My life as a "creative" started early. I began journaling and writing regularly at age seven. I'm thirty years older now. Despite the early start, I didn't fully embrace my creative life until three years ago. At that time, I decided that life was too short and too precious to spend it doing things that didn't "move" me in a significant way, on a genuinely basic level. In early 2000, I quit my corporate job, sold the too-large house in town and bought a gorgeous 25-acre plot of woods in the middle of nowhere. I built a road nearly a mile long just to get to my land and am in the process now of building my "cottage" in the woods. I've simplified my life and recaptured a feeling of joy.

Starting this new life was a dramatic change for me. I wouldn't recommend this to everyone, but personally, I needed to take major risks and make big changes. I felt that with this degree of commitment, and no opportunity to turn back, I would have the best chance of making my dreams come true. Since then, I have launched two successful online businesses and have been elected as vice president of my professional organization, The International Virtual Assistants Association (www.ivaa.org). Through

these endeavors, I have experienced the joy of helping others live their dreams and pursue their bliss in the same way I have. I work with clients world-wide, and do it all from my favorite little quiet corner of the world-deep in the woods of southern Kentucky. Now, creativity envelops my life, my work and my hobbies. I'm raising children who constantly expand their own creative horizons. I feel quite lucky.

CP: What does being "Centered" mean to you?

Being "centered" is finding personal balance. For me, it's not automatic. I have to concentrate and constantly adjust my bearings to stay on the proper path. I tend to get lost in my projects. I love my work, which makes life a joy, but it also means that I tend to go overboard. Extremes nullify "centeredness" and balance.

The creative, spiritual, family, social and civic aspects of a person's life must be in alignment with personal priorities for them to remain "centered." Everyone determines the appropriate percentage of life to dedicate to each of these areas, and they must maintain those percentages to feel whole. Being centered is arranging your life, by making thoughtful choices, to keep these percentages in balance.

CP: What are some of the ways, besides your main, chosen art form, that you express your creativity?

My primary art form is writing. This year my New Year's resolution is to expand that into a more visual art base by learning more about calligraphy. I touched upon it several years ago, but now it's time to study more diligently. As much as I adore the written word and appreciate the visual arts, it makes sense for me to meld the two. Calligraphy does just that. I also enjoy painting (despite my lack of talent with a brush) and have a passion for beadwork. Pearls are my signature and I'm learning to express my own sense of aesthetics by using precious and semi-precious stones in necklaces and beadwork.

CP: What or who are some of the inspirational influences on your creative life?

I believe creativity springs forth when there is room in a person's life to embrace it. Authors such as Elaine St. James (Simplify Your Life) and Sarah Ban Breathnach (Simple Abundance) have helped me to walk the path of simplicity while maintaining a spiritual view of what is most important in my life. Freeing my time and energy by simplifying makes room for more creativity and joy in life. For those inevitable bumps on my creative path, I return to such writers as Julia Cameron (The Artist's Way) to jump-start my own creative existence. The writings of the Dalai Lama (The Art of Happiness, in particular), Emerson, and Thoreau help me recapture the wonder of life and realign my personal perspectives.

Every day is a creative melding of my passion (writing) and my work. I specialize in writing, editing and marketing services for my clients. Every day is an exercise in creativity. When I first started, I worried that it would lose its appeal if I made a career of my passion. That didn't happen. Some days I feel less-than creative. But, once I start the process of molding and shaping words, it sucks me in. I can't help but enjoy it. And each day is different. Some days I write Web content, other days I consult with small business owners to help them define their business or present their products and/or services in a

new light. I create and edit newsletters or I ghostwrite for an author experiencing writer's block. I stay busy and usually avoid "writer's block" myself, but if I hit a point where the words become sluggish, I change to another project type and get the creative juices flowing again. When I return to writing, the creativity continues to flow.

CP: Have you found ways to integrate your creative and “working” time and tasks and if so, how?

Moving to the woods has been a constant inspiration to me. Every time I return to my "farm," the beauty of this place literally makes me catch my breath. I could just hug myself when I think of how lucky I am to be living in this expanse of basically untouched wilderness. To be able to live here and work on my own terms keeps me working harder and more diligently than living in any other situation could. Here, my writing seems to be less ornamental and more essential to my life. My writing and living here have intertwined so tightly that one can no longer be extracted from the other without doing damage to both. Although I adore my laptop, I'm quite happy taking my trusty leather-bound journal and classic fountain pen up to a flat rock on the ridge overlooking the steep drop to the trout stream. Here, my thoughts drip freely onto the pages. My muse is Mother Nature, and her inspiration whispers to me through the trees. I've always known I was intended to write, that it was my calling, but here it's hard to imagine life NOT writing. Here it's as much a necessity to me as clean water and fresh air.

CP: What new image, area of creativity, or theme has inspired you recently? How did your awareness of this new generative energy come about?

I've always wanted to "get back to nature" and recapture the joy I found on the farm of my youth. Freedom was a physical presence for me every time I explored those Tennessee woods. My entire adult life I have dreamed of moving back to "the farm." I didn't know if I could do it solo. I had serious reservations from time to time, even after my move here. Times were incredibly difficult those first couple years. I was a single mom raising three kids and building a fledgling business on the Internet. I think I survived by pure, unadulterated stubbornness. Even so, there were times when I didn't think I would make it. During the darkest hours, I would go up into the woods, sit down and take a few deep breaths, usually with my pen and journal in hand, and look around. And I would realize all over again, that of all the places in the world to be broke, scared and alone - this was the most beautiful. And that if I HAD to be in dire straits, that THIS was the best place in the world to do it. As crazy as that may sound, it gave me strength. I wrote my stories and maintained a journal online for the first year and a half, and most importantly-I kept moving forward. By doing this, I discovered that even when I was down, this place nurtured my soul. And no matter how I felt, I kept writing. Now, the woods work a little differently for me. When the workload is too stressful or there are too many projects to complete on a particular day-I take a break and go walk for a few minutes in the woods. This place is constant and soothing to my natural extremes. There is nowhere I would rather be this busy or this overwhelmed than right here. I have found the kind of nourishment here that many people spend their whole lives seeking. I discovered a place where I belong, one that encourages me to tiptoe tall when I stretch, to paint my life in broad, bold strokes, and to write as steadily as I eat, breathe, or sleep.

CP: What words would you offer to other creatives to inspire and encourage them on the creative path?

- * If your creativity calls to you, if you feel it soul-deep, don't deny it.
- * If you feel destined to do something, DO IT!
- * If people think you are unrealistic, or even a bit nuts for having your dreams, that's their problem. It's not yours. Don't adopt it.
- * Do what you need to do. Do what compels you. And do it with all your might.
- * Only YOU can give yourself permission to follow your dreams. And only YOU can prevent your successfully realizing those dreams.
- * Believe in yourself and follow your bliss.
- * Oh, and for those just beginning the trip-it's worth everything it costs!

CP: Where can readers go to learn more about your creative endeavors?

You may visit my "baby," [A Wicked WordCraft](#) to learn more about how I've combined my passion with my work.

Thanks Angela!
