

TRANSCRIPT

Energy

I don't know about you, but my making activities often get pushed into the corners of my life. Like when you were a kid and your parents would say, you can play after you do your homework. I have always been haunted by the idea that I'm not allowed to do my craft until all of the cooking and the cleaning is done, and my work is done, which it never is. And until, you know, my family is settled or sleeping. So by that time, it's late at night and I'm exhausted. It's not really the best time to be knitting complex lace or beginning to wind, a warp of 800 warp ends. There's just no energy left for your creativity. So in terms of energy, I am at my best in the morning when the house is silent and I've had a cup of coffee. Creative energy is not something that you can just conjure up at the snap of your fingers. It needs proper feeding care and maintenance, just like your physical self. Sometimes with the busy lives that we all lead, we push our physical selves to the edge, burning the candle at both ends, but where your physical self might just kind of hobble through your hectic schedule, your creative energy will wane and fail. You'll feel like you hit a wall and that you have no more ideas left. Sometimes all you need is a good walk in the woods or extra long hot shower to recharge your creative batteries enough to get going again. But while it's not the goal of this video to be about healthy living or nutrition or wellness, it's important to recognize that those topics can directly affect our ability to do creative work.

I observed that there are different kinds of creative energy. There's a kind of spark that creativity gives you and propels you into physical action. Something triggers you and you break out the needles immediately to cast on, or you get inspired and you start winding a new warp right away. You roll out the fabric and you start cutting out garment pieces. This kind of creative energy feels exciting because it's kinetic, we're moving, we're getting going. This kind of creative energy, requires physical energy to fuel it. So if you've spent several hours cooking, cleaning the house, and you're physically exhausted, it's hard to get onto the floor to tie up a loom or even imagine cutting out fabric pieces. For these physically exhausted time, I reserved my spinning activities or really easy knitting projects. So simple movements that don't require a ton of energy, but still help me make progress towards the goal.

There's another kind of creative energy that is needed for ideation and design. This is a kind of internal wrestling with sketches and ideas, concepts, colors, and shapes. This is also exciting as you explore different directions for something that you want to create, and this kind of creative energy requires mental energy to fuel it. It requires a lot of decision making, which can be very mentally draining. Decision fatigue is the idea that we have a certain daily capacity for making decisions. Decisions can be as minute as deciding what to wear in the morning or what to have for breakfast. Deciding if you're going to make coffee at home, or if you're going to go get coffee from the cafe, decisions can be as big as deciding if you're going to go back to school or not do pursue another degree or take a certain job or move to a new city. All of these decisions can take mental energy throughout the day. And once you've depleted that energy, it becomes very difficult to make even simple decisions like what to eat for dinner. I encourage you to find ways to protect your mental energy so that you can save it for times when you need it for your creative work. So this is why both Albert Einstein and president Obama have said before that all their suits or their clothes are the same color. That way they don't have to spend any time making a decision about what to wear. Instead, they are saving that decision, making power for other important decisions. So consider ways that you could block time for your creative decision making early in the day when maybe you're not yet depleted.

Now, the time blocks that I've just mentioned, uh, they tend to work for me, but they may not work for everyone. I've just come across the work of Daniel Pink, who talks about there being three different chronotypes and that is people with different internal clocks. So he describes three different groups. One is the larks who are considered early birds or morning people. These are the kinds of people who jump out of bed in the morning and are just ready to start the day. And then there's another group called the owls who are basically night hours or night people. So they don't get out of bed until after 10 o'clock in the morning. And then the majority of people fall into the third bird chronotype, which is people who generally naturally wake up between eight and 10 o'clock in the morning. So each of these chronotypes experienced different energy levels at different times of the day for everyone's energy levels, there will be a peak, a trough and a recovery period. For the larks and the third birds, they will go through the peak, the trough and recovery in that order. So it makes sense that they have energy in the morning. They peak around noon. They go through a trough in the afternoon when they're feeling more low energy and sluggish. And finally they go through a recovery at night, but if you're a night owl, the cycle goes in reverse and you go through your recovery period in the morning when you're sleeping in, lying in bed still, and then you have your trough in the afternoon, and then you have your peak in the evening. And it totally makes sense. So if you figure out your chronotype, you can look at scheduling your creative work at different times of the day. So the suggestion is to work on analytical tasks before and during your peak hours. So that includes things like doing research or calculations for a project, maybe even doing some planning or decision-making. I typically do like heavy lifting during this time. So I do my weaving calculations. I draft my weaving drafts. I figured out tie ups and all that kind of stuff during my peak period. And then during your trough, you can work on creative tasks, like, uh, actually generating new ideas and brainstorming, actually executing on the creative work. And then finally in the evening you can do the really low energy stuff or during your recovery period, things like twisting fringe or plying yarns or knitting stockinette. So all this to say that maintaining and managing your creative energy is not a one size fits all solution. It can be really customized to your internal clock.

In a blog that I made about the ergonomics of threading my baby Wolf loom. Someone commented that I should consider switching to a plant based diet to give me more energy and to fix my increasingly creaky joints. And it's no doubt that the things that we consume and put into our bodies will affect our energy levels, our strength and our longevity. I am no longer in a phase of my life where I can consider coffee and red bull as adequate fuel for my late night crafting adventures. So I've personally been thinking more about and experimenting with what I eat and observing how it affects my energy levels and my mental clarity.

Another practice that I'm trying to put in place is having a regular quiet time and a meditation as a way of improving my mental clarity and focus. Again, the more mental clarity you have, the more you will be able to make creative decisions and it's crucial to being effective.

And finally, the last practice that I've been considering is what I consume with my eyes. That is how much time do I spend consuming visual content. And while I love Pinterest and Instagram, as much as the next crafter, I try to be really intentional about what I view, because it can have incredibly negative effects on my creative energy. We can be prone to comparison and seeing visually stunning and amazingly prolific work of another maker can be both inspiring, but also disheartening because it can make you feel inadequate. And so there's lots of conversation about how people only post their best on social media. And you're comparing your regular life with someone else's highlight reel and how that's not healthy. But at the end of the day, my practice is to create before you consume. And

so my kids are learning this too. I encourage them to wake up in the morning and draw or build something before you go and do other things. So don't let your creation be influenced or affected by what other people are doing.