

The Buddhist Eightfold Path journaling prompts for artists

The Buddhist Eightfold Path is a loving guide for reducing suffering in our lives through gentle, daily practices that can be adapted to fit what we need in the moment. For artists, it can be useful as a set of tools to move through doubt, blocks, and self-criticism to connect with kindness, authentic expression and flowing momentum in our work. The teachings can also help us explore our art making as a contemplative practice that can deepen the creative well we draw from.

The Eightfold Path is not intended to be a strict, linear, step-by-step sequence, but rather developed simultaneously as an interconnected, holistic way of life. Think of them as eight beautiful strands in a braid that are interconnected but also separate. Use them one at a time, combine them or create your own pattern to work with them with gentleness and creativity!

I invite you to experiment with using the following journaling prompts to help you reflect on your relationship to art making right now in your life. May you continue to nurture your artistic spirit in whatever ways feel most inspiring to you!

with love,
Emma



buddhist noble
eightfold path

wise intention

wise view

wise concentration

wise effort

wise speech

wise action

wise mindfulness

wise livelihood

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Wise Intention

The energy behind and underneath our creating.

1. If you imagine your art as a lantern in your life, what is it illuminating for you right now?
2. What longing is humming softly beneath the surface of your creative cravings and desires right now?
3. If you let go of impressing anyone, what would your heart choose to make right now?
4. What would it feel like to create as an offering to your own heart?
5. If your artwork were a seed, what would you hope it would grow into over time?

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Wise View

*Seeing ourselves and our art
clearly through the eyes of love.*

1. How do you see yourself as an artist right now?
2. How might your creative block be a doorway today rather than a wall? Imagine walking through it...what do you notice about it?
3. What if your art needs you as much as you need it? Does that shift anything about your approach or perspective on your creative work?
4. What larger unfolding might your art practice be part of?
5. Imagine yourself as an eagle looking down on your creative longings and all of the art you have made in your life (or want to make). What would that eagle see that you can't from your vantage point right now?

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Wise Concentration

“Where focus goes, energy flows.”

-Tony Robbins

1. What happens when you give your creativity undivided, undistracted attention?
2. Where does your attention drift to when your creative process stalls or feels stuck?
3. What small ritual might help you open into that delicious place where time flows and expands in your art making?
4. What part of this piece or project is quietly asking you not to rush?
5. What happens if you clear your art space and place just one beautiful object or material there? What do you notice?

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Wise Effort

*Cultivating positive mental states
to support our creative work.*

1. What would loving effort feel like in your body today as you create art? Try it and see what you notice.
2. Do you abandon your art practice when something gets hard? Why? What happens in your mind?
3. What support (structure, rest, music, a timer) might help you cultivate a gentle, loving relationship with your art practice right now?
4. How can you practice forgiveness and kindness towards your creative nature with a soft, open heart today?
5. Repeat this loving, enthusiastic mantra to yourself today, "I am an artist!" Say it like you are a 5 year old and see what you notice in your mind and outlook on your art, then write about it!

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Wise Speech

*“The words you speak become
the house you live in.”*

-Hafiz

1. When you speak to yourself about your art right now, is your voice sharp or soft? Why?
2. How would you describe this art piece or your art practice if you were a curious, playful child who just walked into your studio?
3. What truth about your creative longings is ready to be spoken gently aloud to yourself or someone else?
4. If this piece you are working on could whisper back to you, what would it say?
5. What words do you wish you could say about yourself as an artist right now?

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Wise Action

*Small, authentic steps in our creative practice
can lead us to unexpected fulfillment in our work.*

1. What is one simple step this piece or your creative practice is inviting you to take today?
2. Where might you choose honesty or humility today in your art practice?
3. If your hands trusted themselves completely, what would they try today?
4. Place your hand on your heart and take three slow breaths. You just did three sacred actions for your artistic self. How does it feel to see breath as action in art making?
5. Where could you loosen your grip a little and let the artwork lead you on an adventure today?

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Wise Mindfulness

Noticing the currents of our creative mind.

1. What feeling greets you as you sit down to create today — excitement, resistance, fear, curiosity, hope?
2. How do you know when you love something like a color, texture or theme in your art? What does it feel like in your body? Track those sensations as you look around today and write them down.
3. What color, texture, or technique is calling for your attention today? How does that feel in your body?
4. What if you imagine a creative block you have right now as a melting ice cream cone in your mind? What happens?
5. Watch your thoughts as you create something today. What do you notice? What patterns or loops are present?

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Wise Livelihood

Our creative lives are living ecosystems.

1. Does your creative rhythm feel nurturing right now, or is it asking for rearranging in some way?
2. How does your art feed and nourish you?
3. What kind of making feels like a loving act towards yourself and the world?
4. If your art could support you gently and steadily through life's challenges, what might that look like?
5. What does enough feel like in your creative work at the moment? What does being satisfied feel like to you creatively?

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I hope you enjoy working with these prompts over time in your creative practice. Play with them, adapt them, alter them, be an artist with them!

I'd love to hear how they support you as an artist. Please reach out any time by leaving a comment where you downloaded these or by emailing me at freeman.emma@gmail.com.

sending you love and creative encouragement from one artist to another,

Emma