

Identify Your Word:

Then turn it around and embrace the positive meaning

I open this “play time” homework with an excerpt from Julia Cameron’s book, “The Vein of Gold.” I recommend this book, and – perhaps even more heartily – her “The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity.” The latter is the best book and process (a 12-week process, if you do all of the exercises) I know of for creative, artistic exploration and recovery.

I personally know the composer, Michael Hoppé, referenced therein. Hoppé used to live in Portland, Oregon, and is a colleague of my voice teacher, Linda Brice. I was one of the first 12 apprentice teachers to graduate from the Transformational Voice® Institute, and each of us sang one of Hoppé’s compositions at the graduation ceremony, with the composer himself at the piano. He’s an utterly delightful man – charming, humble and kind.

From Julia Cameron’s **The Vein of Gold: A Journey to Your Creative Heart:**

Children don’t come into the world and hatch an artistic career as a diabolical plan to scotch their parents’ dreams. No seven-year-old says, “I think I’ll really screw the old bastards. I’ll be a writer.” And yet many creative children (and all children are creative) are construed by family and teachers to be management problems. I was Unruly Julie. (“Don’t be so intense. Calm down. Slow down. Stop being so wild...”) Composer Michael Hoppé was routinely denigrated as “the Dreamer.”

“Oh, Michael, you are such a dreamer,” the scornful parental tone rained down on him—and reined him in. Told by his parents that artists were selfish and irresponsible people, he was urged to become a businessman instead of a composer. Being a financial success would yield him, his family, and his world far more happiness and satisfaction than following his musical dreams, he was told. Besides, the family mythology continued, artists were selfish, irresponsible, thoughtless, vain...

An obedient, dutiful son, Hoppé heeded his parental guidance and become not a composer, but an executive at a large record company, serving his musical dreams at one remove. (A practice I call being a “shadow artist.”) Graced with a composer’s ears, he brought to his label fine performers and composers, among them Vangelis. All the while, he quietly noodled away in his off-hours, composing his own music, composing his own soul, if not his life, around the music he created himself.

Events might have continued to unfold in this fashion but for a fateful accident. Asked to audition his company's "talent" for a film producer, Hoppé made a tape of his artists' work and sat through a long and difficult meeting as artist after artist was rejected.

"No, no, no, no, no! Don't you have anybody that's right for me?"

Just as the tape was spooling to the end, a snippet of his own music came on. Oh, my Lord. What an embarrassing accident! Hoppé lurched to snap off the machine.

"That's it. That's him! That's our composer!" the producer all but shouted. Hoppé was stunned. Composers were the people he represented! Fortunately, the producer was insistent. In that moment, a composer was not so much born as freed. (Hoppé has subsequently made the Oscar short list for his film compositions.)

"The dreamer began to follow the dream," Hoppé says, a world of emotion lying in his soft understatement.

Often, when I am teaching, I play Hoppé's heartfelt melodies from The Yearning and then stop to remind my students that he was not supposed to compose them.

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One of Hoppé's words was dreamer.

You will learn a couple of mine in the "Identify Your Word" video.

My client and friend, Julanne, uncovered a meaningful one in the first live Authentic Expression retreat. Her word was "sensitive." ("Oh, Julanne, you're so sensitive. I feel like I'm walking on eggshells around you. Will you please stop being so sensitive?!") Julanne is a gifted writer, voice actor and artist. Of course she's sensitive. Expressing her gifts and work in the world requires enormous sensitivity.

What are some of your words? How can you turn them around and embrace the positive aspects?

Word:	What I was told:	What it positively means:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____