

WELCOME

It is a beautiful and mysterious journey to come into deeper relationship with your creative power. It is your birthright, your core source of expression. This is your power and belongs to no one else. An important shift occurs when you allow this aspect of your self to simply *be* and *play*, without judgment. I encourage you to allow the page to rise up and meet your hand. Allow the page to open up and express your heart of hearts through your strong hand. Allow your mind to let go and watch as you let yourself play freely. This will make you stronger in every area of your life and your strength makes all of us stronger. This is the revolution of self claiming self. This is the revolution of coloring ourselves and our communities into reality. This is our world. Thank you for taking the time to play. I'm so glad you're here.



Love maya

Rule #1: Everyone is an artist.

Reflection. This rule creates a new reflection. It reframes us as artist. This rule gives permission to grow into this larger perception of self as creative.

Express. Within our new, expanded reflection we have a new purpose. An artist's job is to express. The rule comes full circle, because our new reflection as an artist is to express and create our own reflection.

Rule #1 is a unifying and empowering statement. It immediately creates a tone of equality and inclusion among everyone, out of which arises respect and curiosity. It confirms that everyone has something valuable to contribute and inspires a sense of wonder about what that might be for each of us. It acknowledges the force of creativity that flows through all of us and through that acknowledgement we become larger. We can each say: *I am artist; I create; I contribute; I am.* This first rule begins the powerful link between creativity and a sense of self.

MY MARK IS MINE

I have witnessed much art making in my work and I have noticed that no one marks the page the same way. Literally, our very bodies carry our uniqueness. If I make a polka dot on the page and you make one and another person makes one, we can tell who made which polka dot. How we carry our stories and experiences affects how we hold our hand, touch a pencil, apply pressure and execute something as basic as a dot. Just a dot expresses something that is all our own. My polka dot is mine and only mine. And yours can only be yours. This is the beginning of art and being an artist.

Rule #2: There is never a right or wrong way to make art.

Explore. When we realize that there is not a right or wrong way to be ourselves and express what we must, a pressure is taken off. We are freed to explore and express without fear of wrong doing or living up to what is "right."

Empower. All art is self-portrait. No one can express what is ours to express better than ourselves. In this way we can know ourselves and express ourselves for who we really are. We are literally our own authority of who we are and what we express.

Rule #2 is a freeing statement. It takes judgment off of creativity and frees up the relationship with the self so the artist can create authentically. Through this the artist can learn from and know themselves. By extension it supports an open stance for others to create as they see fit. Without judgment, our creative possibilities, and even our possibilities of who we are and can become, expand.

I AM THE BOSS OF ME

If something as simple as a polka dot can show something that is uniquely our own, imagine what doing more than a polka dot can do. Everything we create shows something about ourselves.

Ultimately, who else can be the “expert,” the “boss of you,” but you! No one can know you more than you. No one can BE more you, than you! So how can you be you or show you in the “wrong” way? It's not possible!

Rule #3: Art is always an act of courage.

Freedom. This rule creates space for us to accept any and all of our feelings. I use courage to begin with because this includes fear. This is a doorway to all layered and complex feelings. The point is that we are free to feel what we feel. This rule echoes the 2nd rule in that it frees us from judgment, but this time in relation to emotional expression instead of creative expression.

Expand. When we do not press our feelings down, but instead provide room and acknowledgment of our feelings, they can move around and through. This creates more internal space and increases our capacity to deal with our emotions and allow energy to flow. The more space we have, the more we can expand.

Rule #3 is an acceptance statement. As we engage with creativity, the nonverbal, the unknown or unexpressed inside of us seeks expression. This may be all the more necessary if we are not accustomed to seeing ourselves reflected in our world. There are bound to be feelings that move through us. These may come in the form of thoughts, emotions or body feelings. When we honestly and authentically come face to face with ourselves and all we have experienced in our lives at this time, this is an act of courage. For us to then let that become the physical document of art, when we create a reflection of who we really are, it is even more courageous. We are claiming ourselves. Courage doesn't mean we're not afraid. There may be fear. We just find a way to do what we need to do while we are afraid. There's nothing wrong with fear.

MISTAKES ARE MOMENTS OF COURAGE

Although I've made hundreds of paintings, I still sometimes face the blank page and think; *I don't know what I'm doing! How do I do this? Why do I do this? This is hard.* I begin drawing, but feel unsure. Every line feels like a mistake. I want to crumple up my piece of paper and start over again. But what I've found to be true is not that I've necessarily made a mistake, but that this is a moment of courage. Often, if I just let the “mistake” be there and keep working, things turn around. I often find something wonderful and unexpected in the mistake that I like even more than what I had imagined initially. Not framing things as mistakes, but as moments of courage keeps me curious and open as to what could happen next. I've learned to flow with anything that at first seems like a mistake to me. If we know that courage is part and parcel of the creative process and can honor, invite, even use it as a tool to strengthen ourselves, then we are truly artists! Art is not about the product, but about the process. For most of us the art product will fade or shift in importance or meaning with age and time. What lasts, what we cannot discard, is what happens inside of us as we create. That is ours.

THE 3 RULES

© Maya Gonzalez, from *Coloring the Revolution #1 Coloring Book*

DEFINITIONS

originally from my Claiming Face Curriculum

CREATIVITY:

Creativity is the personal teacher within each of us. As our birthright it is the inherent ability and energy, we as humans are born with, to transcend current ideas, forms and patterns and to create meaningful new ones that are relevant to the moment and our deepest selves. This allows us to connect with, maintain and perpetuate flow and integrity with who we are at core.

ARTIST:

Creativity is the teacher that lives within each of us. Being an artist means that no matter what activity we are engaged in, we are listening to and guided by our inner teacher.

TO CLAIM FACE:

(1) to recognize and assert one's place/face and inherent belonging in the world; (2) to embrace and celebrate what one's face expresses, how it reflects one's life and historical context in relation to ethnicity, gender expression, individuality, selfhood and more; (3) to declare and require in community the birthright to be exactly who one is inside and out; (4) to know one's self inside and out.

COURAGE:

means that you are afraid. You are aware of your fear. And you make enough room for your fear to exist within you while you do what you know is right for you in the moment.

SELF-PORTRAIT:

an image created of one's self with the purpose of expressing experience, claiming self, creating reflection and knowing one's self more deeply.

REFLECTION; TO REFLECT:

(1) An image outside of us that replicates either our actual image, as in a mirror or shows us something about ourselves, as in art, or the sunset. (2) To pause and focus one's attention in careful consideration on a thought or image.

WITNESS:

A person who sees and pays close attention to either one's self or another. Witnessing strengthens the vitality of existence and presence of the one who is seen and has an effect on who is seen in accordance with intent. For example, if the seer's intent is to respect who they are seeing, then respect will become a relational factor.

I AM THE ARTIST

