

- LinkedIn Expert Voices - Comments on Photography, Teaching & Creativity.

Meaning is best used when it is made available to those searching for their own . . .

What do you do if your creativity in photography is hindered by self-doubt?

60 expert answers

Embrace Fear



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Creativity could not be what is without self-doubt. It could not test your commitment to free expression without trial and you could not measure your own solidity without it. It is a source that helps us to understand where we are, who we are and how we see. And no matter if you use a lens to capture, your voice to sing or your hands to make tortillas, creativity embraces the effort to the extent of your resolve. In doing so it mirrors our existence and sets down before us a clear definition of our limitations, our aspirations and the need for our expressive nature. Without it we lose balance and inch ever further away from ourselves. Rest assured, self-doubt always stands near to us but this is where you must own it or it will own you.

What do you do if your photography skills are only as good as your lens?

51 expert answers

Know your lens



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Any lens can only see as far as the mind behind it. It's purpose is useless unless it allows one to interpret freely, equate honestly and define one's vision for themselves. You have the power to be nothing less than this and it is better to see how you see without compromise than to be limited by the focal length of any lens. I have seen students judge the seriousness of others by f/stops alone, but no matter if you are using a pin hole or a Zeiss, the true measure of any lens rests in the hands of the one who holds it. So please never estimate your self worth by the equipment you carry or you may see less of what you truly own. An eye needs much more to nurture itself over time so that it may accurately focus on what you are meant to see.

Here's how you can cultivate your creative eye in photography.

Here's what else to consider



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Creativity is useless unless it allows us to see it in everything around us. If not we diminish its purpose, limit its understanding and avoid our responsibility in learning how it unfolds. This makes us skeptical of its presence, it makes us bitter and cruel by turning away from something that is rightfully our own. Soon we deny its existence to cover our own inaction and turn our backs to others who cultivate it at its source. This is not fair to you or all that you have come here to do. Your mind has a unique signature all its own that the eye has nothing to do with and you should not weigh your creativity by what you see but rather in how you sense everything. So please find that source for yourself and deny nothing you have been given.

What are the best ways for a new photographer to gain experience?

Here's what else to consider



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Allowing yourself to be new at anything is a gift you must give yourself. Too often we avoid anything that can make us vulnerable to failure. Being vulnerable has stopped many whose patience could not withstand their doubts. But you are different. You can avoid the excuses that may distance you from the insights that others miss. Why is this important? Because you have the potential of revealing nuance to those of us who've yet to see your brilliance. So please never eliminate any experience that may drive your curiosity. To see into anything is to risk seeing everything and you can afford taking that chance. The difference is in knowing how you interpret what you see so that the lens never separates you from the questions only you can ask.

Why is developing a personal photography style important for your portfolio?

107 expert answers

How to showcase your style?



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

The truth is that you already own a personal style that is uniquely your own. It is always with you whether you have a camera or not. Too often we think that that it is an acquired trait but it has been with you from the beginning. Many people think they lose it over time but the majority of them merely forget where they put it and so others try to sell it to them. They market creativity, selling false confidence in technique that merely borrows from others. They prey on your lack of confidence rather than inspiring the confidence needed in yourself and contribute to a vision that is easily predictable. Now your Art looks like Art and you perceive it's worth by a style that was never really yours. The only real style worth owning is yours.

What do you do if you're struggling with self-doubt and imposter syndrome in your photography career?

4 expert answers

Acknowledge Feelings



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

The price of admission to the creative process is never easy to afford and it would be naive of you to consider that anyone of us is exempt. No, struggle demands confrontation. If not it deadens the senses and easily consumes what you own with self doubt leaving little room for the possibilities of growth. Unfortunately we make hard what is easy of the creative equation by constantly subtracting ourselves from it. This creates distance between you and the work you are meant to create. So the question is can you really afford the energy it takes to believe in a syndrome that does not believe in you? Is it worth seeing yourself as an imposter at the expense of your authenticity? No. It is never fair to trade in what you cannot afford to lose.

How can you use your online presence to educate and inspire other photographers?

4 expert answers

Choose your platforms wisely



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

I believe before you can educate or inspire anyone, it would be essential to ask what is the purpose of your "presence" first. No really, this is an important matter to consider because your process is susceptible to self judgement in such things as success and failures and if you demand it to be something it is not, you may misplace your vision. It happens all the time. How? Someone doubts their work and just stops working, another compares their imagery to what others say is acceptable and their level of authenticity fails. This is serious. You see your presence with yourself is critical and intricately necessary for others to know that you are here. Do this and you will ultimately educate and inspire others to do it for themselves.

You've been taking photos for a while, but you're not improving. What can you do to break through?

2 expert answers

Review your work



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

DOUBT is a very real voice that spares none of us. It knows each of us by name and shape. It echoes the same dread in your ear as it did in Arbus and Woodman alike, constantly reminding us of all the attention never received, the exhibits never hung and the leads that led nowhere. I have no answer for its presence and you should not expect one, rather you should be looking for greater questions that will lead you back to yourself but be honest. Do you need recognition to be recognized by your "self"? Any photograph is just another form of the one who creates it and you should never determine your artistic strength based on your human weakness. Your vision is far too important for that and needs only your commitment to validate its purpose.

You've failed at photography. How can you use it to improve your skills?

8 expert answers

Analyze your mistakes



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

You will not find my work at the Met or housed in the galleries of SoHo, but does that make me a failure? Ask yourself, do we fail when we do not take on the assumed appearance of others? And how long will it take until that unfair comparison will separate you from your work? 5 years? 10? For 50 years I have followed my path. Not the one steered towards fame but the one leveled by obscurity. Here I've been taught the patience to accept my vision, to believe in my purpose and to know a place that welcomes us only when we find it for ourselves. It is there that time folds effortlessly into thought, the pulse is lowered and I learn how very little of anything I really know. So please do not fail yourself by turning away from your own path.

What do you do if your students have learning gaps that need to be addressed?

30 expert answers

Identify Gaps



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Learning gaps often turn into learning guilt more often than you know. And there is nothing that separates a student from themselves faster than the shame of falling through a gap in the eyes of others. It cripples their self worth, their essential perspective and creates a consciousness of doubt that follows them through their lives. You may think I am making too much of this issue but that is exactly why it is a problem. Definitions define direction and I have seen too many students easily thrown off course by the labels attached to the so called "slow learner", the "problem child". Every student is an intricate puzzle learning how and where they fit in and most labels attached to their learning are seldom removed by those who place them.

What do you do if your students are hesitant or resistant to creativity?

12 expert answers

Build Trust



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

How can you be resistant to something that is already uniquely yours? If creativity is seen as though it may not exist in others, it won't. Have we learned nothing about creativity or how to teach it? It's transformative nature was ours from the beginning. So why would a student resist creativity? Why should they be hesitant in front of you? That is the real question. I believe we tend to fear our expressive identity because we learn failure first. Fearful learning is a legacy of loss and denial that others have taught and you should have no part of it. A student will only learn creativity if you know yours and this is what matters most. Don't worry about what they can't do, worry more of what you won't do if they lose it in front of you.

What do you do if your shy or introverted students struggle to communicate in class?

33 expert answers

Build Trust



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

The classroom has been a dangerous place for many of us. It was here that we first learned what we meant to others, where our place was and who we were told to be. There we carefully withdrew from those who spotted our frailties and selfishly taught their limitations. They would systematically build a knowledge base that only grew more frail with time. I know this because I was that introvert unable to communicate to those who would never learn the language of the shy hidden in plain sight. Believe me it is far more easier to disappear when everyone else is unaware that you are there. This scars a student and the only way to prevent it is to be aware of how they are damaged. Compassion heals best when it upholds the dignity of others.

How can you encourage self-motivation in students for lifelong learning?

10 expert answers

Cultivate Curiosity



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Learning is hard but teaching is harder and there's no clear path to either. So many teachers often want to measure what is taken by what one has given but it is just not that easy. Like anything else, self-motivation is personal if we are ever to apply it in practice and so it is essential to teach to that SELF that exists in every student. Why? Because your students journey does not end with you and they will be better served if you help them to pack for the trip. They will need the essentials like courage and belief. They will need that "self" before others will try to sell them theirs. They will benefit from confidence if they are shown yours. Do this and you will have at least added to a life that will know how learning has helped them

How can faculty members incorporate diverse perspectives into their teaching?

30 expert answers

Define diversity and inclusion



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

At a time when we are clearly divided by politics and the fear of others, there is nothing more important than to teach to that which separates us. This is critical. Why? Because there is a student in your class right now who will be unable to believe in themselves when others don't. They will assume defeat before ever reaching for success and will ultimately settle for less or nothing because of mistrust. So what can be done to instill a perspective of hope in those who need it most? Inspire confidence now before they are belittled by others. Teach respect so they know what it looks like. Encourage honesty so their lives may build upon it. A mind capable of diverse thought is a powerful tool that must fit its user if change is to occur.

You want to promote diversity and inclusion in higher education. How can you use creativity to achieve this?

2 expert answers

Define your goals



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

It is hard to sit at a table where everyone is not included. Where the menu serves an exclusive palate and the other guests are resentful that you are there. Would you stay? No, probably not but this is what many deal with all the time. Is it worth it? Is it worth being the hire always responsible for leading cultural sensitivity training for others? Nothing divides a faculty more when asked to be something they are not. It causes resentment, makes us suspicious of each other and ultimately contributes nothing. So what must be done? TEACH! Teach to those who need your sensitivity to be sensitive in seeing the benefits of change. Inclusivity is a product of a free society and nothing is free until we make it that way for others to see.

You're teaching a Higher Education course. How can you ensure your students are more creative?

58 expert answers

Encourage curiosity



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Too often students only see what they have been conditioned to accept from others. They become dependent on what is undependable and seldom question the well worn path others have followed. Believe me, there are far too many institutions overflowing with those who follow without question and who determine their self worth through others. They become limited by their limitations, they make art that looks like art and regretfully compare their resumes to others. Creativity is not a size that fits us all in the same way. It is meant to take the shape of the individual and unless they accept this soon they will expect less of a source made whole by their presence. Creativity is a balance we must keep with ourselves and taught with respect.

What are the best ways to engage students with disabilities?

12 expert answers

What is UDL?



Don Gregorio Antón • You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

What is seen as disabilities in others are simply just other abilities that have yet to be recognized. It is true. There are very few of us who do not carry around something that limits our confidence both physically and mentally and until we realize this fact we will always misassume the significance of others. This is a shame, one that can easily disable any of us. So what must be done for our students? Everything! We must redefine compassion as an essential part of the curriculum. We must respect their own unique individuality as a gift and not a burden. Why? Because these students are scholars of endurance who have survived academia in ways that few can imagine. They have just as much to teach us on the nature of strength and wisdom.

What are the most effective faculty development models for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion?

2 expert answers

Intercultural competence



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

It must be said that the majority of schools in the U.S. were never originally designed with diversity in mind. No, exclusion has always blinded those who chose not to see others. In doing so it systematically restricted the necessity of diversity, equity and the transparency necessary to nurture an inclusive society. This is why I am grateful to those of you who have endured this legacy of loss and who know that to deny anyone their own dignity and respect is to deny us all the same. To effectively promote this is to teach to it through your presence and patience. Academic segregation has long been responsible for isolating and insulating us from each other and we cannot afford to risk passing on to others the limits we all have inherited.

What are effective strategies for building relationships with students at risk of dropping out?

12 expert answers

Identify and understand the risk factors



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Whether it is the student unable to withstand the brute force of conformity or the teacher seeking strength where little is offered, we are all at risk in schools. Of what you may ask? Of following lessons first taught and seldom forgotten in "self consciousness". It's true. From the very beginning our confidence is formed by those whose job it was to keep us safe. We saw ourselves in the those who saw us and merely carried on their opinions. Here we learned our place but not our purpose and this is where you come in. Students learn courage when you are courageous. They make an effort when your efforts are sincere. Do this and you will initiate a strategy far more effective in helping others to find value and purpose in themselves.

What are the most common reasons students drop out of school?

116 expert answers

Personal problems



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

In a society that leaves fewer choices for those who have less it is a crime to overlook those most in need. Those who may not be as easy to teach. Those whose gifts are not as easy to reach are often marginalized by the impatience of others. They have learned the lessons schools cannot afford to teach and then subsequently teach others that it is just not worth it. These are those who fall through the cracks we all know are there. They often become medicated or incarcerated for lack of hope and patience. They fill our streets and live less of the lives they were promised. You know this. We can no longer afford the crippling of minds ill prepared for independent thought and susceptible to a society that will merely see them as a statistic.

What are some best practices for engaging adult learners in Higher Education?

2 expert answers

Know your audience



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Know that we have all been taught by teachers who were taught by teachers who were taught by teachers. So you will have to teach through every teacher who taught before you. This is a huge responsibility if taken seriously. Why? Well think about it. The majority of mass shootings have taken place in schools and churches. The very places we are told to blindly trust are often the seat of vengeance. So what does this say about the possible lives before you? Those who are suspicious of your methods, those impatient with your delivery and who have been disappointed by the system? What it says is that you will have to work harder. That you will have to be patient and careful with the individual learning needs of those who will need you most.

How can you help tutors build their confidence?

121 expert answers

Identify your strengths and weaknesses



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

There is something you own that no one has and that is your fear. Everyone has their own and it follows each of us no matter who we are. Do you know why? Well it is not your fault but it is the fault of learning systems that often knows more about what they teach than who they teach. When this happens students become lost in the exchange of knowledge. They become casualties of those who often know little of courage and the compassion necessary to inspire others. Please think about this or you will invariably pass on your lack of confidence to others. It is critical that you comprehend your role as teacher so that others may truly understand their role as student. True learning is a gift you give yourself and students are your best teachers.

You're struggling to find time for self-care. How can you prioritize your well-being?

37 expert answers

Assess your needs



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

There are many of us who became teachers because we saw ourselves reflected in those who taught us. They mirrored something back to us that confirmed our unique presence and allowed us to see that to live in an infinite world under finite conditions is just not worth it. So we struggled to teach others. Why? Because we had acquired a learning debt. One that begins when you understand that knowledge is worthless unless it helps others to find their own. This is an act of faith, as belief is only as strong as the believer and this will tire and test your resolve. So please do not let this tarnish your self perspective. Rather do whatever is necessary to heighten your reflectivity or others will be less likely to see themselves as you did.

What do you do if you're a teacher feeling disengaged and unmotivated in your late career?

31 expert answers

Reassess Goals



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

There is a reason why you are reading this now. Why out of every topic you've seen your eyes would stop here. All I can say is that you would not be reading this reply if you were any less of a teacher. No really. Others would never be interested in self evaluating their path. But you are different. You are looking back, assessing your energy and efforts. Thank you. This proves that that you are not jaded by what you think you are owed as a teacher. So it is with deep respect that I offer you an assignment now. Search for "The Changing of the Guard" a Twilight Zone episode and see what it says to you. Self doubt is seldom seen as a useful tool but it is what it costs to be better, see further and to know where you may be going from here.

What do you do if your creative endeavors are met with failure?

12 expert answers

Accept Reality



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

Failure is failure no matter where you meet it, but failure is not possible if first you try and that is all that really matters. Trying is a lost Art that is often overlooked. It pries the lid off possibilities and pays the price of admission to the only truth you can ever really own. Any creative endeavor is lined with uncertainties, which are often mistaken as failures and you cannot afford the energy to be a victim to your own regrets. Failure demands a specific response capable of seeing beyond it and it will often permit you greater insights than success can provide. It is your job to understand why you fear failure especially when it is trying to teach you resilience. Failure is our own fault if we do not replace it with wisdom.

What do you do if you're struggling to find meaning and purpose in your work?

34 expert answers

Reflect Deeply



Don Gregorio Antón · You

Professor Emeritus / Humboldt State University

I have seen it in those around us. Those whose everyday struggles barely gets them through the week. They wrestle with the perceptions we've all been sold that we are not enough in who we are and in what we own. Slowly it erodes our purpose, hijacks our confidence and suffocates the best parts of ourselves. This usually surfaces when we mistake our jobs for ourselves and fail to see the total sum of our life's lessons. Each one of them has been given to us to test our theories, our resilience and our own code of ethics. Most of us fail at this and we find ourselves ever repeating the same judgments and sentencing that breaks us apart. So please do not violate your own self respect by eclipsing the possibilities of who you may still become.