

WEEK
FOUR:

Creating a Habit

Week Four: Forming a Creative Habit.

*We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*

~ Will Durant

'They' say it takes 28 days to form a new habit.

Sometimes 'they' say it takes 21 days or sometimes 'they' say 90 days is the magic number.

Now I don't know who 'they' are or which 'they' is correct, **but** I do know that if you don't make time to create a new habit, if you don't prepare for it, if you don't open your notebook, if you don't attempt to try, then you will **never** make creativity a part of your life.

Creativity only becomes part of your daily life if you first invite it in and secondly (and most importantly) you ask it to stay.

So how do you make creativity a daily habit?

When I first started playing, exploring and discovering my creative squeak, I was a mother of an active and overly curious toddler and was heavily pregnant with my second daughter.

We had also just moved to Australia from Scotland, we were living with my parents, Mac was often away weeks at a time and starting his apprenticeship, we were waiting for the house we had purchased to clear probate, and all our furniture and season appropriate clothing was in a shipping container some where in the Pacific!

What I am saying to you is this:

*There is no perfect time to start a new habit.
There isn't an ideal month, a perfect time or a set date to begin.*

If you keep waiting for the end of the month, for Monday, or even for tomorrow to start your creative habit will you ever? Probably not so I am asking you to start now.

RIGHT NOW!

Grab your notebook and doodle for 5 minutes and then we will come back to this weeks notes.

DO IT! (I am 100% serious by the way - stop and please doodle now!)



Did you do it? (High five to you!!) And how do you feel now? Accomplished? Happy? And how easy was it to spend five minutes being creative!

You just completed the first step in making a creativity a habit so lets talk about some other steps to create successful habits!!

STEP ONE: MAKE SOME TIME

The first step in forming any habit is to make time! Not a lot of time just little snippets - so lets talk about where you will find moments in your day to be creative.

I can almost hear you saying you don't even have time to catch a cup of coffee in your day, let alone find ten minutes to create.

I hear you. There are not many moments in our busy days where we have the luxury to spend five minutes on ourselves.

In the beginning, I couldn't even begin to fathom where I would find five minutes so went and bought a cheap diary I would plan out everyday. EVERYDAY. Including the weekends! And yes hands up it was totally controlling and possibly over the top - but it worked for me

Because what I found was that I would have small pockets of time that I could use to be creative, where I previously thought I didn't have any time.

There was time:

- During Beans nap times
- At the play park
- While Bean was eating her lunch or dinner (because she did and still does take forever to eat her meals! ;))
- Before she woke in the morning
- When she was in bed at night
- When I was watching TV
- When Bean was playing with her own pencils
- In the car while waiting to pick up Mac from work
- Sitting in the bathroom during bath time.

Now none of these were ideal situations or more than 5 - 10 minutes, sometimes only 3 minutes, but they were all I had.

And I knew in my heart of hearts, if I didn't make the most of these moments I would never have creativity in my life. Remember my why was that it made me happy and sane and settled - so I had to do this. I had to take these micro moments and run with it and I had to do this everyday

What about you? I promise that you *can* find five to ten minutes everyday.

- Can you set your alarm ten minutes earlier?
- Can be creative with your morning coffee?
- Can you do on the morning commute?

- During your lunch break?
- When the kids are down for a nap?
- When the kids have practice?
- While waiting for dinner to cook?
- When your watching TV at night?
- When you're relaxing in the bath? (I have done this one - it's a bit tricky but still doable!)
- In bed before you go to sleep?

When will you find pockets of time?

4.1 REFLECTION: FIND SOME TIME.

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: Your creative squeak notebook,
a pen + coloured marker/ highlighter.



Open your book to a random double page. On one side paste in the weekly schedule sheet which are at the end of this weeks notes

Write down your usual weekly schedule - be sure to include everything including, work and commute times, dinner, kids activities, when you wake up, your favourite TV show, drinks with friends etc.

Now grab a coloured marker or highlighter and mark with a star, moments every day where you think you could grab five minutes for yourself to create. Be realistic and very honest with yourself, don't schedule five minutes when you know

that you will not want to or can't spend the time to be creative.

For Example:

I wrote down that I would have time to create in the mornings, before the kids wake up. I know if I do it then, then I am done for the day and I don't have to worry about find time later. I would like to schedule half hour each morning to sketch.

REALISTICALLY, I also know that I like to hit the snooze button. At least twice, may three times, so instead of half hour the reality is more likely 10 minutes.

So this is what I schedule for every morning except the weekends. 10 minutes of sketching time.

If I allotted half an hour, after I hit snooze twice, I would think there was no point in sketching cause I had already slept through most the time I had allotted. There was no point in sketching so hit the snooze button for the third time!

Then I wouldn't fuel my creative habit and I would start each day feeling like a failure and feeling guilty for not creating at all.

On the opposite page, stick in the second of the weekly schedules.

Remember you are being honest and realistic, so in the second schedule; write down when you are going spend five minutes being creative everyday.

And by being totally realistic and honest with your time means you are less likely to sabotage yourself.

TIP: Remember this creative time doesn't mean pulling out your paints, pencils and other assorted ephemera, it means playing and exploring and discovering all of which can be done with just your notebook and a pen!

Little Bitch Buster.

If your little bitch is anything like mine, it will be telling you that you don't have any time.

Mine was screaming at me:

"Don't be so stupid Kirstin - you can't even go to the bathroom in peace let alone find 10 minutes to scribble in a note book"

Ain't she a peach!

For just now, don't worry about what your Little Bitch is telling you; just write the list of times that **ARE POSSIBLE**. Tell your LB that nothing is set in stone and you aren't committing to anything just yet.

If your Little Bitch is particularly nasty during this exercise, find the beautiful **WHY** page you've created and read over it, and spend a few moments remembering and reflecting why the being creative everyday is so important for you to nurture and encourage.

Now tell your little bitch to shut up and look over your list of possible creative pockets again. Can you find some time now?

STEP TWO: MAKE A CREATIVE SPACE

Now I am not talking about making a whole room available to you - when I first began it was literally one notebook and one pen.

Slowly I added more to my collection - a few tubes of paint, some watercolours, three brushes, a pencil, eraser, small watercolour pad etc.

All of this would live in a peg tin that I picked up somewhere and lived on the bench next to my dining room table. I would pull it out at lunchtime and pack it away before dinner. That was my creative space for a good 18 months until Mac told me it was driving him mad and we converted a room in our garage for me to play in.



I loved those moments at my dining room table with my little box. And my little box was so portable, if I wanted to sit on my couch and play - I could. If I decided to watch TV in bed, I could take it there, or even on those perfect spring days, where the sun is shining and it wasn't too hot, I could take it outside with me.

I want you to create your own art box, which you can easily transport around your house and make a little space where it will live.

4.2 ACTION: MAKE SOME SPACE.

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: a little box/ basket
Your notebook + supplies.

Find a little box, tin or basket (a shoe box is perfect!) and put your notebook, your supplies and other bits and pieces in it. You want it all together so that when it comes time to create it is all in one space.

When you've come home from work, shopping or anywhere you've had your notebook and supplies - put them in your box.

And when you move from space to space in your house, you can take your little box with you.

Spend five minutes finding and sorting a space for your art box to live. This is where you will keep it when you aren't using it. HOWEVER please keep it

somewhere that is visible and easily accessible. In the back of the linen cupboard isn't easily accessible or visible.

Remember the saying "out of sight out of mind"? If you don't see it, you are less likely to use it frequently in the beginning.

STEP THREE: WHAT RESULTS DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE.

After you have formed your creative habit what is the end goal? What do you want to ultimately achieve?

Is it to keep playing and exploring? Is it to paint a painting that you like and would feel proud to hang in your house? Do you want to make creative journaling a part of your everyday? Take an advanced art class?

What is your end goal?

4.3 REFLECTION AND ACTION: WHAT IS YOUR END GOAL.

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Your notebook and pen

Spend five minutes journaling or mind mapping and thinking about what you would like to achieve at the end of this course.

What is next on your creative journey? What are your creative goals?

It is totally ok to have more than one end goal. Mine included:

- Enrolling in an online mixed media class with an artist I admired
- Painting something that I was happy with and proud to hang in my house
- To paint something to hang in the girls room



Mine was to be happy enough with a painting that I had made that I could frame it and hang it in my house.

To this day the painting still has pride of place in my lounge room.

Make a page in your notebook dedicated to your end goals. (or use the work sheet at the end of the chapter)

Keep adding to it as you have more. Pop them on post it notes and stick them around your house.

Make them visible and easily seen to inspire and encourage you.

STEP FOUR: MAKE THE TIME.

In step one we talked about when you are going to make time to be creative and in the first reflection exercise you wrote in the schedule all the times you were able to find five minutes to be creative.

Remember it isn't pulling everything out for a big creative session; it's just five minutes of time everyday when you can make some time to create and play

Step Four is actually scheduling and making the time. In the beginning I believe that the only way you will make a creative habit is to schedule it and do it *EVERY DAY*.

So how do you normally keep track of your day? Where do you keep note of your appointments, your plans, or your commitments?

Do you use a diary or a calendar? Do you keep your schedule on your phone or your computer? Whatever method you use this is where you are going to literally schedule the times you are going to be creative each week.

I do most of my sketching in the morning, and I have an alarm on my phone that says *"Get yo' lazy ass up and create biatch."* No joke.

What ever works for scheduling your daily routine will work for your creative routine.

Apart from my phone alarm, I also schedule times in my diary schedule for creating. I write it in bright colours and every morning when I review my day I see my happy notes to create.

So lets schedule it in. And use bright colours to highlight your creative time so you don't miss it.

REMEMBER: *You can only create a habit by showing up and you can only show up if you plan the time to do it.*

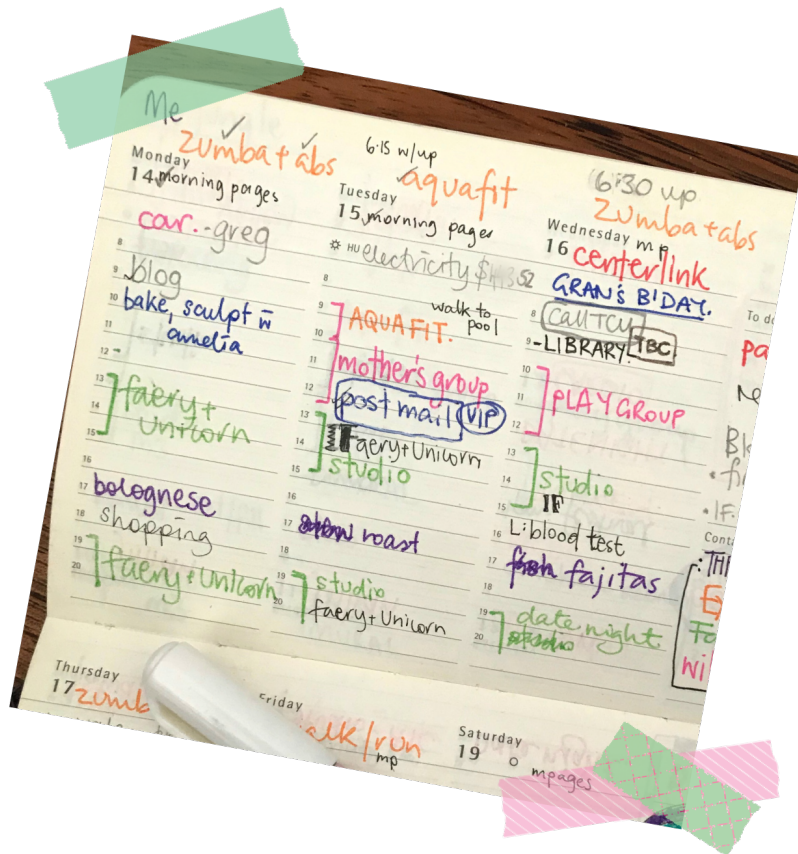


4.4 ACTION: SCHEDULE IT.

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Your calendar

Using bright colours schedule in your calendar when you will spend five - ten minutes everyday to create. Make it big and bold and fun!



Set calendar alerts or an alarm on your phone to remind you it's time.

If you don't have a planner or way to schedule your week print off another copy of my weekly schedule that I have included at the end of these notes and use it.

STEP FIVE: WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

It's all very well in writing down when you are going to create but if you sit down at your designated time only to be unsure of what you are going to make in you're allotted time then it is a wasted exercise.

What do you want to do this week? This month? What style of creating are you exploring? Have you made up a challenge to do this week?

I can almost guarantee that if you don't do this step you will look at an empty page for 5 minutes, close your book, and shove it in a draw never to be seen again!

But if you write down ahead of time what you are going to create then that decision is already made for you!

And this week is easy! This week you can spend 5 minutes a day with your blobs!

4.5 ACTION: WHAT WILL YOU CREATE.

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Your calendar

Using the same calendar from your last action exercise spend five minutes each week deciding what you will explore, discover and create this week.

What will you do in your five-minute allotments?

Be as specific as possible and actually write down what you will do.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Monday

7.30am: CREATE [three doodle squares]

Tuesday

1pm: CREATE [one blob doodle]

Wednesday

1 - 3pm: Illustration Friday [designs and start painting]

etc.

STEP SIX: BE YOUR OWN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER.

'That which gets measured, gets done'

Again this is one of those 'they say' quotes, but I believe it is a fun tool to utilize in creating a habit.

Have you ever marked off the days until a holiday on your calendar? How awesome does it look and feel to see those days being counted down and marked off.

We are going to make a contract with ourselves and become our own accountability partner and every day we are going to make our own count down.

4.6 FUN: BECOMING ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR CREATIVE HABIT

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: your notebook, some paint and a marker.

There are two ways you can do this exercise. You can either use my accountability tracker at the end of the notes or you can make your own page. (Personally I would do number two - but it is totally up to you!!)

If you decide to go route number two then grab your paint because your smooching paint again!

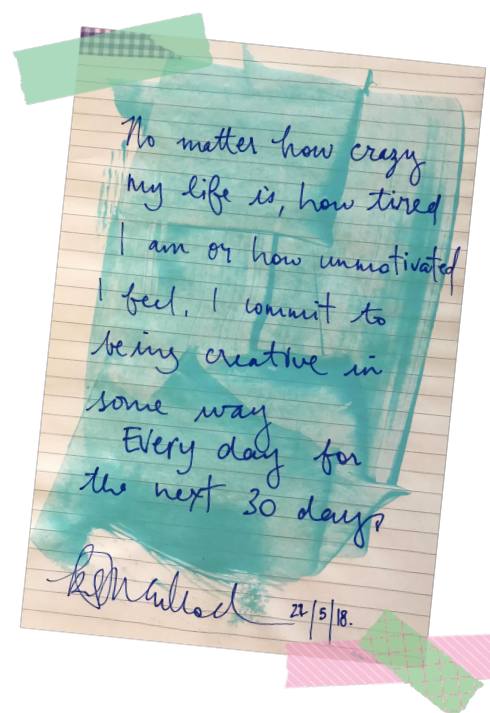
Again lighter colours will work best for this exercise, find a double page and put some paint on your page and use an old card, your fingers, brushes or sponges and smooch your paint around and let dry.

After it is dry on one side I want you to write to following:

"No matter how crazy my life is, how tired I am or how unmotivated I feel, I commit to being creative in some way, EVERY DAY for the next 30 days."

Write it big and fill up your page. AND sign your name.

You have now contracted with yourself to be creative everyday for the next thirty days.

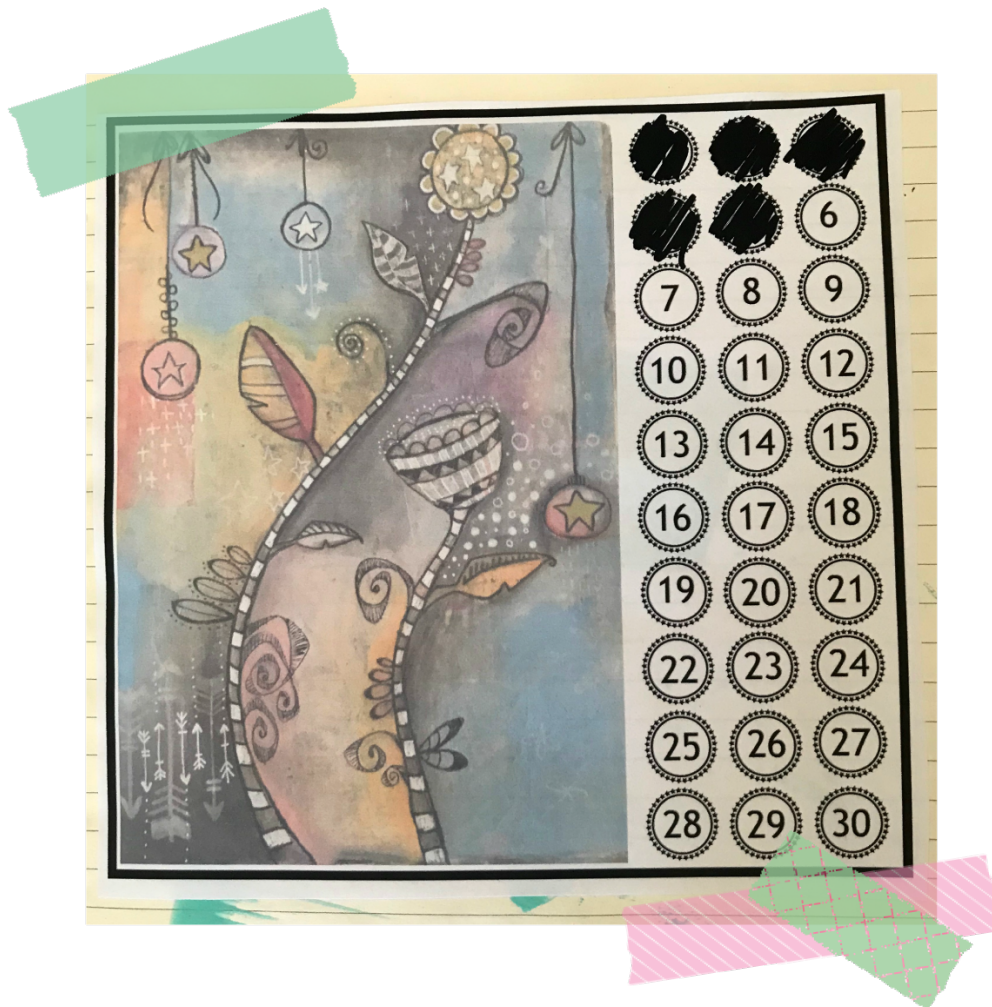


On the other page you can either paste in the 30-day grid from your notes or write in the numbers 1 - 30 down. Decorate your pages however you want.

Book mark this page by turning over a corner, using a bookmark or sticking in a post it note, so you can find the page easily.

Each day over the next 30 days, I want you to cross out a number immediately after you have been creative.

Don't stress if you miss a day BUT if you miss two or more it is time to make a concerted effort to include creativity into your day - so set an alarm or something more extreme to remind you to create.



STEP SEVEN: WHAT IS YOUR REWARD?

There is point in creating a habit if there isn't some kind of pay out at the end. Now I would say being creative everyday is it's own reward - remember how it make us feel? And how we put those feelings into words and made our title page?

But I feel that sometimes a physical reward will up the ante and make it more exciting and rewarding.

So what will you reward yourself with after these ten weeks if you are creative everyday?

A new art supply to play with? Another art course to discover and explore? A visit to the gallery to soak up inspiration? What is going to assist your motivation here to be creative everyday?

TIP: Your reward should really motivate, excite and inspire you. It should be something you really, really want!

4.7 FUN: WHAT IS YOUR REWARD?

Time: 2 minutes

Equipment: your notebook, some paint and a marker.

At the very bottom of your 30-day page write the following:

“At the end of the 30-days if I reach my goal I am going to reward myself with _____.”

Write in your reward.

Write in on a post-it note as well and stick a couple around your house and work place. The fridge, your computer, the bathroom mirror, or the car - somewhere you will see and read it easily.

Share it with me - email me your reward or share it on the facebook group!



At the end of the 30 days
if I reach my goal I
am going to reward myself
with. Michelle's Lino Print Course

A FEW AFTERTHOUGHTS FOR YOU:

- REMEMBER - New habits don't always come easy - bad habits are much easier to make than to break
- Your schedule should be non negotiable, but if you schedule a time that is not working for you ***reschedule your creative time!***
- Do you notice any roadblocks or negative self talk when you are doing any of these? What are you going to do to overcome them?
- You are building a habit - so don't expect yourself to be perfect and get it right every day. Your accountability page must be completed with complete honesty. But if you do slip up and miss a day or two - catch up immediately and maybe schedule a couple of extra days



4.7 FUN: YOUR FIVE-MINUTE DAILY CREATIVE EXERCISE 'BLOBBY' CREATURES

Time: 10 minutes set up

Equipment: your notebook, some paint
A brush, ruler and a pen.

We have spent this entire workshop making our creative habits but what will you do this week in your scheduled creative time?

I have a really fun exercise for you that my in person workshop 'squeakers' just adore doing. Have you ever looked at the clouds and seen animals, shapes, people, flowers etc? This is an artistic version of cloud watching.

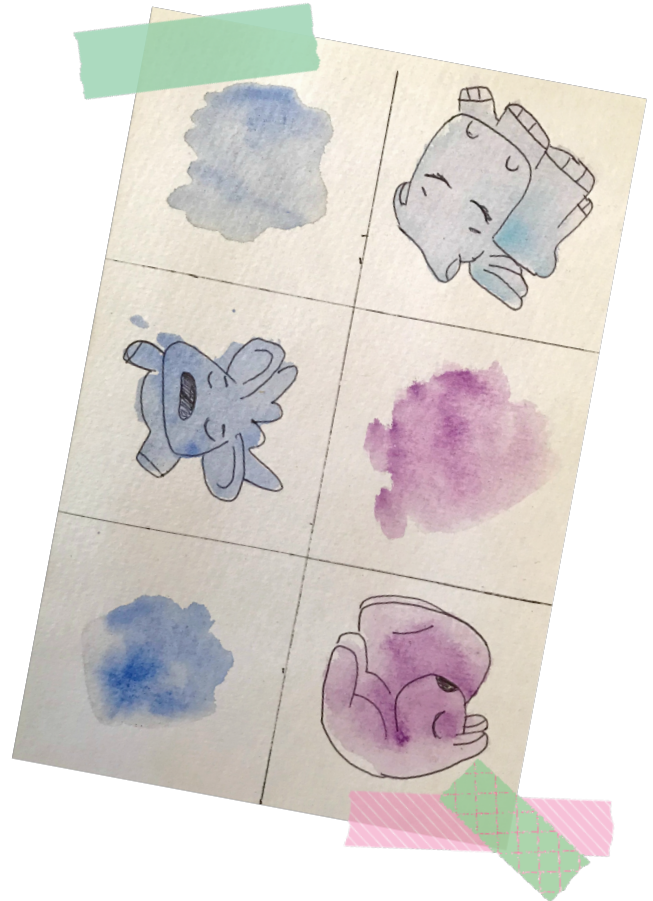
Open to an empty page in your notebook and using your ruler split your page into four rectangles/squares. (if you are using a larger notebook, feel free to grid the page into more squares.)

Mix a little of your paint with water so it is a runny consistency. Dab a little water in each square and then add your paint in a 'blobby' pattern.

Let the pages dry. Alternatively you can do this on a separate piece of paper and glue it in your notebook once it has dried.

In your next scheduled creative time, grab your pen and notebook. Open to you 'blobby' paint page.

Look closely at your blobs. Let you mind clear. Can you see any pictures in your blobs? An animal, object, person, shapes, flowers? Use your pen to draw in what you see.



Little Bitch Buster.

Can't see any shapes in your blobs?

That's ok. Move you page around, turn it side ways or upside down. If you see something draw it in.

If after turning the page around and you can't see anything skip that square.

Come back to it another time.

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Weekly Schedule

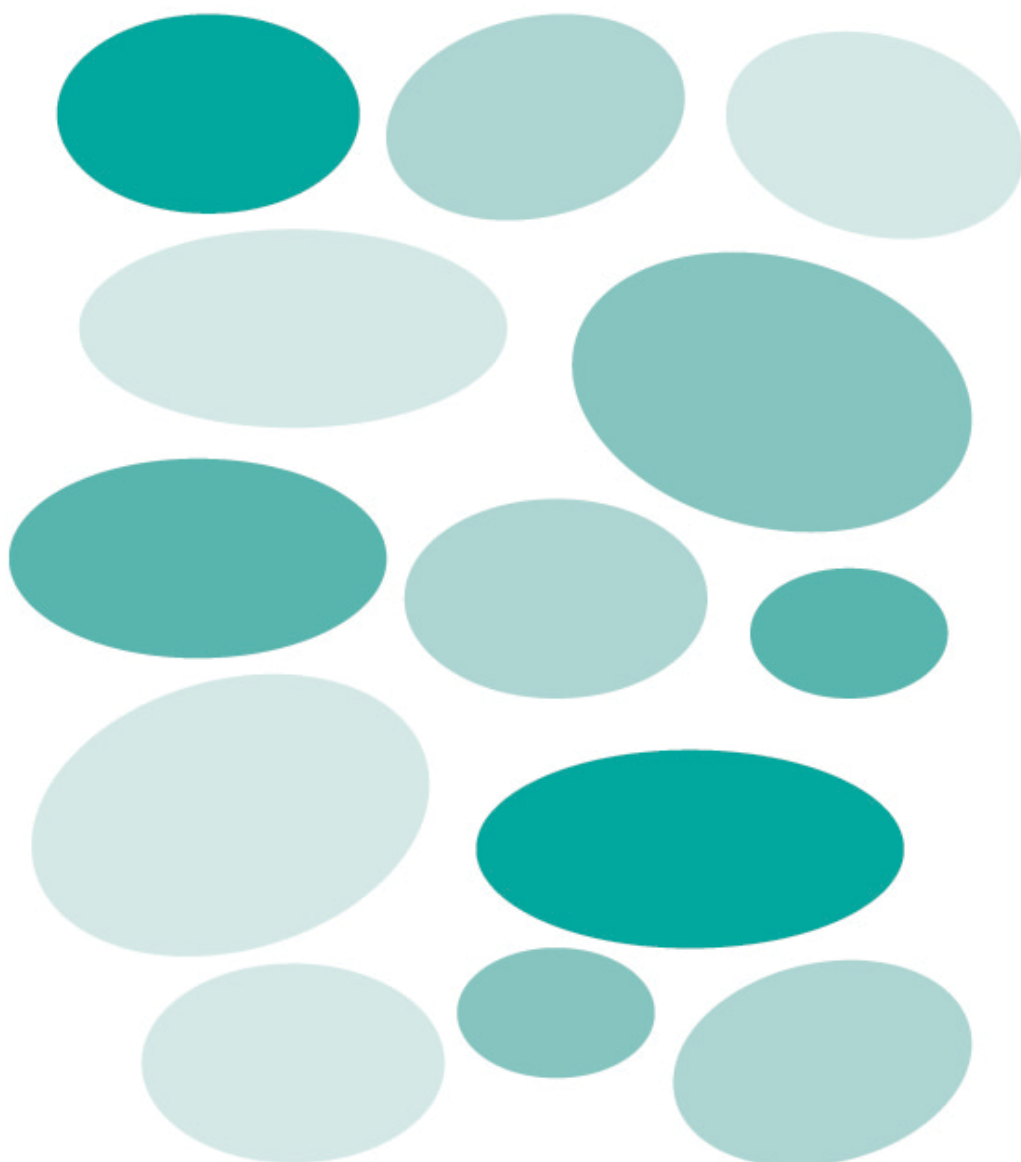
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Weekly Schedule

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What are your End Goals?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE AT THE END OF DISCOVERING YOUR CREATIVE SQUEAK
AND BEYOND?



YOUR CREATIVE EVERYDAY TRACKER

