



Spark Your Blog with SOCIAL MEDIA

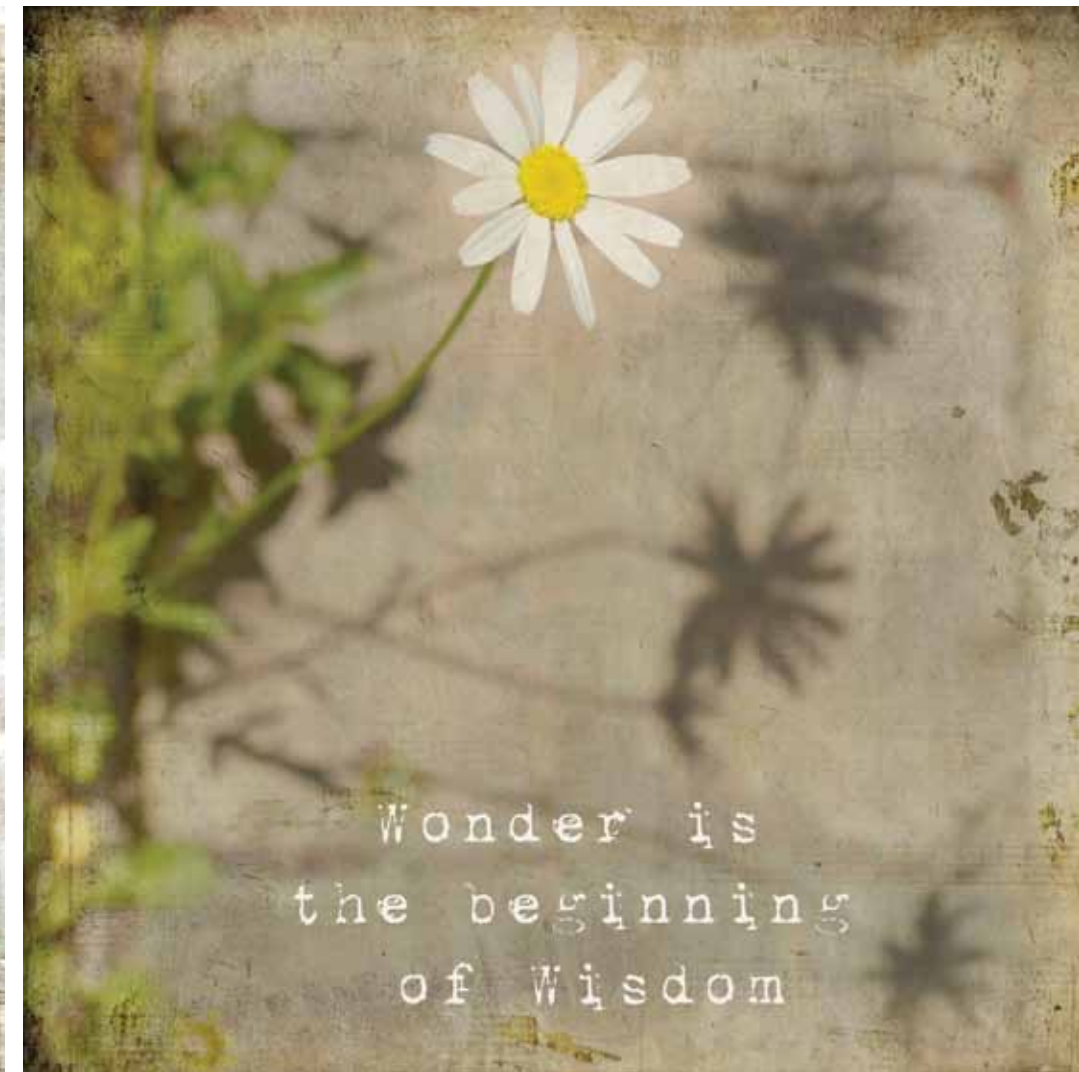
BY JAMIE JAMISON alajamie.com

Often I start my day with a cup of coffee and my best blogging intentions. Then, for what seems like eternity, I stare at my computer. Finally after 10 minutes, I start surfing the Internet, and before I know it, life calls me to do a hundred other things. No blog today, tomorrow, or the next. My blog has defeated me again!

This was pretty much my routine until last fall when I started using social media as a way to mini-blog to promote my art and to spark ideas for my blog. I was fortunate to attend the Shutter Sisters Oasis where I had a helpful conversation with the very inspirational and fantastic blogger, Kim Klassen. She suggested I shouldn't force my blog, which gave me permission to step back and re-evaluate its purpose. As I reflected, it was obvious I was inconsistent and searching for that purpose.

For some of us, we choose a blog as a quiet space of reflection with little feedback; this is my blog. Personally I am very outgoing; however, online I am shy. Perhaps it is my professional training, but I don't like to share a lot with strangers. My reflections were ➤





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limited and even though I wanted to reach out, my blog felt forced. So I continued to stare at a blank page; however, at the same time I was using social media frequently to share with friends.

My social media updates were easy, authentic, and I enjoyed the immediate feedback. I spent more time on Flickr, Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter; and my blog remained quiet except for an occasional update. Soon I realized that it was both acceptable to be an inconsistent blogger and to use social media as a mini-blog to share my photo art and document my life. Yet, I still wanted to keep my blog active. This gave me the inspiration to take these mini-posts and photos and use them in my blog. Fortunately, it is relatively easy to link social media together; but I never viewed my updates or photos as seeds of inspiration for a longer blog. ➤

As a communications instructor at a local university, I discuss with my students the plethora of technology options available and the task of selecting the right channel to send a message. We also address the importance of feedback for those messages. I realized that I wanted feedback for my work, and since I had not promoted my blog, there was no immediate feedback. This void left me empty of ideas. Social media feedback is almost instantaneous and provides a multitude of inspiration. I began to float an idea or a picture, and based on the response, I was motivated creatively. Now when I look at my computer, I have ideas for my blog.

Flickr is my go-to social media site. I put an image out there, join a few groups, and watch the reaction. Some photos receive only a few comments, but others resonate with a large group. This feedback helped me to be more creative and to have the confidence to share a more in-depth experience. (Actually, this is how I selected the images to send that appeared in *Somerset Apprentice* and *Somerset Studio Gallery*). Twitter, Facebook, and now the popular Instagram offer additional opportunities to mini-blog an idea or a photo.

Your phone, no matter what type, is a fantastic way to document a moment. See something interesting or have a creative milestone. Take a photo and add a caption. And with all of the fantastic apps available, you can also create art and share on the go — in the carpool lane or at the doctor's office. No more staring at a blank screen — you are mini-blogging. After you have some feedback and when you do have time, write a more in-depth entry. On vacation, I use my phone to quickly share with friends, and when I return home the inspiration for my blog is overflowing.

For me, blogging is about sharing a moment of my life as well as my photo art. Thanks to social media, I now have the seeds of inspiration to write longer blog posts. So rather than stare at that empty screen, open social media accounts. See what has inspired you and where your heart was that week, and use those images or words to spark your blog. ☺

Jamie Jamison is a mixed-media artist and part-time college instructor living in Canfield, Ohio. She also spends the summer in Chautauqua, New York, helping to support the Visual Arts of Chautauqua Institution (VAC). Her photo art tiles reflect the simple beauty of the layers in life. To see more of Jamie's work, visit her website alajamie.com or contact her by email at jamiemj@me.com. Follow Jamie at alajamie.blogspot.com or instagram.com/alajamie.

