

Practicing the Art of Creativity

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Not every problem can be solved in the same way. That might seem like an obvious fact about being creative, but it's often readily ignored.

You've seen so many ideas, facts, and exercises throughout this book that you're excited to try. But why didn't I just write an "Here Are 5 Simple Steps to Being More Creative" book? It's because there is no one correct way to be more creative. It's a process. It's a process you have to understand, embrace, and take control of yourself.

With that said, it can seem really intimidating to know that not only are you not as creative as you could be, but that you can quite possibly choose the wrong way to be creative. Should you just give up?

You can't think about it that way at all. What works for you at the time is what works for you at the time. Typically, that will mean choosing the method or idea that you are naturally drawn to for the problem at hand.

The methods you are drawn to are usually where your natural deficits lie—what you need to work on. Your mind leads you to the processes your brain and your situation require to creatively solve a problem.

Sometimes, you'll use one technique over another. There's a season for everything in creativity. Sometimes, you need to totally veg out, read stupid books, watch trashy TV, watch SportsCenter, and totally ignore your work. Only then will you come up with the solutions you need.

Other times, you really need to focus, investigate, explore, and brainstorm—the usual methods we use to be "creative."

Still other times, you'll need to take a walk, weed the garden, and become one with nature, or else you'll never come to the right conclusions. The great thing is, experts agree that we intuitively know what we should do if the possibilities have been presented to us.

That's a huge part of why I've written this book. You can't try a certain technique, even if it's the very best option, if you've never been exposed to it before. I want to expose you to every angle of creativity so you have a toolkit available so you can think creatively in whatever way you need.

Your intuition will tell you that you're on the right track. Experts call this kind of intuition "feelings of knowing." We know when we are close to a breakthrough. We know when we are on the wrong path, feeling frustrated and uncertain that it will ever happen for us. That's when you need to try something different. Your intuition, or feelings of knowing, will improve dramatically as you practice your new creative skills more often.

If you don't feel like you're getting the answer, that it's never going to come, it's time to make a change. You need to take a break from what you're doing, and revisit things from a different angle. Use one of the tools I've given you throughout this book, and you'll get to the point where you know you're close to the answer.

This can be a struggle – it's a process. It can be scary and full of uncertainty. Learn to embrace the feeling, because you know that wonderful things lie around the corner. You'll get the breakthrough you seek.

Part of doing this is living and practicing creativity. This is like any skill you would practice. Remember—while some people were born with a mind that naturally tends toward the creative, it's something that's inside all of us. Practice, and you will get better.

You have to learn to flex your mind. Flex your mind in ways you never dreamed possible before now. Do things you've never done, read things you've never read, and find new reasons to be creative.

You don't have to just be creative in your work—you can be creative in your life as well. There are things you're overlooking in everyday life that can dramatically change your level of happiness and success.

You should practice brainstorming and dreaming on a regular basis. Pull connections from every direction you can. Close your eyes and imagine you're looking into the night sky. Watch as shooting stars keep flying by—carrying the ideas of the universe. Reach up and pull the brightest stars down to see if they form something even more beautiful. Eventually, you'll have the right combination and it will explode into a rainbow of light and beauty. This is the visual you can think of when you're trying to connect new ideas.

Ask for Feedback

You're well on your way to becoming an expert at practicing creativity. But, how do you know your ideas are any good? While there *aren't* any bad ideas, there certainly are some half-baked ideas. Go ahead and ask for feedback from trusted colleagues and friends. Make sure you choose people who will be very honest with you.

When you show a half-baked idea to someone else, they get to look at it with fresh eyes. It is with 100% certainty that they'll see things you don't see. Their feedback will help you shape your idea into something better. Ask a variety of people to do this, shaping and growing your idea until it's something you feel passionate and certain about.

Be careful not to just share your ideas with experts. Share your ideas with people who have no idea what you do or what you're thinking. Put it in their terms, but share it. It might sound counterintuitive that someone with no background in your market could possibly be of help to you. But you'll be surprised. People who have no prior concept of the idea can show you things you missed completely.

They can offer solutions and add new insight your more expert colleagues and friends cannot. Don't overlook this or dismiss it—it is an extremely important part of the process.

Release Yourself

It's easy enough for me to tell you to open your mind and to change your way of being in the world. I realize it's easier said than done. This is something you have to practice to do. You have to make an effort to change and to open your mind.

Consider this quote from Alice in Wonderland:

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. **Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.**"

The Queen does it every day. Why can't you do the same? Set aside time to allow yourself to think of humorous, fun, crazy, impossible ways of looking at a problem.

Being fun and silly opens your mind up in a whole new way. It also makes it less like a chore and more like something you look forward to. You'll be amazed at how many incredible ideas you can come up with as soon as allow yourself to let loose a little bit.

Rigidity is the antithesis of creativity. Open up, be flexible, and be creative.



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