

Creativity Training

GLD in Europe, Leipzig
February 4, 2024



Exercise #1

Wake up those creative muscles

Finish the story...

Mustard Jack was hungry.

Exercise #1 result:

Our story

Mustard Jack was hungry. He had been on the train four hours on his way to be a contestant on Jeopardy. And so he ordered a plate of ostrich at the onboard restaurant, but sadly they had just run out. At that moment, Relish Jane entered the restaurant. Mustard Jack looked up, thought he recognized her for a moment, then looked back down at the menu, hoping to find something similar to ostrich. “Excuse me, is this seat taken?”, a screeching voice penetrated his thoughts.

He immediately recognized Ketchup Kate, his high school sweetheart. The train ground to a halt. Someone let out a piercing scream. He went for a hot dog, without mustard, because he didn’t like mustard. Suddenly, the whole train vanished and he found himself all alone in a wide street. He got aware that he was half naked, not wearing his pants anymore.

Every storefront was smeared with mustard, the drains were bubbling loudly with liquid mustardy ooze. Relish Jane and Ketchup Kate spotted each other and shouted with joy, “It’s you!” Mustard Jack shrank back behind the table, in embarrassment about his bare bottom. Mustard Jack immediately started thinking of an exit strategy.

At that moment, he heard the door slam open, and at the doorway stood Mayonnaise Mackleroy. And he suddenly realized he was pantless! Was this a dream or a nightmare?! Mayonnaise Mackleroy approached him with a grin on his face. Mustard Jack punched him smack dab in the middle of his grinning face and ran away.

He hoped that this nightmare would end soon. Then he remembered that he had ordered a hot dog but hadn’t eaten it yet, so he ran back to see if the waiter had brought it. He searched and searched for the train, his eyes watering due to the mustard fumes in the air. He looked up and saw his hot dog flying through the air at the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade.

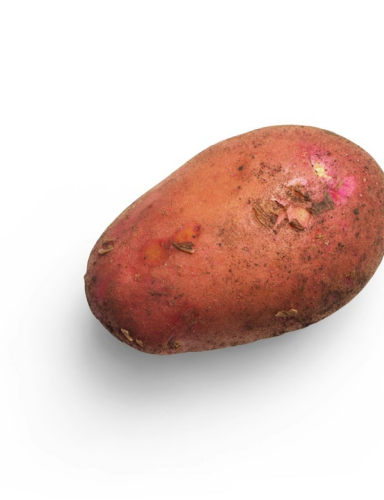
What is creativity?

Creativity: the ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new.

- We are all born creative.
- Think of being creative as PLAY = unconscious investigation
- Creativity is something you need to practice like any other skill – you need to make a commitment to it.

Exercise #2

Think of as many non-food-related things you can do with a potato as you can in 5 minutes.



“Creating” the right conditions

The biggest killer of creativity?

INTERRUPTION

Internal:

As Hindus say, the mind is like a chattering, drunken monkey.

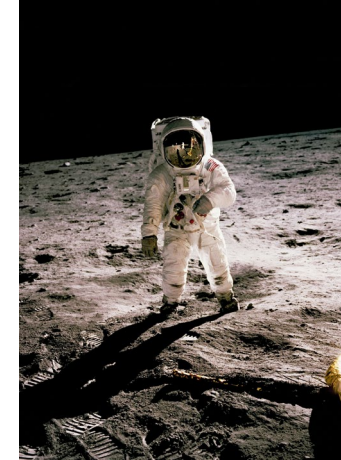
External:

phone notifications, computer, people

“Creating” the right conditions (2)

So how can you avoid this?

Create boundaries of time and space.



The process takes practice, like meditation – things will pop into your mind so it’s good to have something nearby to scribble these intrusive thoughts down.

Your thoughts follow your mood – angry, gloomy, if you’re in the wrong frame of mind, it can be harder to be creative.

And remember: There is no “should”, there is no “have to”, there’s no script, it’s all fluid, so don’t put yourself under pressure.

Exercise #3

- Imagine you are cleaning out a stranger's house. Make a list of as many strange things you find there as you can in 5 minutes.

Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind

From a book titled *Hare Brain Tortoise Mind: How Intelligence Increases When You Think Less* by Guy Claxton

Two different thinking styles:

The fast, impulsive, and intuitive hare brain versus the slow, deliberate, and reflective tortoise mind

Claxton argues that both thinking styles are crucial for cognitive well-being and success.

Our world today often values the quick thinking associated with the hare brain, but the tortoise mind's reflective and deliberate approach is equally important.

Tortoise mind: pondering – playful, leisurely, dreamy. According to Claxton, allowing the mind time to meander is not a luxury. Thinking slowly is a vital part of the cognitive arsenal. The tortoise mind is willing to explore without knowing what it is looking for, and tolerant of ambiguous information.



It's all about the process

DO:

- Change your mindset/approach. Today's society focuses on speed, pressure, the need for control → leads to efficiency and productivity.
But you can't rush creativity. Deferring decisions makes us uncomfortable, However, you can learn to tolerate the vague sense of worry when something is unresolved, knowing a solution will present itself.
- Scribble incomplete sentences, lists, stream of consciousness – just get it down on paper in some form.
- Surrender to a state where you don't avoid feelings. Get mentally naked.
- Some creativity experts suggest having a simple structure in place, a plan for what you are trying to achieve, but if you do, you have to remember to let go of it, reinvent it, revisit it repeatedly, use it as a springboard.
- Be willing to not know what you're doing. Get out of your comfort zone.

It's all about the process (2)

DON'T:

- Be concerned about a lack of clarity. Don't push it, it will become clearer and clearer. When it has become clear enough, give it to your fact-seeking, critical mind to work on it. When you've gone as far as you can with your analytical mode, go back to creative mode and repeat – work through several iterations.
- Try to tame your images – let them be strange, outrageous, zany, and see where they lead.
- Get critical too soon – “New ideas are rather like small creatures. They're easily strangled.” (John Cleese)
- Use ChatGPT to be creative, because it won't help you build up your own creativity.

Exercise #4

- A woman in an evening gown just ran out of the opera and jumped in a cab. Write down as many different reasons/scenarios as you can in 5 minutes.

The role of the unconscious

Your unconscious mind continues to work on whatever it is without you being consciously aware of it (tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon).

Thinking is the greatest obstacle to creativity:

Think of all the things we do without consciously directing our bodies or minds to do so (driving, sports) – creativity is the same but like those things, it requires a lot of practice.

The language of the unconscious is not verbal, it is images, feelings, etc.

Ideas that you can access by relaxing and letting your mind meander are inaccessible to purposeful cognition.

Creativity blocks

The council of inner critics: These inner voices are just old recordings and you've heard it all before. They are like wet cement. Don't put your feet in them or you won't be able to move. Let the critics be and move on.

Worrying about being wrong implies there is one 'right' solution somewhere that others know – reject this mindset – no one will see what you think/write unless you choose to share it.

Blocks are part of the process – take a shower, go for a walk without your phone (especially near water), do something totally different to let your unconscious mind keep working on it.

Do a task like emptying your entire cutlery drawer, washing and drying it all by hand, then putting it all back. Vacuum especially under furniture, in corners, etc.

Let yourself get bored.

Exercise #5

- Make up a new word and provide its definition(s). Use it in a few sentences.

Edward de Bono

How to Have Creative Ideas: 62 Exercises to Develop the Mind

The purpose of doing exercises is to help develop creative habits of mind.

His book and exercises are based on random words (RW) from the list in book, chosen using dice (table-column-section-word)

Exercises:

- Take a RW and come up with a new magazine concept based on it
- Take two RW and combine them to create a new business
- Storyline – take 4 RW and create a story using them in any order

More creativity exercises (if time allows)

- Make up your own version of rock, paper, scissors.
- Make a list: Things that give you goosebumps

Creativity exercises for later

Ideas to practicing in your own:

- Write about your earliest memory of something specific – a piece of clothing, a toy, an occasion (smells, sounds, tastes, sights)
- Draw something on a post-it note every day for a month.
- Mindlessly doodle
- Watch a show you've never seen before on mute and come up with your own dialogue.
- Hearing and sound exercise (also exercises for other senses)
- If you are waiting somewhere, don't take out your phone – instead, count all the things around you in just one color, make a mental list of all the sounds you hear, etc.

Remember:
There are no hard rules or
secrets, it's about finding out
what works for you!



Resources

Here are a few resources, but there are many, many more out there ...

- How to Have Creative Ideas by Edward de Bono
- The Thirty-Day Creativity Challenge by Ed Bell
- Hare Brain Tortoise Mind: How Intelligence Increases When You Think Less by Guy Claxton
- Creativity: A Short and Cheerful Guide by John Cleese
- Conscious Creativity: Look, Connect, Create by Philippa Stanton
- Huberman Lab podcast episode The Science of Creativity & How to Enhance Creative Innovation
- Whole Lotta Creativity Going On: 60 Fun and Usual Exercises to Awaken and Strengthen Your Creativity by Regina Pacelli
- Creativity Building Exercises for Screenwriters by Jason Rogers
- Creative Strength Training: Prompts, Exercises and Personal Stories for Encouraging Artistic Genius by Jane Dunnewold
- Naming the World: And Other Exercises for the Creative Writer Edited by Harvard Professor Bret Anthony Johnston
- Wild Ideas: Creativity from the Inside out by Cathy Wild
- Answering the Call of Creativity by Michele Cassou
- Podcast Think Fast, Talk Smart, episode 111 – How to Spark Creativity in Your Communication with guest Tina Seelig
- Podcast Pixel Hopper’s AI Sessions – When AI Meets Creativity (the podcast by an AI that I mentioned)
- Podcast On Purpose with Jay Shetty, episode – 8 Ways to Get Out of Creative Block
- Ken Robinson TED talks
- Creativity Uncovered podcast with Abi Gatling

Thank you
for your attention.