

Creativity: what it is and how to get it

HOW DO YOU DEFINE CREATIVITY? Is it an ability to look at things differently? Is it coming up with a new idea? Is it innovating, looking outside the square, challenging the way things are currently done, or is it art, a new thought, or simply just not being afraid to try new things? Perhaps it's having fun, expressing yourself and being weird? Can you have an idea without being creative? Or, can you be creative without having an idea?

My own definition of creativity is having an ability to look at things differently. I believe creativity is creating something that was not there before, or changing, improving or enhancing an existing idea, such as inventing a new ice cream flavour or throwing a party with a fun theme.

I repeatedly hear people say 'I'm not creative,' or 'I don't have a creative bone in my body.' The truth, is that negative self talk is one of the biggest factors affecting your creativity – or at least your own perception of your creative ability. Don't let self talk stop you from achieving what you want to achieve.

This is not to say that you should stand in front of the mirror each morning and say to yourself, 'I am creative, I am an ideas person.' Rather, when you have the opportunity to approach something differently or to solve a problem, just quietly say to yourself 'I can do this.'

Another great self-programming action is to change 'can't' into 'what else?' Instead of thinking to yourself that something can't change, can't be done, or can't be improved, simply ask the question 'what else?' or even 'what if?' If you ask these questions consistently, you will find you are on your way to creating more options in both your work and your personal life.

Tips for unlocking your creative talent

- 1. Ask more questions.** Even when you know the answer to something, ask the question. The easiest way for you to exercise and stretch your brain is to always ask yourself for options. Don't accept one way of doing things.
- 2. Stimulate your mind.** Get outdoors, read, listen to new music, go to the supermarket, explore a new street, walk or catch the train, talk to a stranger, see a movie or grab a magazine you've never read before. In order to stimulate your

mind you need to find new stimulants. Colour, movement, sound, people watching and unique environments will all help to stimulate your mind and your thinking.

- 3. Take up a new creative activity.** Paint, draw, write poetry or a short story, do a crossword, watch a quiz show. What are your passions away from your work? Think how much time you are spending on those passions on a weekly basis. Think about the things you used to do when you were a child that made you lose track of time. Quite often these passions are your most creative endeavours, yet they're the first thing to go when you're pushed for time. Try making time for them!
- 4. Relax.** Spend quiet time relaxing, contemplating and writing things down as they come to you. Meditating is an excellent way to stimulate your creative mind. In this day and age of multi tasking, multimedia and mobile communication we have less and less time to sit and think. Make sure you set aside relaxing, quiet, contemplating or problem solving time each day in your diary. If it's not in your diary, it won't happen.
- 5. Break your habits.** Do something different every day. Go to work a different way, do something different at lunch time, read a different newspaper, do a different class, see a movie you wouldn't normally see, go to the theatre, or take a day off to explore a different area. Breaking habits is a very important part of breaking routine, which in turn will help you get used to thinking outside the square.

Remember, ordinary people are having great ideas every day and using them to solve problems, find solutions and excel in their jobs and in their lives – they just don't consider that it is actually creativity that they are using. Believe in your ability and you will go far! ■

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Gary is the founder of Blue Moon Creative at the Vault, Australia's first creative thinking venue. He devotes his time to teaching people how to unlock their imaginations and engage their creativity. Gary is a key-note speaker and is the author of the book, *The Keys to Creativity*, available from all good bookshops. Visit www.bluemooncreative.com.au for more information.