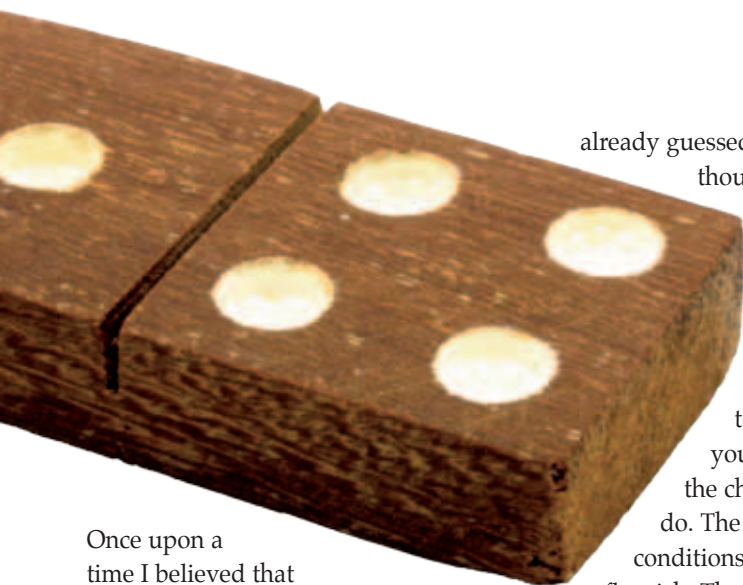


Everyone Can be

CREATIVE

Here's How

by Roger Neugebauer



Once upon a time I believed that the world was divided into two camps: People who are creative . . . and the rest of us.

That was until I came across a study performed by the University of Michigan (<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/pccs/home>). In the study, researchers tested participants and ranked them from most to least creative. Then they divided them into two groups: those who demonstrated the most creativity in the test, and those who demonstrated the least. They told the most creative group that their members had ranked lowest in terms of creativity and the least creative group that they had ranked highest. Then each group was given the same problem to solve. The results are (and I am sure you've

already guessed this) that the group that thought it was the most creative actually generated the most creative ideas.

So now I believe that everyone has the potential to be creative — you do, your staff members do, and the children in your program do. The challenge is to foster the conditions that enable creativity to flourish. These conditions are play, rich experiences, freedom, and passion.

Play

"All of us can enhance our idea-producing capabilities by adopting a spirit of intellectual playfulness and a sense of humor. Hang loose. Toy at ideas. Avoid being too careful. Enjoy."

Michael LeBoeuf

In her *Exchange* article, "Playing with Ideas," (May, 2000), Lilli-Ann Buffin observed, "In homes that nurture

creativity, children engage in lots of activity, fantasy, fun, and play. The more opportunities children have to play, the more they learn about objects, relationships, their environment, and themselves."

But playfulness is not just for kids. Adults need to allow themselves to play as well. Bonnie Neugebauer, in her *Exchange* article, "Need a Creative Idea? Build Yourself a Creativity Machine," shared these ideas for getting into a playful spirit:

- Play games with words, numbers, ideas (analogies, association games, puzzles).
- Play around with your perspective, not only the way in which you see things, but the way in which you hear, taste, smell, and feel; tune in to the way you monitor your sensory responses to the world around you; try to be more open, more sensitive.
- Do different things and do old things differently; try to break habits to open yourself to new experiences and sensations.
- Allow yourself to respond to life's experiences with the full range of your response system — intellectual, emotional, physical.
- Allow yourself to daydream, to fantasize, to imagine, to reflect — let your mind wander.

Rich Experiences

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things."

Steve Jobs

Creativity seldom involves the creation of totally new ideas. Creativity usually involves combining conventional ideas in unconventional ways. People are more likely to come up with creative combinations of ideas if they have a large store of ideas to draw upon.

There are lots of ways to build up your idea bank:

- Reading. Not just about your work, but about history, geography, fantasy, futurism, gardening,

sports, astronomy, music, oceanography. . . .

- Traveling to places far different than where you live.
- Trying out new experiences — hang gliding, camping, star gazing. . . .

Meeting lots of people also builds your store of ideas. Michael LeBeouf suggests:

"Exercise your imagination by keeping company with people who are fun to talk to and who have a keen sense of interest in life. An individual who can stimulate your thought process is what you are looking for. The more you associate with such people, the more they will force you to exercise your imagination as you interact with them."

Freedom

"When I am 'entirely alone' or during the night when I cannot sleep, it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how these come I know not nor can I force them."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Creativity cannot be forced, rushed, or controlled. Creativity flourishes in an unconstrained, free environment.

Creativity requires time. Individuals cannot turn their creativity on and off like a faucet. Everyone has their own pattern or pace for evoking ideas. Lilli-Ann Buffin asks, "Is there space and time in your day for quiet reflection? To play with ideas? . . . Without time for quiet reflection, adults grow stale and stressed, their music silenced."

Creativity requires mental vacations. You may find it helpful to follow a period of intense immersion in problem solving with a totally different activity where you are focusing on something else and let your unconscious mind wander. You may get a mental block trying to solve a problem at work, but have ideas come flooding in while you are jogging.

Creativity requires a positive attitude. One key rule of brainstorming is 'no negativity allowed.' If a group is trying to solve a problem and when an idea is proposed someone chimes in "that's the dumbest idea I have ever heard," this will put a kink in the creative process as people will be reluctant to risk sharing a 'dumb' idea.

"All children are born artists."

Picasso

Creativity requires a tolerance for failure. As Bonnie Neugebauer observed, "The creative process is not a smooth road from problem to solution; but a rocky, twisted trail littered with ideas of varying value." In his TEDTalk, "Schools Kill Creativity" (www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html), Sir Ken Robinson observed . . .

" . . . if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything

Anna

Where do you get your ideas?

*I'm from Germany,
so my ideas are from
Germany.*

*Submitted by Donjyu Zhao
World Forum National Representative China*



WAYS TO MURDER AN IDEA

- See it coming and quickly change the subject.
- Ignore it. Dead silence intimidates all but the most enthusiastic.
- Feign interest, but do nothing about it.
- Laugh it off. "Ho, ho, ho, that's a good one, Joe. You must have been awake all night thinking that up."
- Say, "Oh, we've tried that before."
- Stall it. "We're not quite ready for that, but in time . . ."
- Appoint a committee to sit on the idea.
- Drown it with cold water. "We haven't got the staff to handle it. That's all very well in theory, but in real life . . ."

Source: *Imagine*; www.synecticsworld.com.

original. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. And we run our companies like this, by the way. We stigmatize mistakes. And we're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities. Picasso once said this — he said that all children are born artists.

The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it."

Passion

A final condition to bring out creativity in people is passion. It's hard to be creative about a problem that you don't care about. You are likely to be much

more exuberant if you were offered the opportunity to redesign your own classroom than the classroom of another teacher.

The passion that drives creativity could take many directions. It could be a heartfelt commitment to . . .

- All children
- Your children
- Your family
- Your future
- Your school
- Your leader
- Your peers
- Your profession
- Your community
- An idea
- A cause
- A politician
- A spiritual belief
- A hobby

Wherever a person's passion lies, that



Katey Rafanello, Painter

Interview by Donna Rafanello

In creating art I'm expressing myself. I have to be aware of myself, out of balance, out of order, contradictory. It's a challenge, explaining something. I have an idea and I contemplate it.

Art is an escape, a refuge. I used it as a child to understand what was happening in my life, to work things out. I guess I was inspired by trauma. Then my mom and sisters complimented me on my original ideas and told me what I was making was valuable. In school I had good and bad teachers; the bad ones tried to exert their will on my creative process. I've always wanted to do things my own way.

Art is my meditation. Ideas come first from curiosity, my fascination and interest with things I see: Science, the relationships between things, human behavior. Second, my brain filters what I see: Problem solving and problem making.

Ideas come to me every day. I express myself in the way I make a sandwich, arrange words in a sentence, and put an outfit together. I'm trying to make sense of it all. It gives me a sense of purpose to come up with answers to the unknown.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What can be added?
- What if this were exaggerated?
- What else can this be used for?
- What is being wasted that can be put to use?
- What else is like this?
- Is there something I can duplicate?
- How can this be done better and more cheaply?
- How can this be made more appealing?
- What can be substituted?
- What can be subtracted?
- Can it be done faster?
- What ideas can be combined?
- How can this be condensed?
- How else can this be arranged?
- What is the opposite of this?
- What if nothing is done?

Source: Michael LeBeouf, *Imagineering* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980)

is where their creative juices will flow most naturally.

So, to sum up, everyone is creative, but the conditions must be right to bring out this creativity. You need to be playful; you need to have a store of rich experiences to draw on; you must have freedom to explore ideas at your own pace, with few constraints; and you must be passionate about the ideas you are exploring.

Uzziah, 4 years (holding his two hands to his head)

Where do ideas come from?

Nobody; I make up things in my mind, and I do it, and it becomes real.

Submitted by Delfena Mitchell
World Forum National Representative
Belize



CHARACTERISTICS OF CREATIVE PEOPLE

- Intense absorption in activities
- Seeing patterns and relationships
- Combining things or ideas in new ways
- Challenging assumptions because of a reasoned-out difference of opinion
- Coming to a decision independently and taking action based on it
- The ability to shift from one idea to another
- Having a strong intuition — ‘seeing’ the answer to a problem
- The ability to take a risk
- Asking ‘what if’ questions and making insightful observations
- The tendency to create and test hypothesis
- Tolerating ambiguity while exploring alternatives
- Finding enjoyment in thinking and working alone.

Source: Jane Healy, *Your Child’s Growing Mind* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004)



"Creative people have many interests and a passion for pursuing their ideas. Because of this driving force, they are able to persist in the face of difficulties. Creative minds joyfully seek out problems to be solved."

Lilli-Ann Buffin



Maurício, 3 years old

Where do ideas come from?

My idea comes
from the sky and
it has got wings to
get here.

Submitted by Vera Melis Paolillo
World Forum National Representative Brazil
and Valéria Goncales Andretto