

Out of the Box

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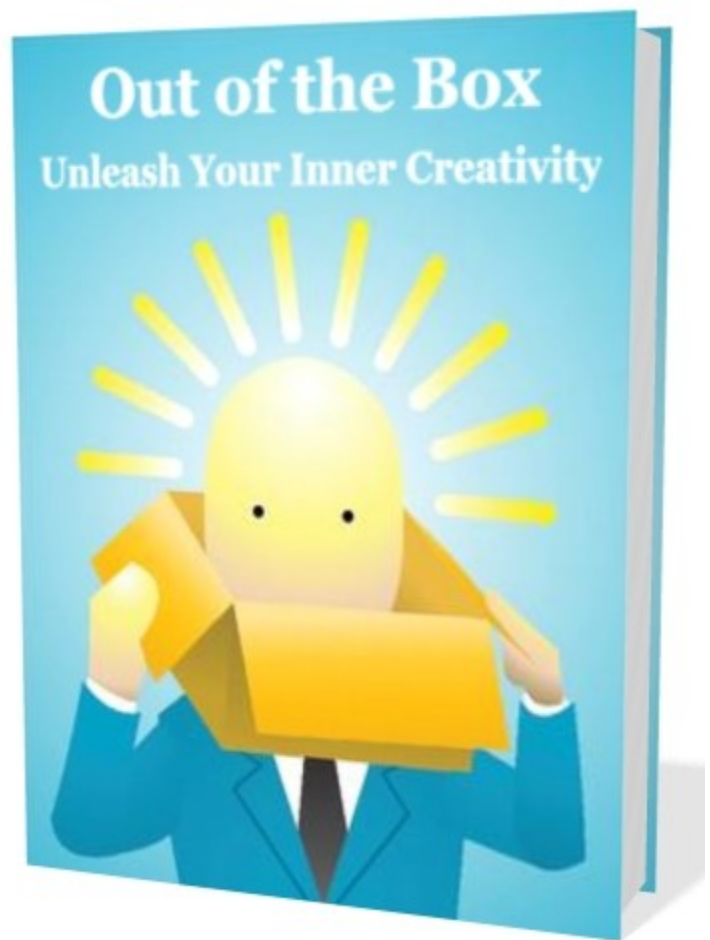


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CHAPTER 1 - CREATIVITY DEFINITION

“Creativity is...seeing something that doesn’t exist already. You need to find out how you can bring it into being, and that way be a playmate with God.”

- Michele Shea

Creativity is marked by the ability or power to create or bring into existence, to invest with a new form, to produce through imaginative skill, to make something new. When you create something, you are actually bringing it into being, making it from nothing. But how do you make something from nothing? How do you achieve creativity? What is the essence of creativity?

Perhaps only magic can explain creativity, that sudden “aha!” moment when it all comes together. Some have said that it’s something mysterious and puzzling, perhaps impossible to figure out. Some have said it must be divine inspiration.

Creativity is simply thinking the impossible and then doing what no one else has done before, sometimes developing completely new worlds. If you’ve taken a new approach to a problem and it works, then you’re using your creativity.

Creativity comes in many forms. It can be scientific creativity, resulting in inventions or medical cures. It can be artistic or musical, resulting in beautiful paintings, sculptures, or operas and songs. It can be creative writing, resulting in novels, short stories, and poems. Creativity can even be as simple as arts and crafts such as needle arts, yarn crafts, and woodcrafts - things you create with your own two hands.

The important thing to remember is that creativity includes generating the idea or concept, as well as applying that idea and producing or manifesting the end product or result. Creativity or imagination is an integral part of being human and separates us from the animal world. Carl R. Rogers said,

“The very essence of the creative is its novelty, and hence, we have no standard by which to judge it.”

CHAPTER 2 - ARE YOU CREATIVE?

“The only truly happy people are children and the creative minority.” - Jean Caldwell

Have you ever watched five-year-olds at play? They are curious and highly creative in their games. They don't know yet, what they don't know. Their creative limits have no bounds; no one has told them that they can't do something. They're fearless explorers, artists, or musicians; some are even comedians in the making. They have not yet been pressured to conform and they think they can do anything and that nothing is beyond their capabilities.

Research shows that every human being is capable of creative thought. We have creative abilities that often show up very early in life. Studies show that the average adult thinks of only three to four alternate ideas for any given situation, while the average child can come up with sixty.

They have proven that as far as creativity is concerned, quantity equals quality. Having the subjects make a list of ideas, they have shown that the longer the list, the higher the quality of the final solution. The very best ideas usually appear at the end of the list.

Actually, creativity is bred into us as humans; it's in our genes - a part of our very DNA. Unfortunately, as we grow older, the pressures of having to grow up, go to school, get a job, all seem to repress our creative tendencies. The stress of everyday living, coupled with occasional dilemmas, leaves us too drained to be truly creative.

But creativity is powerful and is essential to our well-being. Without creativity, our lives become predictable, routine, boring, and pedantic. The good news is we can all be highly creative. Now I know you're saying, "But I'm not at all creative. I can't paint or even draw a straight line, I don't know

one note from another, and I've never been able to write worth a darn. Poetry? Don't make me laugh!"

Okay, so most of us are not Mozart, Da Vinci, Einstein, or Shakespeare. However, we are all creative in our own way. We simply have to recognize our own unique talents and skills. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Are you constantly looking for new goals, something new to accomplish?
2. Do you like to look at what already exists and ask "What if?"
3. When you try something new and different, does it make you feel smarter?
4. Do you enjoy teaching someone a new skill?
5. Are you good at problem solving?

Then, pat yourself on the back - you are a "creative" person! Creativity doesn't always result in a tangible product. Sometimes its ideas, problem solving, or teaching; but it is indeed, creativity in action. Creativity enables us to better ourselves, develop awareness, and expand our horizons as well as those of other people.

When the potential for creativity meets the promise of skill, you've made contact with the creative spirit. There's no holding you back now. You've received that flash of inspiration - that "aha!" moment of illumination - and you are ready to take those creative risks.

Now, you're probably wondering exactly what it is that you need to do to assure yourself of creative success. You do need certain tools and skills to accomplish this task.

First, you need a certain expertise in whatever arena you've chosen to pursue your creativity in. If you have zero knowledge in the field of science, odds are you will not make the next fantastic breakthrough in medicine or

invent the replacement for the wheel. You must find the field that is your special interest and skill setting. Some expertise is essential for success.

The next tool essential for your success is the ability to think creatively in your chosen field - being able to imagine a whole realm of possibilities. That includes the ability to turn things over in your mind until you find the answer.

Persistence is also required - that determination to keep on tackling a problem until you solve it. Know when to turn things upside down and look at them differently. You must know when to nurture the process of creativity and when to let it rest in your mind until it's ready to fly free.

Another vital tool in this search for creativity is courage - to be willing to take the creative risks and try something you've never tried before. You have to be open to whatever new possibilities that presents themselves to you. You never know when ideas will come.

Lastly, you must have passion - the desire to succeed no matter what. It doesn't matter what the end prize happens to be or what manner of compensation you might receive. The passion is all that's important - the desire to make whatever work, no matter what. Albert Einstein said, "Sticking to it is the genius."

Most importantly, you must face any creative risk with the mind of a child. Childhood is when creativity first comes to you. Will it grow or be stunted? You should play like a child.

Children may not realize it, but playtime is actually a learning process. It's the brain's favorite way to learn. The child learns about math, verbal skills, music, and visual arts during playtime. They learn to explore and they learn the thrill of discovery. They learn about their own culture and others as well.

So, is it true that children are more creative than adults are? During the Industrial Revolution, two hundred years ago, this country devised the educational system and started training people to be good little workers

and always obey instructions. This didn't leave much room for individuality or nonconformity in our thinking. The good news is that today's educational system, for the most part, allows children to be more freethinking and creative.

Childlike creativity should be studied and emulated. Let yourself think that anything, even something outrageous, is possible. This will help you develop creative connections. The non-creative mind says, "I can't," but the creative mind says, "I can and here's how!" If you can see, speak, hear, remember and understand, you too can be creative. Never, ever say you're not creative. Whatever you believe or disbelieve about yourself, you're right.

How do you feel about being creative? Do you tie creativity to strange, artsy, or flaky behavior? Do you feel suspicious of those with that description? Or maybe you automatically tie creativity with extremes of madness or psychosis. "I'm too down to earth to be creative!" you protest.

Sometimes you are in possession of facts already known to the world at large. The difference is in your organization and interpretation of those facts. Perhaps your creativity lies in your ability to take a room full of people and convince them to make a buying decision. Maybe you've saved your company millions of dollars with a single idea. Ever resolved a conflict in your family or company? Guess what? You're creative!

Maybe you've even been told how talented you are in a particular area; you may even know it to be true. So why be shy about it? But what do you do about it? How do you go about unleashing all that talent? How do you nurture it?

Let's go back to the idea of being more childlike, unhampered by daily life and stress. Let's play! Grab a drawing pad and colored pencils and draw circles and patterns. If you have children of your own, borrow one of their coloring books and crayons and join them in the coloring fun. Make objects of outrageous colors, just as children do. Color outside the lines, way outside the lines! Find yourself some clay or Play-Doh and start sculpting; it doesn't have to be anything in particular; just have fun with it. Squish it, cut