

Lifting your creativity

The job ad reads: Wanted - visionary and creative problem-solver who possesses a strong desire to thrive in a fast-paced, innovative environment.



to new heights

By Colin Funk

In fact, in our later years many of us experience creativity only in a crisis situation. How many times have you heard “Ok folks, it’s time to get creative!” when things are rapidly sliding downhill? It’s no wonder that we often turn the other way, or at least start to twitch, when we are called upon to be creative. Before we can be expected to access our creative side with ease, we need to have ample experience with the creative process. In the theatre world, no one is expected to go on stage without experience, training, and rehearsal. In fact, a common maxim of the theatre is “if you can’t do it in rehearsal, you won’t do it on stage”. Even highly skilled actors and improvisers will encounter a dry spell if they are not able to routinely practice their craft.

One of the biggest myths surrounding creativity is that creative accomplishment is the result of an instant flash of brilliance. Rather, creativity tends to surface after tremendous effort and hard work. We know the value of creating routines for ourselves in the areas of physical health and nutrition, but we rarely adhere to these same standards when it comes to developing our creative side. If we don’t routinely work on developing our creativity, how can we be expected to access it when we are called upon to do so? The answer is to create your own personalized creativity workout. Consider these following steps:

Book into the mind gym

Finding the right environment to begin your creativity workout is the first step. The environment needs to be safe, non-judgmental and gives all interested parties permission to play. Setting up a designated creative space in your organization will demonstrate the willingness to cultivate a more creative corporate

culture. It is so much easier to enhance creative thinking by changing the physical conditions that block it, rather than by trying to force people to think more creatively.

Find an effective creativity trainer/mentor

In the creative world – like the athletic world – finding a good trainer is an important step to ensure the proper development of your creative potential. The major focus in creativity research over the past three decades has been studying creative individuals. Highly recommended strategies include spending time with children, seniors, and even pets. Some of the best teachers and practitioners of the creative process may be more accessible to us than we think.

Using the right equipment

Familiarity and experience with the right equipment is an essential part of any good creativity workout. There are scores of new and wonderful creativity training tools on the market, however don’t overlook the old standard – the journal. Using a journal on a regular basis to record your thoughts, ideas, and daily observations is an excellent way to track your progress. Recording your dreams, rambling thoughts, and creativity quotes over time contributes to a great mind-body workout. The journal is by far the most effective piece of workout equipment for mastering Reflection-Action-Reflection-Action repetitions.

Find a workout partner

Finding a workout partner who is also interested in developing his or her creative side can be very valuable in keeping you on track and motivated. At all costs however, avoid engaging in creativity workouts with individuals with names like: Gate

Keeper, Referee, Monkey-On-My-Back, Little Voice, Cop-in-the-Head, Filter or Censor.

Find the right exercises

curiosity curls, flexibility flex, and imagination stretches

Any activities or exercises that develop curiosity, flexibility, and imagination will quickly produce positive results in the area of creativity development. However, for high-impact and immediate results you may want to focus directly on your “but.” Moving through the world with a Yes, and rather than a Yes, but response will often encourage others to offer new ideas rather than instantly blocking creative thought.

Motivation

Even the best workout plans will be derailed if the participants aren’t truly motivated. Make sure your motivation is intrinsic – conducive to creativity, rather than extrinsic which can often be detrimental. This is especially important if you are interested in long-term development. Creativity researcher Teresa Amabile noted that when people are primarily motivated to do a creative activity through their own interest in, and enjoyment of, that activity, they may be much more creative than when they are primarily motivated by a goal imposed on them by others.

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