

## PARTICIPANT NOTESHEET

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# THE 7 'MOST NEEDED' CREATIVITY RESCUERS

## How to reach your creative potential

It is possible for anyone to be creative. The brain is a muscle that responds well to exercise, just as the body does. Targeted exercises allow weakened neural links to be strengthened, which can help to develop creative thinking. Studies in divergent thinking, for example, show that children with low divergent thinking scores who continue to exercise these creativity 'muscles' can outperform others with higher scores who do not. The brain is not completely wired with location-specific neural pathways that are preset according to genetic coding and then established for life. Targeted exercises also make it possible to 'rewire' the brain at any stage in life to form new and varied connections. This should give us hope that even if we feel we have established ingrained patterns of thinking and habitual ways of perceiving and behaving, we are not stuck with these habits for life.

What is the impact of specialised brain training? Animals raised in enriched environments (surrounded by other animals, with opportunities to explore and play) have been found to learn better than otherwise identical animals that have not spent time in the same sort of enriched environment. The animals from enriched environments have higher levels of acetylcholine, a brain chemical essential for learning, increased brain weight (5 per cent greater in the cerebral cortex and 9 per cent greater in the area that is targeted for training), 25 per cent more branches of 'trained' neurons with greater size, more connections per neuron and greater blood supply. Post-mortems have also shown that people who have been educated in specific areas show a greater number of neural branches, which is linked to a general increase in the volume and thickness of the brain in those particular areas.

HBS professor Teresa Amabile argues, 'One myth about creativity is that it's associated with the particular personality or genius of a person — and in fact, creativity does depend to some extent on the intelligence, expertise, talent, and experience of an individual. Of course it does. But it also depends on creative thinking as a skill that involves qualities such as the propensity to take risks and to turn a problem on its head to get a new perspective. That can be learned.' University of New Mexico neuroscientist Rex Jung believes only 40 per cent of our creativity comes from our genetics, but 60 per cent comes from environmental influences. All people, he believes, can develop the capacity for creative thinking.

As well as areas of brain activity that are innate, there are also specific areas that can be developed, such as convergent thinking and focused attention. The ability to rapidly shift between convergent and divergent thinking is also critical, and this too can be learned. Through developing training programs that alternate periods of intense convergent thinking with maximum divergent thinking repeatedly over stages, a number of studies have shown that brain patterns have changed and greater creative thinking capacity has emerged



Excerpt from "Who Killed Creativity?... And How Can We Get It Back" by Andrew & Gaia Grant (Jossey Bass 2012)

Take our survey now to help identify the best rescuers: <http://www.whokilledcreativity.com/resources/survey/>

# THE RESCUERS

## STRATEGIES FOR RESCUING CREATIVE THINKING:



### Creativity Rescuer Profile 1: FREEDOM

The 'Freedom' profile can be thought of as the rescuer with the key to unlocking oppressive systems and structures. This pioneer opens up possibilities by creating a mental state in which it is possible to feel safe and secure and to explore ideas without restrictions. Freedom encourages humble leadership and accessible work environments, with flatter management structures and more opportunities for open collaboration. It is a profile that is not restricted by preconceived ideas or concepts and is able to unlock challenges and open up possibilities. As a rescuer, freedom is ready to face any challenge at any time.

- Ask open ended questions without expecting specific outcomes or solutions.
- Build an environment that makes people feel valued and encourages the acceptance of a wide range of ideas.



### Creativity Rescuer Profile 2: COURAGE

The 'Courage' profile is the lifesaver rescuer that brings the buoyancy of self-belief. Closely related to confidence, courage helps to deal with fear and neutralise 'fight, flight or freeze' responses to fear when we are threatening to be drowned by it. The rescuer creates a positive linguistic environment that allows creative ideas to flow, and a positive emotional state that encourages the launching of daring quests. With no interest in limiting ideas and options to 'black' and 'white', but instead readily accepting many shades of grey, courage stimulates new options and possibilities. Encouraging diverse, even opposing, opinions and ideas can help the creative process. Being spoon-fed homogeneous opinions and ideas does little for our creativity.

- Provide a platform for creative ideas where all ideas are encouraged and supported, where individuals can feel proud of what they achieve and can learn to present these ideas confidently.
- See potential 'failure' as a learning opportunity rather than a finality.
- Learn to accept extremes on a number of different dimensions at the same time and learn to synthesise apparently incompatible opposites.



### Creativity Rescuer Profile 3: INDEPENDENCE

'Independence', the imaginative liberator, is not unlike the parachuting paramedic that can see an objective view of any situation and swoop in to rescue where needed. Independence provides the opportunity for a calmer, non-emotive reflection on thoughts and actions. Independence has a free will that enables it to open up to any number of possibilities without restriction or judgement. Independence works through unleashing the imagination. Independence involves being able to take 'time out'. When we take a break from a situation, our brains often keep working on problems through non-conscious processing. Everyone has had the experience of leaving work with a pressing issue unresolved, only to be overtaken by an 'a-ha!' moment during the night, when no longer thinking about the problem. This is the result of creative non-conscious processing.

- Step away from a state of constant 'busy-ness' and instead take 'time out'. Time out can help give perspective, so you can more easily set priorities and identify issues and solve problems.
- Put away your electronic devices to allow for 'free thinking'.
- Allow your imagination to play.
- Use mind mapping to explore a whole range of possibilities and options.



## Creativity Rescuer Profile 4: OPENNESS

As a rescuer, 'Openness' operates like the intensive care doctor who is able to target blocks to creativity and release creative thinking from all parts of the brain. Openness enables the individual to make sense of diverse and often opposing ideas. Openness sees value in everyone and considers every option or idea. Restricting your exposure to information sources can definitely be a problem when it comes to innovation, and can lead to unhealthy insulation. Some of the most profound ideas don't necessarily come from the 'experts'. Through not staying limited to preferred thinking styles but instead accessing all possible approaches, openness creates vast opportunities. According to the simple 'binary function' brain theory, some people look at problems purely practically and factually, ignoring imagination and emotion ('left' brain bias), while others view them from a more imaginative and reflective perspective based on feelings, rejecting logic ('right' brain bias).

- Identify your habitual ways of thinking and behaving, and find alternatives to these.
- Check you engage a balance of 'left-brain' (logical) and 'right-brain' (emotional) perspectives when approaching a task.



## Creativity Rescuer Profile 5: PASSION

'Passion', the rescuer that operates like an intensive care nurse, is a zealous motivator that can help bring healing, renewed energy, and reconstruction to apparently old and 'dying' situations. Passion recognises that the most successful people often are not the most talented but the ones who are impelled by innate curiosity. Passion is not satisfied with accepting or conforming to the way things are, but instead is prepared to break apart the old in order to make way for creative new connections. Professor Amabile focuses on motivation in her studies of successful creative thinking because, as she believes, 'The desire to do something because you find it deeply satisfying and personally challenging inspires the highest levels of creativity, whether it's in the arts, sciences, or business'.

- Find ways to connect with motivation to ensure engagement.
- Be ready to reconstruct reality on the basis of new information or ideas.



## Creativity Rescuer Profile 6: FLEXIBILITY

'Flexibility' is the park ranger that can provide release from the apparent 'traps' of limited thinking. Not constrained by what it thinks ought to be done, Flexibility has an innate elasticity that ensures it is able to find new, original ways of doing things. Rather than sticking within the confines of known experience, Flexibility stretches the mind and ensures it is prepared to explore numerous options. This intrepid adventurer implements a process that can lead to real change and, ultimately, transformation. In a typical creativity challenge designed to test divergent and convergent thinking, college students were asked to think of all the things that could interfere with their graduating from college. They were then instructed to choose one of those items and to come up with as many solutions for the problem as possible. A large number of students could quickly list every imaginable way things could go wrong, but many were unable to demonstrate flexibility in finding creative solutions. And those who could not come up with a range of possible solutions, the challenge revealed, were more easily subject to despondency and despair. It is important to recognize your typical problem-solving style, and to think of alternative ways of solving problems that normally you would not consider.

- Identify current mental 'traps' that you may have fallen into.
- Find a number of different solutions to the one problem.
- Map current processes, and find different paths to reach the same outcomes to identify which might be the most efficient and effective



## Creativity Rescuer Profile 7: POSITIVITY

This 'Positivity' rescuer is the ambulance officer bringing life giving oxygen. It represents both the attitude and the approach needed to survive and thrive through any challenge. By providing the underlying reason for action and the ongoing stimulus, optimism supports and maintains the transformation process. With positive thought and language strategies, true optimism is not a mere state of mind but a belief or value system that focuses action. It counteracts the negativity that can follow failure, and ensures success over the long term.

Optimistic people have been found to be more productive in all areas of their lives. When individuals are positive they work with more focus, achieve more, encourage those around them, see problems as opportunities, find themselves in less conflict and are more enthusiastic in the work environment. The optimist and the pessimist will both encounter problems in life, but the optimist is better able to weather all circumstances. They will use setbacks as learning experiences rather than disasters. This is the attitude that fuels the ongoing creative learning process.

- Model and teach positive self-talk and language.
- Practise optimistic thinking to build resilience.
- Reword or rework limiting language and experiences into positive outcomes.

We are all born with creative ability, but many of us have forgotten how to use or apply it — what most stifles creative thinking in us is our failure to exercise it. Like the proactive 'paramedic' who not only patches up the damage done but also provides strategies for building or rebuilding good health, the creative thinking rescue approaches we propose offer the specific strategies for developing creative thinking for future success.



*The Creative Scene Investigation is based on the book 'Who Killed Creativity?... And How Can We Get It Back' by Andrew and Gaia Grant. It forms part of the full CSI suite of programs, which are designed to help individuals teams and organisations develop a more creative and innovative culture. More resources including videos, articles, interviews, licensing, and self-facilitated down-loadable workshops are available at:*

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