

8 Habits of Highly Creative People

What exactly is creativity?

So many of us assume that creativity is something we had as a child but we lost, or something allocated to a small percentage of individuals that we can only admire from afar.

But science has shown that, in many ways, we are all wired to create. The key is recognizing that creativity is multi-faceted – on the level of the brain, personality, and the creative process – and can be expressed in many different ways.

1 IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Observing children in imaginative play reveals a wellspring of natural-born creativity. When engaged in pretend play, children take on multiple perspectives and playfully manipulate emotions and ideas. As adults, cultivating a child-like sense of play can revolutionize the way we work. Research shows that hybrid forms of work and play may actually provide the most optimal context for learning and creativity, for both children and adults, and that play and intrinsic joy are intimately connected, creating a synergy that naturally leads to greater inspiration, effort, and creative growth.

2 PASSION

Passion often stems from an experience or a relationship that moved us somehow and can lead to inspiration. It is often the emotional fuel that starts one down a creative path, but it's only a start. People who fulfill their creative dreams over the long-term balance the excitement about the future with realistic strategies for getting closer to their goals; inspiration with hard work; and dreaming with doing.

When someone advises you to "Follow your passion," use caution. You must look for passion that is in harmony with your authentic self and with your other activities. While you should be open to what inspires you, don't follow passion blindly. Make sure it truly resonates with you and your skills.

3 DAYDREAMING

Creative people know that daydreaming is anything but a waste of time. The science of daydreaming has shown that mind wandering offers very personal rewards, including creative incubation, self-awareness, future planning, reflection on the meaning of one's experiences, and even compassion.

The next time you're working hard on a work assignment or creative project that requires intense focus, try taking a 5-minute daydreaming break every hour. Try engaging in a simple activity that will allow your mind to wander, like walking, doodling, or cleaning, and see how it affects your ideas and thinking.

4 SOLITUDE

Time for solitary reflection truly feeds the creative mind. It's important to give yourself space to reflect, make new connections, and find meaning. When our mental focus is directed towards the outside world, the executive attention network is activated, but the imagination network is typically suppressed. This is why our best ideas tend not to arise when our attention is fully engaged on the outside world. The ability to enjoy and make productive use of our own company can trigger creativity by helping us tap into our thoughts and our own inner worlds. Don't fight solitude, embrace it!

5 OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

Openness to experience is the single strongest and most consistent personality trait that predicts creative achievement. Openness can be intellectual, characterized by a searching for truth and the drive to engage with ideas; aesthetic, characterized by the drive to explore fantasy and art and experience emotional absorption in beauty; or affective, characterized by exploring the depths of human emotion.

The desire to learn and discover has significantly more bearing on the quality of creative work than intellect alone. So, if you want to boost your creativity, try out a new creative outlet or a totally different medium of expression, perhaps take a new route home from work, or seek out a new group of people with different interests or values that you might learn from. Openness to new experiences can help increase your own capacity to recognize new patterns and find links among seemingly unrelated pieces of information.

6 MINDFULNESS

While the capacity to observe the present moment without distraction or judgment is a vital skill for anyone who seeks joy and fulfillment in life, it's particularly important for creative thinkers. Mindfulness – both as a practice and as a personality trait, has many cognitive and psychological benefits such as: improved task concentration, sustained attention, empathy and compassion, introspection, self-regulation, enhanced memory and improved learning, and positive affect and emotional wellbeing. Many of these are central to creativity. However, for optimum cognitive flexibility and creativity, it's best to achieve a balance of mindfulness and mind wandering.

7 TURNING ADVERSITY TO ADVANTAGE

Experiences of loss, struggle, suffering, and defeat can be powerful catalysts for personal growth, creativity, and deep transformation. It is often through suffering that we learn compassion, from loss that we learn understanding, and from overcoming struggles that we discover our own strength & beauty.

Adverse events can force us to re-examine our beliefs and life projects – and here we find creative potential. After the experience of adversity, the mind is actively dismantling old belief systems that no longer hold up, and creating new structures of meaning and identity. Research has also found that extreme positive events – in particular, those that evoke feelings of awe, wonder, inspiration, and connection to something greater than the self – can also encourage creativity. So, if you're looking for a creative boost, treat all of life's meaningful moments – the good and the bad – as potential sources of inspiration and motivation.

8 THINKING DIFFERENTLY

In choosing to do things differently, creative people accept the possibility of uncertainty and failure—but it is precisely this risk that opens up the possibility of true innovation.

The secret to creative greatness appears to be doing things differently even when that means failing. Especially during idea-generation phases, trial-and-error is essential for innovation. The more ideas creators generate, the greater the chance they will produce an eventual masterpiece.

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