

19 CREATIVITY BOOSTS

“In order to be creative, you have to know how to prepare to be creative.”

—Twyla Tharp, The Creative Habit



PREPARING MEANS BUILDING ROUTINES AND PUTTING YOURSELF IN PLACES TO RECEIVE BREAKTHROUGHS.

1. Listen to everybody. Everybody and everything is a resource. You are on high alert and fully present in every interaction. Don't tune out others outside your particular industry; there could be the seed of an idea.
2. Avoid negative self-talk. Garbage in, garbage out.
3. “Leap and the net will appear.” --Linnea Spransy. Be willing to enter the arena. One good moment can break free of fear. Just start!
4. Get together with other creatives, from a wide range of fields, in order to expose yourself to new/contrarian ideas. Think about with whom you are spending your time.
5. Be restlessly curious. Someone said that we stop being interesting when we stop being interested. Explore things that peak your interest.
6. Get out of normal pathways. Stretch your mind for 5% of your week. Go to places you don't normally go; get “fun-comfortable”. Get ideas from toys, bookstores, web sites. . . . Play to wake up creativity. Goal: Do something new every month! It's a creative gift you give yourself.
7. Identify your dream. It's motivating to keep one eye on your desired future.
8. Experience solitude daily. Run/walk, sit on your patio/meditate/pray. Find a way to relax. The answer will arrive only when you stop looking for it. Create and protect time that is void of distractions and is explicitly designated to generate new ideas.
9. Write down “cloud thoughts”: passing ideas. Capture them. Then when you get back to your office, you can mind-map on a big white board: find clusters/patterns that might spark a new idea. BTW: have creative tools around you: white boards, highlighters, Post-its, butcher paper, toys, crayons. . .
10. Simplify. Busyness strangles the still, small voice. Read the book Essentialism.
11. Answer the question, “What is here that no one is thinking about?” Or come at it from the opposite perspective. Maybe a fresh idea will break out.
12. Walk away for a while when you get brain-freeze. Stop trying too hard. You can't pressure yourself into creativity. You might have to leave the office and get out in nature for a while to re-start.
13. Realize that creativity ebbs and flows. Ride the wave as long as it lasts. Be gentle with yourself when it's dry. Ask yourself, “What is behind this funk?” Not interested? Personal crisis? Shift to a part of the project that DOES interest you, that's more in line with your motivations, to jump-start.
14. Create a Best New Mistake Award on your team: in a culture of innovation, failure is always an option. Creativity is about trying something different and experimenting, right? Taking a risk is part of breaking out of status quo.
15. Listen to music for inspiration. Ancient Greeks used to assign a physician and a musician as the 2 main people-helpers for healing.
16. Evaluate what you have created. Two evaluation questions after your creation:
 - Did it move people?
 - How was my process/behavior along the way?
17. From *The Accidental Creative* by Todd Henry: theaccidentalcreative.com, learn the 5 Creative Rhythms of a prolific, brilliant, healthy creative (producing great work consistently and in a sustainable way): Focus (clear objectives), Relationships (engaging others), Energy, Stimuli (what you are putting in your head), Hours (calendarizing these habits)
18. Read *A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink. Daniel's creative themes:
 - Design: moving beyond function to engage the senses.
 - Play: Bringing humor and light-heartedness to business/products
 - Meaning: the purpose is the journey; give meaning to life from inside yourself
 - Story: narrative added to products/services, not just argument. The goal of a creative is to tell the story!
 - Symphony: adding invention and big-picture thinking (not just detail focus)
 - Empathy: going beyond logic and engaging emotion and intuition
19. Focus on making things happen, regardless of own discomfort, by stepping a little out of your comfort zone on a very regular basis. If it hurts a little, you are probably doing it right.

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