



Demystifying Creativity

Creative Wellbeing Workshops

Are You Creative?

Many people do not think of themselves as creative and most people do not think of themselves as artistic. They think that both require special skill or talent with which one is



born. They might admire other people who are creative or artistic but they don't think of themselves that way. They might see creative people as unconventional and right-brained and see themselves as analytic and left-brained. Even people who are more creative or artistic might think of creativity as a random moment of inspiration that comes at its own whim.

What is Creativity?

What does it mean to be creative? Creativity is commonly defined as imaginative and novel ideas and activities. It is often associated with artistic sensibility and originality. A broader definition of creativity includes expanding perspective, exploring possibilities, experimental problem-solving, and flexible thinking.

Creativity Is a Process

What we often don't realize is that creativity is, above and beyond all other things, a process. So, whether we are naturally creative or not, we can all engage in and benefit from the process.

Why Be Creative?

On the other hand, why bother, especially if you don't consider yourself to be naturally creative? Because creativity has significant positive impact on our lives. It promotes mental flexibility, focus, and problem-solving skills. It helps reduce stress, improve mood, and strengthen immunity. But perhaps the most gratifying rewards are when our creativity is activated, we experience flow, a state we achieve when we are fully immersed, energized, and engaged.



Why Do You Want to Be More Creative?

Despite these benefits, actually jumping into the creative process can sometimes feel forced and uncomfortable, even for people who consider themselves to be creative. So how do we warm ourselves up to creativity? First, think about what is motivating you to be more creative. Is it to be more playful? More artistic? More expressive? More mentally flexible? To break out of your routine and do things differently? To solve a problem? To get a different perspective on things?

Applying Creativity

Regardless of what is motivating you—e.g., making art, writing, designing your home, solving a problem—most of us need a warm-up to get into the creative process. I chose simple structured exercises to get the process started. It's helpful if the result of that exercise does not have a high degree of importance or value at first. Just engaging playfully in the activity, starting and being in the process,



is in many ways more important than the product The point is to get into action because it is further warming up the brain.

Activities that promote creative thinking:

Warm yourself up to it! Remember, it's about getting the creative process going.

- Positive emotion
 - Gratitude
 - Community
 - Curiosity
- Sensorimotor stimulation
 - Sound, color, light, music, smells, touching materials
- Create the right environment for *you*:
 - Alone
 - With others
 - Quiet and still (library, studio)
 - Loud and active (coffee shop, the family room)
- Doodle—it warms up the right side of the brain
- Spill Writing: Write anything that's on your mind for 3 minutes without pausing (if you don't know what to write, write "I don't know what to write", "this is stupid" "nothing comes to mind" etc.). Tear the writing up then put it back together.
 - Write about a problem or issue with your non-dominant hand
 - Make a gratitude list
 - Welcome mistakes as rough drafts, information gathering, working out the kinks, et
 - Use structure and guidance if needed—worksheets, instructions, stencils, outlines, coloring sheets, etc.
 - Use others—generate ideas and experiment with others
- Purposefully make mistakes
- Pause and observe—find 10 things in your immediate environment that you never really noticed before
- Get curious—asks questions
- Switch up your routines
- Pretend to be characters you either like or dislike for a few minutes, have them tell you what they think about the situation you are addressing.
- Get inspired—find, look, and listen to other people who inspire you



Activating the Right Side of the Brain and Creative Thinking

All of these activities help subtly overcome the natural resistance that we experience when we are undertaking something that requires effort and risk, even if only nominal. This literally changes our mind, it activates the right side of the brain that is curious, expansive, and willing to experiment with something that is new and different—that might initially seem daunting or require risk.

When you attend one of our workshops, we have a chance to see how you approach creativity and can help you identify what seems to warm you up the most. Do you need more structure or less? Do you to use stencils or draw freehand? Do you prefer to be quiet or to talk? Alone or with others? In public or in private? Music or silence? Do you keep going for a long time once you've warmed up or do you just create for a short burst of time? Try to notice these things about yourself. They are the pathway to *your* creativity!