

# your creativity

**H**ow do you rate your creativity? Are you very creative? Not creative at all? Are you in the midst of a creative slump? Do you want to be more creative in your life, work and play? Maybe you believe that only certain people have the necessary ingredients to be creative. One myth is that creativity requires some psychopathology, but this notion can be dispelled.

Everyone has the potential to be creative. All growth and development are actually creative processes—something new coming into existence. There are many ways that you are already innovative. When you plan a vacation or cook a meal you are using your creativity by making something that didn't exist previously. All around you, in fact, are signs of creativity: your house, your car and your furniture. Here are ten ways you can enhance that creativity.

## **Key #1:** Recognize That You CAN Tap Into Your Creativity

Michelangelo said that the figures he sculpted were in his piece of marble and that he removed marble to uncover them. Take the view that what you want to create is already inside you. Thus it simply needs to be uncovered, or discovered, deep inside your unconscious. Think of yourself as a tree with your roots reaching into the earth of a universal unconscious. Creativity is a process of opening, of unfolding. It is there but needs to be released.

Magic begins to happen when you are able to believe you can be creative. To help you with this process, write an affirmative self-statement on an index card and review it on a daily basis. Examples might include "I have the capacity for creating new ideas," "There are a wealth of ideas inside me just waiting to emerge" or "I have great ideas waiting to be uncovered."

## **Key #2:** Give Yourself Permission to Be Less Than Perfect

One of the most common stumbling places for the blocked creator is the interaction between perfectionism and procrasti-

nation. When combined with fears of judgment, they make a toxic brew. If your creation must be perfect—especially if it must come out perfectly to begin with—you are inhibiting the birth of something new. When this is combined with your concerns of how others (as well as yourself) will judge your product, the result is mental constriction, wasted energy and the interruption of the creative process.

Initiate the creative process by letting anything come out of you, as rough and as raw as it may be. Notice how this facilitates the flow of energy and creativeness. Again, make up a relevant self-statement on an index card. This might look like, "It's okay for me to make a mistake" or simply, "I'm human. I don't have to be perfect to be okay."

## **Key #3:** Develop Creativity Building Blocks

Forget the notion that creativity "should just come naturally." In fact, creativity requires some systematic effort. A child can be creative in constructing with building blocks, but first must have the blocks! What are your building blocks? For a writer, this can be research on a particular subject. It might also be training in how to write and structure the written product. People who are creative tell me that the preparation and research of a project can take up to five times as much time as the actual creative work! Can you identify some of the basic tools that you need to acquire or improve?

## **Key #4:** Have a Flexible Attitude

However many raw materials you collect, perhaps the most important factor in unleashing creativity is your attitude. If you suffer from "functional fixedness," you stick with the comfortable, obvious and acceptable. Something new usually occurs from the putting together of already existing material, but in new combinations. For example, someone thought about putting together a surfboard and sail to become a windsurfer. The more flexible your mind, the more you can shift from idea to idea and the more open you are to new perspectives, the more likely you will come up with something new.

The ability to be flexible in response to new ideas can actually be learned and practiced. From this moment on, try responding

differently than you normally do to situations. Surprise your friends. Be bold!

This is sometimes referred to as looking and acting outside the box. Try hanging out with people who respond and think differently, thus diversifying your experiences. Experiment with taking different positions in arguments on topics such as capital punishment, school vouchers or legalized drugs. This weakens the constraints imposed upon you by your particular culture, including your parental models.

## **Key #5:** Remove Distractions and Master Stress

Stress and distractions cause your brain to narrow its focus. Many people believe that they do their best work under pressure. I would say, however, that these people don't even know how good their work could be if they learned to work without the pressure. In my peak performance research with athletes I have found that pressure can take you just so far. It is when you learn to release this pressure that you are pulled toward success, rather than pushing yourself in that direction.

Distractions arise when you don't finish what you start. This leaves what I refer to as Unfinished Business (UB). Since our unconscious has an innate drive toward completion, a part of you is always preoccupied with this process. The more you can intentionally deal with your UB, the more present you can be for your creative work.

## **Key #6:** Commit Yourself to the Process

Creativity comes when you put your entire self into the process. Create a commitment ritual. In this process you make a contract or agreement with yourself to enter into the creative process and to stay with it until you have reached completion. In other words, you are telling yourself that no matter what, you are going to get this done, even if it takes a long time.

One way of doing this is to look into a mirror. Look deeply into your own eyes. You are connecting with yourself. Enhance this by holding your hands together, tightly. Reach into the highest place inside yourself and say, "This (book, project, business venture) is extremely important and exciting to me. I will work on it for as long as it takes to create something special. I will never hide from this commitment."

## **Key #7:** Give Your Brain a Creative Intention

Your brain is capable of performing countless tasks at the same time. After all, it directs every system in your body--and you know your heart, lungs and other organs don't wait their turn to beat, inhale or contract. Your brain is always focused on taking care of business. It has a direction.

Tap into your Internal Guidance System (IGS). Be very intentional and send your brain in just the direction you want it to

go--that of being more creative. Do this by giving your brain "intention."

This direction should be some variation of what you want to create or be creative about. Take a few minutes to form visualizations, images of what you are working on in the creative process. Like an Internet file just beginning to appear on the screen, it may have just the beginnings of form. Allow whatever aspects you can produce to form in your mind. Another way of saying this is to daydream with intent. By doing this you are setting up your IGS to unconsciously work on completing these images. Repeat this process as often as possible.

## **Key #8:** Set the Stage for Creativity

You are now ready for the final stages in the creativity process. You need to set up your playing field, the arena within which all the ingredients come together. Included in this field may be time parameters such as creating from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, for example. It should include ways of leaving all distractions at your doorstep, perhaps by agreeing to return to other unfinished business at a prescribed time. This field may include sounds or music that help you focus or daydream.

Experiment to discover your own tools to include in your playing field. One client of mine tried different drum rhythms until she found one that matched her own pace. It made it easy for her to focus and concentrate. You may want to be creative in a particular room where you live or where you have a certain view. By setting up your creative "arena," you are setting the stage and facilitating your intention and IGS.

## **Key #9:** Meditate

You have put together many ingredients for your creativity. It is helpful to have some way for them to incubate, for the creative energy to simmer. When I say meditation, I refer to any method for quieting and emptying your mind. This further allows the material from deep inside to be assessed and integrated with all the other ingredients.

By doing this you are making yourself available to tap into what might be referred to as universal energy. It is already inside of you. Like Michelangelo, you will be bringing out what is already there.

## **Key #10:** Create!

In this 10th key you put the first nine keys to the test. Key #10 is your first act of creation. I would like you to come up with this: one more tool to enhance your creativity. We'll include your ideas in a future issue!

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