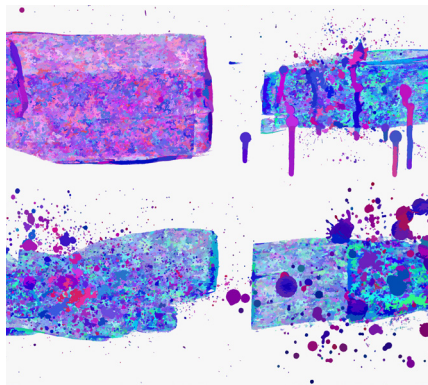


every
woman

WORKBOOK

Unleashing your creativity
in the workplace



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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

ESTABLISHED IN 1999, everywoman advances women in business. Our aim is to ensure women from all over the world fulfil their potential. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members, and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to kick-start your career, at a time and place that suits you.

Do you consider yourself creative? Perhaps you paint in your spare time, write music as a hobby, volunteer with a theatre group, or work in an industry where your success is measured on your artistic output.

If not, you may feel 'creativity' is a word that doesn't apply to you, especially in the workplace. But really, anyone and everyone can be creative - with huge benefits for you as an individual.

"Creative skills can apply to everything you do: How you deal with problems. The way you deal with people. The way you fix up your house. The way you choose to manage your day. Having a child is the ultimate creation! You have to be creative every day of your life and everything in your life can benefit from working on your creativity."

Suzana Apelbaum, Creative Director,
Google, New York City

In a survey of 1,000 American adults, 76% said that being creative is valuable to society, but almost the same number (75%) cited it as important to their psyche on a personal level.

Whether it's the rush that comes with getting a good idea or whether a desire to be creative is built into our DNA remains to be discovered by neuroscientists of the future. What is clear today is that there is a direct link between creative output and individuals' health.

People whose work is 'above average' for creativity enjoy health advantages

equal to being 6.7 years younger or having a household income 15 times greater¹. And it works both ways: people tend to be at their most creative when they're in a good mood: "Increases in positive mood broaden attention and allow us to see more possible solutions to creative problems," says creativity researcher Dr Shelley Carson. Other psychologists talk about the hypnotic and healing quality of getting into a 'flow'

whereby you're so immersed in idea generation or working out a complex problem that you forget to pay attention to the time or numerous distractions, bringing about a meditative quality for the mind².

“Creativity touches us every moment from the flush toilet we sit on, to our smart phone and the concept of money, which we use to pay for these things. This ability to imagine abstract concepts in our mind, the power to create, is what gives humans their evolutionary edge. It is the secret of our success.”

Caroline Wiseman, Barrister & Art Dealer

By discovering your own creative style, as well as identifying the blockers which might be stopping you from achieving that coveted ‘Eureka!’ moment, you’ll find the ways in which creativity could apply to you and your life - from uncovering surprising new ways to solve problems, to helping you understand why sometimes it’s best to let ideas incubate for a longer period of time.



You’ll also discover how much fun being creative can be - we’ve packed this workbook with quick exercises designed to move your thinking into new, unexplored territories to inject playfulness into your working life and realise your own potential for unlimited and brilliant new ideas.

Let us know how you get on!

Karen, Max and the everywoman team

PART 1

What is creativity?



WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

The stereotypical creative type is so pervasive in the collective consciousness that it's likely you'll have misconceptions around creativity, what it involves and who it concerns.

The realities of creativity and the creative process involve complex neuroscience and decades of research. But by understanding a little more about what creativity is (and what it isn't), you'll uncover opportunities for creative thinking in areas you might not have considered in the past.

Circle whether you believe each of the statements below to be 'true' or 'false'. Once you're ready, skip forward to reveal the answers. And don't be surprised or alarmed if you discover that your original perceptions about creativity are turned on their head.

1. Scientific evidence points towards the left side of the brain being all about realism, analysis, practicality, organisation and logic; the right side creativity, passion and emotion. Most people are dominant in one area.

TRUE
FALSE

2. There are three brain networks which are used exclusively for creative thinking and output, meaning the areas of your brain used to come up with a great new idea are there solely for that purpose.

TRUE
FALSE

3. To realise your utmost creative potential, all elements of the brain connected to creativity need to activate simultaneously or in close succession.

TRUE
FALSE

4. If you are trained in creative thinking, you will outperform someone who has not been trained, both in terms of volume and breadth of ideas, even if the other person is innately more creative.

TRUE

FALSE

5. The most innovative ideas to have changed the course of history have sprung from 'Eureka!' moments, such as Darwin describes in his autobiography when sharing how he chanced upon the idea of natural selection: While sitting in his study the algorithm 'pops into his head'; "At last," he writes. "I had a theory with which to work."

TRUE

FALSE

Answers

1. FALSE:

The newest thinking by cognitive neurologists is slowly but surely overturning conventional and simplistic notions about the science of creativity. "The latest findings," says the Scientific American³, "suggest that the right brain/left brain distinction does not offer us the full picture... Creativity does not involve a single brain region or a single side of the brain. Instead, the entire creative process consists of many interacting cognitive processes (both conscious and unconscious)... brain regions work as a team to get the job done." Being highly creative needn't mean disorganised and scatty; highly practical doesn't fall short of good ideas.

2. FALSE:

Scientists have discovered three complex neural networks which are engaged with creativity: the executive attention network, the imagination network and the salience network. But rather than being the sole preserve of creative thought and expression, these three networks are responsible for a host of functions.

Executive attention network	Imagination network	Salience network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights up when engaged with creative problem-solving • Works when trying to recall a distant fact or concentrate on a challenging lecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights up when creating new thoughts or planning for unfamiliar scenarios • Works when trying to imagine how another person is feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights up when making connections between seemingly unconnected things • Works when switching concentration between internal thoughts and external events

3. FALSE:

It might seem logical that optimal usage of all brain function related to creativity equals maximum creative output, but sometimes each complex system comes into play at various stages of the creative process. While it's sometimes helpful for them to work together, sometimes cooperation can actually impede creativity.



For example, certain thoughts and imaginings might stem from allowing the mind to roam free - a process which can be hampered if our executive attention network is causing us to focus too much on the problem at hand⁴. This explains why willing a new idea to life seldom works, and why some of your best, most creative and imaginative ideas occur while you're in the shower or preparing to drop off to sleep. It's this very process of creative 'mind roaming' that takes place when musicians engage in improvisation - only two of the creative networks are activated at once: the connective 'salience network' and the idea-generating 'imagination network', coupled with a partial deactivation of the problem-solving 'executive network'.

4. TRUE:

The Mozarts and da Vincis of the world are often spoken of in terms of having a ‘creativity gene’, but research has in fact shown that groups who are trained in creative skills come up with more diverse ideas than those who have received no training at all, regardless of their starting point. “We now think of creativity as one of those fundamental traits that make us all human and also as one that can be enhanced and grown with practice,” says Chris Grivas, co-author of *The Innovative Team: Unleashing Creative Potential For Innovative Results*⁵. Such training may not make you the next J K Rowling or Beethoven, but it will maximise your creative flair.

5. FALSE:

Flashes and strokes of insight, epiphanies, or ‘Eureka!’ moments are all part of the rich vocabulary human beings have created to describe the isolated moment an idea ‘pops’ into our heads. However, in his TED talk *Where Do Good Ideas Come From?*⁶, Steven Johnson argues that this concept is merely born of a desire by people “to condense their stories of innovation down to shorter time frames”. Darwin may have claimed that his theory of evolution struck him during a dull moment in his study, but on analysis of Darwin’s many notebooks and journals, a scholar named Howard Gruber found that “Darwin had the full theory of natural selection for months and months and months before he had his alleged epiphany. What you realise is that Darwin, in a sense, had the idea, he had the concept, but was unable of fully thinking it yet. And that is actually how great ideas often happen; they fade into view over long periods of time.”



“If you go back and look at the historical record, it turns out that a lot of important ideas have very long incubation periods,” says Steven Johnson. “I call this the ‘slow hunch.’”⁷ In more modern times a study of engineers showed that the best innovations came from steady effort and collaboration, rather than an inspirational ‘bolt from the blue’⁸.

Now you’ve read about the science of creativity you should have a firmer idea of what creativity is and is not. But the science is only half the story: creativity in practice can be personal, fun, powerful, and at times, chaotic. The following descriptive interpretations of creativity may also serve to give you some ideas about what creativity is - and where you can put it to good use.

EXERCISE:

To help you uncover potential scenarios in which you can flex your creative muscles, read the definitions of creativity below and think about how they resonate with you and your experiences at work. Note your examples down opposite - on completing the workbook you may wish to reflect deeper on these situations, armed with your greater knowledge about the creative process. If you can't think of an example, think about how you could use this type of creativity in future projects.

“Creativity comes from a conflict of ideas.”

Donatella Versace,
Fashion Designer

Example of a time my idea clashed with a colleague's and a new idea was formed through debate...

“Creativity is an energy and a life force. It's where everything begins. It's a human condition.”

Suzana Apfelbaum,
Creative Director, Google

Example of a result born of a great deal of energy I committed to a project...

“Creativity comes from a conflict of ideas.”

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Example of a time my idea clashed with a colleague's and a new idea was formed through debate...

“Creativity is an energy and a life force. It’s where everything begins. It’s a human condition.”

Suzana Apfelbaum,
Creative Director, Google

Example of a result born of a great deal of energy I committed to a project...

“In art, science and business, creativity is the engine that drives progress.”

Dr Allan Reiss,
Stanford Psychiatrist

Example of a time my idea changed something in my team or the wider business for the better...

“Creativity is just connecting things.”

Steve Jobs,
Founder, Apple

Example of a work idea formed by something unconnected to work - a hobby, a movie, a conversation overheard...

“Every child is an artist; the problem is staying an artist when you grow up.”

Pablo Picasso,
Painter/Sculptor

Example of ways I bring playfulness, fun and lightness to the workplace...

“Creativity is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.”

Thomas Edison, American Inventor of the light bulb

Example of a time a small idea turned into a complex project requiring many skills...

“Creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and somehow valuable is formed.”

Wikipedia

Example of time my idea added new value to the business...

What have you learned about your creative abilities based on the examples that came easily and those you struggled to identify?

Have these definitions inspired your own unique way of thinking about creativity? Don't worry if not - further creative exercises later in the workbook may inspire you later on.
For me personally, creativity is...

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Our current understanding of creativity relies on the latest discoveries from the ever-evolving field of neuroscience. But in order to delve into the creative process – the routine by which a problem is identified, an idea is conceived and then actioned – we need to travel back to 1926, when London School of Economics co-founder Graham Wallas published his seminal work in the field of creativity study, *The Art Of Thought*.

Through his study of some of humankind's most creative minds - writers T S Eliot and Lewis Carroll, physicist Albert Einstein and engineer Alexander Graham Bell, to name a few - Wallas identified four stages of the creative process, of which many more recent definitions of creativity are variations.

1. Preparation

The mind consciously investigates all aspects of the problem. You consciously put out feelers, discuss your needs at networking events and with trusted colleagues, check the intranet to see what you could get involved with, and use your commuting time to daydream about the types of opportunities that would excite you most. Part research and planning; part entering the right frame of mind so that when an opportunity presents itself, you're ready to act.

3. Illumination

'Eureka!' An idea pops into your mind as if from nowhere, illuminating the problem you've been trying to solve. The results of your research, knowledge and conscious and unconscious thinking converge in a 'flash' of inspiration when you wonder if that temporary project manager role your boss is hiring for is something that you could take on short-term in addition to your current position.

2. Incubation

The problem lodges in your neural networks where you unconsciously lay down pathways for later connections to be made. Alice In Wonderland author Lewis Carroll referred to the incubation period as 'mental mastication'. The results of your preparation converge with all the other data and knowledge you collect during every waking moment. You may have temporarily put the idea 'out of your mind', but unconsciously there is work being done.

4. Verification

If the preparation, incubation and illumination parts count for the 1% of what inventor Thomas

Edison referred to as 'inspiration' then the final stage - verification - is the '99% perspiration' that follows. Your conscious mind sets to work, creating a proposal for how your plan could work, discussing your suggestions with your boss and thinking through how you'll manage the additional workload.

The four stages of the
creativity process
Example problem: Increasing
your organisational profile to
become more visible.

EXERCISE

Now you understand the four main stages of the creative process, you're going to apply them to different areas of your life. List at least three times at work or at home when you have creatively come up with a solution to a problem. Can you recognise these stages in the process?

Example 1: I needed to create a meal from the leftovers in the fridge

Preparation: Checked the fridge, freezer, and cupboards so I knew exactly what food was available.

Incubation: Went to work and threw myself into my job.

Illumination: A colleague mentioned she had made an amazing risotto last night and I realised I could cobble something together.

Verification: Decided on the recipe and cooked when I got home.

Example 2: Customers weren't happy with our response times via email

Preparation: I looked into why this might be: is it because my team are too busy to respond? Is it because they are not checking the inbox? Are they aware of why replying is important?

Incubation: I checked the inbox myself and answered a few emails.

Illumination: While I was checking, I realised a lot of the emails required very in depth responses and I think this is the reason we're not replying very quickly.

Verification: I put together a plan for how we could fix the problem.

Example 3:

Preparation:

Incubation:

Illumination:

Verification:

Example 4:

Preparation:

Incubation:

Illumination:

Verification:

PART 2

Creativity blockers



THE CREATIVE PROCESS

What's stopping you from being creative? Think about each of the stages of creativity and what internal or external factors might be limiting your ability to think at your innovative best.

e.g. stress over deadlines, messy workspace, badly run brainstorm, culture of judgement, lack of inspiration.

In this section we present some of the most common blockers of creative output - and what you can do to limit their power.

1. Going it alone

Sometimes the best ideas come in the most private moments - while showering, dropping off to sleep or walking the dog. But the expression 'two heads are better than one' comes into play here. At each stage of the creative process, you can do your own internal processes the world of good by getting input from others. Think about your network: who is great at bouncing ideas around with? Sometimes just the act of 'thinking out loud' with a trusted other can result in 'Eureka!' moments.



2. Forcing it

One of the biggest reasons brainstorming fails is that groups and individuals rarely produce their most creative ideas when told to do so on command. "The more you think about it, the more you mess it up," said a Stanford researcher investigating the impact of

enforced creativity on subjects⁹.

As deadlines approach, enable your unconscious mind to do its best incubation and illumination work by taking regular breaks, mixing up your routine, challenging yourself with completely new problems and immersing yourself in weird and wonderful knowledge (TED talks on random topics, a Wikipedia page chosen from a few random letter searches).

3. Unwillingness to take risks

Research has shown that the most creative individuals are often those who are willing to throw caution to the wind and test out a new idea, rather than going with the tried and tested¹⁰. If you think you may fall into the risk-averse camp, or aren't sure where you sit on the risky business scale, work through the everywoman workbook Risk taking for greater success.



4. Staying too focused

Focussing on one task or field can often mean you run dry of creative juices. Research has proven that employees who engage in creative pursuits outside of work are often the most creative and the happiest in the office¹¹.

5. Too much judgment

Another reason brainstorming fails is that the group or individual rushes too quickly to condemn an idea or look for reasons why it won't work. Hone the art of making mind maps, whereby you capture every single idea you or your team can think of on a theme, without any kind of evaluation whatsoever. When volumes of ideas is the driving force, avoid arguing with colleagues or the voice in your head, ban passing any kind of judgment, open your ears and consciously replace your "No but..." with "Yes and..."



6. Stress

Low wellbeing is one of the death knells of creativity. Cramming idea generation into the 45 minutes before a deadline, staying up late to solve problems or relying on external stimulants (coffee and alcohol) are unlikely to result in creative genius. Studies show that those who meditate for just 30 minutes each day produce the best ideas and are better able to focus on problems¹². If meditation seems daunting, start small by setting regular reminders on your phone to take a deep breath in and out at least once an hour for an instant de-stress.

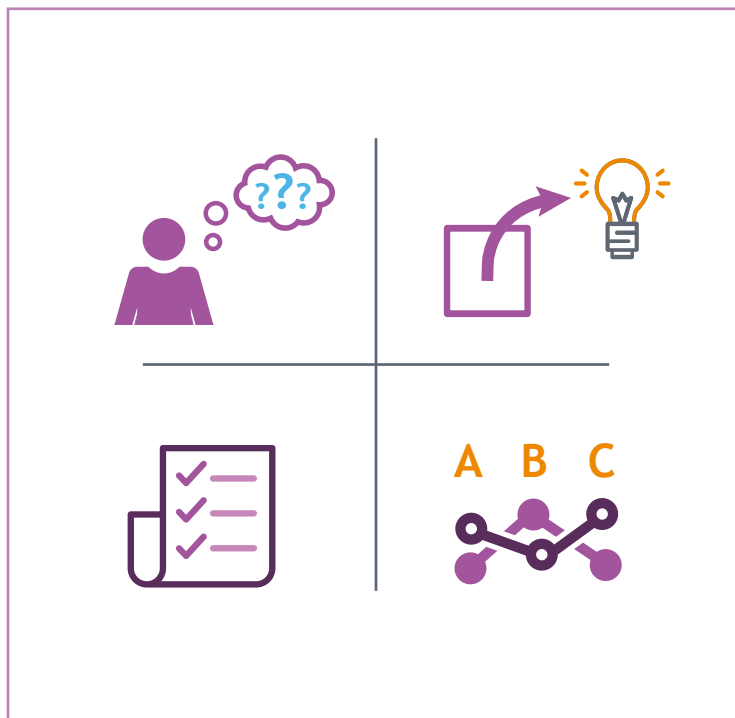
7. Sitting still

Physical inactivity breeds mental inactivity, and Stanford researchers have found the opposite is also true: injecting some physical activity into your day will stimulate you mentally too. This needn't mean hitting the gym or taking up Parkour - a short walk does the job nicely. And don't worry if you don't have access to a beautiful park - study participants who walked on a treadmill facing a blank wall showed equal increase in creative output, so stretch your legs with a jaunt around the block or your building, exploring previously unexplored corners or walking on the other side of the street as usual for an added change in routine¹³.



PART 3

Discovering your creative style



DISCOVERING YOUR CREATIVE STYLE

Modern researchers have discovered that there are four types of creative thinkers which correspond to each of the four stages of the creative process: the Clarifier, the Ideator, the Developer, and the Implementer.



“Some of us,” says the author of *The Innovation Team*, Chris Grivas, “are more comfortable with one or more of these styles than the others; others may be comfortable with all of them”¹⁴.

Grivas’ research shows it is valuable to knowing which style(s) you naturally gravitate towards, and even more useful when you see how this might relate to your colleagues’ styles.

Take the following quiz to discover which style or styles you might naturally possess and in which stages of the creative process you can begin to develop further.

QUESTIONS

1

You're invited to a team brainstorm where the objective is to think up ways that flexible working could best be introduced in your department. Your preferred methodology is:

- a. A deep dive into the data around current working hours, and the opportunity to question a representative from HR on the opportunities of flexible working.
- b. To take a broad view of the benefits of flexibility, perhaps imagining what the department could look like in 18 months' time, should flexible working for all become a reality.
- c. To generate as many specific ideas as possible, before narrowing down to the best and most realistic using a relevant evaluation tool.
- d. Getting to the idea as quickly as possible, then focusing on how it can be best actioned, drawing up realistic plans for how the idea will work.

2

During the brainstorm, which of the outcomes is the one more likely to inspire you?

- a. To run several pilots simultaneously, each based on proven working methodologies of flexible working around the world - the initiative would allow for a greater exploration of the problem and unearth data to work with.
- b. To allow individuals to choose which of the many proposed options for flexible working best suit them.
- c. To divide the best ideas among smaller working groups for finessing before the group convenes for a second round.
- d. A loose plan for how the top three ideas will be put into action over the coming months.

QUESTIONS

3 Thinking about a time when a project has been about to go into top gear, which of the following images most resonate with you?

a.



b.



c.



d.



4 When mulling over a problem in your mind, which of the following thoughts or directives are you most likely to give yourself?

- Really think about the core of the problem before making any decisions.
- Consider the options and imagine what the future look like in each case.
- Examine the strengths and weaknesses of each idea.
- Lay out the steps required to bring each idea to action.

5 Your boss requests help with various tasks. Which of the following do you put your hand up for?

- Hunt down and summarise the contents of an elusive report he or she's forgotten the name of but can remember one or two stats from.
- Speak to a range of department heads to understand the stories behind the latest employee engagement survey scores.
- Conduct a competitor analysis of the company website.
- Design an induction plan for new departmental interns.

If you've ever successfully brought an idea to life and implemented it, whether it's ordering a takeaway or launching your own blog, you will, either consciously or unconsciously, have been active in all four areas. Using more than one style at once can help you get to a solution more quickly.

RESULTS

Mostly As



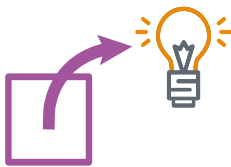
Clarifier

As a Clarifier you like to get to the root of an issue before you jump headlong into generating ideas. Before trying to come up with a solution for low attendance at meetings, you first want to understand who isn't turning up and why, whether the meeting is actually necessary and whether absentees even know it exists. You are most alive during the preparation stage when your natural curiosity and thirst for knowledge lay the groundwork for solid ideas.

Pros: Detail orientated, methodical, analytical.

Limitations: May suffer from 'analysis paralysis' - getting too hung up on the data and less inclined to action.

Mostly Bs



Ideator

Your unconscious mind works overtime to fuse the seemingly disconnected into a constant stream of ideas - the incubation stage has your name written all over it. You enjoy thinking broadly and without constraint, always with one eye on the bigger picture. Rather than think up ways to get absent attendees to come to a departmental meeting, you might think holistically about the meeting culture in your organisation and how it can be tweaked or overhauled for the greater good. You enjoy bouncing between ideas and find inspiration in the most mundane occurrences.

Pros: Imaginative and flexible; 'out-of-the-box' thinkers.

Limitations: May leapfrog from one idea to the next, never following through.

Mostly Cs



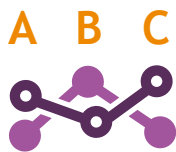
Developer

Generating lots of ideas are one thing, but for you the most satisfying times are those ‘Eureka!’ moments when the fruits of your labours spark spontaneously into a solid idea you can work with (the illumination phase). You enjoy the mental process of sharpening and fine-tuning your idea, chipping away at the weaknesses and illuminating its strengths by conducting SWOT analyses, competitor analyses and thinking through the steps in its future evolution.

Pros: Innovative and able to make decisions.

Limitations: May get too caught up in perfecting the idea.

Mostly Ds



Implementer

You’re all about results. Ideas are great, but it’s what you do with them that counts, and no sooner than that idea has sparked its way to life, you’re stuck into verification mode, planning and actioning the steps that will see your idea go from an abstract thought to reality. You derive the most energy from the doing, and are able to visualise a clear path between your imagination and the end goal.

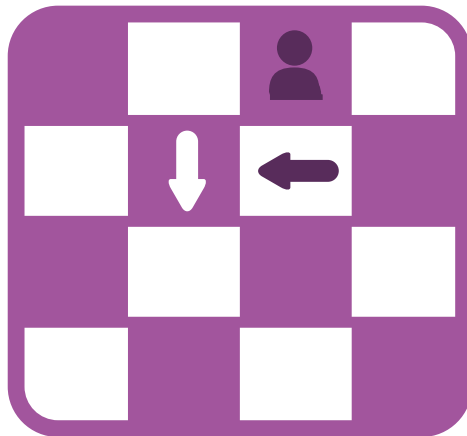
Pros: Energetic, action-orientated, learn by ‘doing’.

Limitations: Experiences frustration when things appear to be moving too slowly.

TIP: the developers of the four creative personality types found that while it’s useful to know your own style, it can be even more valuable to know that of those you work closely with. Run this quiz through your next informal team gathering to discover where you complement one another’s traits.

PART 4

Creative games, exercises and challenges



CREATIVE GAMES, EXERCISES AND CHALLENGES

Now you've examined your own creative style, in this section you will be presented with a series of creative challenges; some are classic exercises based on psychological research, others are modern brainstorm techniques, while others are based on the techniques of some of the greatest thinkers the world has seen.

Start by working through examples relating to your own style, but remember, creativity is a skill that can be learnt - so you can develop in all four styles.

1. Why not try... changing your routine

Great for: Flexing your **Ideator** muscle

Famous fans: Charlie And The Chocolate Factory Author Roald Dahl ("I began to realise how simple life could be if one had a regular routine to follow with fixed hours and very little original thinking to do.")

In the workplace: Move beyond 'stuck' thinking; shaking up 'tried and tested' processes; introducing variety and alleviating boredom.

Sitting around waiting for inspiration to strike rarely results in a brainwave. If you've been sat in the same environment trying to hit on a new solution, chances are your neural networks need 'incubation' time. Switch up your routine. If you normally go for a walk in the park at lunchtime, visit an art gallery. If you usually order a skinny latte, treat your taste buds to something new from the menu. Psychologist Dr Simone Ritter has shown that the even the simple act of using a different method to make your usual sandwich can result in unblocking those creative pipelines. When faced with a blank screen and no words are forthcoming, best-selling author Jonathan Franzen changes up his sensory perceptions - wearing earmuffs or even a blindfold to cure writer's block.

TIP: List some of the unchanging elements of your routine that you could mix up, creating new experiences and distance from whatever problems you're tackling.

2. Why not try... doodling

Great for: Developing your **Developer**

Famous fans: Steve Jobs (Apple) and industrialist Henry Ford

In the workplace: Allows for greater focus during long presentations or training sessions, and recalling important facts.

When you were in school you were probably reprimanded for doodling in the margins when you should have been paying attention. Chances are you were engaging in a primitive attempt to focus all the more; Suni Brown, author of *The Doodle Revolution* provides evidence that doodling - either absentmindedly or deliberately - allows you to stay in the moment. Doodling can also enhance recall, enable greater intake of the information going on around you and activate neural pathways leading to cognitive breakthroughs - perfect if you've forgotten a crucial bit of information that you need to 'pop' back into your consciousness.



TIP: Keep a small sketchbook to hand that you can scribble in during digital conference calls or lectures where you're not expected to participate. If you're not much of a sketcher, it doesn't matter. Start your doodling 'out-of-the-box' by completing mini drawings out of the four sketches started above.

3. Why not try... asking questions

Great for: Enhancing your **Clarifier** and finding a new perspective

Famous fans: Richard Branson, founder of The Virgin Group (“My curiosity drives me to think I can do better. Somebody tells me that 80% of the species in the ocean have not been discovered, so I think, ‘well, maybe we should try to build a submarine to go down to the bottom of the oceans and explore them’. Or it looks very, very expensive to be able to go to space. ‘Why don’t we register a company, Virgin Galactic Airways, and try to maybe build a spaceship company?’”

In the workplace: Challenging the norm to hit on better solutions; forcing yourself and teams to see the bigger picture.

If you’ve ever been around a small child at the height of the ‘why?’ phase you might be in no rush to start thinking or behaving like a three-year-old. But often by questioning absolutely everything going on around you, you can start to unlock new answers and ideas. Leonardo da Vinci wrote of the dangers of accepting conventional wisdom, attributing many of his progressive scientific theories to his willingness to question all that he encountered.

TIP: Think of a problem you need to solve or reflect on an idea that you’ve yet to action. Start your exploration with the six universal questions outlined by ‘father of brainstorming’ Alex Osborn. This example is based on the problem of needing a new location for the company’s summer party.

What? e.g. What is the theme of the summer party? What different ‘zones’ do we want to create for the party? What impression do we want to create among guests? What are the key criteria of the perfect location?

Where? e.g. Where have we held past parties? Where are the possible locations within a 10 miles/20 miles/30 miles and so on? Where do guests/important clients live that needs to be taken into account?

Why?	Why are we having the party? Why have past locations made for a successful event?
Who?	Who has strong opinions about where we should hold the party? Who will be there? Who won't be there? Who do we know who may know about some unusual locations?
How?	How can we discover more unusual locations? How will we travel to the venue? How much do we want to invest in hiring the location? How much effort do we want to put into dressing the venue?
When?	When do we need to make a decision by? When do we want the event to start and what time does that mean we need to get into the venue to prepare?

4. Why not try... generating a random word

Great for: Stimulating incubation and illumination (Ideators and Developers)

Used by: Comedian and TV host Jimmy Fallon to inspire unique ideas from his guests.

In the workplace: Encouraging your ability to 'join the dots' and find creative solutions.

The sparking of an idea into an 'A-ha!' moment occurs when neural pathways make a unique connection between two or more disparate elements. Boost your brain's ability to find connections between the apparently disconnected. For each of the pairs of words below, think up a way to connect them - it can be as direct or as longwinded as you like so long as a connection is made.

Cigarette	Rainbow
Silver	Dog
Hair	Popcorn
Moon	Scarf
Coal	Printer

e.g. My grandma always carried a silver cigarette case in her handbag
Her hair shone in the light of the moon

TIP: Spend a minute or so each day - during your shower, on your commute or while waiting for a meeting to start - playing this game. Use a random word generator found online or pick two words at random from a newspaper or dictionary.

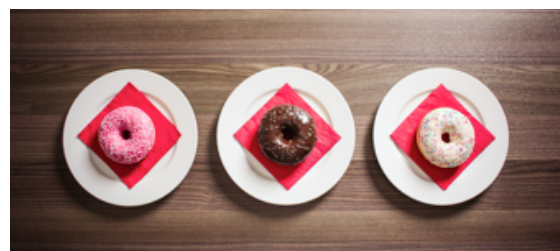
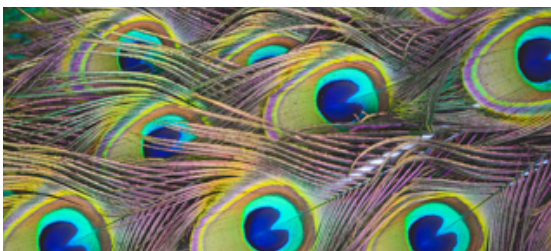
5. Why not try... refining your senses

Great for: All creative thinkers

Used by: Leonardo da Vinci

In the workplace: Becoming more empathic, developing your communication and listening skills; taking a more holistic approach to problem solving.

The average person, wrote da Vinci: “Looks without seeing, listens without hearing, touches without feeling, eats without tasting, moves without physical awareness, inhales without awareness of odour or fragrance, and talks without thinking.” Da Vinci sought to constantly refine his senses by consciously using as many as possible in his daily activities. Sharpen up your senses by taking a long look at these images¹⁶. As well as thinking about what you can see beyond the obvious, imagine what you might be able to hear, taste, smell or touch if you were in the image.



6. Why not try... role play

Great for: **Clarifiers and Implementers**

Used by: Psychologists to test the effect of 'distance' on our ability to problem-solve.

In the workplace: Stepping out of your usual thinking to look at things from a fresh perspective.

Numerous studies have introduced role play into their creative games and problem solving in a bid to understand how being 'too close' to a problem can impede it moving forward, finding that removing yourself from the situation can have an unlocking effect. So whether you're in clarification mode and are struggling to understand the problem, or verification mode where a clear path to action must emerge, introduce role-play in one of the following ways.



1. Imagine yourself as a child. What would a 7-year-old make of the problem?
2. Put yourself in the shoes of a completely different person - a friend, relative, neighbour, boss, celebrity - and ask yourself what they would do.
3. Tackle the issue once more from the perspective of an expert or a novice, a rich person versus a poor person, a traveller versus a homebody and so on.

7. Why not try... solving a classic riddle?

Great for: **All creative types**, particularly **Implementers**

Used by: Psychologist Karl Duncker to test a subject's fixedness of thought and ability to think outside the box.

In the workplace: Reassembling the facts to see varied possibilities.

Imagine that you are given a candle, a box of thumbtacks and a box of matches and are asked to fix the lit candle to the wall so that it will not drip wax onto the table below. Don't read on until you have a possible solution.

The only solution is to empty the box of thumbtacks, put the candle into the box, use the thumbtacks to nail the box (with the candle in it) to the wall, and light the candle with the match.

TIP: If you struggled with this exercise, seek out more exercises that will push you to look beyond the obvious. Riddles are a great option - Google some. Here's one, posed by Bilbo Baggins in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*: "A box without hinges, key, or lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid." The answer: an egg. Challenging yourself to see beyond the obvious can strengthen your neural pathways for making connections.

If you're struggling with riddles, you can still hone this skill by looking for the fourth word in a sequence which ties the previous three together. Have a go at these three (you'll find the solutions in footnote¹⁷)

Manners	Round	Tennis	?
Ache	Hunter	Cabbage	?
Time	Hair	Stretch	?

8. Why not try... flash writing

Great for: Strengthening your Implementer

Used by: American writer Dr Seuss when challenged by his editor to write an entire book using a vocabulary of only 50 words.

In the workplace: Encouraging succinctness and getting to the core of a problem.

Great Implementers want to cut through the waffle and get down to action. But if you're bogged down by detail you might struggle to see a way forward. Though self-restriction can curb creativity, when sometimes you need chop down some branches before you can see the wood for the trees.

Engage in a spot of flash fiction - a literary trend whereby entire stories are told in anything from five words to the length of a Tweet. Try it out on the following challenges:

1. Write the story of your life in 140 characters or less.
2. Describe your experiences at your organisation for the benefit of a newcomer in one sentence.
3. In 100 words, summarise the key aspects of the biggest challenge in your role right now.

9. Why not try... travelling the world from your desktop

Great for: Getting a fresh perspective

Used by: Anyone and everyone with an Internet connection!

In the workplace: Sparking new ideas and injecting a sense of adventure into problem-solving.

Research has found that international travel can do wonders for a businessperson's creative force field, providing a fresh perspective from which to bounce around new ideas. Not everybody can have a job which pings them between London, New York and Sydney. But thanks to the wonders of the Internet, you can experience other cultures right from your desk. Try the following as starters for ten:

1. Watch a TED Talk on an idea from a culture or issue that's alien to you (the topics page is a great place to browse the archive).
2. Google 'Virtual Reality Travel' to find a wealth of rich media capable of transporting you to other countries without the fuss of having to find your passport.
3. Keep an eye on NASA's video galleries and NASA TV for out of this world content that will transport you to even lesser trodden paths.

Find more creative games, puzzles and challenges from the following sources:

www.lumosity.com

www.testmycreativity.com

www.fitbrains.com

PART 5

Learning from three creative women



LEARNING FROM THREE CREATIVE WOMEN

In creating this workbook, we spoke to three women from very different walks of life, all of whom value creativity as one of the most crucial skills they can bring to bear on their careers.

Read the conversations below to understand the breadth of ways creativity can factor in individual careers - with tips for how to put their advice into practice in your life.



Dr Rachel Cowen, Biochemist, The University of Manchester, United Kingdom¹⁸

“As a young cancer researcher I realised that I had not spent time throughout my education developing my creative senses. There had been no support in that sense as I progressed. That became a source of frustration to me when I saw the benefits of open and honest brainstorming. The success of a research grant application hinges on a great, novel idea - but how do you get that?

In science, where there's a lot riding on the outcome, the pressured environment can easily become a very critical one where ideas are pounced on negatively, and as a result, people become fearful of speaking up. I did a lot of reading around creativity and going to idea generation workshops before I began to think about how I could extend that learning to my students. Now I run sessions where we look at divergent versus convergent thinking, get them to assess themselves in terms of their own styles and relax into fun exercises.

A great one we do is the ‘worst idea technique’ where we think of a problem we’re trying to solve through biochemistry and brainstorm all the worst possible solutions that we could propose. It breaks the ice, reduces fear of putting forward ideas and ironically often results in a good idea.

Interdisciplinary work is another thing I actively encourage in my students. Attending conferences outside their core field; networking in wider medical circles; leaving the research lab and actually meeting patients and public to

What subjects are you interested in that you can begin to cultivate knowledge in through lunchtime lectures, reading, online research, TED talks or joining a club?

get their input - they can all unlock new thinking.

It's also really important the environment is right - culturally and physically. In brainstorming I set hard and fast rules around no judgment. I have a Martin Luther King quote above my desk: "There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think." For me that sums up what it's all about. I also pin up all my certificates - having that visual representation of my achievements makes me trust in my own ideas and capabilities."

Keep a record of your achievements, great feedback and work of which you are particularly proud.



**Suzana Apelbaum, Creative Director,
Google, New York City¹⁹**

"Creative skills can apply to everything you do: How you deal with problems. The way you deal with people. The way you fix up your house. The way you choose to manage your day. Having a child is the ultimate creation! You have to be creative every day of your life and everything in your life can benefit from working on your creativity.

I started to embrace my creativity in a structured way when I started doing theatre. Theatre is interesting because you build a character and you have to think about its voice and its moment in time and you live in a fantasy world with all those other characters. Creativity allows you to travel to fantastic worlds.

The biggest mistake a creative team can make is to jump into brainstorming too early in the process. Before you can expect a group to come together and share brilliant ideas, you need to stop, look around, do research, understand the problem, do some Google searches, think through the keywords, and encourage teams to do the same. Immerse yourself in the brief. Naturally, while that's happening, ideas will start sparking. Only then do we get together and share these thoughts. And then very naturally some thoughts turn into ideas.

If we're stuck and getting nowhere, we think about extremes: What's the enemy of this brand we're trying to come up with an advertising campaign for?

I'm a non-stop collector. Unfortunately I'm very disorganised; I once tried to create a scrapbook of things I'd seen or experienced that I knew could incubate into future ideas. In reality these bits and bobs are everywhere - in random folders, in bookmarks, in my head - but it's comforting to know it's all there somewhere.

Name five things you've done over the last week that required creative thought.

Part of my role is facilitating external brainstorms with clients who often haven't wired themselves to think creatively. The key is to create a safe space where there is no judgment. Of course evaluation has to come into it at some point, but I always try to challenge rather than offer critique. A space in which people are expected to be brilliant is doomed to fail. You have to be able to get it wrong; to fail over and over.

What new rules would benefit brainstorms in your organisation?

One of the things I dislike about the concept of creativity many have is its glamorisation - the idea that at Google we're all in cute rooms surrounded by colourful beanbags and that's where the thinking happens. The real creative space is the one in your mind."

Anne Walker MBE, Founder, International Dance Supplies, United Kingdom²⁰



"It would be nice if we all could take time to be creative at our leisure; but business means deadlines for solutions come at a moment's notice. In those situations, I find that the right environment is key. I have an office studio I decorate with pictures and quotes that stimulate my imagination, and I'm lucky to live near the sea because I find that watching the ocean has a huge impact on my ability to sift through ideas. But sometimes it helps to distance myself from the familiar and put myself in an alien environment in order to spark random trains of thought. If you've never visited an art gallery, go for a wander in one; if you're usually an indoor person, take a walk in the park. New environments lead to fresh perspectives.

After forty years in the dance industry I'm still hugely inspired by music and choreography and go to new shows every chance I get. But I also find inspiration in less obvious sources. For me the Sunday colour supplements are a great stimulant for new ideas; I once remember seeing an advert for Brintons Carpets. They'd draped a beautiful rug over a tall, glamorous woman as if she were modelling fashionable clothes. That had me thinking about out-of-the-box ways to market products. While out walking I saw a child jumping through puddles in a sou'wester and wellington boots and the movements inspired a new dance clothing line.

What new experiences can you make time for over the coming month?

What elements of your daily routine can you change up?

The business I'm running today bears little resemblance to the one I started in 1978. Whether or not you're in a typically creative role or industry, you must keep changing and evolving with current trends. You might have a process that's worked for ten years, but just because it's still working doesn't mean it's optimal.

If there's a chore you're dreading - for me it's anything admin or accounts related - putting it off will only blow the worry out of all proportion and cast a shadow over the elements of business you enjoy. My golden rule is to get my bugbears ticked off my to-do list first, and then reward myself with the fun projects I can really shine in.

Too many creative people working together equal a recipe for disaster! Everyone will want their say and nothing will ever get done. The best teams are a healthy mix of innovators and starter-finishers. As well as creatives with whom you can bounce around ideas, keep close at hand the disciplined completers. They're just as central to a project's successful outcome."

What are the tasks that cause you to procrastinate? Commit to ticking them off the to-do list first.

PART 6

Personal Action Plan



PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

You may have embarked on this workbook with a specific problem you need to solve using creative thought. If you don't have a specific creative challenge in mind as you come to the close, let all you have learned incubate for a while until it illuminates upon a goal you would like to achieve that requires use of your innate creative powers. Goal in mind, work through the following points.

1. OUTLINE THE GOAL

Where it originated from, why its success is important to you, and how you think creative thinking can benefit its successful completion.

2. ENTER CLARIFICATION MODE

What questions do you need to ask, what data do you need to gather, what new knowledge or insights would benefit you, who else can you bring with you on your journey?

3. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO OPTIMISE YOUR CREATIVE MUSCLE?

While your unconscious mind is incubating all the information you've gathered, what exercises can you undertake and behaviours can you demonstrate to optimise your creative muscle? (e.g. meditation, networking in events outside my business, daily random word association.)

4. MAKE CHANGES

What routine changes and other lifestyle behaviours could I adopt at home and at work to foster greater creativity in myself and those around me?

5. CAPTURE YOUR IDEAS

When illumination strikes, what methods can I use to harness the power of my ideas to ensure I bring them to life? (e.g. notebooking, talking through with a colleague, subjecting my idea to evaluation techniques.)

6. LIMIT BLOCKERS

What are the common creativity 'blockers' I experience in my day to day and what methods can I use to limit their power?

EVERYWOMAN EXPERTS

Everywoman creates workbooks on topics that matter most to our network members. we draw on member surveys and the latest thinking from the academic and business worlds, as well our own experiences as we navigate our careers. Each workbook offers practical advice, enabling tangible actions for your daily work lives ahead of those important performance reviews.



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Any topics you'd like to see covered on the everywomanNetwork?

We'd love to hear from you: contact@everywoman.com

FURTHER READING

Books

How To Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michael Gelb (Dell, 1998)

The Innovative Team: Unleashing Creative Potential For Innovative Results by Chris Grivas and Gerard Puccio (John Wiley & Sons: 2012)

Online resources

everywomanNetwork workbook: *Brainstorming*

everywomanNetwork article: *7 ways to unleash your team's creative side*

The Creativity Post (digital magazine about creativity, innovation and imagination)

TED Talks playlist of 135 talks on the topic of creativity

ENDNOTES

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