

9 Ways To Enhance Your Creativity

by Adair Wilson Heitmann

Creativity brings magic into our lives, and joy into our hearts. Creativity is our birthright, and our soul's expression. It is a holistic process and an enlightenment practice. Being creative is what distinguishes us from other life forms.

Self-expression is not about composing the perfect musical score; it is about creating our own reality. It is about creating our own lifestyle, work style, parenting and relationship style. Being creative takes courage, because it asks us to risk new ways of thinking, being and acting.

Someone said to me recently that she always thought if she just found the right class -- the right ceramics class or the right weaving class -- the teacher would tell her, "This is where your natural talent lies!" She spent many years confusing being artistic with being creative. She looked outside herself for her own creative expression. When she found her Self in a workshop, she was amazed to find that her *natural* talent lies in how effectively she helps people.

Creative expression is natural expression, and, yes, it can be learned. First, we need to get rid of our inner critic. Judgment is the first stopper of creativity. Eliminate perfectionism and details. Let yourself be playful. Experience your world through the eyes of a child. Have fun stuff around your home and office, fun colors, shapes, textures. Don't take your living/work space or your life too seriously.

For those people who still think that only the sculptor or dancer can be creative, please understand that this stereotype hurts all of humankind. Thinking like this restricts and debilitates all of us. Let me illustrate with a story. A former Harvard MBA boss of mine was a brilliant creative thinker. He would never pick up a paint brush,

yet he could solve business problems better than anyone I've ever met. His attitude was nonjudgmental, and he delivered his thoughts with aplomb, ingenuity and spontaneity. His solutions were his canvas. He was fun to work with, and his way of being evoked inventive thinking from the people in his department. His creative expression established a work atmosphere of acceptance, equality and spontaneity.

Here are nine ways to increase your creative thinking:

- 1. Observe nature.** Did you know that the idea for the submarine came from observing how a fish's swim bladder works?
- 2. Get out of your rut.** Drive home by a different route, brush your teeth with your nondominant hand. Read a magazine about a topic that you know nothing about. These actions exercise parts of your brain that have become like a door mat: dormant.
- 3. Brainstorm ideas by deferring judgment.** Allow any and all free-wheeling ideas to come forth, no matter how outrageous or illogical they seem. The weirdest idea can be the catalyst for the solution.
- 4. Incorporate sight, sound, taste, feel and smell into your thinking process.**
- 5. Use your intuition; it increases your creative potential.** The first rule in developing your intuition is to refuse to discard hunches. Trust your instincts; Albert Einstein did.
- 6. Give yourself creative time.** Go to the movies, museum or zoo; write in your journal; wear something different; have lunch with a creative friend; watch sun beams travel across a wall.
- 7. Listen to the wisdom of your nighttime dreams;** therein lies solutions beyond your wildest imagination.
- 8. Let yourself be in the NOW.**

Meditate, practice yoga, chant.

9. When stuck, don't force a solution. Do something different; take a walk, seek guidance outside yourself.

Like meditation, creativity is a practice, not a one-time event. I experienced this firsthand last Summer while visiting Cape Cod. I was reminded of how readily we can sabotage our own joy and expression. Here I was in a place I love, with my art supplies and time to paint, and I froze.

"What is wrong with this picture?" I asked myself. The answer came quietly: joy was missing. A part of my ego personality thought there was a right way to paint on the beach, and, frankly, that wasn't the *real* way.

"Aha," I said to myself and started painting as I imagined a little child would. I had fun mixing unusual colors and getting messy. I loved how the wet paint brush felt in my hand as it glided across the rough watercolor paper. I was in the joy of the moment. I was not creating artwork for a gallery. I was on the beach in my bathing suit, with the wind, sea gulls, water, and

sand, and I was playing with colors and paints and paper. I was in bliss; one with the universe.

Creative expression is in all of us; it is our way home and our way whole.



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