



Own your creative power by developing your imagination

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As someone who gets bored very quickly, I wasn't sure I would be able to stick to a theme for a year. So, I regularly have to remind myself why I chose this theme, "Own your creative power", for this year.

Most of us grow up with goals and dreams of what we want our lives to be like. We plan and study, and work to achieve those goals. We may achieve some of our goals and set new goals. And this was great in the world of long ago. Or perhaps not so long ago. Now, we do still plan and work towards our goals and dreams, but life is so full of disruptions, we often find our goals and dreams shredded by the state of the world. The pandemic, recessions, wars, inflation, price hikes, technological changes and so on, disrupt our lives like never before and we often find we have to pivot and adapt or completely change our goals and dreams because what we had before is not going to work in the world today or the world of the future.

Fortunately, as human beings we all have creative power. We have a brain that allows us to deal with major disruptions in our lives. We can pivot and change and be successful no matter what the world throws at us. Our brains are capable of imagination, of creativity, of new ideas, and of changing a great deal. The unfortunate part is that we are not that good at knowing how to use this part of our brains. Societal institutions and school don't prepare most of us for the changes that hit us now as adults. We don't get to utilise and practice using our creative thinking power much. And then there are people who don't like that human beings can have creative power and would rather teach (and sometimes indoctrinate) us to conform. This series of newsletters this year has been about helping you to activate and develop the part of the brain that engages in creative thinking, recognises that you have the power to define your life, and stop the fear and anxiety that interferes with being able to make

changes. In this newsletter I am going to talk about how you can develop your imagination.

Using your imagination means coming up with something new. Below are some ways in which you can practice using your imagination. Like just about everything else, the more you practice a skill, the better you get at it.

1. Most of us know what **brainstorming** is. Set yourself a topic and for 30 minutes just brainstorm everything you can think of about that topic. Nothing is off limits. Nothing is inappropriate. Just jot down everything you can think of related to the topic. Do this several times a week to practice developing your imagination.
2. Read content or watch content that is totally **outside the material you usually consume**. We get hooked on our favourite topics and then tend to learn about them. However, learning new topics and even learning about topics we may not particularly like is very good for stimulating the imagination. A lot of great ideas come at the interface between two totally different fields. Many new innovations come from taking ideas from one subject and applying them to a different subject. Don't just stick to reading and watching what you know and like. Mix it up a bit. Do it often if you really want to improve your imagination.
3. Meet, interact with, and **engage with people completely different** to those you normally associate with. We tend to stick to our same circles socially and professionally. However, you don't have to do that. Socially and professionally, step out of your comfort zone and meet very different people. Who knows what ideas they may spark?
4. **Portray different roles**. The six thinking hats exercise of Edward de Bono gets people to take on the characteristics of a person based on the colour of a hat they are assigned to wear. You can do this in general. Decide you are going to approach a problem from the perspective of your grouchy uncle. And act as if you were him when thinking of solutions. Or you could try out role playing your creative and trendy cousin and try and think like they would. It takes some concentration to think and talk and act as someone else would, especially someone very different to you, but it can be fun and creative at the same time. And it gets the parts of your brain you may not usually use active and working.
5. Asking questions is always good for coming up with new ideas. The technique called **starbursting** means you generate questions. And they can be questions that are quite off the wall. For example: How would we solve a water problem if all the rivers dry up? What would an effective schooling system look like in fifteen years' time? What are the next ten jobs that are likely to become obsolete because of technological advances? Use starbursting to generate questions and get you thinking in new ways.
6. And then there is that age old technique, which has sometimes gotten people into trouble - **daydreaming**. Daydreaming can be very good for generating new ideas. Often some of the best ideas have come from people who daydream. Just don't daydream while you are driving on a dangerous busy road.

Thinking out of the box is something you can learn to do. The brain works like a muscle in

that you use it or lose it. The more you use and enhance a skill or certain way of thinking, the better you get at it. The less you do it, the more difficult it is to do when you need to call upon it. Given that our world is just so crazy and upside down, and people now have no clue what the next five to ten years will bring, you do want to start learning to use your imagination. It will help you get through whatever madness the world throws our way in the future years. The really nice part of using your imagination is that you can make it a whole lot of fun too.