

Ten Ways to Boost Your Creativity



1. Change the Way You Think about Creativity: It's not just writers or visual artists who need to be creative--we all need to tap into our creativity to solve problems and come up with new ideas no matter how mundane the task at hand. And we all are creative, no matter what messages we've given ourselves. So give yourself credit when you think of a new way to do something--you're being creative!

2. Change Your Routine: Take a different way to work, shop at a different market, pick up a magazine that you haven't read before, eat lunch at a different place or try a recipe that's new to you. Our brains are stimulated by new experiences.

3. Explore the Magic of Early Morning: The poet Rumi said, "The morning breeze has secrets to tell you. Do not go back to sleep." Rumi had something there. When we meditate, journal or engage in other creative activities in the early morning, the results are often quite different than when we do them later in the day. Before the clutter of the day sets in, we are better able to access the wellspring of creativity that lives in our subconscious minds.

4. Listen to Music: Not just any music, but music that will enhance creativity. Bach has been shown to help people access the right sides of their brains where our creativity resides. Mozart has been used with children to help them learn better. The creativity CDs of Dr. Jeffrey Thompson (available at Barnes & Noble, Border's and Amazon) have special qualities to help our brains enter a more creative state. Experiment—who knows what will activate your right brain?

5. Laugh: Laughter has been shown by many studies to enhance creativity. It makes sense. When we laugh, we are more relaxed. When we are more relaxed, we can create more easily. So laugh a lot--at yourself, at funny situations, at the absurdity of life. To learn how to laugh spontaneously, attend a free or low-cost laughter workshop by talented San Diego laughter leaders like Sarito Sun or Dr. Funshine—or find one near you by visiting the World Laughter Tour website. We all need a good laugh these days!

6. Shake it Out: We hold emotions in our bodies, and emotions can sometimes block our creativity. Take a creativity break by going to YouTube and finding a song that particularly gets you going. "What a Feeling" from Flashdance is my personal favorite theme song—find yours and dance!

7. Go with the Juice: We've all had those flashes of creativity. That book you've been meaning to write suddenly begins to write itself in your head, an idea for a new recipe occurs to you while you're driving. To the extent possible, go with the juice. Write down your ideas in a special notebook so you don't lose them. Paying attention when creative thoughts come up will encourage them to show up more often. By the way, if you've ever wondered why you get ideas in the shower or when driving, it's because those are right-brain activities, and the right side of your brain is where your creativity resides.

8. Meet new people: Take a risk. Chat up the person behind you at the grocery store or explore a new coffee shop. You'll fire up your right brain, and you might just make a new friend.

9. Doodle: Doodling is also a right-brain activity, and a great way to generate new ideas, explore your subconscious or even improve your memory. The next time you're stuck, just let your pen move aimlessly on a page in a playful way. You may be surprised what comes up!

10. Clear the clutter: I call them "naggies." You know naggies when you see them--they're impossible to avoid. They're those little things that never seem to get done. Those pants you bought six months ago but never hemmed, the books you can't remember to return to the friend who lent them to you, that stuff in the bag in your closet that you need to take to Goodwill--they're all naggies. Naggies nag at you, taunt you, drain your energy and pull you down in subtle ways. Because they never seem to get done, you chide or even berate yourself over them. Naggies are an arch enemy of your creativity because they distract you from your creative goals. Make it your goal to start eliminating the naggies in your life and watch your creativity blossom!

And here's the best tip of all: Join me for The Artist's Way, a 12-week journey into creativity and self-discovery. My new classes start in September. Visit my website to learn more about this life-changing class!

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