

## One Minute Skill Building Series

### Center for Student Involvement Resource Center

#### Keys to Creativity

Look for the second right answer. Often the really creative idea is just around the corner.

Use your soft thinking in the germinal phase of thought process; followed by hard thinking in the practical phase. The metaphor is an excellent tool to help you think about something differently.

Play the revolutionary and challenge the rules—especially the rules that govern your daily activities.

Periodically inspect your ideas to see if they are contributing to your thinking effectiveness.

Have rule-inspecting and rule-discarding sessions with your organization.

Ask “what if” questions and use the provocative answers as stepping stones to new ideas.

Encourage “what ifing” among the members of your organization

When a problem can be solved in a creative way, try posing it in ambiguous fashion so as not to restrict the imagination.

Try using humor to put the group in a creative state of mind.

Find your own personal sources of ambiguity that force you to look for more than one meaning.

If you make an error, use it as a stepping stone to a new idea you might not have otherwise discovered.

Differentiate between errors of “commission” (performing an act) and “omission” (failing to perform an act).

Strengthen your “risk muscle”.

The next time you have a problem, play with it!

Develop the hunter’s attitude: always be on the lookout for new ideas.

Look for analogous situations. Often problems similar to yours have been solved in other areas.

Let your “stupid monitor” down, play the fool and see what crazy ideas you can come up with.

Recognize when you or others are conforming or putting down the fool.

Have faith that the ideas you generate can and will be beneficial.

Adapted from Suffolk County Community College- from “A Whack on the Side of the Head” (Roger von Oech)

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#### Mental Locks to Creativity

**“The Right Answer”** Much of our educational system is based on the search for one right answer. Thus the “right answer” approach becomes deeply ingrained in our thinking. The problem is that life is ambiguous; there are many right answers—all depending on what you are looking for.

**“That’s Not Logical”** The thinking process can be divided into two processes: soft thinking which is approximate, diffuse, and contradictory and hard thinking which is precise, specific and consistent. For some, the thought process involves little soft thinking during idea conception, their attitude being “that’s not logical”.

**“Follow the Rules”** Our culture puts a great deal of pressure on one to “follow the rules”. From “don’t color outside the lines” to “don’t shout in the library”, our daily lives are governed by rules. Although some rules are good and serve to protect society, “following the rules” can only result in “thinking of things as they are”.

**“Be Practical”** As one grows older, they become a prisoner to the familiar and practical. When faced with a problem, the question is “what has been done” rather than “what if—”. For many daily activities the practical is important. But the practical can be destructive if it prevents us from asking “what if”.

**“Avoid Ambiguity”** We have been taught to “avoid ambiguity” because of the communication problems it can cause. And in situations where misunderstandings would be serious, “avoiding ambiguity” is good. However, too much detail and specificity can stifle the imagination.

**“To Error is Wrong”** There are times when error is inappropriate. Although many times, an error on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 50<sup>th</sup> attempt can serve as a stepping stone to the desired result. Being afraid to fail or constantly playing it safe can work to slow down or halt the creative process.

**“Play is Frivolous”** Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father. Many times an idea will be generated when you are involved in a task completely unrelated to your problem. But for some, the attitude is “stop playing around and get down to business”.

**“That’s Not My Area”** Specialization is a fact of life. Society requires you to narrow your focus and limit your field of view. To counter this attitude, make it a habit to be on the look-out for novel ideas that others have used successfully. Actively be on the hunt for new and interesting approaches.

**“Don’t Be Foolish”** Beware of group think. This is the phenomenon in which group members are more interested in retaining approval of the other members than trying to come up with creative solutions. Listen to “the fool” who is poking fun at an idea, they may have something important to say!

**“I’m Not Creative”** This attitude results in the self-fulfilling prophecy. An individual stifles themselves because they believe that creativity belongs only to others. To be creative, one must believe in the worth of their ideas and have the persistence to build on them.

Adapted from Suffolk County Community College