

Creative Genius

Cultivate habits to get out of ruts.



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OVER A CUP OF TEA IN DUBLIN, OUR client, David confessed to us that he had run out of creative juice, was unable to come up with fresh, new ideas, and was feeling stuck in a rut. Lacking the passion, energy and zest necessary to help him lead his team, he was just going through the motions day-to-day, showing up but not really being there, doing what he had to do but not doing it with joy and passion, getting by but not getting inspired.

When you are feeling like David, it's hard to be excited or look forward to anything. When you don't have much energy left in your creative tank, eventually you simply run out of gas.

At some point, you have likely felt overwhelmed, unmotivated, and stuck. During those times, it's hard to feel creative, come up with new ideas, and meet the challenges of your work and life with a feeling of possibility and passion. With the pace of change, creativity isn't a luxury—it's a survival skill.

Getting out of the rut is simply a matter of finding, nurturing, and experiencing various stimuli as part of your daily routine to keep things fresh and keep you engaged. As you become aware of how you seek and use stimulus to spark your creative genius, you will flourish.

Creative genius is your gift when you are stimulated—full of excitement, energy, ideas, possibilities, and a “can-do” attitude and behavior that communicates anything is possible. This genius brings creative energy into your work, meetings, and interactions with others; works more with imagination than knowledge; and pursues big, bold ideas.

Three Healthy Habits

We have identified several habits that shape your creative genius and give you the stimulus you need to get out of the rut. Here are three of these habits, along with ways of getting started.

Habit 1: Scouting. Imagine yourself drawing inspiration and insights from the world around you each day. The scouting habit forms the backbone of

your creative anatomy. Scouts keep their eyes open and immerse themselves in the experience at hand, much like anthropologists in the field. Scouting is not the time for evaluating, but rather for observing, being absorbed in and recording what it is that you see, hear, and read—not analyzing what those observations may mean. It's all about taking in different stimuli and seeing what sparks happen for you (a-ha moments that help you seed ideas).

When you're on autopilot, you perpetuate the rut. Sometimes shaking up the routine is exactly what you need to stimulate your creative genius. For example, examine how you get to your work. Likely you take the same mode



of transportation or the same route. How about going via a different way tomorrow? Or, try the bus if you take the train, a car if you take the bus, a bike if you walk? Change it a little. You may see things you haven't seen before and receive a creative spark.

French novelist Marcel Proust said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” While new landscapes provide rich opportunity within which to scout, often you need only to change the way you look at things. Try this: read a magazine that you normally wouldn't read. When you find yourself getting inspired, capture your thoughts. Review the journal, think about what you wrote and the ideas sparked from what you've written.

Habit 2: Cultivating. Picture a workspace that encourages your creativity. What does it look like? How do you feel when you walk into it? How about other spaces and places that give you energy or make you feel good? How can you cultivate the spaces and places

that will give you the fertile conditions for your creative genius to thrive?

A proper environment is critical to get out of a rut and attract sparks. You don't need a huge budget to rearrange your office furniture or buy a new picture or purchase some plants. This habit of cultivating is about creating, developing and experiencing spaces and places that will help you be in a creative state of mind. If you walk into an environment that makes you feel down, lowers your energy or leaves you uninspired, you can't be in that space and come up with great ideas that you feel passionate about. If you can't do much with your environment or need a change of pace, try getting out and about to a place or space where you can get some energy and a vibe that puts you in the right state of mind for creating. Sometimes simply going to a different space is all you need to feel inspired, get you out of the rut, and activate the creative genius! Or, inspirational music might provide the right “state of mind” for you. What can you do with your environment that will give you more energy and help you access your creative genius?

Habit 3: Playing. Plato was quoted as saying, “You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” How you play tells those you play with a lot about yourself. Sadly you rarely communicate who you are through play because you don't allow yourself to—nor is it typically rewarded or encouraged. At work, few managers consider play to be a legitimate way to spur business results. However, we believe that play is serious business. In fact, your creative genius must have a steady diet of fun. Play is a fast and easy way to get out of the rut. If nothing else, you keep amused. Think back to when you were a child or think about a child. Chances are this child spends more time in a state of play than in any other state. Of course your creativity naturally flourishes in childhood, but who says even with your grown-up responsibilities and rules, you can't have a little fun?

To be more playful, try a new hobby, sport, or food. See how you feel. Watch a funny movie tonight when you get home. Or, bring in a funny movie and watch it with your team instead of having your regular status update meeting.

As you practice these habits, start small. Select one habit and action. Soon your creative genius is sparked, and you are stimulated and out of the rut! **PE**

Andrew Pek and Jeannine McGlade are authors of Stimulated! Habits to Spark the Creative Genius at Work.

ACTION: Activate your creative genius.