

CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION



The Secret Superpower to Unlock Your True Potential

SOPHIE HOWARD

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a World of Ideas

This book is written to help you nurture what I believe is the most important skill in business – the ability to come up with original ideas. This skill cannot be replaced by robots, artificial intelligence or cheap outsourced labour. It is an excellent skill to develop and makes you invaluable in any business- on your own or as an employee. With creativity and imagination, you will have an ability to create desirable products and services, spot connections and opportunities that others miss, and find creative ways to solve problems.

Every successful business relies on unique products or services. In order to be successful, we rely on creating marketing messages that stand out, join the conversation inside the customer's mind, and imaginative ways to catch their attention on crowded advertising platforms.

We're competing for attention, using softer skills of persuasion and influence to close the sale. But without an original, compelling product or service, the business has nothing.

When you read this book I hope you'll realise the importance of being able to merge ideas from different disciplines, understand the need to find thinking time to be creative, and the importance of fostering this powerful skillset in the modern business world.

CHAPTER 1

THE POWER OF CREATIVITY

We often talk about the need for creativity. Whether it is creative thinking for solving problems or coming up with innovative ideas, creativity is used in common parlance. Well, do you know what it means? It's usually defined as a tendency to identify or produce ideas, possibilities, or even alternatives that can be used to communicate with others, solve problems, or even entertain yourself and those around you. It is commonly used to express unusual ideas or thoughts and individuals who have managed to change our culture and life in general in important ways. Apart from this, creativity is also used to refer to the ability to produce works resulting in the generation of novel concepts or products.

There are three common reasons why people are motivated toward creativity. The first reason is the need to solve problems, the second reason is to communicate values or ideas, and the third is to look for complex and new situations. Creativity is considered to be the cornerstone of imagination. All successful people share this brilliant skill. The ability to view things from a different perspective increases your creativity.

Creativity and Better Mental Health

According to a study conducted by Girija Kaimal et al. (2016), engaging in a creative art or any other activity that gets your creative juices flowing can reduce cortisol levels. Cortisol is a stress-inducing hormone, and it is released whenever you experience any stress. It is also a part of the basic fight-flight response ingrained into our genetic makeup. This response is a part of our survival instinct responsible for ensuring our survival in life-threatening conditions. Unfortunately, the human brain is incapable of distinguishing between physical danger such as being chased by a wild animal and mental

stress such as work pressure. The prolonged presence of the fight-or-flight response is associated with chronic stress and related disorders. A simple way to counteract this stress is by engaging in creative activities such as painting, drawing, and singing. Stress is also the primary marker for several chronic illnesses and disorders, including strokes, diabetes, and metabolic disorders.

According to the research conducted by Karen A Baikie et al. (2018), expressive writing can improve your emotional and physical health. In another study conducted by Pam A Mueller et al. (2014), writing things down can reduce anxiety, ease depressive symptoms, and improve your overall mental health. According to the research undertaken by Tamlin S Conner et al. (2016), engaging in daily creative pursuits increases your overall sense of wellbeing and productivity.

Research in this field has led to similar observations and inferences. Engaging in creative pursuits improves your cognitive functioning, emotional health, and even mental health.

Moving Past the Myth of “The Lone Genius”

History is filled with instances of lone geniuses. Men and women achieved great feats unlike any through their inspiration and talent. Whether it is Emily Dickinson, Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, or even Vincent van Gogh, they're all considered to be examples of lone geniuses. The concept of the lone genius is fueled by the notion that creativity is driven by search, interaction, and plenty of solitude. It essentially refers to an individual who works and burns the midnight oil, stays confined to himself while developing a grand theory or an innovative idea with hardly any interactions with others. The idea of the lone genius is supported by Noble prizes too. It suggests that inventions and innovative ideas alike are the result of breakthroughs achieved by working independently.

Well, the concept of the lone genius is nothing more than a myth. Innovation doesn't take place in a vacuum or isolation. Instead, it's usually a sea of collaboration peppered with periods of incubation and solitude. For instance, Albert Einstein might be considered to be a prototypical lone genius. He is responsible for several wonderful ideas, innovations, and discoveries that

paved the way for modern physics. It would be wrong to suggest that all his success is down to his solitude. His ideas were not developed in solitude. If anything, they were based on the intellectual foundations laid down by his predecessors and peers. Yes, he did come up with concepts that others did not, but these concepts were not born out of thin air. Even if the idea struck him out of the blue, several others laid the foundation. Creativity is usually the culmination of curiosity and questioning. It is an amalgamation of convergent and divergent thinking.

Even if Pablo Picasso is considered to be a lone genius, his creativity is associated with the friendly and competitive rivalry he had with Matisse. Similarly, it is said that Vincent van Gogh once suggested to his brother, Theo, that his creations were as much his as his Theo's. Emily Dickinson authored hundreds of poems during her lifetime. She was considered a famous recluse, but her works were inspired by all those she corresponded with via letters. Likewise, it is said that Einstein managed to make sense of his theory of relativity after intense discussions with Michele Besso, his former classmate and officer at the Swiss patent office.

In all these situations, the primary idea is collaboration. Regardless of whether it is a direct or an indirect one, their success was due to collaboration. Whether it is a muse or a silent partner, their success came through collaborative efforts. On the other hand, there are several instances of collaborative partnerships leading to immense success. Notable examples include the Wright brothers, the Curies, and McCartney's. Orville and Wilbur Wright, through their joint efforts, became aviation pioneers. They are accredited with inventing, developing, building, and flying the first-ever motor-operated airplane known to humankind. Similarly, the duo responsible for discovering two radioactive substances- polonium and radium, are the Nobel-Prize winners Marie and Pierre Curie.

When you go through these examples, it becomes abundantly clear that innovation and creativity don't occur in a vacuum. Yes, some people are responsible for ideas no one else thought of, but their discoveries and innovations are result of collaborative work. The power of collaboration cannot be discounted when it comes to creativity. Life doesn't occur in a vacuum, and neither does anything that happens in it.

If you are interested in testing the limits of your creativity, let go of the notion of a “lone genius.” This is nothing more than a myth. Humans aren't designed to be lone wolves. Our ability to survive and thrive depends on collaboration.

Negative Influence of Digital Technology and Social Media

The list of gadgets involved in our lives these days is endless - laptops, desktops, smartphones, smartwatches, and tablets. Digital technology has become part and parcel of daily human life. Whether it is an adult or a child, our dependence on technology and social media is undeniable. From the constant chiming of notifications on our smartphones, alerts on our smartwatches, and the incessant pinging of notifications on our laptops, modern lifestyle is about being plugged in. We live in a time that's glorified the concept of staying connected. This always-on lifestyle has become a significant problem because it has taken a toll on our creativity, productivity, and overall wellbeing and health. This is one of the reasons why the urge to digitally disconnect is increasing these days. Technology and social media have simplified our lives. Unfortunately, it comes with a hefty price tag. This price tag does not justify the convenience it offers.

Technology offers a variety of advantages that most of us seldom look at its liabilities. Digital distraction is real but incredibly easy to deny. Ironically, the efforts we make to save our time often result in denial. All the tech distractions have made a living in this denial quite easy because they seem useful and even nurturing to a certain extent.

Digital distraction is slowly but surely killing our creativity. In the previous section, you were introduced to all the different advantages of creativity and why it is considered one of the most important human traits. It is a valuable skill, and technology is diminishing it steadily. Creativity is not a gift bestowed upon a selected few. It's a natural part of thinking and behavior. Unfortunately, digital distraction is blocking and killing it. In this section, let's look at a few simple ways digital tech and social media erode our creativity.

Information Overload

Have you ever heard of the term information overload? It is a self-explanatory term and essentially refers to excess information that cannot be processed. This term was coined by a political science professor working at Hunter College named Bertram Gross in 1964. He used it to refer to a situation where the information input in a system exceeds its processing capacity. As humans, we only have a limited capacity to cognitively process all the information we are presented with. When there is excess information, or it overwhelms our processing capacity, it reduces the quality of our decisions. The concept of information overload is not a new idea. One of the earliest references to it dates back to the 3rd or 4th century BCE when a writer complained there is no end to making books. Even during the renaissance and the period of the industrial revolution, this complaint kept coming up. Managing information these days is no longer a problem restricted to the wealthy elite. The era of digital technology and information has granted us access to a massive wealth of data. All this data is available at the click of a button. Whether it is social media, mobile applications, web pages, or even emails, data spills into our lives from endless sources.

Every day, a high volume of new information is created. The pressure to create more information is increasing. It's become incredibly easy to create, duplicate, and even share information online these days. We all receive information from multiple sources and channels. A combination of these factors is directly increasing the weight of historical data available. It is also resulting in massive amounts of conflicting and contradictory information available.

When you put all these things together, it becomes abundantly clear that we are constantly overwhelmed by information. Open your email, and you will see a flood of notifications. Check any of your social media profiles, and there will be hundreds of updates and notifications. Whatever you do, there is a lot of information, and not all of it is important. Since the human brain is a relatively small organ compared to all the wealth of data available, it is overwhelmed. When you are flooded with so much information, making sense of it is beyond any of our brain's capacity. This is one truth we all need to acknowledge, accept, and understand. Collectively, as a race, we have bitten off more than we can chew. The saying is both figuratively and literally true in the tech world. Information overload is reducing our creativity. When

your brain is overworked, overwhelmed, and unable to catch up with all the information it needs to process, there is no room left for creativity. Unless you take digital detoxification, restarting your brain's creativity is not an option.

Digital Dopamine

Phobias are intense fears and aren't always rational. You might have come across agoraphobia, claustrophobia, hemophobia, hydrophobia, arachnophobia, and so on. Well, there's a new intense fear doing rounds these days, and it is nomophobia. What does it mean? It refers to an intense fear of being separated from one's smartphone. Smartphones have made our lives easier. Whether it is talking to a loved one halfway around the world, ordering groceries, or even indulging in retail therapy, everything is just a click away. The dependence on smartphones is steadily increasing. On average, we spend around 2-4 hours daily on our phones. In the last decade, this single tech device has become a necessity and has been considered an extension of one's body. Have you ever felt handicapped without your phone? Or felt like you were transported to the dark ages when you couldn't access your phone for one reason or another? If yes, it is time to take a hard look at what technology has done to us.

This dependence on the Internet and technology didn't occur overnight. It all started with a single neurotransmitter produced in the brain known as dopamine. Neurotransmitters are chemical messengers responsible for communication between the brain and different cells in the body. These chemicals are also responsible for certain behaviors and habits. Dopamine is one of the most important and powerful neurotransmitters because it is responsible for our reward cycle. Do you ever feel good after doing something? This feeling is caused by dopamine. Dopamine is extremely pleasurable and is responsible for making us feel happy, motivated, and even aroused.

The brain automatically seeks any activity that results in the production of dopamine. This is also how dependence and addictions are created. Even something as mundane as watching videos on YouTube and scrolling through your feed on Instagram can be oddly rewarding and satisfying. According to

the research conducted by Arastirma Makalesi et al. (2019), social media addiction is dopamine driven. The problem with addiction is it prevents us from leading a healthy and happy life. The growing dependence on digital dopamine is not only killing creativity but is reducing our productivity and harming our mental and physical health.

If all you need to do is merely access your social media feed to feel good, your brain will prompt you to do it more often. If all your time and energy are dedicated to this, it will harm your quality of life. For instance, do you feel good when you get a “like” or a positive “comment” on your social media posts? This simple activity releases dopamine in your brain. The world we live in favors instant gratification. This idea is further facilitated by the growing popularity and dependence on social media. If you want to buy something, head to Amazon. You have Netflix if you get an instant urge to watch something. If you are seeking companionship, there's Tinder, Bumble, and so on. The options are endless.

Unfortunately, the convenience all this technology offers is breeding impatience. It, in turn, is harming our ability to cater to our professional and personal relationships alike. Dependence on digital dopamine is eroding our creativity.

Digital Laziness

The Internet is arguably one of the most important parts of the modern world. Whether it is a financial transaction or research and communication, everything revolves around digital infrastructure. Believe it or not, technology, especially the Internet, is reducing your brain's usual work. Prima facie, it sounds quite helpful. Unfortunately, it is merely making our brains lazy. When Google is with you, why do you need to remember facts or figures? Forget about statistics; if all the information about your contacts is stored on one device, you no longer have to memorize names or numbers. Why learn the layout of the city when you have digital maps at your disposal? The Internet has made our life easy, but it has taken a toll on our cognitive capabilities.

When we talk about digital laziness, the word lazy is used concerning your

brain's functioning. It doesn't refer to the times when you decide to become a couch potato or do nothing. Instead, it refers to your ability to recall, think, and come to logical conclusions without any external help or support. For instance, before the Internet stepped into the picture if you read a statistical survey or a scientific study, you had to memorize the information included in it. These days, you just need to search for it online, and you have everything at your disposal. You don't even have to read through the entire article; the search function on the Internet lets you search for specific words needed. Life couldn't have been made any easier than that already, yes.

Another unfortunate consequence of the digital revolution is we have outsourced our thinking capabilities to the Internet. When there is a vast collection of intellect available, why do we even need to think? According to a study conducted by Amanda M Ferguson et al. (2015), the increasing dependence on the Internet is increasing the urge of self-doubt. The study's researchers noticed the participants doubted their existing knowledge and would rather depend on the Internet to double-check their knowledge.

Apart from second-guessing ourselves, digital amnesia has become quite real. Why bother making an effort to remember when everything you need is stored elsewhere? This is not usually a conscious decision we make. On some level, our brains have accepted that there's no point in committing things to memory because there is an available option to crosscheck and retrieve information whenever required. According to a study conducted by Betsy Sparrow et al. (2011), our collective dependence on The Internet is slowly reducing our memory and recollecting abilities. In the study, participants were asked to type facts and delete the file. When they were told the file would be deleted later, their ability to recollect the fact they have written was significantly higher. Another interesting inference of this study was the participants' ability to remember the location of a specific folder on the computer was higher than the facts stored in it. This merely shows that our brain efficiently outsources its memories instead of increasing its storage space and recollection abilities. When your brain is voluntarily reducing its cognitive abilities, your creativity is bound to take a backseat.

Reduction in Critical and Independent Thinking

Technology is slowly but steadily playing a bigger and integral role in our lives these days. Critical thinking and analysis are important for better decision-making. This is also the cornerstone for independent thinking. Dependence on technology has improved our visual skills and has steadily declined our ability to think critically and analyze situations. For instance, playing video games and watching series do not engage your imagination or thinking process as reading does.

The easy accessibility of technology is reducing our ability to think creatively and independently. After all, a simple online search gives you all the answers to the questions you have. We are flooded by readymade thoughts, ideas, and opinions. So, we don't have to exercise our mental muscles. Technology might help you work faster and even smarter in certain cases, but it does not do any favors when it comes to critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. If all the answers you need are just a click away, the reliance on technology to solve all your problems will increase. This can reduce your perception of intelligence and knowledge. At the end of the day, the only person you can count on is yourself. Do not give away this control over to anyone or anything else. A computer can never be a replacement for the human brain. After all, it is the brain that conceived the idea of a computer.

According to the research published by Betsy Sparrow et al. (2011), the need to recall or analyze information is slowly reducing with increasing dependence on technology. Since future access to information is always a possibility in the tech world, the need to remember or even fully understand concepts and ideas is slowly reducing. Let's assume that you read through a new concept today. Can you access the same information sometime later? Yes, you can! If so, what's the need to remember or memorize it? This thinking is the primary reason for the decline in our critical thinking faculties. When readymade opinions and answers are available, the need for independent thoughts reduces. We are unknowingly developing a herd mentality.

Critical thinking is not a new concept, and ancient philosophers such as Plato and Socrates also believed in its importance. It is defined as the ability to rationally and think and understand the logical connection between different ideas. It is also understood as the ability to engage in independent and

reflective thinking. You are essentially using the ability to reason before coming to any conclusions. This skill helps identify, understand, and solve the problem systematically instead of depending purely on intuition. Critical thinking enables better judgments and promotes informed decision-making.

The ability to think independently helps question your available set of information and draw inferences from it based on your thoughts, opinions, and ideas. This opens your mind to the wealth of knowledge you have access to. It helps you become more discerning of all the possibilities and options available. In a way, it is a personal skill that increases your self-confidence and self-belief. The ability to think independently is what sets the creative brains apart from the rest.

Ideation Industry

Ideation is a part of the design process that primarily focuses on the generation of ideas. The primary notion of ideation is to “go wide” regarding concepts and outcomes associated with an idea. This process not only fuels creativity but also helps understand whether a specific idea is implementable or not. Ideation is necessary for innovation. To develop solutions, you need ideation because it involves innovation and creativity. When the possible course of actions or solutions available in any given situation is expanded, it becomes easier to think of different solutions to solve the said problem.

Ideation helps ask the right questions, which leads to innovation. In any situation, there are always obvious choices and solutions. Ideation helps push past these regular choices and opens up the scope for innovation. It also helps uncover any previously unexplored areas of innovation and creativity. If you are looking for out-of-the-box thinking, ideation will come in handy. The concept of ideation is not about a singular brainstorming session. Instead, it's about several people coming together and thinking about different ideas and solutions. It helps turn a team into a cohesive unit by seamlessly combining different perspectives. After all, two brains are always better than one when it comes to problem-solving.

Ideation involves various methods ranging from prototyping to mind mapping, brainstorming, creating a storyboard, brain dumping, challenge

assumption, and crowd storm. Each of these ideas is designed to fuel your brain's creativity and promote innovation.

Computers Are Not a Replacement

Computers are incredibly smart and quick. That said, they're not a replacement for the human brain. Regardless of how powerful, smart, or quick a computer is, it is still a slave to instructions and rules. It's not capable of thinking original thoughts or creativity in any form. Even if a computer can successfully compete with and defeat a grandmaster at chess, it cannot compose music like Beethoven or Mozart. We can write programs to help a computer with creativity, but its capability is still restricted to the programs written. Original ideas are the result of shifting paradigms, streaming of consciousness, and freedom. When it comes to computers, there are formulas, rules, and several constraints involved. This does not begin to compete with the idea or out-of-the-box thinking.

Computers are not a replacement for human creativity. Take a moment and think about it. Do you think a computer will ever try to determine whether it is creative enough or not? It will not think of this unless it is programmed to do so. This question will never voluntarily strike its central processing unit. Unlike a computer, we are capable of thinking whether we are creative or not. We are also capable of thinking critically, analyzing different things, and coming up with new ideas. Humans are capable of criticizing while machines are not. Regardless of how wonderful that result or output generated by a computer is, it will never compete with human imagination or brain.

Even if a machine is programmed to compose music or write poetry, ultimately, humans have to decide whether the output is worth it or not. A computer cannot judge for itself whether the finished work is any good. Human creativity is not just the result of our ability to think innovatively. It also includes our ability to think critically about an idea and evaluate it.

In short, creativity is one of the most important life skills you can concentrate on. It is a common trade that all successful people share. Creativity is seldom the result of thinking confined to a specific individual. Instead, consciously or unconsciously, it is an amalgamation of efforts made by different people.

Whether it is Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, or Marie Curie, their ideas were extremely brilliant, and they managed to revolutionize the world. These ideas were also influenced by the thoughts, opinions, and ideas of others in their lives. Creativity doesn't occur in a vacuum, and the concept of the lone genius is nothing more than a myth. When it comes to creativity, the idea doesn't always have to be original, but spotting a pattern and being open-minded helps maximize an idea's efficiency.

A simple way to tap into your creative side is by reducing the dependence on digital technology and social media. Whether it is digital laziness, information overload, or increased stress, there are many harmful effects of prolonged dependence on technology and social media. Even though the Internet has become an integral aspect of modern life, it harms our ability to think independently and critically. Regardless of how efficient a machine is, it is not capable of generating ideas on its own. There is no replacement for human creativity.

CHAPTER 2

THE VALUE OF IDEAS PEOPLE

Conventionally, an idea refers to a novel concept or a thought about a possible course of action. This term is used quite frequently. An idea doesn't always refer to your “eureka” moment like Archimedes. Ideas are essential for progress. Progress relies on a change, and it doesn't occur without an idea. Human progress and development are therefore closely associated with different ideas. Unless these ideas are implemented and realized, they're just thoughts. Creativity is your ability to think of new ideas and transform them into reality. By executing creative ideas, innovation takes place. Simply put, the value of an idea can never be underestimated because it has the power to change the whole world.

How to Get in Touch With Your Creative Side

Learning to get in touch with your creative side is important for discovering your true potential. Here are a few practical tips and suggestions you can use.

Inspiration Matters

It's quite easy to assume all successful people wake up feeling incredibly motivated and inspired. If you have been thinking this, it's time to think again. Finding motivation or inspiration is the same for those who are successful and struggling to find their success. These are not traits that manifest out of thin air. Everyone goes through their fair share of ups and downs in life before making it big. Even after making it back, you need to stay inspired and motivated to keep going. From the desire to leave a positive impact on the world, to create space dedicated to creative thinking, there are different habits successful people follow to stay motivated. This section looks at simple tips and suggestions successful people use to stay inspired and motivated.

Who isn't aware of the CEO of SpaceX and Tesla Elon Musk? He is one of the most successful billionaires, entrepreneurs, and pioneers in the tech world. It's a known secret that he sleeps very little and works incredibly hard to get on with his ambitious projects. So how does he find the motivation to do all this while ensuring all his companies succeed? In one of his public addresses, Musk said that the primary motivating factor for him is to visualize a future that makes him feel good. One key takeaway from Musk is to find a purpose that is bigger than yourself and think about the footprints you will leave behind.

The founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, lives by the motto move fast and break things. This tech mogul believes and supports the notion that waiting for a single Eureka moment in life is incredibly dangerous. It's nothing more than a lie. When he started Facebook, he did not know how big a success it would be. He didn't know he had his Eureka moment. If you keep waiting for the Eureka moment to occur or an epiphany to strike you overnight, you are setting yourself up for failure. Never wait for inspiration to strike you. You need to take action and get moving to discover what inspires and keeps you going.

When it comes to concentrating on productivity, Jeff Bezos has something of value to add. Amazon's CEO believes in letting your mind wander aimlessly for ideas to strike. He believes in maintaining harmony between moments of passiveness and creative thinking coupled with relentless execution once an idea is implemented. You don't have to feel guilty if you are not always productive. At times, the mind needs to wander to stumble upon an idea. Cut yourself a little slack, and don't be too hard on yourself.

Richard Branson, the founder and CEO of the Virgin Group, controls more than 400 companies in different fields and industries. This business magnet did not randomly find success one day. So, what is the secret that keeps him going? He believes there is no magic pill when it comes to success. It's always about finding a purpose that transcends the idea of earning money. It's about structuring your life such that you constantly work towards long-term goals and don't stop learning. He looks for new challenges and talks to those who inspire him. When it comes to success, money shouldn't be your only motivation. Understand your reason; add organization to your life and be a

student forever. These are the lessons you need to learn from Richard Branson.

The product Spanx is synonymous with shapewear for women across the globe. Sara Blakely came up with her revolutionary idea while traveling in a car. She is one of the most successful businesswomen and billionaire entrepreneurs in the world. This was when she realized that driving fuels her creative thinking process. She usually has a fake commute where she wakes up an hour earlier than usual and drives around aimlessly. She believes this promotes inspired thinking. What is the takeaway from Sara Blakely's inspiration? The answer is quite simple. You might not have paid any conscious attention to it, but the surroundings and the environment you are exposed to affect your thinking process and capabilities.

How to Become an Idea Machine

Ideas are considered to be the currency of the 21st century. Regardless of what comes and goes in life, your ideas are always your own. This concept was publicized by James Altucher, an author, entrepreneur, podcaster, and hedge-fund manager. His book, “Become an Idea Machine,” delves into great detail about the power of the human mind and its ability to churn out ideas. He suggests a simple mental exercise to strengthen your creativity.

Think of the brain like any other muscle in the body. For instance, if you want bigger biceps, what should you do? You need to exercise more often and lift weights. Since the brain is a muscle, too, the only way to strengthen it is through exercise. Ideas are crucial for success in all aspects of life. So, it is important to train your idea muscle or the brain. To generate more ideas, you need to start exercising them. The simplest way to do this is by following the 10-idea rule. Before you start your day, spend time in the morning, find a quiet spot, and start thinking. This is your ideal time. Select a specific situation or an object and note 10 ideas that can be used to make it better. It can be 10 ways to improve the interiors in your home or a presentation at work. Regardless of the topic chosen, make a note of 10 ideas. Chances are, not all the ideas you come up with are incredible, but that is not the point of this exercise.

Writing the first 3 or 4 ideas is quite simple. If you push yourself a little, you will reach the 6th idea. After this, it becomes a little difficult for your brain. This is quite similar to running a marathon. The initial miles in a marathon are easier to cover than the last ones. Once you reach the midpoint, you need to push yourself to keep going. This is precisely what you are doing to your brain. After the six ideas you have come up with, the brain starts to sweat. It needs to work harder to complete the task at hand. By pushing your brain to think more, you are enhancing its problem-solving skills. Try to think beyond the obvious during the idea time.

Once you have a list of ideas, you need to sort the wheat from the chaff. How do you do this? It's time to put on your metaphorical glasses. Start by assuming an optimist's role and note all the positive aspects or benefits offered by an idea. After this, think about it from a cynic's perspective and make a list of reasons why the idea will not work. You merely need to change your perspective in the given situation and look at the idea from a fresh perspective. After all, this, if you realize the idea is worth implementing, go for it! You never know because all it takes is one idea to change your life!

Are you wondering why you need to think of at least 10 ideas daily? Well, this is an incredible practice that offers several advantages. When you start training your mental muscle to think of new ideas, it changes your perspective and broadens your horizon. You will slowly notice you have more ideas than ever before while your brain is working more creatively. The ideas you write down daily can be invaluable. It doesn't necessarily have to make sense today, but it might come in handy sometime in the future. Writing down your ideas helps build the right momentum for your day. It increases your sense of clarity while giving you a purpose and a sense of direction. If you like one of your ideas, you can take the steps required to execute it.

If you are just getting started with this concept of training your idea muscle, here are suggestions you can use.

- 10 ideas to improve time-management
- 10 ideas to improve your productivity at work
- 10 ideas to increase your financial freedom
- 10 ideas to balance your work and personal life

- 10 ideas to get your creative juices flowing

Well, you get the idea, right?

Perfection is the Enemy

Since the beginning, humans have been obsessed with the idea of perfection. Perfection is the ultimate goal. Alas, it is an unattainable goal. Do you remember the saying, “Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder?” What might look beautiful and perfect to one doesn't necessarily seem so to another. This is the reason why perfection cannot be attained. Perfection refers to a state of flawlessness. If something is perfect, there shouldn't be any defects in it. At times, perfection can be achieved in certain tasks. For instance, you can try to complete a job perfectly or achieve a perfect score. If perfection is the goal in life, you are setting yourself up for disappointment. Humans were never intended to be perfect.

Forget humans; even machines cannot be perfect. They might operate perfectly for a while, but the usual wear and tear, maintenance, and repairs cannot be ignored. In a culture obsessed with goal orientation and achievement, perfection might seem like a perfect goal. Can you look at a rainbow and complain that one of its colors is not perfect? Doing this not only ruins a perfectly good moment, but it is also ridiculous. Unfortunately, this is what we subject ourselves to when we focus too much on perfection. It is okay to push yourself to do better, but there is a limit too. Striving for perfection is different from the expectation of perfection. When you strive for perfection, you are pushing yourself to do better every time. When perfection becomes the ideal outcome, it is a recipe for disaster and disappointment.

Another drawback of perfectionism is it creates discord and eliminates creativity. Perfection induces incredible anxiety. When you strive to be a perfectionist, taking the first step itself becomes incredibly difficult. For instance, you might come up with a wonderful idea and believe it is incredible. Once you have the idea in place, you start thinking about it. The more you think about it, the more imperfections you see in your seemingly perfect idea. You will eventually reach a stage of thinking where you believe the idea is worthless. This can be anxiety-inducing. Since perfection is

subjective, it increases anxiety. Unless something is perfect, taking the first step with a perfectionist attitude is next to impossible.

If you are a perfectionist, your work will never truly be ready. Regardless of the countless hours that go into it, all the effort and dedication, nothing will ever be good enough. There will always be something that needs to be edited or fixed. When this happens, the chances of procrastination creeping in increase drastically. When you stop procrastinating, implementing an idea becomes difficult. Procrastination also reduces creativity.

The fear of judgment is quite real while aiming for perfection. For instance, most writers spend all their life working on a project they never publish. They do this because they believe their project requires more work and there's scope for improvement. The more you look at something, the more flaws you notice. The most common reason they don't take the first pass is that they're scared of being judged. Since perfectionism is nothing more than a Mirage, striving for it sets you up for disappointment. It also increases the fear that whatever you do is never good enough.

When you put all these negative thoughts together, it becomes abundantly clear that perfectionism is the enemy of inspiration and creativity. You cannot create anything if you can't stop thinking about perfection.

Constraints Fuel Creativity

Necessity is the mother of all inventions. This saying is true. When you need something that becomes essential, you start looking for different ways to achieve it. You don't only start consciously looking for ways to fulfill a necessity, but you are forced to do so. What does this saying have to do with creativity? At times, constraints are important to fuel your creativity.

Creativity might sound like something that stems from freedom. This is a romantic notion. Most of us believe creativity is something that is at its best when the possibilities are endless. When you have all the time and resources required and anything that can come and go is available. This is nothing more than an ideal scenario to complete a creative project. Unfortunately, this is also a myth. In reality, creativity isn't always the result of freedom. At times, you need some constraints to get your creative juices flowing. Whether these

constraints are natural or self-imposed, they always help.

Common constraints that can fuel creativity are budget, time, and space. If the resources at your disposal are unlimited, it increases the freedom to explore different alternatives. If these resources are limited, the opportunity cost associated with each of the alternatives increases. These constraints create a dire need for creativity. For instance, if you have a 4000 sq ft house, you have ample space to decorate it according to your needs and requirements. If space was restricted to 1000 sq ft, you need to get more creative to accommodate all your requirements. Do you see what happened here? The space constraint prompted creativity.

Similarly, if you have two months to complete a presentation, it gives you plenty of time to create and prepare yourself for the presentation. This also increases the risk of procrastination. You can always start working on the presentation at a later date. Now, if the deadline you were working with was just 10 days, what will you do? You will need to create a plan of action to achieve your goal within a limited period. Knowing that you are working against the clock creates additional pressure or favorable stress that gets your creative juices flowing. Establishing a budget constraint also prompts creativity. This is so much more than a theoretical concept.

Constraints are like obstacles you need to navigate. Navigating around them might not be pleasant, but once you understand how to maneuver yourself, reaching the desired destination becomes easier. Creativity is not restricted to thoughts or ideas but includes execution too. When you start working with constraints, that helps fine-tune your focus instead of getting distracted by everything else happening. Limitations certainly inspire creativity, even if it sounds counterintuitive.

In a study conducted by Ravi Mehta et al. (2015), constraints fuel creativity. This study included 60 undergrad students who were randomly divided into two groups. The participants were then asked to write an essay about growing up with limited or plenty of resources depending on their assigned group. After this, they had to come up with creative ways to use bubble wrap. A panel later scored their essays and ideas. The researchers noted the group with fewer resources came up with the most creative ideas to use bubble wrap. This study goes on to support the notion that a reduction in the

availability of resources increases creativity. The constraint itself acts as an incentive for the need to be creative. When you have everything you can ever think of, the chances of opting for a path with the least resistance increase. On the other hand, when you are left with a few resources with multiple applications, it increases the need for creative applications.

Whether it is an unexpected obstacle or a curveball, it helps shift your brain out the rut it is in. It, in turn, increases critical thinking and creativity.

Creativity Fuels Progress and Growth

Progress or growth is important for getting ahead in life. If you want to move forward, change is needed. Change is the only constant in life. You might have heard all these things. Well, creativity is the fuel that promotes progress and growth. If it weren't for that one idea, the world would still be the same. For instance, what if the Wright brothers never acted on the idea of designing a fully automated and motorized flying machine? If it weren't for their idea, we would not have had an airplane today. Air transport would not even exist. From the machine designed by the Wright brothers during the late 1800s to the aviation industry today, we have come a long way. This is what progress and growth look like. It always starts with the idea that transforms into something bigger.

Without creativity, chances are they will keep repeating the same patterns. Progress doesn't occur without change. All those who are incapable of changing their minds are incapable of making any progress in life. If you want to get ahead, you need to concentrate on strengthening your mental muscles. Previously, you were introduced to different tips and suggestions that can be used to strengthen and tap into your creativity. Well, now is the time to start following those suggestions and implementing them in your daily life. Once you embrace your creative side and start harnessing its power, you will truly be surprised.

Apart from this, you should also work on changing your belief system. Accept the fact that you are only human, and making mistakes is a part of the process. If you are unwilling to change this mindset, it is a sign of stagnation. If your life becomes stagnant, growth and progress are not possible. If you

want to be successful, embrace the concept of making mistakes and learning from your failures. Success is not possible without failure. Whether it is Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Mark Zuckerberg, or Jeff Bezos, all these people had to overcome several obstacles and failures until they attained the success they are known for today. Your brain is a muscle, and you have the power to start exercising it.

Similarly, the creator of Facebook had no idea at the time of its creation that his social media platform will be used by over a billion people. He intended to create a communication platform for all those residing within a specific college or University. This idea not only changed his life but the course of humanity too. This is one of the reasons why you should never brush away your ideas. Instead, keep on working your idea muscle until you find an idea worth implementing.

The power of an idea can never be underestimated. Ideas are fueled by creativity. Creativity is not a skill that you are blessed with. You can teach your brain to be more creative. Concentrate on filling your mind with inspiration. Whether it is Richard Branson or Warren Buffett, there's a lot to learn from successful people. Find their sources of inspiration and try incorporating them into your daily life. Instead of letting technology guide your decisions, transform your brain into an idea machine. Start practicing the 10-idea rule suggested by James Altucher. While getting in touch with your creativity, let go of any notions of perfectionism. Perfection is the enemy of creativity and creation. Instead, establish helpful constraints such as resources, deadlines, or budgets to fuel your creativity.

Ideas cannot be generated by anyone other than the human brain. Your idea muscle cannot be replaced by outsourced labor, software, or even artificial intelligence. That said, not all your ideas need to be wonderful or worthy of implementation. To enhance your creativity, learn to separate the wheat from the chaff. At times, your idea might not necessarily make sense to others. It is okay if that's the case. As long as it makes sense to you, and you believe in it, standby outside. George Bernard once said, "All progress depends on the unreasonable man." There is a fine line to tread between genius and insanity. Tread this line carefully, and success is closer than you imagine.

CHAPTER 3

THE POWER OF A CREATIVE MIND

It's been repeatedly mentioned in this book that creativity is something you can work on improving. Whether you want to achieve success or become better at problem-solving, the answer lies in unlocking your true potential through creativity. In this chapter, let's look at simple practices that can help improve your creativity.

Think Time

The world we live in is extremely complicated and dynamic. We are all usually in a rush to complete one thing and move onto another. When you are chasing one task after another, it can become quite overwhelming. Simultaneously, you are trying to squeeze in as many activities as possible within the limited timeframe. When you are constantly working like this, you become a prisoner of unrealistic expectations. A simple way to decompress and let your brain take a break is by allocating time for thinking and reflection. Successful billionaires and entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg usually take “think” days or weeks to read, meditate, exercise, and concentrate on healthy eating. You might believe you don't have sufficient time to do what these people do. Well, take a leaf out of their success and try to concentrate on developing their healthy habits. Warren Buffett, one of the most successful investors in the world, once said he spent most of his time thinking and reading.

You need to make thinking a part of your daily life. Even if it's just for 20 minutes or an hour, set time aside where all you do is think. During this period, don't let any other distractions get the better of you. Instead, concentrate only on yourself. This is quite similar to the billable hours of a lawyer. Most lawyers and professionals charge for the time they spend

thinking. Why do they do this? Do this because thinking is not as simple as most people seem to believe. Thinking is an activity required for your mental muscles to become stronger and more efficient. Whether it is reading or taking a walk, different activities trigger your idea generators.

Networking

To become creative, you need to broaden your horizon. A simple and effective way to do this is by surrounding yourself with people from different fields and walks of life. Networking is a great way to not just build relationships but also strengthen your creativity. There is an interesting relationship between networks and creative productivity. Most of us usually gravitate towards those who are similar to us in one way or another. Whether it is a similarity in thinking, ideas, or personalities, we constantly look for people with commonalities. When this happens, sooner or later, there will be homogeneity in your circle. Your circle can consist of family members, friends, colleagues, associates, business partners, and so on. Since you cannot choose your family members, let's eliminate that from the list of networking. Let's move onto everyone else who is a part of your usual network.

Homogeneity kills creativity. Unless you take deliberate action to reverse this trend, you cannot improve your creativity. Creative thinking is a combination of convergent and divergent thinking. Divergent thinking includes idea generation and visualizing, while convergent thinking about analysis and judgment. Both these types of thinking need to come together to improve your creativity. According to the research conducted by Kyung Hee Kim (1992), divergent thinking usually reduces over time, and in its absence, convergent thinking takes over, and it reduces your ability to produce new ideas.

When you step outside your closed circle, it gives you access to divergent perspectives. The pressure of social conformity is quite real, reducing your ability to take on risks or explore new ideas. Many people conform to societal notions, especially in tight-knit groups, because they believe it will jeopardize their sense of belongingness if they do something others do not agree with. When you start talking to others, it automatically broadens your horizons and perspectives. Two heads are better than one for problem-

solving. Now, imagine how much better it is if multiple brains are at play? When you talk to others, this is one reason it helps obtain better insight, valuable ideas, and even different perspectives that can improve your overall productivity. How you view a problem will be quite different from how someone else views it.

Importance of Thinking Space

When it comes to improving your creativity, you need thinking space. All the thinking you do generate ideas. These ideas improve your ability to make decisions or take effective action to move forward. All these steps need to be performed deliberately. The best way to maximize your overall productivity while doing this is by setting aside dedicated time and having a clear mind. If you are trying to work in a distracting environment, your reasoning and logical thinking will reduce. It also prevents your creativity from coming to the forefront.

Since we all live in an extremely busy world, creating time for thinking and setting aside thinking space are two things most of us fail to do. You need to create a space to reflect, learn, and decide. Believe it or not, the general environment you are exposed to influences your creativity. Different environmental factors such as noise, light, and color can affect your creative thinking process and overall productivity. The environment needs to be such that it is psychologically and physically comforting. It needs to allow your mind to relax and stretch itself. Whether it is comfortable seating, ideal temperature, lack of unnecessary background noises, or sufficient lighting, they all play a significant role in your thinking process. Think about all the different things that inspire and motivate you. Make a list and try incorporating them into your physical space. At home, create a work desk or a thinking spot for yourself. Don't allow anyone else there and use it regularly for your thinking time.

5-Hour Rule

Reading is essential for learning. You cannot learn if you don't read. Regardless of what you believe, reading is one skill that you should never give up on. If you are not an avid reader, there is no time like the present to

get started. Reading is not only informative and relaxing, but it gets your creative juices flowing too. It forces your brain to visualize, understand, and view things from a different perspective than your own. This is a great way to broaden your horizon while increasing your knowledge base.

All successful people are not only inherently motivated and inspired, but they also are lifelong students. They never stop learning, and this distinguishes them from everyone else. For instance, Warren Buffett spends around 5 hours daily reading up to 500 pages of corporate reports and at least 5 newspapers, while Bill Gates makes a point to read around 50 books in a year. Similarly, Mark Cuban read for at least 3 hours daily, and Mark Zuckerberg read one or two books every week.

Michael Simmons created the concept of the 5-hour rule. It essentially means you need to set aside 5-hours every week or an hour daily to consciously practice or learn. There are three simple aspects involved in learning, and they are reading, reflection, and experimentation. It's not just reading that matters; you need to reflect upon whatever you have read to enhance your learning abilities. This is where thinking time steps into the picture. Previously, it was mentioned that you need to set time aside for thinking daily. For instance, Jeff Weiner schedules at least two hours of thinking time daily, while Brian Scudamore spends 10 hours of thinking time during a week.

The thinking or reflection period gives your brain a chance to reflect upon whatever you have learned and absorbed. Think of it as a mental rehearsal. Chances are you will come across new ideas or even new perspectives towards the same topic. The learning process doesn't end after these two steps. You need to experiment too. You need to set aside time for experimentation. For instance, Ben Franklin used to consciously set time aside for experimentation.

Similarly, Thomas Edison was known for approaching each of his new inventions with incredible humility. He tried to systematically identify all the possible solutions and test each one of them before he managed to solve a problem. Don't get bothered that you are looking for a needle in a haystack. Don't stop and second-guess yourself. Instead, go ahead with dedication and diligence that helps examine each straw until you stumble across the needle

you are looking for.

Peak Physical State

The connection between physical and mental health cannot be overlooked. If you want to improve your cognitive abilities, you need to concentrate on your physical health. Poor physical health increases the risk of developing mental health problems. Similarly, poor mental health can also harm your physical health. According to the research conducted by Julius Ohrnberger et al. (2017), optimizing your physical health improves your mental health.

The good news is that regardless of all that you can and cannot regulate in your life, your physical health is well within your control. There are three aspects of your usual lifestyle you need to concentrate on to optimize your physical wellbeing. These are following a good diet, getting the rest your body needs, and learning to manage stress. Once you do this, your overall sense of wellbeing will automatically improve.

Make sure that you consume a healthy and wholesome diet. Eliminate or try to avoid processed and prepackaged food from your daily diet and become mindful of your food choices. Instead of mindless and emotional eating, learn to identify your body's hunger and satiety cues. Your body and mind need sufficient rest to recover and recharge themselves. Don't treat them like a tireless machine. To improve your overall health and wellbeing, you need around 6- 8 hours of good quality and undisturbed sleep every night. Apart from these factors, make sure that you learn to manage stress effectively.

Stress has become an undeniable companion in modern life. Unfortunately, the effects of stress are extremely damaging and wide-ranging. Stress impairs your physical and mental wellbeing. When you are physically and mentally compromised, your creativity will suffer. To avoid this, you need to reduce and regulate stress. Simple ways to combat stress include exercising regularly, following a good diet, and getting sufficient sleep. Apart from it, improve your time management skills, start prioritizing, and understand your body's limits.

Ultra-Learning

The concept of Ultra Learning is based on the idea of aggressive self-directed learning. It is a learning strategy created to enhance the overall result and optimize the learning process. The word aggressive here refers to doing what needs to be done even if it is intense or takes longer and more effort. It is self-directed because you are the only one in control. The three aspects of Ultra Learning are focus, speed-reading, and memory enhancement. When you combine all these skills, learning a new skill or acquiring more information becomes incredibly easier.

Before you concentrate on Ultra-learning, the first step is to select a specific topic you wish to learn. Whether it is a skill or new information, you need to understand how you want to go about the learning process. For instance, if you are learning a new language, there will be many ways to do it, and there will be certain pitfalls too. By spending a couple of hours researching about how you can go about it and what not to do, the chances of success increase. It essentially refers to learning how to learn. Spending a little time doing the groundwork helps increase your chances of success. The second step is to determine the reasons why you wish to learn the specific skill or subject. Once you have the required focus, learning becomes quite easy, and the chances of giving in to distractions reduce. Apart from concentrating on these two things, you need to work on improving your memory and speed-reading. Speed-reading is a simple technique that improves your ability to read quickly. You will learn more about Ultra Learning in the subsequent chapters.

Daydream

Have you ever daydreamed? It essentially refers to a state of mind wherein your mind entertains unrelated thoughts to anything else going on around you. Whether it is at home or work, we all tend to daydream from time to time. It usually happens when you are bored or distracted, and your mind moves on to more interesting things. According to a study conducted by Matthew A. Killingsworth et al. (2010), people usually daydream for a significant portion of the time they're awake. When it comes to daydreaming, there is an unfortunate stigma associated with it. Most of us wrongly believe that daydreaming is synonymous with laziness, lack of focus, or even apathy. Regardless of all these beliefs, daydreaming is important for improving your

creativity and problem-solving skills.

According to a study conducted by Jonathan W Schooler et al. (2011), there is a correlation between daydreaming and the ability to come up with new ideas. Whenever you are daydreaming, the brain allows certain issues and ideas to marinate in the unconscious. This results in new insights and creative answers to problems. Daydreaming is not just beneficial for work-related tasks or other important issues, but it can be used to improve your overall sense of wellbeing too. Daydreaming might not help achieve an immediate goal, such as reading a book or reading a report at work, but it gives your mind the time it needs to address other important questions. So, daydreaming is helpful for not just your short-term task but even long-term pursuits in life. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that Sara Blakely usually uses a fake commute to improve her thinking process and get the creative juices flowing. During the commute, she is not concentrating on driving but is giving her brain the time to focus on something more important.

Cross Disciplines

When it comes to creativity, there are no hard and fast rules. Whether you are interested in a particular subject or field, you need to explore more fields or subjects to explore your creative side. For instance, if you are interested in gardening and mathematics, there's no reason you cannot draw a relation between these fields. Does this sound a little absurd? Well, cross-disciplinary interaction helps improve your learning abilities and promote creativity.

Victor Wooten is a popular American bassist, record producer, and songwriter. He is known for his signature style of playing the bass like a piano. His style is nothing more than an example of cross-disciplinary learning that promotes his creativity. This was a style he created by visualizing how a pianist would play the bass. The primary idea or motivation that prompted him to do this is that creative insights come when you stop doing things how they are supposed to and try different perspectives.

In life, there is no such thing as too much knowledge. Learning helps hone your mental capabilities while increasing your wealth of knowledge. Knowledge is power, after all. To improve your creativity, you need to keep learning. It is a process you can never stop. Whether it is a random skill or a

brief stint, learning something new opens up your mind and broadens your horizon. The more you learn, the easier it is for the brain to form connections between new information and existing information.

Let's go back to the example of gardening and mathematics. From measuring the proportions of ingredients used to calculate the ratio of nutrients for fertilizing the plant and sowing seeds in a perfect grid, there's math involved. It is all about drawing patterns and forming connections. Encouraging your brain to draw associations and form connections between a new topic you are learning and any pre-existing information strengthens your creative thinking process. Learning becomes easier when the brain becomes adept at doing this.

The power of a creative mind is so much more than success. It brings with it imagination, promotes innovation, and offers a variety of mental health benefits. Exercising your creative muscle will change your perspective toward life and problem-solving in general. Several aspects of your life are beyond your purview of control. The good news is you have complete control over your mind. Regardless of what you choose to believe, you can influence how you think. By influencing the thought process, you are manipulating your mind to become more creative.

Whether it is a thinking space or networking, there are different ways to fuel your creative mind. Set aside a daily consideration time, add physical activity and movement to your routine, and make sure that you consume a healthy diet, manage stress, and get all the rest you need. Once you start taking care of your physical body, your mental health is intricately connected. Taking care of one aspect helps the other.

CHAPTER 4

THE POWER OF GOOD QUESTIONING

Most people do not understand that asking good questions is one of the most important skills. Since we have a lot of information at our fingertips, we believe that we know the answer to everything. We may not have even considered the situation or the question, but we believe we have an answer to all of it. As Einstein said, “Curiosity is a holy trait.” You can expand your horizons and brainstorm if you ask the right questions. It is important to ask the right questions if you want to understand the people around you. It is also important for you to learn this to successfully manage clients, engage employees and sell skills.

There are times when you start a conversation only through questions. You may ask logical or typical questions since these are what is expected of you. In most cases, we tend to ask questions that will help us improve our knowledge. We want to determine if what we know is factually accurate. Think about how these questions affect or improve your relationships, especially when it comes to your employees, business development, or sales. You need to ask them questions that will make them feel important since their opinions matter. If not, they will wait for the conversation to end.

If you want to ask the right questions, you need to look at things from different perspectives. It is not about what it is you need to know. It is all about identifying what you do not know about the topic since this is the best way to learn more from an interaction. A good question is written in a way that makes it easier for you to connect to a person. You learn to share a meaningful relationship where both of you learn from each other. Ask the right questions to make sure you get the person talking.

So, you need to understand what you think is a bad question. To ask the right questions, you need to understand what you do not know about and be

comfortable with it. You need to verbalize your understanding as well. It is only when you are comfortable with the unknown that you ask the right questions. When you are comfortable, you do not ask questions that can cause innovation and creativity to stop. You need to stay away from any temptation and avoid asking wordy questions. Do not ask questions that have a hidden motive or are filled with jargon.

A good question does not look at the obvious answer. Such questions challenge the way everybody thinks, and other times they may be uncomfortable for a person to answer. You need to keep the objective and intent of your question whenever you ask people a question. The objective will keep the discomfort away. When you are genuinely curious about something, you will learn to ask the right questions and move to a new place since you want to learn more. It is important to use the right language to provoke thought. If the person you ask a question says you have asked him a good question, it means they have heard this question before and have an answer to the question. Otherwise, they will say they never thought about it before, which means the person is now in the same mindset as you.

You need to seek the answers to your questions before you can expect someone to answer what you are asking them. You need to phrase the question correctly so people around you know what you want to learn about the topic of conversation. You need to define what it is you need to know or do not know. When you differentiate, you learn to form the right questions that help you uncover ideas, have productive conversations, and stop comparing knowledge. Write down your questions. Do you think the question will make another person think? If yes, ask them that question. When they give you an answer, ask them to elaborate. Let them know you are interested to learn more about the topic and understand their response better.

You can use phrases such as “Tell me more about that” or “What do you mean?” to carry on conversations with people. These phrases will keep people talking, and you learn more from the conversation. When you ask a person for more information, you can organize your thoughts and form the right response. This response should be genuine and well-thought-out. Another thing about asking the right questions is to wait for the silence. Give the person time to give you his answer. You need to be comfortable with the

time someone takes to answer a question.

Why Are Questions More Important Than Answers?

When you want to be a leader or prove your worth, you answer every question posed to you. You rush to answer the questions. It is important to understand that people need direction, guidance, and priorities. If you want to answer all questions, you miss the opportunity to do what a leader should be doing, ask questions, and empower your team to think on their feet. As a leader, you need to think of different ways to ask questions, so you and the team collectively come up with an answer.

You Can Build Knowledge

You may believe that the best leaders will have an answer to all questions. When you think this way, it will prevent you from asking the right questions. How good is a leader if he does not have an answer to the many questions you have? John Hawkins, the author of '101 Things All Young Adults Should Know,' said that "Sometimes we get so caught up in appearing smart that we become afraid to ask the question that will actually make us smart." You should ask the right questions no matter what your level is. When you set aside the fact that you know the answer to all questions, you become smarter because you have obtained different viewpoints. It is only when you ask the right questions that you learn.

Do you think Thomas Edison developed the light bulb in his first attempt? No, it took him multiple attempts to do this, but he did not consider these attempts as failures. He considered these as steps because he always asked himself what he could have done better to improve, and this is what you need to do, too.

You Learn More About People

When you ask someone a question about anything, you learn more about them. You can learn more about how they think, what they know about the topic, and how they express their opinions. When they respond to your questions, think about their answer and how they answered your question. You should also assess how well they have answered the question. In this

sense, you need to ask them questions to which you already know the answer. You learn more about others when you ask them questions.

You Can Engage Others

People are hard-wired to answer any question they are asked. When you ask someone a question, regardless of whether they answer the question or not, they are thinking about the question. They may continue to think about the question even after you have asked them another question. If you get a group of people to think about a question, you can come up with good answers. You may not have come up with these ideas had you relied only on your brain. You engage a person's mind when you ask them questions.

You Can Communicate the Value

When you ask people to give you their input, you show them that you value what they have to say to you. You give them the impression they are important to you. When you discuss this with a group of people, it becomes difficult to hear everybody's voice. It is best to address someone directly to show them their opinions and answers matter. Asking a person questions, you tell them they matter to you.

You Can Guide

When people ask you a question, you respond, but the other person sets the tone and topic in this situation. He can control his thinking too. When you ask questions, you can control the conversation and control how they respond to you. If you want to move thought and attention towards one topic, all you need is a good question. When you ask the right questions, you can guide someone into thinking correctly.

You Can Set an Example

When you pose the right questions, you can motivate others to think. They will learn to look at different ways to do things and begin to question how things have always been done. This is a good place to start. If you let yourself and the people around you slip into a mindset where you cannot think out of the box or are afraid of risk, it may lead to failure. One of the easiest ways to

prevent this from happening is to ask the right questions. The following quote explains this well. It is from the book *Mindset*, which details the happenings of a meeting headed by Alfred P. Sloan, “Gentlemen, I take it we are all in complete agreement here... Then I propose we postpone further discussion of this matter until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about.” When you ask the right questions, you give people around you the freedom to ask the right questions.

You Can Develop Through Questions

In his book, “Turn the Ship Around,” Captain David Marquet mentions that he could communicate better with his crew when he did not bark orders at them. He chose to ask them to tell him what they intended to do, which helped people take more ownership of their work. The crew no longer waited for the Captain's orders but thought about what they would need to do. This made the crew better teammates and leaders since they began to think about different situations at a higher level.

Michael Hyatt, an American author, also mentioned that it is best to ask the right questions to mentor another person. You can give your advice to your team or anybody around you, but it is best to have someone conclude on their own based on the questions you ask. You can help someone improve by asking the right questions.

Another way to develop is to use the blue ocean strategy. Using this strategy, you can open a new market space and create demand. In the strategy, you work on capturing and creating market space that has not been used before. This makes competition irrelevant. For example, if I owned an electronics company, it is best for you to source material from India or Vietnam, unlike other companies which source material from China. You need to be confident and push your boundaries to make sure you reach the top. If you are not confident, you will be number 2. If you do not think originally, you will remain number 2, and there is no place for number 2.

Tips to Ask Great Questions

This section will look at several tips you can use to ask people the right

questions.

Have a Clear Objective

You need to have a goal when you communicate with people. These goals may vary depending on the people you are talking to. If you speak to a potential client, you need to learn how to build a rapport with them to effectively match their requirements. If it is a team member or colleague, your objective could be to solve a problem they face. When you have a goal in mind, you can let your intent be known through your questions. This is one of the best ways to make sure people give you the right information. The objective will serve you well in difficult situations.

Never Expect People to Agree with You

Do not ask people questions if they only answer you with a yes. This answer does not give you any information, and it just confirms any assumptions you may have made before you asked the question. It is also important to note that a yes does not always mean yes. It can mean “Yes, though the answer to your question is no,” “Yes, I am only saying this, so you stop speaking to me,” or “Yes, but I do not think I will do what I have committed to do.”

If you ask the person you are speaking to a yes or no question, make sure the answer is “no” since that can lead to further conversations. You can ask the person follow-up questions. You may not like the answer, but this empowers the person you are speaking to, and it gives you an avenue to ask more questions. He may also want to communicate openly with you.

Based on the responses, you can ask further questions to understand what they mean by their response. Ask them to elaborate. If they are unsure how to respond to you, ask them further questions to elicit a response.

You also need to understand that people approach a question differently, so you need to be open to receiving different answers from everybody you speak to. Never judge a person's response because they may have a different view. Let them know if you do not agree with their response, but do not judge them for their thoughts.

Using Open-Ended Questions to Obtain More Information

Asking open-ended questions is one of the best ways to get more information from a person about any topic. An open-ended question gives the respondent enough space to elaborate on the topic. Such questions are powerful since the answers given may take you by surprise. Instead of being given yes or no answers (which you may have already considered), you get a million different answers. This will make it easier to solve any problem. A few examples include:

- In case someone is asking you to do something for them, you can ask them the following question: How do you want me to do this?
- If you want to get another person's view on a topic, ask them: What do you think we should do?
- If you want feedback, say: Is there something I could have done better to improve?
- If you are dealing with someone who thinks he is always right, say: Do you find yourself in a situation where the opposite is true?

Since open-ended or divergent questions do not have a right or wrong answer, you should expect to receive different responses. You can ask your team or anybody an open-ended question since that will fuel your creativity. It is okay to ask close-ended questions in certain situations, but avoid doing that too often because that gives the respondent a chance to respond to you using yes or no.

Open-ended questions are also a good way to start conversations. Most of them begin with:

- How do you think we should....?
- Do you know if there is a different way to....?
- What do you think will happen in case....?

These questions get a person's creative juices going, and they will think of the right answer to give you. Close-ended questions often start with “Which are...?” or “What is....?” These questions do not give you answers that help you improve.

To make it easier, you can ask people questions that encourage them to brainstorm and think of different possibilities. If you are speaking to children, you can ask them questions, which will get them thinking.

Use Mirroring

Mirroring is a technique most people use where they repeat another's words back to them. They phrase their response as a question, so they obtain more information. For instance, if you were working with a client and mentioned he was unhappy with the latest product, you would simply say, "Unhappy with the product?"

This helps with the following:

1. Your client feels you have listened to them since you are repeating what they said
2. You can buy yourself time if the response has caught you off guard
3. You ask them an open-ended question, which gives them scope to elaborate why they felt the way they did

It may seem difficult for you to mirror another person, but it works in most cases. Do not mirror the person too much though, because it will throw them off. Only mirror them if you are genuinely interested in what they have to say.

Label and Understand Emotions

You need to label and understand a person's response since that is an effective way to set up great questions and build trust. Let us understand how you can label their emotions. It can start with something as simple as an observation – "it feels like" or "it seems like." You can then add the label or observation itself to it. For instance, if you know the work your team has done did not help the client, you can say, "It feels like our work did not live up to your expectations or standards." This may feel like you are accusing the person you are speaking to, and it may put him on the defensive. Labels may sometimes be incorrect, but you can give your counterpart a chance to elaborate when you frame the label as an observation.

Labels are the best way to ask your counterpart open-ended questions. For instance, after the label, you can ask them how they would want you to improve. Using a label shows the respondent you understand that you understand how they feel. This will allow you to elicit effective responses.

Wait for the Respondent to Finish

Do not let silence affect your line of questioning. You may have asked the respondent something open-ended, and instead of receiving a response, you may be treated with silence. If the respondent takes too long to answer you, follow up with another question, checking to see if what you said was accurate or not. Ask them a yes or no question, which brings you back to the first question. It is difficult to ask at times, but you need to give your respondent enough space to answer. If the question makes the respondent think, you need to give them time to answer before bombarding them with other questions. Just give them time.

Use the Right Tone

We have only looked at the words you should use when you ask questions, but it is important to understand that the words are only a small part of how you communicate. Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, coined one of the most important rules used in communication – the “7 – 38 – 55” rule.

According to this rule, words only account for 7% of your communication, body language 55%, and tone 38%, respectively. For this reason, you need to focus not only on what you say but also on how you say it. As mentioned earlier, you need to have an objective in mind. You also need to be genuine about what you say to the people you are speaking to. Use the right tone when you deliver a message to the respondent. A smile can make all the difference, even if you are speaking over the phone. If you need to get your point across, use an inflected tone.

It is important to ask good questions if you want to improve and learn more about different areas in life. Try asking people questions at home and work. You will see how much you do not know. Use the tips in this chapter to help you ask the right questions.

CHAPTER 5

THE POWER OF FEEDBACK

It is important to give people feedback, which is essential for a person's professional and personal growth. As a leader, you need to develop this skill set. You cannot be successful in your career if you do not know how to give feedback. This chapter looks at what feedback is and its importance. It also leaves you with some tips you can use to give feedback effectively.

What is Feedback?

Feedback is the art of giving valuable observations to a person to help them grow professionally and personally. This feedback will help them develop the right behavior to make sure they achieve the best results.

As an entrepreneur, you need to define the right ideas to help you succeed. You also need to make sure you get the right feedback from people for your ideas. So, how do you think you can do this? You need to surround yourself with the right people, so you look at your idea from different perspectives.

Importance of Feedback

Why do you think feedback is so important? Numerous things make it important. Feedback plays a key role in professional and personal growth, and it is important to get feedback as often as possible because of this.

Self-Efficacy

Most people do not know how to do everything on their own. They need help to understand what is expected of them and their task. It is for this reason their joy and confidence may drop for a while. Their minds may be clouded with stress and doubt, and they may not trust their work. When you give them

feedback from your perspective and encourage them, you can bring them back onto the right track. This will help them gain confidence in their work.

Prevents Risk

One of the easiest ways to make sure a person adheres to the plan is to tell them what they would need to do. You also need to tell them what they have done correctly and how they can improve. When you do this, you can improve your team's performance. Develop goals and tools they can use to prevent mistakes. Use applications and other project management methods to make sure the team sticks to the project deadline.

Establish a Constructive Workplace Culture

When you give people constructive feedback to a team, and each individual gives the same kind of feedback to another in the team, it improves collaboration and relationships. In an organization with a well-developed culture, colleagues and teams can emphasize personal and professional growth. They learn to work their emotions out and resolve any conflicts in the team effectively. Since the team learns to cooperate, productivity may increase.

Boosts Employee Engagement and Motivation

Leaders who give feedback regularly and show they care about their team can improve the team's productivity. As a manager, it is your responsibility to give feedback and monitor the performance of your team. When you give feedback, it shows you are interested in your team's work results and activities. If you do not give feedback regularly, your team members may become disengaged and feel neglected. By motivating your colleagues with constructive feedback, you will notice they are committed to their work.

Fosters Change

If you want to improve your business and team, you need to implement a practice that fosters change. Hire the best people and implement management practices to help you with this. You cannot expect these processes to ensure that your team and business improve. Give your employees the space they

need to grow and adapt to changes. Let them work on developing their competencies, as well. Your feedback can give them the guidance needed to help them learn.

Feedback for Ideas

When you surround yourself with people from different areas and industries, you can get different ideas from the people around you. In this section, we will look at how you can get feedback for the ideas generated.

Every Idea Should be Weighed Equally

It is important to understand that not every idea you come up with is going to work. Ideas developed during a creative session are not isolated events, and they are links to brainstorming sessions that can help you reach heights. Not every idea developed will work, but at least it can lead to an idea, which will work in the future. It is for this reason you need to consider every idea developed during a brainstorming session. If you find that your team has come up with an impractical idea, you should still document it. If you have issues with the idea, let the team know. Praise them for their efforts, as well.

Ask the Right Questions

We have discussed this earlier. I will reiterate that you need to lead everybody in your team to jump to the conclusion that the idea will not work.

Explain Why

If you are at a higher level, you may be privy to information that not everybody knows. So, you need to explain why some ideas are not accepted while others are. They need to be given a strategic view of why the idea was not accepted. You need to be transparent and let your team know how the ideas were evaluated. It is when you are transparent that they can trust you to lead them in the right direction. If you shut down an idea without any reason, you may upset the team member.

How Pixar Encourages Creativity and Original Thinking

Pixar has had successful films because the people collaborate and share ideas. They do not believe only one person can come up with ideas. The teams work together and encourage each other to grow. In this section, we will look at a few ideas Pixar uses to develop new ideas.

More Than One Person Can Be Creative

People often think only creative people come up with ideas, and they develop them on their own. Unfortunately, people do not know that the best ideas only come when the team brainstorms together. In Pixar, every employee is given a chance to pitch an idea. They are asked to contribute towards the bigger picture. The company follows a non-hierarchical structure, which means everybody in the company is treated the same way. It is for this reason people need to understand that a creative project is a collaborative project.

Feedback Does Not Crush Creativity

When transparency and trust are present in an organization, feedback, positive or negative, only makes people think more. According to Ed Catmull, co-founder of Pixar, said: “We believe that ideas – and thus, films – only become great when they are challenged and tested.” Every team should be honest and be understanding when someone criticizes an idea. It is not because they hate the idea but because they have concrete reasoning behind it.

You Can Diversify

Pixar was not a filmmaking company when it started. It was a tech company that moved into making movies. They constantly changed the way they thought. If they have an idea or concept, which everybody likes, they try different ways to make the idea work. Movies like Monsters Inc. did not get filmed in a day. It took the team years to build on the concept and shoot the film. That being said, you need to understand that pivoting or changing the idea does not mean you have failed. It only means you can improve.

Socializing Matters

Pixar celebrates people and the company itself. They have parties and go on

retreats. They celebrate people. They encourage them to bring something from home, which makes their office space more homely. Most Pixar films succeeded at the box office because of the teams' efforts on the short films. The company uses these short films as a way to test different ideas. It also uses small teams to help them develop a wide range of skills.

Trusting the Process

Pixar has a flexible structure in the workplace but also has processes and structures in place. These processes and structures do not hinder creativity. Catmull said, “People who take on complicated creative projects become lost at some point in the process.” Pixar also has processes in place to help people even in such situations. Teams and businesses need to have these structures and processes in place to encourage brainstorming.

Allows for Mistakes

You cannot expect the company to do better and take risks if you do not allow people to make mistakes. Pixar encourages people to experiment and also accepts that mistakes can occur because of that experimentation. Unlike Apple, Pixar does not fire people for making mistakes but expects them to learn from those mistakes.

People Matter More Than Ideas

Since ideas come from teams who work together, they are more important to the company. Ideas cannot be defined as singular objects. They are also not independent of the people who come up with the idea. Ideas come into being after they are forged based on the million decisions people make. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for you to determine how to give them feedback.

Tips to Give Feedback to Teams

Constructive feedback is a powerful tool you can use to help people improve. If you do not give the feedback adequately, you may hurt the individual you are speaking to. You may also feel underappreciated and lose the motivation to work. As a leader, you need to mentor or manage people correctly. You also need to determine how you can give them the right feedback, and this

chapter has a few tips to use.

Identify Your Motives

Before you give anybody feedback, you need to determine why you want to do it. The objective of giving feedback is to improve a person's performance and the situation itself. You cannot expect the session to go well if you are offensive, harsh, or critical. You will learn more from people when you maintain a positive approach. Focus on how you can help the person improve his style of working.

Set SMART Goals

You need to set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) goals for everybody, including yourself. SMART goals help people perform and do their best. These goals serve as good quantitative measurements during feedback and evaluations. Before you give someone feedback, you need to set the right objectives for them. You can discuss these objectives with the team before you set them. These goals will help you during the assessment cycle. You also learn to maintain objectivity.

Use Evidence

Another way you can maintain objectivity is using evidence, and you can find all the evidence you need for the discussion. You can use the evidence to determine how a person was doing at work and the number of tasks they have done successfully. You need to understand that this information is not an indicator of his success.

Focus on Behavior and Performance

You should stop focusing only on how the person works. When you concentrate on behaviors and performance results, you can avoid venting negative emotions. This will prevent you from hurting someone with a subjective opinion or blaming them for something. For example, do not say something along the lines of “You do not pay attention to the deadline, and your work shows you are irresponsible.” Instead, say, “I noticed some of your tasks had not been completed on time, and I think these delays can

compromise the team's ability to meet deadlines. Can you tell me why it is hard for you to adhere to the deadline?" You can use this technique to maintain a friendly and professional tone when you speak to your colleagues. You can establish a constructive dialogue, avoid accusing the person you are speaking to, and establish a constructive dialog.

Use the Right Words

Any sensitive topic needs to be approached carefully. Therefore, unless you know the person you are giving feedback to well, pay attention to what you are saying, and make sure you use the right words to deliver the message. The objective is to pick terms, which are neutral and delicate. You also need to control your body language, tone, posture, gesture and facial expressions. If you do not control them, you may contradict everything you say because of your non-verbal signs. You may throw the person off because of your mixed signals.

Do Not Give Unsolicited Advice

Very few people believe feedback, positive or constructive, helps them improve. They do not ask for negative feedback, which creates stress on both you and the people you give the feedback to. Ensure you ask someone if they want feedback before you give it to them. Ask them how they would like to receive the feedback, too. When you do this, you can control the discussion. You can ensure the person you have given feedback to works on improving over time. You should empower people, so they can control the discussion. Let them feel confident. Allow them to ask you questions before you give them any feedback.

Have a Private Discussion

Avoid criticizing someone in public. Some people may also prefer being praised in private. Some employees may also prefer it if you write employee feedback and send it to him over email. This will give you some time to reflect on what you want to say, thereby giving you some time to offer the right response. Feedback is not only uncomfortable for the person you are giving it to, but it can also be uncomfortable for you. When you move the discussion to a private area, you can remove some pressure.

Use the Feedback Sandwich

In case you have to give someone negative feedback, you can use the feedback sandwich to reduce the effect of the feedback. If you are unsure of giving negative feedback, this method can help you, too. In this technique, you need to begin the discussion with praise. You can then proceed to give negative feedback. End this discussion using a positive comment or praise, as well. When you sandwich technique, you put the unpleasant feedback between two praises, which reduces the stress on both you and the person you are speaking to. This helps you reduce the risk of hurting the person's self-esteem and develop trust.

Schedule Meetings

You need to schedule some time with the person you want to give feedback to, so you can prepare him and yourself. Do this regardless of whether the feedback is positive or negative. When you have an appointment, the person you speak to will know what to say and absorb the information you give him. He will also be willing to discuss the feedback.

Allow People to Ask Questions

Communication is a two-way street, and if you want the person you are giving feedback to improve, you need to listen to them, too. Give them the space to share their concerns, ideas, and observations during the conversation. You need to involve the person you are speaking to in a discussion to identify the plan of action to change the behavior. This approach will ensure the person will take steps to improve.

Do not lecture someone about how they should improve since that would be like you talking to a brick wall. Never forget how important and difficult it is to discuss different elements. Avoid talking at someone since it is best to have a conversation with them. This is the only way they open up. Give the person some time to respond to what you have to say about him. Let him ask you follow-up questions, if any. When the issue is clear, the two of you can work together and identify the action plan.

Give Recommendations

Never overwhelm a person when you give them feedback. Do not leave them guessing the steps they need to take to improve. Help him by setting new performance goals and give him a plan he can use to achieve the performance goal.

Send Follow Up Emails and Make Notes

Feedback meetings are scary and can be emotionally intense. The person you are speaking to may forget the points he wants to discuss with you. You need to ensure time does not go to waste and the outcome of the session is positive. Make notes during the meeting and let the person know what you feel about their work. If you cannot have face-to-face conversations, you can send your message to them over email. This is the only way to process information better and reflect on whatever you have mentioned to him.

Have Regular Sessions

Feedback is an important process, and it requires attention. If you need to say something to someone, you should say it. It is only then that people will know where they stand to prevent any surprises. When you give feedback, problems will not get out of hand. Do not expect feedback to be a one-in-a-year event. Have regular feedback sessions, so you do not throw a surprise at someone. Ensure you give simple feedback. With informal, frequent feedback sessions, a person will not be surprised. There will be nothing unexpected about the feedback session.

Offer Mentorship and Support

You should never leave someone unattended or alone after the feedback session is over. Let the person know you are available in case they need to ask further questions. Let them know you can clarify any points and share new ideas with them to help them grow. If they do not come back to you, you should follow up yourself and give them words of encouragement.

Follow Up to Keep the Conversation Going

It is difficult to evaluate people or yourself. It will take a lot of energy and thought for you to do it right. Stop treating feedback conversations as one-

time meetings. You need to follow up with the person you are speaking to and appreciate them when you see any improvement. You should also appreciate yourself if you find yourself improving over time. This is the only way for you to show people and yourself that you care about their growth and success. You can also motivate them to continue their work. Feedback is essential for development and growth.

The tips in this chapter can help leaders deliver feedback effectively, leading to a culture that is communicative, high performing, and collaborative.

This chapter has looked at different tips and practices you can use to give constructive feedback. These tips work, so prepare yourself to implement them for any meetings you may have scheduled for further feedback. The following are some additional points you need to bear in mind:

- Analyze the results and the points deeply before you make a note of them
- Write down what you want to say and how you would want to say it
- Ensure you and the person you are speaking with are in the right mindset. Only start conversing with the person when you are both comfortable

Additionally, you can prepare a checklist to see how you can develop the right method to give feedback. You need to learn to deliver the message or feedback to the person in the right way, so you can motivate people to do better in any situation. Constructive feedback is extremely important for business and team development. It is also important for personal growth.

Use Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono developed the Six Thinking Hats concept. According to this concept, every team member must learn to separate their thought process into six roles and functions. Every role is assigned a color, which symbolizes the thinking hat. When you mentally wear a hat and switch it, you can redirect or focus your thoughts.

Hat	Role/Function
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White	This hat symbolizes only facts. The team members should only consider the information they have in hand and nothing more.
Yellow	This hat symbolizes optimism and brightness, and you can explore the benefits and value of any idea your team develops
Black	This hat is the devil's advocate or the judgment hat. The team will identify why a specific idea will not work. The members work together to identify the dangers and difficulties in the idea. They also determine where the idea can go wrong. This is an important and powerful hat, but it is a dangerous hat if the team overuses it
Red	This hat signifies intuition, feelings, and hunches. When the team uses this hat, it can express feelings and emotions. The team can share likes, fears, loves, hates, and dislikes.
Green	This hat only looks at the team's creativity. The team can look for alternatives, new ideas, and possibilities using this hat. This hat allows the team to define new perspectives and concepts.
Blue	The blue hat is used to manage the process. It is the mechanism used to control the functioning of the other hats.

Disruptive Innovation

Before we understand how disruptive innovation is created, let us understand what it is. This term refers to a product, service, or concept, which either creates a new market segment or disrupts the existing market. It is like the blue ocean strategy, but it is more to do with developing new ideas.

Disruption often occurs when any traditional values or concepts in an existing market are altered or changed. New players may enter the market using a new business model or technology, which adds new value to the market. This concept was defined by Clayton Christensen, a professor at Harvard Business School. He talked more about the concept in his book 'Innovator's Dilemma.'

When he wrote the book, he described disruptive innovation as being inferior to existing services or products in the market, which came into being due to traditional value metrics. When it enters the market, disruptive innovation does not look at the entire market but focuses only on small customer segments. These may not be profitable segments. Established companies choose the larger and profitable segments because they need to make higher profits. It is for this reason the other segments are open for people.

For instance, when you buy a new phone, you may choose a familiar brand. There may be a new company in the market, and it may use better technology, but you will not choose it because it is not a mainstream product. This new entrant is a small segment of the existing market. At this point, the value offered by disruptive innovation is little to nothing. When disruptive innovation enters the larger segment of the market, companies choose to identify and learn the new technology to topple the competition. It is too late for companies to do this since there is a new entrant in the market. Existing companies cannot expect to respond to new competition solely through adapting the new technology. They need to find the right means to refine their business offering and model to compete with the new entrant.

Some characteristics of disruptive innovation are:

- The risks are high
- This innovation only targets the lower profit margins
- It either creates a new segment or disrupts an existing segment in the market
- Sales measures and arguments are changed
- Introduces a new business model or technology
- This only enters the market slowly, but it reaches the mainstream, and the concept grows exponentially

Netflix

Netflix is one of the best examples of disruptive innovation, and it used a new business technology and model, which disrupted the existing market entirely. This platform offered users to rent DVDs, after which it launched as an online platform. It is now a streaming service that is based on subscriptions.

It is an on-demand platform that is used by over 200 million people worldwide. Throughout the late 90s, Blockbuster was doing a great job at renting DVDs to people. When Netflix came into existence in the 2000s, it knocked Blockbuster out of the market since it targeted those segments that Blockbuster did not worry about.

Netflix did disrupt the industry, but it also disrupted itself. When Netflix was launched, people who used Blockbuster did not switch to Netflix. The platform was attractive to people who used online shopping. Netflix only reached the mainstream when it disrupted itself and moved from DVD to online streaming. People no longer had to go to the store and wait in line before renting a DVD. They now have everything available online, and all they need to do is pay a monthly subscription fee.

Blockbuster was still doing well when Netflix moved to a subscription-based model. When customers began to move away from Blockbuster to Netflix, the former launched a similar service for its customers. Since Netflix had already peaked, Blockbuster could not push Netflix out of business.

If you are looking to establish yourself in the creative industry, the following are some TED talks you can watch:

- David Kelley: How to build your creative confidence.
- Elizabeth Gilbert: Your elusive creative genius.
- Tim Harford: How frustration can make us more creative.
- John Maeda: How art, technology, and design inform creative leaders.
- Sunni Brown: Doodlers, unite!
- Julie Burstein: 4 lessons in creativity.

It is important to understand that everything good takes time. You may have a million ideas, but you need to learn to pivot and accept that some ideas may not work. Consider the song 'Let it go.' The song was written by the songwriter couple Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez. They were only able to come up with the words to the song because they put themselves in the shoes of Elsa to determine how she may be feeling. They took a walk in the park and considered all aspects:

- How would it feel to be free?

- How would it feel if you had to hold back yourself because you had a secret?

They asked the right questions, which got their creative juices flowing. They wrote the lyrics in a day, and the demo they gave made everybody cry.

So, when it comes to developing ideas, make sure you do everything in your power to understand the idea.

CHAPTER 6

THE POWER OF A POLYMATH

It is important to remember that there are no new ideas. It is impossible to have new ideas. The only thing you do is take many old ideas and put them through a mental mixer. You mix them up and turn them into curious and new combinations. You and your team turn the ideas around and make new combinations, but these new ideas are still based on old ideas that have been used over the years.

Now, you may push back and say that Darwin's theory of evolution and Einstein's theory of relativity were new ideas. Do you think these were original ideas? If you read about Darwin's theories, you know the concept was based on the theory of the transmutation of species and others popularized by Lamarck. Einstein also credited Ernst Mach and David Hume as influencers in his work. This brought to question if there are any new ideas.

Someone once asked when the first original thought originated. There must be a beginning somewhere, isn't it? Do you think we will never know because there is no record of the first idea? When did people stop getting ideas and start mixing them to generate new ideas? These are great questions, and not everybody has a response to these questions.

Have any new creations now that could not be linked to something in the past? Every new idea does start somewhere, but it is difficult to find an example. Most discoveries are based on an earlier idea. Consider Penicillin as an example. This was discovered in the 20th century, but the roots of the idea go back to 5,000 years ago. It was first used in Mesopotamia, India, China, and Ancient Egypt when plants, like fungi, are used to treat different diseases. You can go back further to 60 000 years ago. This is the Paleolithic era, where plants were used to treat different illnesses.

Why Does Everybody Worry About Novelty?

If a person were to say they have a new idea, they believe that they generated this idea from nowhere. There may not be an original idea or thought, but this new idea may help others. For you to confirm the idea is not a derivative, you can explain it in terms of the idea itself and not use any metaphors to explain the idea.

The problem is people believe an original or new idea is supposed to mean there are absolutely no other ideas like the idea they have come up with. People are obsessed with the concept of a new idea. People want to build something stronger and greater, and they believe old ideas are fragile. So, tell me this – can you think about something new? Is every thought of yours original? Are the ideas you come up with new or based on something that already existed?

Does this mean there are no new ideas? Most people do not think about new ideas because they think it was already thought about. So, the belief is the idea is not new. What if there is absolutely nothing new for someone to identify? Would this give you some confidence to come up with new ideas? Can you overcome any obstacles? Do not obsess over the novelty of an idea. Focus on what the idea can do for someone. The idea may not be new, but you add a unique spin and perspective to create something new to suit everybody's needs.

Tips to Generate New Ideas

What do you think is the difference between a good and a great idea? The former is an idea that comes every time to help someone solve a minor problem. You can use this idea to overcome problems in your daily life and work. On the other hand, a great idea is rare and needs you to put in some extra work if you want to execute it. These ideas are unexpected and come because of inspiration. The challenge of generating great ideas is to free yourself from the mundane and conventional thoughts which occupy your thought on most occasions. In this section, we look at some tips you can use to change how you define or stimulate a new idea.

Engage in Sessions

You cannot generate a great idea if you do not push yourself to do so. You need to find some way to push your brain to think differently. Spend some time to stimulate your brain into changing the way you think. You can take a walk, watch something or converse with people to motivate your brain to think.

Socialize with People Outside Your Circle

When you hang out with the same people all the time, you will find yourself in a rut. You may not think clearly and cannot generate a new idea. Use all your connections on LinkedIn or other social media platforms. Start conversations with these people because they do not know how you think. So, you will be forced to revisit your inner thoughts and ideas. Their perspectives will help you think differently and will bring new ideas to the surface.

Read More

You can stimulate new ideas and thoughts when you read. Most people do not read much, and this is a grave mistake they make. It is best to add business books to your routine since it helps you learn more. You can also expand and change the way you think. When you read, you come out of your headspace and activate your thoughts. A great book is 'Non-Obvious Mega Trends' by Rohit Bhargava. If you cannot spare some time to read a novel, go to the store and spend an hour or two to find the right book for you. You will find yourself thinking differently.

It is also important to read about different subjects. It is best to combine different subjects to stimulate different ideas. Read about different topics and find information, which will stimulate your thoughts.

Another technique you can use is speed-reading. You can combine different ideas to create something unique.

Surf the Internet

If you are unsure of what you are looking for, you should Google the

information. The best way for you to generate or find new ideas is by learning continuously. Spend an hour every day to go through the web and look for new information.

Use a Journal

Journals are the best way to record any thoughts, emotions, feelings, and happenings in your life. It is the best way to develop and structure any ideation habits. If you do not have a journal, you need to begin today. If you already write in a journal, you need to start every entry in your journal with the following phrase: “My new idea or thought for today is....”

Meditate

It is hard for you to come up with an idea when your mind is overflowing with concerns and thoughts. You need to give yourself some space to clear your mind. It is best to meditate since this method allows you to clear your mind of stress. This helps you focus on different ideas and your future. You can solve world issues. Spend two hours every week meditating, and you will have new ideas flowing in no time.

Use Exercises

When you have some structure, it breeds creativity. You can use simple exercises to get your brain to work, so you can focus on generating new ideas. A great exercise you can use is the one developed by Dr. Blaine McCormick, a professor at Baylor University and an author. He suggests you perform the exercise with a partner, take a few minutes to develop 42 ideas on specific problems and topics. You do not have to come up with 42 ideas but set a target for your session. There will be at least a few good ideas in the session.

These methods require some energy and commitment. This is the only way you can generate new ideas. Give your brain some space and time to work. One or more of these ideas can help you generate one or two ideas. Record your ideas and see which one works best for you.

Ultra-Learning

There is a lot of debate about the learning process, and there are numerous guides you can use to master your learning process. One of the easiest ways to do this is to use the book Ultra-learning written by Scott Young. Ultra-learning was developed by Young and is a technique you can use to learn any subject clearly, quickly, and thoroughly. In this book, Young uses an approach to help people learn difficult projects.

One example is how a person can complete a 4-year course in MIT's computer science in 12 months. Training and learning techniques often borrow ideas from different activities, especially sports. You can use the different ultra-learning techniques to translate how you can improve your learning process at work. An interesting thing about this learning technique is that it focuses on learning goals, making it easier for you to learn more. This chapter will look at the different techniques and principles of ultra-learning and how you can apply them to your learning processes.

Principles of Ultra-Learning

Scott introduced the following principles in his book:

1. The first principle is meta-learning, which focuses on drawing a map for your learning process
2. The next is to focus on where you need to spend some time concentrating and focusing on what you want to learn. Allocate some time to learn
3. You need to be direct, which means you need to learn by doing everything you think you should
4. The next step is to attack your weakest point
5. Once you have learned everything you can. You need to test whatever you have learned
6. You should ask people for feedback because it is the best way for you

to learn. You know what the importance of feedback is from the previous chapter

7. Pace your learning, so you can retain the information you learn
8. You need to develop intuition by exploring and playing different techniques
9. You also need to explore your thoughts and step outside your comfort zone, so you learn everything you need to about the topic

Let us look at these principles briefly.

Meta-Learning

The first principle in ultra-learning is meta-learning. In this step, you need to research and take a broader look at the subject you want to read about. The objective of this principle is to focus on mapping the subject matter concepts and different learning strategies. This is the best way to dive deep into the subject. It is at this stage that you should explore your motivation to learn more about the subject. Young says you need to ask the following questions:

- Uncover the motivation to understand and learn the subject
- Identify the different skills and knowledge you need to acquire the required results
- You also need to assemble the methods, resource, and environment for you to learn

You can learn more about how to do this by using an example of how one can learn software engineering.

Focus

This is a very obvious principle, and you can use this to learn. If you want to learn more about a specific subject matter, it helps you focus on the learning process and develop a sense of flow. There are three distractions you should manage:

- You need to find the right environment where you can learn. Find a space that is conducive for you to learn
- Prepare a to-do list or task to help you maximize your potential. You can do this using the next two principles
- You need to push your mind into a state which allows information to flow

Directness

Directness is a learning technique based on the context or situation where you are going to use the skills. You need to learn the subject by doing, and for this, you need to stretch your skills. Most people prefer learning before they execute their skills. They are uncomfortable about performing different actions only through learning. You cannot expect to learn only by reading through different content. Your brain only retains information when you execute whatever you have learned. The objective is to apply all the information you learn and execute the skills you develop through action. Your actions separate you from those people who do not execute the skills. According to Young, “The easiest way to learn directly is to simply spend a lot of time doing the thing you want to become good at.”

Only through learning will you uncover different aspects and information about the skills you want to develop. You may not identify these aspects through reading alone.

Drill

When you spend enough time applying the knowledge and skills you learn, you can discover different areas causing a bottleneck in your learning process. These steps are termed the rate-determining steps, and it is when you perform drills, you can identify these bottlenecks.

A drill will need you to be creative. This is the only way you can structure the skill and isolate it from the other skills. When you improve the structure and change the way you operate, you can repeat this skill in a controlled setting. The objective of this step is to learn through quick feedback and repetition. A drill, when designed well, allows you to remove any bottlenecks in the

process. You can further improve how you learn.

Most books and concepts around learning focus on drills and repetition of the skills, as that is how you learn. In this framework, a drill is only one tool used in the entire strategy.

Retrieval

Consider a situation where you are writing an exam or test. In this situation, you need to retrieve the information you learned before the exam, so you do well. You can only retrieve information if you write a mock test and improve your strengths. Another way to exercise the process of retrieval is to write everything you learn. Young uses a technique known as a 'Concept Map.' In this technique, you need to develop your learning technique from scratch. This map highlights the different concepts you have learned during the first few steps and determines how you can relate these concepts.

Feedback

This technique allows you to assess and determine how far along you are in your learning process. There are three types of feedback you should ask for during your learning process, which is:

- Check if you are doing something wrong. This process is termed the outcome feedback
- Identify if there is something incorrect that you are doing as part of your learning process
- If there is something you are doing wrong, you need to define how you can fix the step

You will improve your learning process faster if you are open to asking people for feedback. Therefore, you need to include a feedback loop into your learning process.

Retention

You cannot expect your mind to retrieve the information it cannot retain. If

you do not have a strong retention process, you will feel stuck because it becomes harder for you to progress or proceed. The principles of retrieval, directness, and drills will enable your mind to retain information.

Additionally, you should also pace your learning strategy, so you give yourself enough time to rest and recuperate. For instance, if you have 10 hours to learn some concept, you should spend an hour every day for 10 days to learn the concept.

Experimentation and Intuition

Experimentation and intuition are principles that work together. These principles take you from being good to become the master. If you want to become better at intuition, you need to dive deep into the subject. The best way to learn is to look at the subject as a whole before you dive into the micro details. To understand the subject well, you need to recreate the reasoning and foundation behind the different concepts from the first few principles.

When you work on these principles, you may come across different opportunities that allow you to experiment with your learning process. You can challenge existing presumptions or assumptions you may have about the subject. Through experimentation, you can learn more about how to accumulate knowledge.

These learning principles are in a sequence, but it is best to look at these as pillars that help you learn and grow. Ultra-learning is a learning technique, and in the long term, you can use these principles to help you learn the subject better.

When it comes to creativity, an important thing to remember is to look at the bigger picture, spot the trends, and connect the dots, so you don't miss out on the chance to learn.

CHAPTER 7

THE POWER OF ROUTINE

Regardless of your age, you need a routine. Routines are not just helpful for children, but adults too. When you establish a routine, you know what needs to be done, when, and how. These little steps reduce stress, help declutter your mind, and free your creativity. The power of a routine can never be underestimated, especially if you are trying to develop healthy habits. The simplest way to incorporate a new habit or break free of an unhelpful one is through a routine. When you repeat the same task, your brain gets used to it.

Ten Commandments to Feed and Strengthen Your Creativity

Feeding and strengthening your creativity is not an overnight process. Instead, it is a lifelong journey. If you want to strengthen your creativity, you need to incorporate different helpful practices and habits into your daily routine. After all, practice makes you perfect. Well, perhaps not perfect, but it will certainly improve your existing skillset. The more you practice, the more creative your brain gets. All the different suggestions discussed in this section are simple to follow and can be easily incorporated into your daily routine regardless of your usual lifestyle. While implementing these changes, ensure you take things one tip at a time. Once you have successfully implemented up, move onto another one. Don't overwhelm your brain, and instead, take things slowly. Slow and steady wins the race and keeps repeating this mantra whenever in doubt.

Brainstorming Sessions

Indulge in regular brainstorming sessions. Whether it is for 10 or 20 minutes, ensure that you push your mental muscles beyond their usual functioning. While brainstorming, remember there are no limitations. This technique is

also known as blue-sky thinking. Let go of any threshold or boundaries you have unknowingly established. Try generating ideas that are not bound by any constraints, whether financial or time related. This is a great way to spark your creativity. Previously, you were introduced to the concept of thinking about 10 ideas daily. Follow the same principle, but now, let go of any constraints you have established. By forgetting about constraints for a while, your brain is allowed to run free and wild.

Exercise

Famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said, “Sit as little as possible.” Even though this advice was given over a century ago, it is quite helpful. Exercising regularly promotes creativity. Whether it is walking, running, or jogging, ensure that you add some physical movement or activity to your daily routine. Several famous thinkers such as Henry Thoreau, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant popularized the idea of theorizing while walking. In fact, literary history is riddled with writers who believed in the power of regular exercising. According to a study conducted by Marilyn Oppezzo et al. (2014), walking helps improve creativity. Mark Zuckerberg usually likes to hold meetings on foot, and Steve Jobs was known for his walking meetings. Even if this behavior seems a little eccentric, it helped their creative minds. Whether it is working indoors or outdoors, it inspires your creativity. It was not the environment that resulted in this, but it was the act of walking itself.

The next time you feel that you are stuck in a rut or struggle to solve a problem, go for a walk. Walking can be quite meditative and therapeutic too. Whenever you engage in any physical exercise, follow the principle of mindfulness to improve its overall effect.

List of 100 Challenges

Thinking about challenges can improve your creativity. Take some time and make a list of 100 different challenges in your life; the activity of making a list of these challenges itself is a mental exercise for your brain. Once you have this list in place, start thinking about these challenges. You can start with the smallest and the easiest or the hardest challenge. Think about the

different ways in which you can overcome the challenge or circumvent it altogether if possible. Once you are thinking about a challenge, make a note of 10 different ideas to tackle it. It's not just about making a list of ideas; you need to implement them as well.

This simple activity is a perfect combination of several other previously discussed tips, improving your overall creativity. For instance, if one of the challenges you have written down is overcoming negative thoughts, make a list of 10 different ideas you can use to overcome negative thinking. Once you have this list in place, start implementing each of your suggestions until something clicks. You have nothing to lose by going through this process and everything to gain.

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

If you want to grow in life, you need to step outside your comfort zone. As the name suggests, a comfort zone is like a cocoon that makes you feel safe and protected. If you want to grow and develop or progress, you need to step outside it. The Comfort zone is synonymous with stagnation. To step outside it, you need to first understand what lies outside. Learn to become comfortable with discomfort. Whether it is a social setting or learning a new skill, there will be some discomfort involved during the initial stages. Once you become comfortable with this discomfort, growing in life becomes easier. By stepping outside the comfort zone, it gives your mind a chance to explore different aspects of life that you previously don't even consider.

Hold on to Curiosity

Creativity and curiosity go hand in hand. You can wonder, question, and search for answers that fuel your creativity and keep you going.

Unfortunately, over time, our natural curiosity tends to reduce. Don't let this happen. Never let go of your curiosity if you want to enhance your overall creativity. Have you ever noticed how children constantly question different things? They are quite curious to learn and explore. What happens to this curiosity? As we age, we tend to lose this natural ability to question. Don't let this happen. Instead, start living a curiosity-driven life. Make a list of different things that interest and fascinate you. Once you have the list of

topics, start researching them. Curiosity is also important for learning. Don't restrict your curiosity and let your brain think along new tangents. It can be something as simple as asking, "What if?" in any given situation.

Quality Content

We are constantly bombarded with information these days. Whether emails, social media updates, news, or anything else, there are multiple sources of information constantly flooding our senses. It is important to pay attention to the content you consume because it affects your thinking and creativity. Feeding your brain the right content can bring you a step closer to your goals. When there are multiple choices, you mustn't fall down the rabbit holes available online.

Unsubscribe from any content you usually ignore. For instance, are there any emails you don't open and delete immediately? If so, why don't you unsubscribe from such lists? It hardly takes a couple of seconds to do this, and it reduces the digital clutter. When your brain is cluttered with unhelpful information and thoughts, how can you think creatively? The best way to improve your creativity is by reducing mental clutter. If there are any emails or newsletters that haven't added any value to your life in the last six months, unsubscribe immediately.

If there is any content that you don't agree with, let it go. There will always be some content that you love to hate. This can be a guilty pleasure, but it is better to avoid all this drama. If you leave a website or any other information platform fuming, it doesn't do you or anyone else any favors. Remember this simple rule while decluttering- if something does not add any value to your life or doesn't hold any meaning- let it go.

Clear Your Mind

Clearing your mind improves your thought process and promotes creativity. Think of your brain as a chest of drawers. If stuffed with clutter, there will be no space left for positivity or creative thinking. So, it's time to start clearing your mind. Dealing with mental clutter is incredibly simple, and it hardly takes any time or effort. One of the simplest exercises you can use to clear

your mind is mind dumping. At the end of the day, spend about 15 minutes, grab a piece of pen and paper, and make a note of all your thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings or ideas don't have to make any sense. Don't judge yourself while writing. Instead, try to get everything out of your system. Once all the information is in front of you, you can carefully go through it and determine whether it is useful or not. If anything is unhelpful, eliminate it. Let go of all thoughts that don't help you.

Creativity doesn't have to elude you. It is accessible, and all you need to do is clear your mind. Once your mind is calm and you stop thinking, your creative juices will start flowing. Apart from being mindful of the content you consume, become mindful of mental clutter too.

Sleep on It

If your mind is racing at 100 mph, do you think you can sleep? Chances are, you've had such a sleepless night before. If you are extremely stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, or anything else along these lines, sleep will elude you. Unfortunately, the lack of sleep merely worsens the stress you are experiencing. Have you ever noticed that you feel fresh, relaxed, energetic, and more motivated after a good night's rest? This is because your body and mind got the rest they need to function effectively and efficiently. When you are sleeping, your brain is active, but your body is not. This is one of the reasons why you tend to experience vivid dreams. The brain produces a chemical known as acetylcholine while you sleep. This enters the hippocampus and the neocortex and sends them into a flexible state. This flexibility is responsible for higher cognitive functioning. When this happens, your brain starts actively searching for connections and establishing a relationship between things that previously seemed unrelated. This is one of the reasons why you might wake up from sleep with new ideas.

Since sleep is incredibly important, you need to ensure that you get 6- 8 hours of sleep daily. Create a sleep schedule, follow it consistently, exercise regularly, consume a healthy and balanced diet, reduce the usage of electronics right before sleeping, create a bedroom environment conducive to sleep, avoid daytime naps, and avoid consuming caffeine late in the day. By following these simple suggestions, you can improve your sleep schedule.

Become Mindful

The word mindful has been repeated multiple times in this book. What does mindfulness mean? It's a simple practice of staying in the present without worrying about the past or the future. It means you let go of all thoughts except those related to whatever you are doing right now. For instance, if you are brushing, mindfulness suggests your only focus needs to be on the activity of brushing and nothing else. This is an incredibly simple practice that can quickly calm your mind and bring about a sense of order to your thoughts. Mindfulness is also the key to happiness.

You cannot change the past or predict the future. If these events are completely out of your control, what is the point of thinking about them? Apart from increasing your stress levels, worries, and anxiety, these thoughts are counterproductive. If your brain is constantly overwhelmed by all this, it cannot think creatively. To improve creativity, learn to become mindful. Mindfulness might not come easily, but it can be incorporated into everything that you do. Whether it is work or engaging in a hobby, ensure that you are always concentrating only on one task at a time. Forget the concept of multitasking. It is not okay to overwhelm your mind and senses with multiple activities at once. Instead, take things one step and one activity at a time. Learn to pace yourself, and it will pay off. Mindfulness is also the simplest form of meditation when your brain is completely focused only on one activity, overall productivity, and efficiency improvements.

Digital Detox

A digital detox is something all of us need these days. Since we are all surrounded by technology and excessively depend on it, it has become a part of our lives. Unfortunately, this excessive dependence and reliance on technology have become problematic. Most of us spend hours in front of the laptop working or on our phone scrolling through social media. What do you do during your free time? Chances are you prefer to watch something on Netflix or play video games, perhaps? When you do this, you are essentially moving from one gadget to another.

If work and pleasure are both related to technology in this highly digitized world, creativity will take a backseat. Ensure that you give yourself a digital

detox daily. Take an hour; use it for self-reflection, engaging in a hobby, or anything else that does not involve technology. Getting away from technology will work wonders for your mental health and creativity.

Avoid Decision Fatigue

Every day, we make several choices and don't even think about them consciously. Are you wondering how it is possible to decide without any conscious thought? Well, it's usually about things that we consider unimportant. Take a moment and think about it, and you will realize it is true. From the clothes you want to wear to the next meal you wish to eat; these are all the decisions you make. It can be something as simple as which route you want to take to work. Decisions don't always have to be about the major aspects of life, and usually, it's the small decisions that unknowingly drain your mental capacity.

This brings us to the concept of decision fatigue. It is a psychological phenomenon about your ability or capacity to make any decisions. It's also known as ego declination. It essentially suggests that your ability to make decisions worsens when you are constantly making several decisions. After all, your brain is not a tireless machine, and even it needs brakes. This fatigue is associated with every single decision you make, such as the ones mentioned previously. Your ability to make decisions is similar to a bucket of water, in a sense, it is a finite resource. Every decision you make reduces the volume of water in the bucket. After a while, the bucket will be empty. Even though there isn't sufficient research in this field to support ego depletion, it is still too early to make any conclusive claims.

That said, evidence suggests your ability to make good or rational decisions reduces when you are overworked. For instance, according to a study conducted by Julia L Allan et al. (2019), the ability to make efficient and resourceful decisions reduces the longer you work without any breaks. To reduce decision fatigue, here are some simple tips you can follow.

Are you a fan of The Big Bang theory? One of the main characters on the show, Sheldon Cooper, is a stickler for rules and routines. It might sound obsessive, and his routines might be compulsive to a certain extent, but they

are quite helpful. The need for a routine can never be overlooked or underestimated. You can reduce decision fatigue by creating a routine and sticking to it. When you know what has to be done, it eliminates the need for a decision. For instance, what do you do as soon as you wake up in the morning? Instead of following a “go with the flow” attitude, you have a solid plan in place. Make a detailed list of all that you need to do as soon as you wake up until you go to sleep.

The simplest way to reduce decision fatigue is by reducing the options available. When there are multiple choices, every decision you make is slowly tiring your brain. For instance, what to eat, where to go, what to watch, or what to wear just a few simple questions we spend a lot of time thinking about. The best thing you can do is reduce the number of options or choices available. Do you remember Steve Jobs in his black turtleneck and jeans? Regardless of the occasion, these are the clothes he always wore. He wasn't trying to create a personal brand or anything along those lines. Instead, it was a simple technique to reduce decision fatigue. Wearing the same thing daily means it is one less decision to make. For instance, take some time over the weekend, and create a meal plan. This way, you will have a meal planned each day of your week.

There are different things you can do to reduce decision fatigue. Unfortunately, the overwhelming times we live in make it exceedingly difficult to eliminate decision fatigue. Since it cannot be avoided, learning to manage it is a good idea. Once decision fatigue sets in, your ability to make sound decisions reduces. If your decision-making abilities are less effective, it's always better to plan. Plan your day such that all the important decisions are made early in the day while the less important ones are left for later.

Another great way to reduce decision fatigue is by establishing a time limit. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that certain constraints promote creativity. When you know you need to decide within a specific time limit, it increases your efficiency as a decision-maker. For instance, if you are shopping at a grocery store, you need to go to the counter for billing. After the cashier has billed your purchase, you need to pay the amount and move on. You can't keep standing at the counter while deciding whether you want to pay or not.

Once you have made a decision, don't start second-guessing. It's quite easy to go down the spiral, but nothing good ever comes of it. Remember, there's no such thing as a perfect decision. The more you think about a situation, the more flaws and problems you will notice. To avoid all this, don't rehash your decisions. This is also an effective way to reduce getting caught up with the idea of perfectionism.

Never make decisions when you are tired, sleepy, hungry, or in a bad mood. These factors might not sound like much, but they significantly affect our decision-making abilities and capacities. When you're too tired, your brain cannot function optimally, and its ability to take cognizance of an issue at hand reduces. Similarly, your brain cannot function when you are hungry. Good nutrition and rest are needed for better decision-making skills.

Routines provide a sense of comfort and security. They also reduce wastage of time and decision fatigue. On average, the human brain thinks around 40,000 thoughts daily. All these thoughts are not always conscious, and most of them are subconsciously taking place in the brain. Apart from thoughts, we also make several decisions daily. Each of these decisions reduces your brain's cognitive abilities to think effectively and efficiently. As your mental energy reduces, the efficiency and effectiveness of your decisions also reduce, so you need to ensure that decision fatigue doesn't affect the quality of your life.

The simplest way to fuel your creative mind is by establishing a routine. From daydreaming to networking, walking or exercising, getting sufficient sleep, reading, resting, learning, and getting out of your comfort zone, make all these different practices a part of your daily routine. From the moment you wake up until you go to sleep, you have a lot of time at your disposal. Time is a valuable asset. Learning to make the most of it brings you a step closer to attaining your goals. Never stop being a student and give your mind the space it needs to wander and explore this world.

CHAPTER 8

THE POWER OF PRIME PHYSICAL STATE FOR MENTAL BRILLIANCE

In this chapter, we will look at how mental and physical health are affected by each other.

Relationship Between Mental and Physical Health

Most people do not understand that mental and physical health are closely related to each other. Researchers have been asking a question for years – how do your mind and body react with each other? The answer is complicated, but it is important to note that your mental health affects your physical health, both directly and indirectly. We will now look at some ways your mental health affects your physical health, and vice versa.

Immune System and Depression

One of the most common mental disorders across the globe is depression. This mental illness impacts more than your motivation and mood. Depression can suppress the response of the T cells in the body, thereby affecting your immune system. This makes it hard for your body to fight against different viruses and bacteria, making it easier for you to fall sick. You may also stay sick for longer because of a weak immune system. This can lead to asthma and severe allergic reactions.

Research shows that the immune system affects your mind and causes depression. Stress, acute or chronic, can trigger different immune responses in your brain. These responses may cause depression and other mental disorders. Nie X et al. conducted in 2018 showed that depression and immune inflammation involve manipulating various immune receptors. This

study was conducted on mice, and these subjects were exposed to the same stress repeatedly. The research team observed that the stress factors led the brain to release a protein called cytokines. This protein is closely associated with inflammation, and the release of these proteins causes a change in the medial prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain plays an important role in depression. In simple words, the research team could trigger a depressive symptom since this is the immune system's response to any stress you are under.

If you have a strong immune system, it shows that you are strong physically. When you find yourself under pressure, even a strong immune system weakens. This can cause depression, which will further weaken the immune system, resulting in a discouraging cycle.

Fatigue and Mental Illness

Anxiety, depression, and other mood and mental disorders result in feelings of exhaustion and tiredness. Some people incorrectly and inappropriately suggest that you are only tired because it is in your head. Research shows that being tired mentally does lead to fatigue and exhaustion.

A study conducted at Boston University made the subjects ride a bike until they were tired or exhausted. The research team used the data collected to define what exhaustion means. Exhaustion is a person's inability to keep up with any physical activity you perform. The subjects in the study were asked to ride the bike in two different situations. In the first situation, the subjects only had to ride the bike. In the second situation, the subjects had to ride the bike while performing a 90-minute task with various elements drawing on fast reactions and memory. This helped the research team stimulate the subjects' impulsive responses to various stimuli.

Once the participants engaged in the second situation, they were listless and tired. They also noted the subjects were tired 15% faster in the second situation when compared to the first situation. This shows that mental and mood disorders are linked to exhaustion and fatigue. If you are persistently tired, it can decline your physical health. When someone is chronically anxious or depressed, he will not engage in working out. He may also quit early if he does start working out. Fatigue from mental or mood disorders

may interfere with your basic hygiene, which will make you vulnerable.

Heart Health, Anger, and Anxiety

The stress of anxiety and angry outbursts are terrible for your heart. The objective of a study conducted at the University of Sydney in 2015 was to determine if acute emotions can cause trouble with your heart. This is what you may have seen in movies, and unfortunately, this is true. The lead author of this study, Dr. Thomas Buckley, said, “Our findings confirm what has been suggested in prior studies and anecdotal evidence...that episodes of intense anger can act as a trigger for a heart attack.”

The team identified that a person's risk of heart diseases or attacks increases by 8.5 times after being angry or upset. After a bout of anger, a person may have tense body language. They may feel like they are about to burst or have clenched teeth or fists. In case you are anxious, the risk of heart disease or attack increases to 9.5. Most people do not worry about heart attacks since they believe they are strong and fit. They also believe their anger and anxiety does not affect their heart negatively.

Different Ways to Manage Mental Health

Now that you know the connection between mental health and physical health let us look at some tips you can use to maintain your mental health, thereby maintaining your physical health.

Identify the Sources of Stress

It is when you identify any stressors in your life that you can overcome them. This is not simple, and it is easy for you to identify different stressors in your life. Some stressors include moving to a different country, changing jobs, going through a bad relationship or divorce. It is difficult to point out all stressors in your life because you may overlook some thoughts, behaviors, and emotions that can contribute to your stress.

You may be worried about your work deadlines, but you may be feeling this way only because of your procrastination. It may not be because of the actual demands of the job. This causes stress. You need to look at your habits,

excuses, and habits closely if you want to identify the source of stress:

- Do you tell people you are not under stress because it is a temporary situation although you have not taken a break from work?
- Is stress an important part of your home or work life? Or is it a part of your personality?
- Do you blame outside events and people for your stress? Or do you think it is unexceptional and normal?

You need to accept the role of stress and how you create or maintain it.

Practice the 4 A's

When you are under emotional or mental stress, your nervous system will throw you off. You can predict some stressors. If you know the stressor, it becomes easier for you to handle the situation or shift it. Use the following methods to overcome the stressors:

1. Avoid
2. Alter
3. Adapt
4. Accept

Avoid Any Unnecessary Stressors

Many people will tell you that you should not avoid any situation but address it. If you pay attention to your life, you can eliminate various stressors in your life. You can do this in the following ways:

1. Say no. You need to know your limits and also stick to the situation at hand. Regardless of whether it is your professional or personal life, you should avoid taking on situations that are too hard for you to handle. Differentiate between the 'musts' and 'shoulds.' When you can say no, do it. It is important to never take up too much work if you cannot handle it
2. Do not work or associate yourself with people who stress or worry you. If someone adds to stress in your life, reduce the time you spend

with that individual. If you feel better about ending the relationship, do it

3. Learn to control your environment. If you don't like reading or listening to conversations about the pandemic, stop listening to the news. If you do not like going to the supermarket, shop online
4. Re-evaluate your to-do list. To do this, you should analyze your responsibilities, schedule, and tasks. If you have too many things on your plate, remove some tasks from the list, especially those that are low priority

Alter the Situation

There are times when you cannot avoid or get yourself out of a stressful situation. In such cases, you can alter the situation to help you. This means you need to change the way you operate and communicate in daily life.

1. Do not let your feelings bottle up and express your emotions to people around you. If someone or something is bothering you, communicate your concerns and be assertive. You need to do this respectfully and openly. If you have to study for an examination, but your roommate constantly chats after she comes home, tells her you need some time to study. If you do not voice your thoughts, you will resent the person, which will increase your stress
2. Learn to compromise. If you have asked a person to change their behavior, you need to do the same. When you can compromise a little, you will find a middle ground
3. Ensure the schedule you have is balanced. Do not work too hard because that will burn you out. You need to find a balance between your family life and work, solitary pursuits and social activities, downtime, and daily responsibilities

Adapt

If you cannot change the situation or stressor, you need to change your

behavior itself. It is easy for you to adapt to different situations. You can change your attitude or expectations.

1. Look at any problem or situation differently. Switch to a positive perspective and reframe the situation. Do not let traffic jams work you up. Instead, look at the situation differently – pause and take a step back. Do not let the traffic bother you. Listen to your favorite music and enjoy some time alone
2. Focus on the bigger picture. Look at the situation and ask yourself how important that will be in your future. Do you think the situation will matter to you in a week, month or year? Is the situation something you should be worried about? If you say no, then do not worry about it.
3. You need to lower your standards and adjust your expectations. Most people want to be perfect and do everything in their power to meet their unrealistic expectations. Do not set yourself up for failure, and do not demand perfection. You need to set a realistic standard for yourself and be okay with what you achieve
4. Learn to be gracious. If you are under too much stress, take some time to reflect on everything you appreciate about your life. You need to look at your skills and qualities

Accept You Cannot Change Things

It is unavoidable to overcome some sources of stress. You cannot change or prevent all stressors, such as a serious illness, a breakup, a death, etc. In these cases, you should learn to cope with the stressor and accept a situation for the way it is. It is difficult to accept some situations, but it is easier for you to change the way you feel about the situation.

1. Stop trying to control uncontrollable situations. Many situations can be out of your control, especially how a person behaves or feels about you. Do not stress out over these situations. Instead, focus on the situations you can control and change the way you react to problems

2. You need to accept the world you live in is imperfect and learn to forgive people for not living up to your expectations

Move Around

If you are stressed, you may not want to exercise or get out of bed. Physical activity is a great way to release stress. This does not mean you have to hit the gym or run around to benefit from physical activity. When you exercise, your body releases endorphins to make you feel better. This can distract you from any worries. You benefit from exercising regularly for at least 30 minutes every day or more, depending on how much time you can spend working out. You should build on your fitness levels over time. Perform small activities that will add up to at least 30 minutes every day. You should remember to get up and move. Some ways you can do this are:

- Dance around
- Put some good music on
- Go for a walk or cycle
- Avoid using the elevator, but walk up and down the stairs

Connect with People

It is best to spend time with the people you connect with or love. This way, you can calm down and relax. It is best to have face-to-face interactions with people you love since these interactions release hormones in your body, which counteract your body's fight and flight response. Spending quality time with the people you love can relieve stress. So, connect with people you love regularly. Speak to your friends and family.

Bear in mind that the people you speak to do not have to fix your stress. All you need is someone to listen to how you are feeling. Do not worry about being a burden or looking vulnerable in front of the people you are speaking to. People who love you will be flattered by how much you trust them. This is only going to strengthen your relationship. You cannot expect someone to always be around you when you want to speak to someone. So, you can maintain and build a network, which will help you overcome any life stressors.

The following are some tips you can use to build relationships:

1. Reach out to someone at work who understands what you do and how you feel
2. Volunteer and help people
3. Have coffee or lunch with friends
4. Ask someone you love to check in with you frequently to know how you feel
5. Go to a concert or movie
6. Speak to an old friend
7. Take a walk or workout
8. Go on a dinner date
9. Meet people by joining a club or taking a new class
10. Speak to a teacher, coach, or clergy member

Take Time Out to Relax

Beyond having a positive attitude or taking charge, you need to remove stressors in your life. You need to take some time for yourself. Do not let the rat race bring you down. You cannot let it control you. You need to take care of what you need and want. You need to nurture yourself. So, take some time out every day to relax and have fun. This is the best way to handle all stressors in your life.

Set Some Time for Leisure

You must ensure you relax for a few hours a day and never let any other obligations or tasks take over your relaxation time. This is the time you should spend to recharge.

Do Something You Like

When you spend some time relaxing and rest, try to do something you like during that time. You can stargaze, read a book, play the piano or ride your bike.

Maintain Your Sense of Humor

You need to find humor in life, which means you also need to laugh at yourself. When you laugh, your body finds different ways to fight stress.

Maintain a Practice

You can use different relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing activities, yoga, or meditation, since these activities help your body relax. You find yourself in a state of restfulness and calm. Your body is not in the fight or flight mechanism. So, learn these techniques and practice them as often as possible. This will help you decrease stress, and both your body and mind will become centered and calm.

Learn to Manage Your Time

If you do not know how to manage your time well, it can lead to stress. If you are burning out or working too hard, you will not find any time to calm down. You may want to cut back on things that your body needs to keep these stressors in check. You may stop socializing and not sleep enough because of a lack of time. You can always take some steps to control and maintain your work-life balance.

Do Not Over-Commit

Do not have too many things to do in one day. You should give yourself some time to complete tasks because people generally underestimate the time it takes to complete some tasks.

Prioritize

If you are aware of the tasks you need to do, create a to-do list and prioritize the tasks on the list. Complete the high-priority tasks before you work on other tasks. If you have something that is stressful or unpleasant, try to complete the task as quickly as possible. Your day will be more pleasant when you finish those tasks first.

Divide a Project Into Steps

If you work on large projects, break those down into smaller segments or

sections. You can then develop a plan that makes it easier for you to complete the tasks on time. Avoid doing everything at once because that only makes things harder for you.

Delegate Responsibility

It is important to take help from others to complete your tasks. You do not have to do everything yourself at home, on the job, or in school. If you know people can take care of a task, then why not let them do it? Let go of the need to oversee and control each step. This helps you let go of unnecessary emotions and stress.

Follow a Healthy Lifestyle

Apart from exercising, you should also choose healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your body's ability to resist stress and other emotional factors.

Eat Healthy

If you eat a healthy diet, you can cope and manage any emotions and stress. You need to be mindful of the food you eat. Begin your day with a healthy breakfast and keep your mind clear. You need to keep your energy high by eating nutritious and balanced meals throughout the day.

Reduce Sugar and Caffeine

Caffeine and sugar give you temporary body highs that boost your mood for a short period. This energy boost will end with a crash in both your energy and mood. It is best to reduce your intake of sugar, chocolate, coffee, and soft drinks. You will sleep better and feel relaxed.

Avoid Drugs, Alcohol, and Cigarettes

It is never a good idea to self-medicate using drugs or alcohol. These can help you drown your feelings and escape from stress, but this is only for a short period. You cannot mask the issue or situation at hand. Learn to deal with problems head-on and with a clear mind.

Sleep Well

You need to sleep for at least 6 hours every night, which is important for your mind and body. If you are tired, you may be more tired and under stress. This will lead to irrational thinking.

Learn to Let the Stress Go

You need to manage your stress in easy and effective ways. If you are stuck in a stressful environment at work or a meeting, have argued with your partner, or find yourself in a stressful routine, you need to see how to manage that stress. This is the best way to relieve your stress. One of the easiest ways to let go of any stressful emotion is to breathe deeply. Use your senses, such as tasting, touching, hearing, and seeing, to accept any situation. You can also use soothing movements to help relieve your stress. You can look at a favorite photo, listen to some soothing music, use specific scents around your house, eat a piece of gum or hug someone you love. Alternatively, you can choose to focus on yourself and relax your mind.

CHAPTER 9

THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

Imagination is your mind's ability to form a mental idea or picture in your head. People imagine themselves in different situations, but imagination becomes extremely powerful when it manifests itself. Everything in the material world was created when someone imagined it. Therefore, anything a person creates in their mind becomes a physical aspect. Some examples include:

- The car was invented or designed only after it was imagined
- Elon Musk's Hyperloop
- The Internet only came into being because it was invented
- The mobile phone was invented because it was imagined before it was created

When you imagine what can help you, then you can begin to create it. You can create the best things out of your imagination, and the Internet is a classic example. You should use mental ideas and pictures to imagine different purposes. Some ideas and pictures can be used to start a new business, solve various issues, do some good for people, and solve several problems.

Your mind has an eye, which looks at things your eyes would not normally see. What you see can be seen by the people around you too. Nobody can see your thoughts and ideas except for you since it is in your mind. There are two forms of imagination – negative and positive.

Positive Imagination

Positive imagination is your ability to imagine every picture or idea you want or desire. This is something you must do regularly. Try to imagine everything you desire. The best part about imagination is that you can form an idea or

picture in your mind of everything you want. For example, if you want to purchase a car, you should think about the following:

1. The car brand you want to purchase
2. The model and color
3. When you want to buy the car

You can also imagine yourself driving the car. You should do this for everything you want. When you do this, your thoughts manifest themselves, and the energy you put out in the universe will ensure you get everything you want.

Spend a few hours every day imagining the things you want in life. You can do this every morning. A positive image will help you achieve everything you need. You will feel better about yourself and the situation you are in. You may also believe that you can achieve everything you want or need. Your unconscious mind will believe your thoughts and will begin to act accordingly. Your thoughts and actions will push you to do better, and you will learn to turn your positive imagination into your manifestation.

Negative Imagination

Everybody has negative thoughts and emotions. If you have negative ideas and pictures, it means you focus on negative imaginations. These ideas and pictures come because of fear. When you are afraid, your fear is going to manifest through your negative imaginations. For example, when you are crossing the road, if you imagine yourself being hit by a car or bike, it is because you are afraid of crossing the road.

Similarly, if you are afraid of an examination, you will imagine yourself failing it. In simple words, if you are afraid, you will have negative thoughts and emotions. You may also have these emotions because of hatred. If you do not like someone, you may imagine terrible things happening to that person. Every murder or crime was committed in your mind before it actually happened. Every murderer thinks about killing someone before he kills. Hatred leads to negative emotions in your mind, and you will act based on those emotions around the person. You may make terrible mistakes in your

life.

You may also have negative emotions because of things you hear and see. If you constantly listen to negative news and people, you will tend to have negative imaginations. For instance, if someone listens to negative news and other people who speak negatively, they will begin to think this way. For example, everybody across the globe is reading the news about coronavirus and panicking. They are tired of being cooped indoors and are depressed. Some people believe they have the virus or may die because of it, leading to depression and fear. If you only watch negative movies, videos, etc., you will have negative thoughts.

As mentioned before, what you imagine and see is what you will get. Therefore, if you think negatively, negativity will manifest in your life. Get rid of negativity if you want to have a positive life.

Tips to Overcome Negative Imagination

1. If you want to overcome negative imagination, you need to switch it with positive imagination. For example, if you believe you will die, you should switch that imagination where you declare you will live for longer. If you find yourself ill, tell yourself you will not be ill
2. Do not listen to negative news or stories
3. Avoid negative videos
4. If you do not like some people in your life, you need to stop hanging out with them
5. Listen to positive stories and music
6. Read positive articles and books
7. Do not fear

You should focus on positive emotions and thoughts when you work on defining an idea. The ideas you have may indeed seem ridiculous. Can you believe that you can actually go to Mars and live there? This is a ridiculous idea at the moment, but Elon Musk believed that he could do this, and he is working towards this. Similarly, you need to focus on what you truly want or need.

You can use different techniques, such as lucid dreaming and the law of attraction, to manifest your thoughts and emotions. If you find yourself in a situation or challenge you do not like, you can turn the situation into a positive one using your thoughts. Play with your ideas and dreams, and do not worry about science. You can do everything you dream about. It is important to understand that no idea is silly, and everybody would have had doubts about their ideas before they had a breakthrough. Trust yourself and think about ideas in different ways.

If you do not know how to develop new ideas, you can read and gather new information. It is important to note how your mind processes new information. If you reason with the information correctly, you will derive accurate conclusions, and the opposite is true. Your conclusions will be your belief, and if you come up with incorrect conclusions, your thoughts will change. If you want to succeed, you need to use positive imagination.

CONCLUSION

Have you ever wondered what the difference is between those who are successful and others? One common trait all successful people share is their creativity. It is one of the essential skills and the basis for all progress and growth. Creativity is not based on the concept of a lone genius; and instead, it is a conscious or unconscious group effort. The modern world we live in is incredibly challenging, competitive, and stressful. A simple way to get ahead is by harnessing your creativity. To do this, the first step you need to take is to take a digital detox.

Since creativity is like a muscle, you can exercise it. To do this, you need to find your inspiration, feed your brain helpful information, and stay away from any notions of perfection. Apart from this, establish certain constraints to promote your creativity, engage in brainstorming sessions daily, and keep looking for new ideas. Ideas promote creativity and start turning your brain into an idea machine.

From daydreaming about crossing disciplines and Ultra-learning, there are different aspects you can concentrate on to promote your creativity. Start exercising, learn to manage stress, consume a healthy diet, and get all the rest your body needs. The connection between your physical and mental health cannot be overlooked. Once you are physically fit and healthy, your mental health will automatically improve. Since creativity is associated with your mind, your physical health goes a long way here.

Never stop questioning, and don't underestimate the power of good questions. Learn the art of questioning, become playful with ideas, and tune into your inner child. Curiosity is a holy trait, so never stop learning. Become a lifelong learner and keep improving yourself. A simple way to improve is through feedback. Surround yourself with people from different disciplines, share ideas, and start working on turning your ideas into reality. Understand the importance of pushing yourself but acknowledge when you need to take a

step back. Never stop learning if you want to grow and prosper.

If you want to improve your creativity, it's time to establish and follow a daily routine. It might sound counterintuitive that you need a routine to be more creative. After all, creativity might sound like something that stems from freedom and wandering. Well, constraints help fuel your creativity. All the information you need about these topics was discussed in this book.

Now, all that's left for you to do is start implementing the simple suggestions and tips given in this book. By incorporating the healthy habits and routines discussed in this book, you can improve your creativity. The key to unlocking your true potential lies in your hands. Take the first step today in the right direction by getting started!

Finally, if you have enjoyed reading this book and found it informative, take a couple of minutes, and please leave a review on Amazon! Thank you and all the best!

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