

Imagine That! Harnessing the Power of Creative Thinking

By Paul J. Meyer

Creative thinking, like faith, can move mountains. Do you have it? If not, can you get it?

I often hear people make the statement that a friend or colleague is “highly creative” or “imaginative,” usually followed by a remark in the reverse about themselves. The actual fact is imagination is as universal as memory, and everyone possesses the innate ability to participate in creative thinking. However, in the majority of cases, only one area of the average person’s mind has been developed to any degree, and that area is not the creative side.

Each person has the ability to think in two ways - *judicially* and *creatively*. The judicial function of the mind is to provide and analyze facts, to pass judgment if you will on any incoming data. The creative aspect of the mind deals with the unknown, within the arena of possibility. Unfortunately, the education provided in our schools today focuses 90% of the student’s work in the area of the judicial, the area of facts and formulas.

“...the more you actively practice using your imagination, the more ability you will acquire.”

Since the ability to be creative is a much recognized trait of most successful people, it is a very desirable trait to have. Einstein was even quoted as saying, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” While some may disagree with that extreme of a statement, all agree that knowledge can be more powerfully applied when creative thinking is in the mix.

Is creative thinking linked to intelligence or advanced education?

The ability to exercise creative thinking is not linked to intelligence or higher education. Even the influence of heredity and environment is uncertain. While everyone has this innate ability, the degree of imagination or creative thinking a person exhibits seems related more to the output of *mental energy* versus any inborn talent.

Even though you cannot make a person more creative than he actually is by nature, you can through exposure to certain techniques cause that person to approach his or her true creative potential. For example, a study was conducted where 330 students of similar intelligence and abilities were divided into two groups. One group participated in a fourteen month course study on creative problem solving while the other group did not.

After the fourteen months was complete, the group that participated in the course showed a 94% better performance level in creative problem solving than the other group!

What exactly is necessary for creative thinking?

Creative thinking is the ability to visualize, to foresee, and to generate ideas in an almost limitless manner. In order to be creative you must:

- Have a positive attitude.
- Have a hopeful outlook on life.
- Have a high degree of enthusiasm.
- Have the ability to encourage yourself to the point of self-confidence.

What can I do to increase my imagination and creative thinking?

Imagination is increased by participating in creative thinking even if on trivial levels. In other words, the more you *actively practice* using your imagination, the more ability you will acquire. You can stimulate your imagination through first-hand experience such as travel, or you can stimulate it through second-hand methods such as reading books that force you to think while you read, not just absorb passively.

In addition, creative people have formed the *habit* of reacting in a “yes” manner to all new ideas. The first thing they do is to consider all the reasons the idea might be good and workable. After all, there are always plenty of people around to point out the problems; very few are open to why something might actually work.

One of the best techniques that can be used to stimulate your creative thinking and generate a list of workable solutions to a problem is called *brainstorming*. This has become one of the arsenals of the corporate world, where staying on the cutting edge of creativity is paramount to their success. However, this technique is highly effective for an individual or a couple, not just for a group.

Brainstorming literally means: to storm a problem with possible solutions. When you brainstorm, you initially use *only* the creative side of your brain. You do not censor or evaluate. After you have a list of creative ideas you can then apply the judicial side of your brain to analyze the most workable solutions. If you are working with a group, you should alternate between individual brainstorming sessions and group sessions.

Imagination is the cornerstone of human endeavor. Creative thinking is an applied art, a workable art, a teachable art, and a learnable art. The more you practice the more you have. Imagine that!

Paul J. Meyer, best-selling *New York Times* author and founder of the Success Motivation Institute has written two dozen full-length programs plus numerous books on attitude, motivation, goal setting, management, leadership, and time management. In this inspirational and instructive CD, *Applied Imagination* available at www.pauljimeyer.com, Paul shares the principles of creative thinking that have made him the success he is today.

