



At “otcoach” we offer a free consultation: why not find out what coaching could do for you.

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25 ways to boost your creativity

As Occupational Therapists we understand the value of creativity, occupation and participation. In the world today, life is full of deadlines, targets, meetings, emails, etc and often our soul yearns to reconnect to our creative source.

After all human beings are creative beings! We create all the time whether it's by imagining or dreaming, by writing or painting, by decorating our homes or designing buildings, by creating new businesses or projects, by cooking or making costumes for the school play.

This is a resource for you, your parents or friends to help you reconnect to your creative source. Feel free to share it but please mention us.

Visualise what you really want

Make sure you are warm, comfortable and relaxed. Spend some time thinking about your ideal day. Get a clear visual image or how you look and what you are wearing. What are you doing? What activities are filling your day? Who else is involved? What would you really like to see yourself doing? What would like to eat on your ideal day? Think about music, outings, nature, hobbies. Try and get as clear and vivid a picture as possible and be flexible to change any elements that don't feel right. Now spend some time writing down or drawing or making a collage of your image. Re-visit this image regularly and make any changes as needed. Remind yourself of what you really want.

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Read

Take the opportunity to read different material. It can be anything: glossy magazines, professional journals (not just your own ones!), children's books, e books, leaflets, autobiographies etc. Open your mind to learning from other sources - there is so much stuff if you look out for it.

Change Channel

Explore other TV channels and watch something you wouldn't usually watch. If you are usually glued to Corrie, turn over to watch a documentary! If, like me, you still only have four channels, (yes really!) go and rent a DVD or you could even turn off the TV and put the radio on.

Ideal World, Ideal You.

Develop a clear mental image of how you want to be, things you would do and what you would have in your ideal world. Visualise this image on a TV screen in front of you. Focus on how you feel in this ideal situation. What sensations do you feel in your body. What is your posture like? Notice your smile, your clothes. Notice any smells, and sounds that are around. Make sure that this ideal vision involves you doing something you really love. Now make the TV screen bigger and bigger and adjust the focus to make it really clear as it grows until you are lifesize. Keep the image and feeling clear and when you are ready, step into the image of you. Wear the ideal you like a coat. Feel your new posture, new smile. Sense how your clothes feel. Immerse yourself in your new "skin". To be effective this needs to be practised regularly

Life Collage

Over a few weeks gather images, photos, pictures etc that attract you or hold some special memories for you. Try and include a good variety of textures and media. When you have some time and space, use your collection of images to make a collage of what you would like in your life. What's most important to you? What makes your heart sing? What feeds your passion? This collage can be as big or small as you like and may grow and change over time - watch it grow!

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Scrapbook

We often encourage children to keep a scrapbook with pages for important days out or events. Why not do this for yourself? There are many lovely resources to buy to do this such as attractive scrapbook, stickers, on-line images etc. With digital photography its easy to take and print photos to use. Get scrapbooking!

Doodle! Let your pencil play

When thinking about an idea or trying to come up with new ideas, let your mind and pencil play on the paper in front of you. As you explore an idea, doodle and allow yourself to write or draw whatever comes to mind even if it seems unrelated at the time. Afterwards, look at what you have written/drawn. Maybe you can see a metaphor emerging. Maybe your doodle has just allowed you to focus on the idea. Maybe you can see patterns emerging on the page which give your thoughts some structure. Keep your original doodles/ideas.

Magical creation box

Find a nice box or decorate a plain one. If you can lock it that great - you never know what you might want to keep inside! Use this box to create a magical collection of items. You could include whatever items hold special meaning or value; Maybe a great memory; perhaps a beautiful poem, a postcard of a great painting, tape of a song...you get the idea. Use this magical box how and whenever you need to . Open it when you need cheering up, when you need inspiration or ideas or just want to remind yourself of what makes you tick!

Morning Pages

This exercise is a habit really and is advocated by Julia Cameron in "The Artists Way" as a great way to get unblocked and allow your creativity to flow. This is a commitment to spend the first 10-15 mins of each day writing whatever comes into your head. It needs to be done first thing, before coffee even before a wee if you can manage it. Just roll over in bed, grab a pen and write a minimum of 3 A4 pages! You must keep writing even if you end up writing " I can't think of anything else to write" or "bla bla bla". The important thing is to keep going and to do it each day - see what happens. This is an amazing process.

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Capture it

Whenever you have an idea, whether its for a project, picture, book, story, recipe, comedy sketch, take a few minutes to write it down. Even if its on to a beer mat or napkin (remember JK Rowling and her café napkins!), get it down and then store it in a place so you can find it when needed. You may want to carry a small notebook and keep the ideas together. Its important to write things down, **you don't have to action them all**, but by capturing the essence you honour your creative spirit.

Be Present

Everyone goes on about being "present" but truly staying with what we are doing at each moment in time can be challenging. Our minds enjoy floating off and thinking about other things: "what will I cook for dinner...when can I move onto the next thing...wonder when Fred will telephone...think I'll eat another biscuit". Buddhists practice "mindfulness" and if you find yourself wandering out of what you are doing, take time to be fully mindful again. Who are you being and doing at this moment and at this moment and this moment?

Time to Think

Its not often we give ourselves time to think these days. We live in an age where everything happens instantly and that often influences the way we approach our work, projects and ideas. Giving ourselves time to think, explore, generate and play with ideas is crucial to allowing our creativity to really grow.

Reducing distractions

Hmmm...this can be tricky as sometimes we secretly like being distracted. Allowing ourselves a morning, a day or longer without the TV, mobile, landphone or emails can be one of the most challenging yet fruitful ways to hear your creative inner voice. How would you manage to make your self unavailable? Try it for an hour, then a morning and work it up from there. Use these quiet times to really "be" with whatever you are doing. It maybe that you just do the housework without distraction or you may choose to use this time to work on a particular project.

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Network

If you are in need of creative ideas for your work or business then networking is a sure fire way of getting them. Talking to people from both similar and different backgrounds opens you up to lots of new ideas. The trick to networking is to spend more time listening and getting to know people rather than talking about yourself. Listen for the different ways people operate, run their business or work life. Listen for possible ideas you could change or adapt. Make sure you gather business cards or contact details so you can keep some records. Of course if you are a writer, networking is the bread and butter way of meeting "new characters" for your books or stories. In today's virtual world, networking puts us back where we can re-connect with real people again.

Meeting in the park

If you and your team are facing a difficult or challenging meeting which requires fresh thought and ideas, take the meeting out of its usual context. Meeting somewhere completely different especially outdoors with all the extra sensory input, really helps people to think more clearly and generate ideas. The park is great as it requires no planning or booking, but if wet or cold why not go to a café, pub or other public place.

Walk in the country

For centuries, artists, poets and writers have drawn inspiration from nature and there's no better, cheaper or healthier way to do it than taking a walk or cycle in the country. Whether you are seeking new ideas for a book, painting or project or have an idea that needs developing, being outside allows us real time to think. Fresh air feeds our minds. Open your eyes, breathe in and let your imagination run free.

Dance

Since *Strictly Come Dancing* came to our screens a few years ago, dance fever has gripped the nation. New classes have popped up all over and the choice is endless: ballroom, Salsa, Ceroc, line dancing, ballet, tap, disco, jive, Circle dancing, 5 rhythms, country dancing, Irish dancing, Scottish dancing, morris dancing..... Moving your body, sinking yourself into the music and really letting go is a great way to tap into our natural vibrant energy. If you can't

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afford a class, get a DVD and learn at home. Even just putting on some music and having a bop around the lounge really helps - go for it!

Music while you create

For centuries artists have been inspired by music. Next time you want to experiment with painting, find a selection of really different but compelling music you are drawn to. Perhaps a mix of classical, rock, pop etc or just a piece that varies in tempo and beat. Find a good variety of materials and media to paint/draw with a listen to each type of music for a few minutes (one at a time), before you start making any marks on the paper. Really listen to the sounds. How does your body sense the music, what images (abstract or representational) come into your mind? Then without censoring yourself see what you want to do with the materials at hand. Repeat the music as you experiment and remember don't attach to the outcome, just play. When you are ready, change the music and do it all again.

Play with your kids

...and if you haven't got any then borrow some. I may hear you say that you play with your kids all the time, but sometimes we only have half our attention with them when we play. Try to enter into their world entirely. Let go of thinking what you need to cook for dinner. Play like you did when you were little - can you remember how?

Say "yes" to scary or fun things

Remember that great song /poem by Baz Luhrman, Sunscreen (1997): "Do one thing every day that scares you..." I would add to that "Do one thing each day that is fun!". Whether it's scary or fun or both, taking yourself out of your comfort zone will provide you with new experiences, ideas and generally give your creative energy a good fizz!

What do you believe?

We all hold beliefs about ourselves and our world. Some beliefs may be useful eg "I am a good mother", "I am good at writing". Some beliefs are not helpful: "I can't make a living from painting" "I haven't got what it takes to run my own business", "I am not confident enough to do..." The thing about beliefs is that they are very powerful but are often formed on little evidence or a mis-representation of false reality, or just inherited from our parents or just not true. In relation to creativity ask yourself this "what do

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you believe about your creativity?" "what do you know to be true?" " If you knew you were clever enough, confident enough what would you do?". Working with our beliefs is a life long process but by starting to examine how our beliefs may limit us and replace them with positive ones, really changes us.

Map it out

Tony Buzan, the Mind Map King has built an entire career around mind maps. Why? Because they are great! Mind maps can be used for anything: revising for exams, solving problems, planning projects, writing novels etc. If you are struggling to get off the ground with a creative project, using a mind map can really get things moving. If looking to write a novel/book take a large sheet of paper, lots of coloured pens and put your idea or plot in the centre, then use the following technique to develop your ideas. Take a main branch from the middle point and label it in anyway - it may be "chapters" or "characters" or "ideas for the plot" or "events/key points in the story" etc. Now draw smaller branches coming off and use these to pursue ideas, expand your thoughts etc and keep branching off but feel free to join some branches or use arrows to direct elsewhere. For more info on mind maps see Buzans books or website www.buzan.com.au

Go with your flow

Often, if we are short of time it feels good to section out time in our diaries for a particular activities. I often say to myself "Wednesday afternoon is my painting time" but when I get there I don't feel like it! I have tried to force myself to do it anyway but just get bored and frustrated - it certainly doesn't flow! Unfortunately I often work best late at night which doesn't help me to get enough sleep but sometimes its worth the sacrifice. What does your natural creative rhythm say to you? Do you listen to it? Maybe its different times of the day, month or even year? Maybe writing in the winter is easier and painting is better in the summer? Work with your creativity and make it easier not harder.

A creative day out!

If you want to paint/draw/sculpt, make some time each month to feed your creative soul by visiting a gallery or exhibition. Take time to really enjoy and immerse yourself in the work on display. What was the artist/s trying to do.

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Read about them. How does their work make you feel? Make notes and sketch if need be. What ideas come to mind for your work as you enjoy someone elses work?

The "Blank" page

Some love it: the pristine white page/canvas, the possibilities

Some dread it: the emptiness, the expectation, the doubts

If you love it then great. If not then find ways to get over it. If its for painting why not put a base colour down first, or paste a background to then paint on, get used to messing up the page and enjoying the mess rather than trying to create a finished result.

If the unwritten page looms large, just start doodling first or writing random words or mini mind-maps. Start writing the end or middle first then come back to the start later.

Out of nothing comes something.

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