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I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious.
Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate

Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.
Scott Adams, Creator of the Dilbert comic strip

John Cleese on Creativity

(Reading time: 6 minutes)

John Cleese is an English actor and comedian best known as a cofounder of the comedy troupe Monty Python. On January 23rd, 1991 he gave an entertaining speech entitled, "Creativity in Management." The 37-minute speech and 8-page transcript have both been posted and are well worth watching and reading respectively. Just recently (September 8th, 2020), he also launched a 112-page book entitled, "Creativity: A Short and Cheerful Guide."

See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb5oIIPO62g and https://jamesclear.com/great-speeches/creativity-in-management-by-john-cleese.

In his speech, John Cleese compares creativity to play: You need "to play with ideas … to explore them … not for any immediate practical purpose but just for enjoyment." He describes this as being in an open mode "allowing our natural creativity to surface." He has a 5-step process for getting into the open mode:

1. You need to "make a quiet space for yourself where you will be undisturbed." **CRASH** – Flow[1] occurs when you are totally absorbed by and deeply focused on something, beyond the point of distraction.

[1] https://positivepsychology.com/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi-father-of-flow/

CRASH OF IDEAS SERIES
'Integrative thinking': a conscious way of synthesizing two or more ideas to come up with one new and superior idea. Roger Martin, past-Dean Rotman, Univ. of Toronto

2. You need to set aside a specified period of time. 90 minutes is optimal. After which you will need to take a break.
   CRASH – Time boxing[2] which involves blocking off a set period of time for a task instead of working on it to completion.

3. Stick with and play with a problem longer before trying to resolve it. "When does this decision have to be taken?... Defer the decision until then, in order to give yourself maximum pondering time, which will lead you to the most creative solution." Snap decisions are too easy.
   CRASH – Daniel Kahneman's Thinking Fast and Slow[3] where the former is emotional and instinctive whereas the latter is conscious, deliberate and rational. By thinking slowly, you can connect more disparate elements.

4. Do not fear of making a mistake. "To play is to experiment: What happens if I do this?" It can be effective to play with others. "If two or more of us throw ideas backwards and forwards I get to more interesting and original places than I could have ever gotten to on my own." Build on your ideas and suspend criticism temporarily.
   CRASH – Alex Osborn's Brainstorming[4] and improv both involve the suspension of opinion and criticism. The famous phrase in improv[5] is, "Yes, and …"

5. Include humour as it relaxes and facilitates creativity even when working on serious issues. "In a joke, the laugh comes at a moment when you connect two different frameworks of reference in a new way." Connecting or juxtaposing different ideas often generates new approaches.
   CRASH – Edward DeBono's Lateral thinking[6] methods encourage random juxtasposition of items to generate novel ideas.

John Cleese also explains that, "we need to be in the open (divergent) mode when we are pondering a problem but once we come up with a solution, we must the switch back to the closed (and very purposeful convergent) mode to implement it. Because once we've made a decision, we are efficient only if we go through with it decisively, undistracted by doubts about its correctness…After it's been carried out, we should once again switch back to the open mode to review the feedback rising from our action, in order to decide whether the

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[2] https://hbr.org/2018/12/how-timeboxing-works-and-why-it-will-make-you-more-productive
[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thinking,_Fast_and_Slow
[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brainstorming
[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yes,_and...
[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateral_thinking

course that we have taken is successful, or whether we should continue with the next stage of our plan. Whether we should create an alternative plan to correct any error we perceive."
Postscript: There are a variety of tools that can assist you in thinking creatively. Nine of the most popular and effective include[7]:

- **Brainstorming/brainwriting/with post-its etc**.[8] are a series of related techniques that can be done individually or within a group. As many spontaneous new ideas are generated as possible, prior to being grouped and evaluated.

- **List of 100**[9] is a technique that involves developing 100 answers or solutions to your problem. As an effective version of brainstorming, it too forces you to continue to play before reaching a decision.

- **Lateral thinking**[10] involves choosing a random word from a list or book and then trying to connect it to the problem or question at hand or developing a very provocative question based on wishful thinking or an exaggeration so as to move the thinking forward to identify new ideas.

- **6 Thinking hats**[11] also developed by Edward DeBono encourages you to think about an issue from his six outlined viewpoints: fact-based, positive benefits, critical/cautious, feelings/intuition, creativity/alternatives, and the process itself.

- **SCAMPER**[12] developed by Alex Osborn and Bob Eberle is an acronym that challenges you to improve your solutions by substituting, combining, adapting, modifying, putting to another use, eliminating, or reversing the current ideas.

- **Triz**[13] or the "theory of the resolution of invention-related tasks" was developed by Genrich Altshuller. It is based on the finding that the vast majority of problems involve the need to overcome a dilemma or a trade-off between two contradictory elements. The resulting tool is a contradiction matrix of 39 x 39 parameters that depending on what features are improving or worsening recommends a subset of the core 40 inventive principles.

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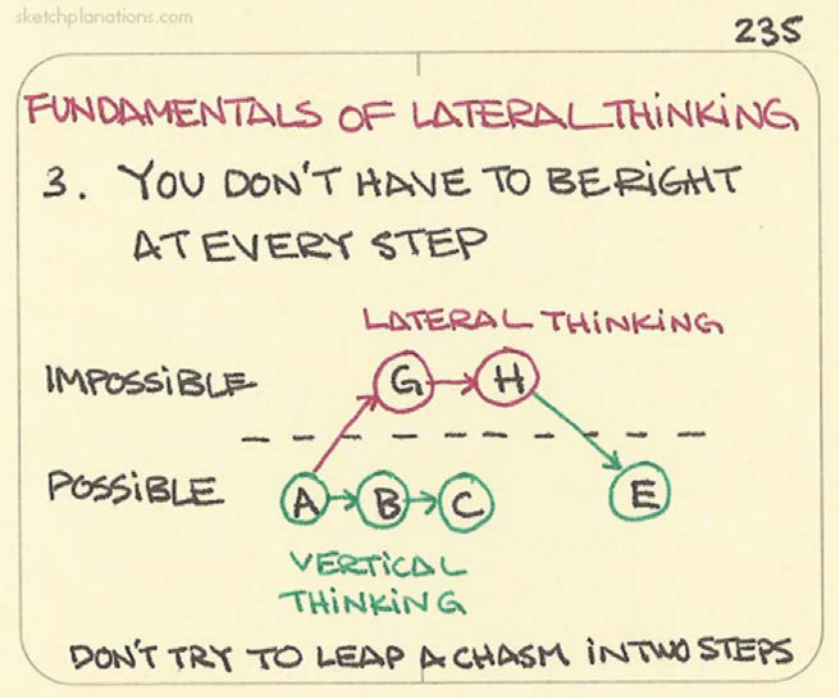
[7] For my 2015 TEDxMcMaster talk search "Creativity" within https://www.hexagon-innovating.com
[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brainstorming
[9] https://litemind.com/tackle-any-issue-with-a-list-of-100/
[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateral_thinking
[11] https://www.southampton.ac.uk/~assets/doc/hr/Six%20thinking%20hats.pdf
[12] https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCT_02.htm
[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRIZ

- **5 Why's**[14] was developed by Sakichi Toyoda and later used at Toyota. By iteratively asking "Why?" to the answer from the previous "Why?", a deeper understanding of the true root cause can be uncovered.

- **Mindmapping**[15] was made popular by Tony Buzan. It involves the creation of free form diagrams and drawings similar to network diagrams, hierarchical diagrams in reverse and decision trees. It facilitates the creation of linkages between various aspects of an issue in a non-linear and visual manner.

- **Delphi method**[16] was developed within Project RAND by the US military to assist in forecasting the impact of technology. At its core is the principle that individuals should first develop their ideas, solutions or predictions on their own before sharing, comparing and integrating the best parts of each submission. Again, like many creative techniques this facilitates a two-step process of divergent thinking followed by convergent thinking.



[17]

[14] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_whys
[15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map
[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi_method
[17] https://sketchplanations.com/lateral-thinking-you-dont-have-to-be-right-at-every-step which I have permission to post.