



Ground-rules for personal creativity

Manage your energy – don't stuff yourself with chocolate biscuits or other goodies that are high in sugar – as you'll regret it later when you find it harder to concentrate as a result of the sugar-low. Instead remember to breathe – our brain cells need oxygen to function properly.

If the going gets tough - take a break. Get some fresh air and drink plenty of water. In order to make connections our brains need to be hydrated in order for the electrical impulses to pass from one neuron to another.

You need less information than you think. The less you know, the more creative you can be, so avoid asking questions, unless vital for clarification. When generating ideas just imagine that you knew the answer to that question, or guess what it might be and see what ideas that gives you.

Ask yourself "**What does that make me think of?**" ...Whenever you hear someone else's contribution allow your mind to drift and make connections.

Capture your thoughts on your notepad (or they will likely disappear off into the ether.) It also frees you up to listen to what else is going on, as you wait for your turn to speak.

Headline your ideas when you speak. Then share the background to your thinking. It lets people hear the key point up front before they start making connections to their own ideas.

Anything goes! Offer points of view, new ways of looking at the problem, images, general directions, absurd ideas. The aim is to develop a broad spectrum of ideas, quickly, without judging any of them. They don't have to make sense at this stage.

Share the airspace – if you find yourself having to take a huge gulp of air to finish what you were saying – you've probably got more than one idea hidden in there.

Stay open-minded to new ideas. Its as important to say open-minded to your own new ideas and suspend judgement, as it is to look for value in other people's thinking.

Stay loose until rigour counts. Evaluate ideas constructively, framing concerns into opportunities. Incubate new ideas, until they've had a chance to grow.

Assume Positive Intent. If you feel in any way discounted by someone's actions, look for the person's positive intention and this will help you to manage the effect it has on yourself.

Take 100% responsibility for results. Others can plan the trip and guide you to the sights, but they can't enjoy them for you. Participate fully and be accountable for your actions and the ripple impact of your climate on others.

Act when the time is right. Only develop the feasibility of an idea once you have generated enough excitement and intrigue. You can develop the feasibility of an intriguing idea, but you can't make a known and do-able idea exciting.



What wishing does for me

1. I remove the restrictions of reality
2. I give my imagination free rein
3. I can entertain mutually exclusive impulses and inclinations and thus get to know all the wants and needs of my whole self – not just my civilised, impression management self
4. I can ignore tradition, common sense and convention to consider only what *I* want
5. I can imagine an impossible outcome being successful and think backwards towards reality, spotting the obstacles and wishing them away
6. I can explore dream solutions and, as Carl Sandburg wrote, “Nothing unless first a dream”
7. Giving myself permission to wish puts to sleep my judgement and negative caution and activates my courage to dare
8. I remove any need to defend or justify
9. I get in touch with many facets of myself that I ordinarily repress
10. I become progressively more daring and unlimited in my dreaming, for myself and others
11. I experience the exhilaration of thinking without the constant restrictions, repressions, strictures, reservations, strings and confinements I impose on myself in the name of reality and practicality
12. As I repeatedly experience this exhilaration without being arrested or ostracised, I become aware that it is liberating of the best in me to *think anything* as long as I evaluate before *acting*
13. It puts me in touch with resources for connecting that I am not usually aware of

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What an Excursion does for me

- 1.** It changes the rules about what is relevant and increases my tolerance for out-of-the-ordinary thinking
- 2.** It makes approximate thinking acceptable and transforms billions of pieces of information formerly labelled irrelevant into 'possibly useful'
- 3.** It makes me comfortable with 'silly' connections and thus opens me to many more possibilities
- 4.** It helps me not insist that a speaker be precise and accurate. I am more able to entertain proposals that have obvious (to me) flaws
- 5.** It gives me practice in stretching my limits of my ability to freely associate
- 6.** It exercises and strengthens my capacity for making unlikely connections
- 7.** It alters my internal climate toward relaxed tolerance of the thinking of others
- 8.** It shifts my listening mode from competitive listening to 'get the point' as in listening to a joke
- 9.** It enlarges my appreciation of my own limitless storehouse of images
- 10.** It puts me in touch with my remarkable capacity to imagine
- 11.** As I make repeated connections I am bombarded by endorphins and in addition to the feeling of aliveness, I am alerted and available to make further connections and create new understandings
- 12.** It builds my respect for my own resources and my ability to call on them
- 13.** It gives me practice in 'chaining', that is , moving freely from one image to another without hampering myself by insisting on logical connections
- 14.** It gives me opportunities to experience and to take pleasure in my miraculous thinking agility
- 15.** It hones my flexibility

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Ground-rules for creative meetings

Decide on your agenda and purpose – let people know what you want from them:

- i. Just to listen and take on board information?
- ii. To listen to evaluate the idea –what works and what could be better?
- iii. To listen for their own ideas, to build on the idea or take it to other areas?

Get clear on:

i. Who will lead the meeting?

This is often not the person who called the meeting as they will likely need to get stuck into the content of the discussion. The meeting should be lead by a neutral party who can ensure that everyone gets the chance to contribute.

ii. Who 'owns' the task or problem to be resolved?

This is likely to be the person who will get fired if the problem doesn't get resolved! Make sure the real problem-owner attends the meeting and hasn't delegated the task to someone else to come up with ideas. The Not-Invented-Here syndrome means that they will likely reject any ideas that they themselves did not play a part in generating.

iii. Whose expertise is needed to help you solve the task?

Make sure you invite both key experts along and also 'naïve resource' people who know nothing or very little about the problem (who are not in the pit) and who don't have anything to gain or lose from solving the problem. These people can add real value in their naïve thinking and novel perspectives.

Choose a suitable venue:

- i. Off-site meetings often allow people to let go of the day-to-day operational stuff that keeps people locked into their logical rational 'safe' mindsets.
- ii. If you can't go off-site, bring in some flowers and fruit to brighten up the room and perhaps print off a few inspiring quotations that can be put on the walls.
- iii. Make sure you have plenty of natural daylight and plenty of wall-space so that you can hang up the flipcharts you cover with ideas!

Remember the Climate

i. Before we can start coming up with ideas we all need to feel safe. Once everyone is settled and comfortable, it can be useful to run a short ice-breaker game, the more playful the better. I love "tell us the story of your shoes", as it helps us to get to know the person without getting too personal.

ii. Avoid questions that hide ideas or mask opinions

We often try to hide our ideas in the form of a question if we don't feel 'safe' enough to put your idea out into the room. This risks someone answering the question without fully considering the idea behind it.

iii. Watch your tone of voice

Only 7% of the message people understand comes through the words that are used. 93% comes through the tone of voice (38%) and the non-verbals (55%) that accompany them. If someone says 'black' – and you think 'white' then say so – more congruent communication will build trust and also generate a wider spectrum of ideas from which to choose from.



Open-mindedness Exercise

Developmental thinking is like an **incubation process**, retaining elements of newness whilst gradually transforming an idea into a feasible course of action. Or this we need to remain open-minded, suspend our critical thinking and constantly look for the value in an idea. Remember – you need snowflakes to make snowballs!

The Open-mindedness exercise helps practise this skill:

Pair up into 'A' and 'B'. Person 'A' is the task owner. 'B' acts as coach and resource.

1. **A** states the task headline and ...
 - Why it's a problem or opportunity
 - Brief background or context important to solving the problem
 - What has been tried or thought of already
 - Your ownership of the problem and power to act on a solution
 - Your dream solution

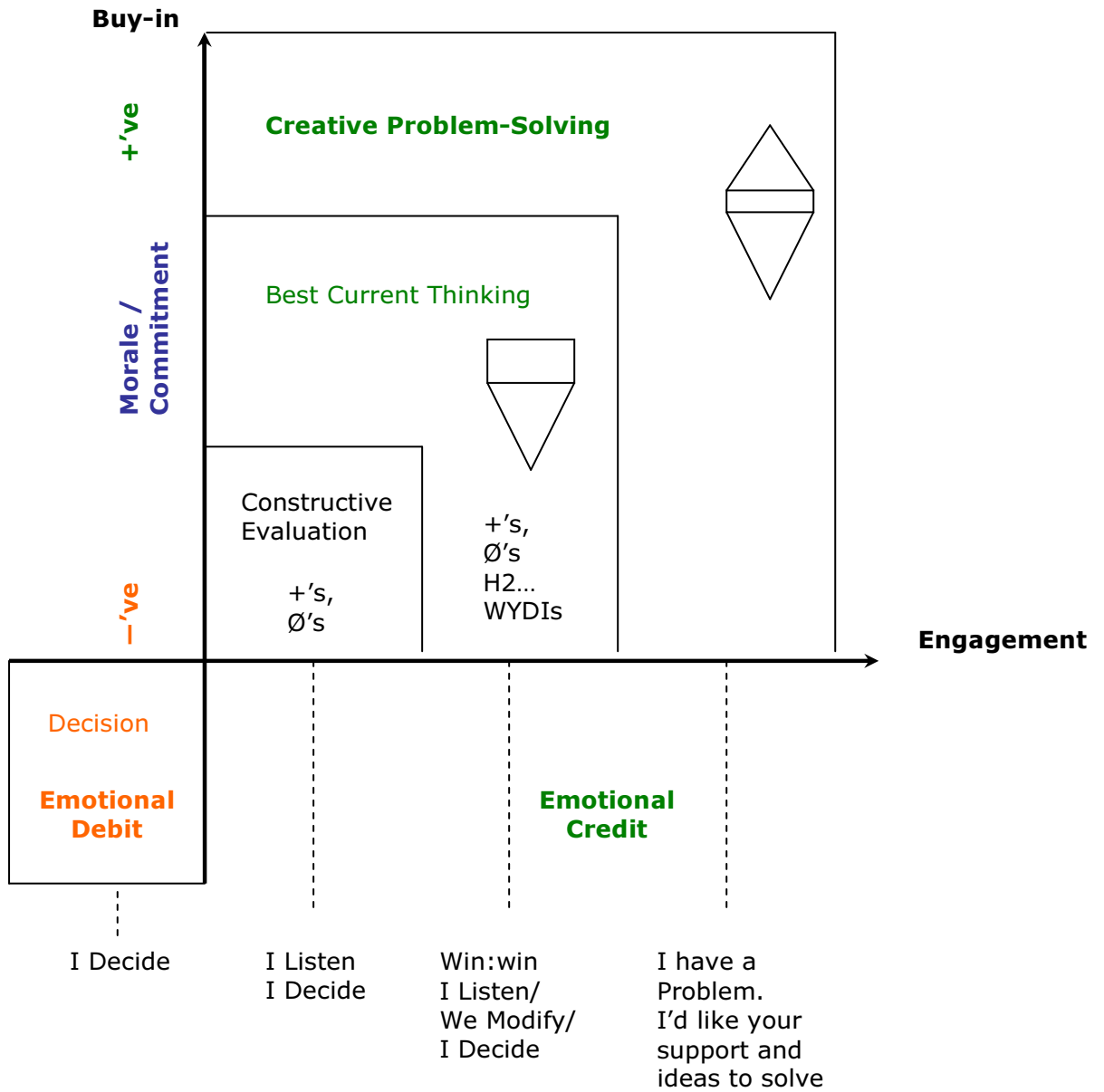
Meanwhile **B** In/Out listens and captures ideas on a pad

2. **B** offers one specific, actionable and **totally absurd** idea (**must** be impossible, illegal, immoral or would get you fired!)
3. **A** paraphrases the idea back to **B** – to check accuracy of understanding, but resists the temptation to 'sell' their idea
4. **A** identifies all the good points of the idea (as many as humanly possible and definitely at least three – how might this help you? What advantages does it have? etc). Then **A** can identify one major showstopper concern, stating it as "How to..."
5. **A** and **B** then work together to come up with ideas and builds on the original idea, in order to overcome the concern, and retain the appeal and benefits of the original idea.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 until an acceptable solution has been reached. Remember to gradually start decoding any metaphors to ground the idea back in reality. A possible solution might solve a piece (or pieces) of the problem and also has:
 - An element of Newness and appeal for the task owner
 - Enough feasibility so that the idea has a chance of succeeding
 - Enough commitment from the task owner to take the next step



Gaining buy-in from others

Commitment / Engagement



Continuum of Engagement

