

Story Block: *Creativity*

*Exploring the art and
science of Creativity*



in partnership with

H O L S T E E

Story Block: Creativity

I think of creativity as the love and passion that is poured into work that creates connections fostering joy, inspiration, and awe. It's something that is felt and developed in the depth of the soul, a magical awakening from unconstrained passion and authenticity.

However, everyone has a different way of defining creativity. So, for this month, I want to share some of my favorite quotes around creativity and let you ponder what they mean to you.



Creativity



It starts as a seed rooted so deeply
within us that we question whether or
not it is worthy of our attention.

Exciting and frightening all at once.
This is the beginning of a creative itch.

Conceived from a stranger's glance,
a wrong turn, or a memorable
conversation.

Nourishing this seed
is our challenge.

HOLSTEE

Creativity *noun*

cre·a·tiv·i·ty | ,krē-(,)ā-'ti-və-tē

The ability to produce or use original and unusual ideas.

Cambridge Dictionary © 2020

In this guide, stretch beyond your social conditioning
and unlearn limitations to awake your inner creative.

On the following pages, enjoy poetry, philosophy,
and a range of activities to help tune into your most
creative self. Dive into teachings by Carol S. Dweck
Ph.D., Ellis Paul Torrance, and Adam Grant — among
others. Engage your creativity through an open
mindset, creative block toolkit, and recognition of
your inner originality.

This guide will jumpstart personal fulfillment through
creativity's many colorful forms.



Imagination

There are no limits within a dream
Insanity at its most extreme
Imagination aged the child
It made me strong, it made me wild

I have ocean secrets growing deep
They're mine to ponder, mine to keep
Creativity taught and raised the kid
It gave me hopes in the places I hid

Warm-Up

One of the best ways to cultivate creativity in our lives is to simply create! Don't panic — just grab a timer, your favorite pen, and get ready to create Two-Minute Masterpieces.

Two-Minute Poem: Write a haiku about the weather.

A haiku is typically written in three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line. Set a timer for two minutes, and let the ideas flow.

Two-Minute Still Life: Draw what you had for breakfast.

Don't overthink it, just draw! Doodles and abstract art totally welcome.

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Two-Minute Novel: Write the first line of your best-selling novel.

Pick a genre (mystery, historical fiction, romance, etc.) and write just one single, compelling sentence. It's gonna be great, don't worry.



“Time is the raw material of creation. Wipe away the magic and myth of creating and all that remains is work: the work of becoming expert through study and practice, the work of finding solutions to problems and problems with those solutions, the work of trial and error, the work of thinking and perfecting, the work of creating.”

KEVIN ASHTON, *HOW TO FLY A HORSE*



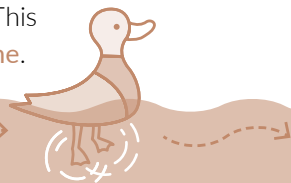
Value the Work

Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D., a Stanford University psychologist, writer, and leading researcher in the field of motivation, introduced us to an important shift in mindset related to creative thinking and personal development. Here's a quick overview of the differences between having a **fixed** and **growth mindset**.

Fixed Mindset: Whatever abilities we have are fixed; we can't do anything to improve them. Every challenge is a chance to prove mastery and skill level, and every failure is an indication of deficiency, weakness, or lack of skill.

Growth Mindset: Abilities are malleable; what we do today will help us improve, regardless of the intended outcome. We can get better. Failures and mistakes are opportunities to learn, grow, and improve.

In a 2013 talk for **The School of Life**, Dweck makes an important link between **perfectionism** and **the fixed mindset**. Perfectionism creates an expectation to do things right the first time every time, and beyond that, to do so seemingly with ease. This tendency is what Dweck calls the **Duck Syndrome**.



Picture a duck gliding along water.

It appears to be cool and calm, smoothly sailing on, totally at ease.

Meanwhile, under the surface, the duck is paddling furiously.

Perfectionists (and often those with a fixed mindset) adopt this stance, wanting everything they do to appear easy, and when it's not, hiding or pretending otherwise. This tendency is extremely limiting within creative work, which requires **hard work**, **commitment**, and **effort**, all of which Dweck challenges us to value over perfection and ease.

What in your life have you truly worked hard at? Maybe it was something that felt out of reach or beyond your skill level, but you rolled up your sleeves, got resourceful and kept trying.

How did you feel in the moment? What did you learn about yourself?

Take a few moments to reflect on that work, to acknowledge the ways in which the effort you put into it maybe helped you grow in some way. **Be proud of yourself for that work (we certainly are 🙌).**



A Pledge

Take this pledge and commit to being open and compassionate toward your creative self. **Tear this page out, hang it up, or write it in your journal** — keep it somewhere you'll see it often. Let it guide you in your effort to prioritize creativity and expression.

I, _____, hereby pledge:

- To **create** without fear of judgment.
- To **accept criticism** and not be burdened by it.
- To **make things** for joy, not for ego or wealth.
- To not let my **learned limitations** guide me.
- To see every “mistake” as **another step** forward.
- To **celebrate** my effort and progress.
- To be **open** to new experiences, **observe** with a curious mind, and let my **instincts** guide me.
And no matter what, I will **show up** every day.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

“The universe buries
strange jewels deep
within us all, and
then stands back
to see if we can
find them.”

ELIZABETH GILBERT



Torrance Test

Ellis Paul Torrance, a pioneering psychologist in the 1960s, dedicated himself to unpacking how children and adults engage with creativity. He designed a non-conventional IQ test to measure a person's creativity through a squiggle prompt on a piece of paper. Higher scores were awarded for answers that included rich imagery, implied narrative, or used humor or fantasy.

To engage our creative side, we're going to do the **Torrance Test of Creative Thinking**. You won't be scored so have fun!

To the right, there are two squiggles. **Using them as a starting point, use your imagination to create a one-of-a-kind picture.**

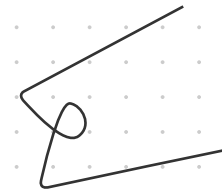
01



Creativity is not the finding of a thing, but the making something out of it after it is found.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Tip: The creative muscle, like any other muscle in our body, gets stronger with practice. The best way to get started is to jump right in. So don't overthink this activity and remember to be kind to yourself.



02

“The creative adult is
the child who survived.”

URSULA K. LE GUIN



Creative Block Toolkit

Regardless of what we do from 9 to 5 each day, creativity is a tool we use often — when problem-solving issues, deciding which shoes to wear, improvising a recipe, writing a compelling email, or doodling in our planners. Every day, creativity helps us solve problems and enrich our lives.

The magic of creativity is not only having a new idea but seeing it through. Naturally, some challenges and creative blocks will come up from time to time. **Here are a few tools to help break through creative blocks — to move forward, shake things up, and solve problems.**

Flow

A mental state in which we are fully absorbed in an activity. A concept proposed by positive psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, when we're in **Flow** we may experience a transformation of time (slowing down/speeding up), we are fully locked into what we're doing, and we feel a balance of challenge and skill.

Get into Flow

1. **Free yourself** of distractions and interruptions
2. **Consider** what times of day you're most productive
3. **Replicate** past moments of Flow
4. **Consider** what motivates you intrinsically
5. **Give yourself** constraints to work within
6. **Choose** work you truly love

Divergent + Convergent Thinking

Divergent Thinking	Convergent Thinking
Generating and exploring a wide variety of ideas	Evaluating and analyzing ideas to arrive at the best or most logical answer
Spontaneous, free-flowing, non-linear	Methodical, organized, linear
Idea phase	Planning/implementation phase

Trigger It:

- Be curious, ask questions
- Free write for five minutes
- Go for a walk
- Get away from screens

Trigger It:

- Compile a list
- Write down what you know
- Consider all outcomes
- Draw out a timeline

Incubation Period

This is an important stage in the creative process in which we stop consciously to think about the problem we're trying to solve. Have you ever had a good idea come while in the shower? Then you may know the value of the **Incubation Period**, and recent studies support its effectiveness. It may feel counterproductive, but taking a moment to pause from actively working allows our conscious and subconscious minds to eliminate unnecessary ideas and make new connections.

Work with an Incubation Period

Plan ahead for inactive time

Sleep on it if possible

Don't settle for a first draft

Meditate or stretch

Work in a **different medium**



“Never limit yourself because of others’ limited imagination; never limit others because of your own limited imagination.”

MAE JEMISON



Your Inner Original

As technology increasingly dictates the way we create and source inspiration, it can feel challenging to be original — to do something different, to be one-of-a-kind. Adam Grant, author of *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*, believes that the people who champion originality are the ones who propel the world forward. And guess what? **Originals are not so different from conformists.** They feel the same fears and doubts, but instead of succumbing to these thought patterns, they explore and take action on them.

Adam identifies **five ways** we can increase originality:

1. Question the default
2. Protect your downside
3. Broaden your interests
4. Generate more bad ideas
5. Procrastinate on purpose

Inspired by Adam's advice, we've come up with five prompts to help you bring out your inner original.

Question the default

It's true, originals take the road less traveled and as a result challenge the norm more often. This is a big distinction between originals and conformists. **In what ways have you challenged the default option or chosen a different route?**

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Protect your downside

“Having a sense of security in one realm gives us the freedom to be original in another,” shares Adam. For example, if you cover your bases financially, you have more freedom to invest in that business you always wanted to start. **Identify a security in place that allows you to take a risk right now (community, job, finances, etc.).**

Broaden your interests

According to scientific studies, people with a range of interests are more likely to make original discoveries that lead to a Nobel Prize. **What are three of your interests and how do you explore them?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“A creative life is any life where somebody consistently follows their curiosity more than their fear.”

ELIZABETH GILBERT



Generate more bad ideas

Sometimes it's about the quantity, not quality. It's proven that simply generating more ideas (even if it means producing less than great work) creates a pathway to ideas that ultimately stick. **Name one thing you'll create more of this month without judgment.**

Procrastinate on purpose

Adam says, "Once a task is finished, we stop thinking about it. But when it is interrupted and left undone, it stays active in our minds." While it may feel counterintuitive, this 'incubation period' is typically when our subconscious connects the dots allowing entirely new ideas to take shape. **What projects are you working on that could benefit from this form of purposeful procrastination?**

A large grid of small dots for writing notes.

“The most important thing about art is to work. Nothing else matters except sitting down every day and trying.”

STEVEN PRESSFIELD,
THE WAR OF ART



“No person has the right
to rain on your dreams.”

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN



Reflect & Discuss

Use these questions for self-reflection or to spark meaningful conversations.

ICEBREAKERS

What is your favorite creative outlet?

01

Who inspires you to think differently?

02

What are you doing when you completely lose track of time?

03

DEEPER QUESTIONS

What is something creative you did when you were younger that you no longer do? Why don't you do it?

01

What have you thought about creating but haven't yet because fear has gotten in the way?

02

What part of your day requires you to be most creative?

03

Are you a perfectionist? How does that help you or hold you back?

04



”Creativity is the word we use for our desire to make use of our inner resources, employ our imagination, knit together our thoughts and feelings into beautiful things such as songs, quilts, or novels, and feel like the hero of our own story. It is the way we make manifest our potential, make use of our intelligence, and embrace what we love.

ERIC MAISEL

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For further reading and curated resources visit: holstee.com/creativity

