

'A truly unique book. I recommend it heartily to anyone who needs a creative "kick in the pants" every so often.'

Deborah Watson-Novacek, Founder of CreativityForLife.com

CREATIVITY NOW

Get inspired, create ideas
and make them happen!

Jurgen Wolff

creativity NOW



WARNING

May contain life-changing ideas. If you are allergic to innovation or creativity, consult therapist before use. Side effects may include excitement, increased creativity, prolonged bouts of thinking, execution of ground-breaking projects and increased levels of success.

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creativity **NOW**

**Get inspired, create ideas and
make them happen!**

JURGEN WOLFF

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and Chris Wicking, whose greatest creation was the love
they inspired in their families and friends.***

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Creative Success Manifesto

THE PRINCIPLE

The journey to creative success is at least as rewarding as arriving

Before you begin your creative endeavour it may help to stop and think about what creative success means to you: its requirements, its costs, its rewards. This is my creative success manifesto – I invite you to make up your own.

1 Success is what you say it is

If getting to number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list makes you happy, great. If writing a blog that 100 people follow passionately makes you happy, or writing one poem a night that nobody else ever sees, that's what success is for you. It's your brain, your heart, your life – don't let anybody hijack it with their definition of success.

2 Commercial success can take a year or a hundred years

J. K. Rowling got there fast. Van Gogh didn't. Even finding those 100 passionate followers can take time. Don't define the journey only by the outcome.

3 Fewer than 1 per cent of people have to buy what you do

Not everybody wants to profit financially from their creative activity, but if you do, if 1 per cent of the people in the USA – 1 person out of 100 – buys what you offer you'll have more than 3 million sales. In the UK that would be about 600,000. If you happen to live in China, you're really in luck.

4 Start by finding one person who likes what you do

It helps to have a champion, somebody who believes in you. Your belief in yourself generates 1 unit of self-belief. You plus a champion generates 100. (Psychology maths is different.)

5 Crazy is the first step

Every breakthrough is considered a crackpot idea at first. Of course, some are crackpot ideas. You can't tell the difference until you transform the idea into something real.

6 Ready, fire, aim

Most creative people want their work to be seen. However, many never take their ideas out into the world because they want to be sure it's the right time and that they have all the resources they need. It will never be exactly the right time and you may never have all the resources you need. Get a prototype out there, see what happens, adjust and persist.

7 The second best time to start

The best time to start doing your creative work was ten years ago. Look at the clock. What time is it? That's right, the second best time to start.

8 If at first you don't succeed, don't try, try again

At least don't try the same thing again and again. Hit yourself on the head with a hammer (you may imagine this instead of doing it if you prefer). How did it feel? Do you think it will feel any different if you do it again? If you do, go ahead. If at first you don't succeed, try something different. Continue until you find the one that works.

9 Failing feels crappy

Motivational speakers make it sound like failing is noble. Maybe it is, but it sure doesn't feel noble. They claim Edison said something like 'I didn't fail 3,000 times to find a workable light bulb filament, I just eliminated 3,000 ways not to do it so that I could find the one that worked.' I bet around the 2,000th try he threw that bulb to the ground, stomped on it, took a stiff drink and yelled at his wife. Yes, we have to deal with disappointing results and rejection, but we won't like it.

10 The only way to fail

You can fail only if you stop. If on the last day of your life you still aren't on the *New York Times* bestseller list or your blog has only 99 passionate followers, or you never quite got the hang of rhyme scheme, so what? If you believed in what you were doing you probably had a hell of a ride. That's what it's all about.



dreaming



1

Sometimes you feel inspired, sometimes you don't.

Sometimes the ideas flow, sometimes they don't.

Why leave it to chance?

In this part you'll find 25 ways to get yourself into the state of mind that invites new ideas.

Go for Baroque

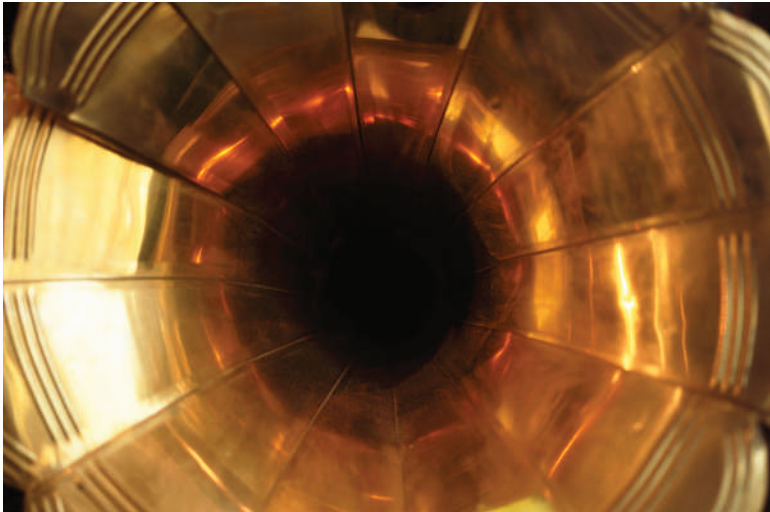
THE PRINCIPLE

Music stimulates your creativity

Music may or may not have ‘charms that soothe the savage breast’, but it does seem to have the power to stimulate the sluggish brain.

Research has shown that Baroque music synchronises brain waves at about 60 cycles per second, and this relaxed alpha state is the frequency associated with creativity. Try Vivaldi’s ‘The Four Seasons’ or Pachelbel’s ‘Canon in D’ or Bach’s ‘Air in D’.

It’s worth doing your own research by listening to different kinds of music to discover the effects it has on you when you’re in different moods.



If stress gets in the way of your creativity, you may benefit by using easy-listening music or Gregorian chant. For this purpose, I'm partial to the music of J. J. Cale.

If your energy is low, turning up the speakers and listening to rock music may get your brain cells sparking. Try some classics from Creedence Clearwater Revival.

To get into a problem-solving frame of mind, choose upbeat music. A University of Toronto study revealed that volunteers were better able to solve challenging word puzzles after thinking positive thoughts and listening to upbeat music. It's another excuse to listen to that *Mamma Mia!* soundtrack.

You may even want to create a soundtrack for each of your different creative activities. Russian novelist Boris Akunin told the *Wall Street Journal* that before he begins writing, he plays five or ten minutes of music to get into the right mood. For a tragic mood he favours Mahler, for a tender mood he goes for early Beatles.

There's another way you can add music to your creativity toolbox: wait until you are in a creative mood naturally, then put on a song or album you don't normally play but that supports the mood. Do this on two or three separate occasions, each time using the same music.

Thereafter, when you don't feel creative but would like to, put on that music and it will create the mood by association.

Website bonus

At www.CreativityNowOnline.com, click on the 'Creativity Now!' button. Bonus 1 is a guided visualisation with music to energise your creative thinking.

Go away

THE PRINCIPLE

A mini-break clears the way for new ideas

We've all had the experience of getting away from our usual demands and routine and returning feeling refreshed and full of new ideas.

Sadly, it's not possible to take off two weeks for a trip to a tropical island every time we need inspiration.

Fortunately, you can get away from it all without going very far. Here are six ways to do it:

- 1 Go to the park.** There's something about being surrounded by greenery and fresh air that immediately helps you switch to a different way of thinking. Even just taking a walk through a park during your lunch break can help.
- 2 Try a flotation tank.** In many cities there are facilities where you can float in a tank filled with salt water heated to body temperature, with no or minimal light and sound. After a short period of this sensory deprivation, your mind stops its chatter.
- 3 Create a do-it-yourself float.** If you can't find or don't want to pay for a session in a flotation tank, fill your bathtub, put on an eye mask and have a long soak. If there are distracting noises in your environment, use earplugs as well or put on soothing music.
- 4 Find an unpopular coffee shop in which to do your work.** They'll be too grateful for your custom to move you on, and you'll have a quiet atmosphere that's different from your usual surroundings. My sometime retreat is a pub with service so rubbish that nobody goes there. Except me.
- 5 Go to the library or a church.** Both are havens of quiet where you can get away from excess stimuli. If you're stressed out at an airport, look for the chapel or prayer room – it's probably not a good idea to get out your laptop, but you can sit and think.

- 6 Swap homes with a friend for a couple of days.** People do home exchanges when they go on holiday, so why not do the same with friends just for a weekend? Even if they live nearby, the surroundings will be different enough to get you out of your rut.



Remember how to play

THE PRINCIPLE

Playing is the most creative state

Picasso said, 'Every child is an artist. The problem is to remain an artist once we grow up.' That applies to creativity in general.

In his wonderful book *Orbiting the Giant Hairball* (Viking/Allen Lane), artist Gordon Mackenzie relates how he used to go into American schools and ask the children how many of them were artists, too. The 6-year-olds all raised their hands. With third-graders, who were 10, only about a third of them responded that way. When asked the same question at the age of 12, out of a group of 30, only 1 or 2 would raise their hands, hesitantly.

To return to the state of creativity that children have naturally, we have to do what they do – play.

Play can take just about any form. When the great pioneer of psychology, Carl Jung, felt that he had lost direction, he would go into his garden and play with little stones.

The important thing is to do it for its own sake. If you make a drawing, do it just to enjoy the process, not to try to create something others will admire. In fact, it's a good idea to decide beforehand that if your form of play is to make something, you will destroy it when you're done, or at least not show it to anybody.

Has it been so long that you can't think of anything to play? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Scribble on a piece of paper, then turn the scribbles into drawings of people or objects (remember, it's not art, it's playing – it doesn't have to be artistically good).

- Play a card game that you enjoyed as a child. Or just make one up. Turn up cards one at a time. If you get four hearts in a row, you get to have a muffin.
- Buy a yo-yo.
- Get some modelling clay and make some figures. If you're angry at somebody, get some pins and do clay voodoo.
- Walk down the street pretending to be your favourite superhero, and imagine yourself solving minor crises. 'Look, Superman/Superwoman, that driver ignored the zebra crossing, use your vision heat rays to melt his tyres!'
- Spend some time with a child – your own or a friend's – and find out what they want to play and join in. Play by their rules!

Website bonus

At www.CreativityNowOnline.com, click on the 'Creativity Now!' button. Bonus 2 is a set of games to get you started playing.



Why? What? When? Where? How?

THE PRINCIPLE

The answer is in the questions

If you've ever spent time around a small child, you'll know they love to ask questions. Especially 'why?' (or, more accurately, 'why!!!!???').

It can be maddening but it also reflects the curiosity and hunger for learning that tends to dim as we grow up. The way to wake it up again is to ask lots of questions.

As adults, usually we interpret 'why?' as a challenge. If you change your state of mind to consider it simply as a prompt to learn more, it becomes a great way to open your mind to new ideas.

But don't limit yourself to 'why?' – also try lots of 'why not?', 'what?', 'when?', 'where?' and 'how?' questions.

It's not a search for factual answers, it's a way to be open to more possibilities.



For instance, let's say you walk to your favourite coffee shop for a cappuccino. Along the way, here are some questions that might pop into your mind:

- Why do I always walk to the coffee shop this way?
- What's another route I could take that might show me some new sights?
- Why is that woman smiling like that? What might be going on in her life?
- Why don't I buy a bouquet from that flower shop and give it to my significant other? Or to myself? Or to the next person I see?
- Where else can I get a coffee today for a change?
- How many people between here and the coffee shop will be on their mobile phones? What are most of them talking about?

When are you going to start asking more questions? Where will you be when you start? What interesting new thoughts will you have? (I'll stop now. Your turn.)

Create your space

THE PRINCIPLE

Having a dedicated space feeds your creative mood

I hope that, like me, you have a great home office or study, lined with bookshelves with one of those ladders that goes around on a rail, a roaring fireplace, a view of the Thames, and of course a manservant who brings you chocolate when he intuits that your creative energy is flagging.

All right, I lied. I don't have a view of the Thames.

Or a few of the other things. At this stage I am lucky enough to have a nice home office, but at other points I've had to make do with a desk in front of the window of my living room, and, once, a tiny table in a room that flooded whenever it rained.



Some set-ups are better than others, obviously, but here's the important thing: you deserve a space, however small or large, that is yours and yours alone.

If all you can find is a computer table in the kitchen, that's fine, but make it off-limits to the kids and anybody else. Mark your territory with some stuff that you find stimulating (more about this in the next section). If you want a plant but don't have much room, go for a little cactus (which also discourages cats from settling down on your desk).

IKEA and others sell desks that can be closed up easily and take very little room. You can make do with even less by creating a portable office. This might consist of your laptop, some notebooks, an accordion file and some framed pictures that you put on the working surface (like the kitchen table).

However grand or modest it may be, remember: you have a right to your own creative space. Insist on it!