

CAREER HEALTH

Breaking the 7 Mental Blocks that Stop Creativity

By Joyce Weiss

Creativity is the ability to look at the same things everyone else does, but see things differently and find hidden connections to create something new. That something may be as grand as a hugely successful advertising campaign or as simple as a better way to organize your desk.

Obviously, creativity is immensely important, but we often place mental blocks that inhibit our creativity. Let's look at some of these blocks.

Mental Block 1: Follow the Rules - Sometimes we become more creative by ignoring the rules. Copernicus disproved the theory that the earth is the center of the universe. Jobs and business depend on innovation. In order to succeed, people have to look for new ways of doing things.

Mental Block 2: Be Practical - Of course being practical is business savvy. But it can be a weakness if stretched too far. Think about the following statements and have fun discussing them in group situations: WHAT IF all your customers became multimillionaires? What if electromagnetic disturbances made all computer reception impossible? These "what if" questions are impractical, yet they start people thinking beyond their limited barriers and can spark new creativity and insight.

Mental Block 3: To Err is Wrong - Most people think that success and failure are opposites; however, they're products of the same process. We learn from trial and error, not by doing things the same way each time. If you are original, you'll be wrong a lot of the time. Progress always involves risk. If you make an error, use it as a stepping stone to a new idea you might not have otherwise discovered.

Mental Block 4: Play is Frivolous - Author Roger Von Oech wrote, "Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father." Your mental blocks are loosened during play. Make your workplace a fun place and watch creativity bubble up.

Mental Block 5: That's Not My Area - I hear this excuse throughout the business world. My question

is, "If it were your area, what would you do?"

Mental Block 6: I'm Not Creative - We need to recognize talents that we've been taking for granted. We are all involved with activities that bring out our creativity. Decorating a home, putting together a colorful wardrobe, telling wonderful stories, etc., are just a few common creative talents. How about transferring that creativity to your job? The thinking mechanisms are the same.

Mental Block 7: Don't be Foolish - All of us are subject to peer pressure. There's a phenomenon in the workplace called "group think". It stops people from being creative. Sometimes people "agree to agree" just because they believe their boss thinks a certain way. New ideas don't develop in a conformist environment.

Finding Our Creative Self - Thomas Edison wrote, "If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves." You can be creative if you let go of old ways of thinking. Many businesses make a major effort to assure that employees follow rules and not overstep boundaries. They promise that, by behaving within these instructions, you'll have a successful career. But so many times, it's breaking the rules and bridging boundaries that initiate an organization's greatest advances. Ask yourself what you would do if there were no boundaries. This exercise makes you step beyond your perceived limitations to look for answers. It helps us break away from the "This is how we've always done it" habit. Creative people maintain an open, imaginative mind. Seeing all possibilities, and how to achieve them, marks the power of imagination. Your imagination stands as your own personal laboratory. Here you can rehearse the endless possibilities, map out plans, and visualize overcoming obstacles. Imagination turns possibilities into realities. The power to be creative is yours.

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Healthy Cooking: There's No Place Like Home

Continued from front page

include dill with steamed carrots, rosemary on boiled potatoes, and vinegar on spinach.

- Spice up your entire diet by experimenting with new herbs and spices. With soups and stews, add the herbs during the last hour of cooking.
- Other low-fat flavor boosters include balsamic vinegar, sun-dried tomatoes, Dijon mustard, Tabasco sauce, salsa, catsup, canned green chilies, and small amounts of sesame and hot chili oils.
- With salads, make your own reduced-fat dressing by using more vinegar and less oil. Lemon juice and Italian herbs add fat-free flavor.

Tools of the Trade - Another trick to healthful cooking is having the right cookware—in particular, a microwave oven, vegetable steamer, and nonstick pots and pans. Steamer baskets that fit into a saucepan with a tight cover are an alternative way to cook vegetables healthfully. Vegetables steamed only for a few minutes (until they are tender but still crisp) will retain more nutrients than those boiled in water for a longer time. If you have no steamer basket, simply put about a half inch of water in the bottom of a pan, add the vegetables so that most of them are above the waterline, cover them tightly, and cook for only a few minutes. Another tip: Reserve that same cooking water for soups, sauces, or even as a broth, and you'll recover the small amount of nutrients lost.

Healthy Rewards - Tasty, nutritious meals cooked at home can be a nice reward at the end of an active day. By getting organized, taking the time to shop, filling the cart with wholesome foods, and then cooking wholesome low-fat meals in quantity, you'll be making a sound investment in your health and fueling your active lifestyle.

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"He who laughs most, learns best."

-John Cleese

VALUES - BASED QUALITY OF LIFE™ Newsletter

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Over the years, we have found that there are elements of your life that are more important than money.

These elements - Physical Health, Relationship Health, Inner Health and Career Health - cannot be delegated.

We hope that you find these articles to be of value in improving the quality of your life.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Healthy Cooking: There's No Place Like Home

By Nancy Clark, MS, RD

Eating take-out food on the run has become a standard routine for many of us, especially if we are active. But most of us would actually prefer healthy home-cooked meals—if we just had the time and the know-how. The truth is you can enjoy simple meals at home that are good for you.

Smart Shopping - The key to healthful cooking starts with healthful shopping. This means don't shop when you are hungry! Otherwise, instead of fresh fruits and vegetables, not-so-healthy treats and goodies may end up in your grocery cart. Post a shopping list in a convenient place in your kitchen so you and other family members can easily add to it before you run out of a food. Also, plan your menus at home and add the ingredients to the list so that you'll be more organized once you are in the store. When shopping, take advantage of foods that make cooking easier: Frozen or precut vegetables (freezing doesn't destroy their nutritional value), prechopped garlic, and dried onions instead of fresh are all good examples. Choose low-fat or nonfat versions of milk, yogurt, cheese, sour cream, and salad dressings. Stick to the leanest cuts of meats and protein-rich foods (flank steak, extra-lean hamburger, and skinless chicken breasts, for example). And remember to stock your pantry with some standard nonperishables such as low-fat broths, tomato sauce, pasta, and canned beans.

Smart Cooking - Once your kitchen cupboards are well stocked with wholesome foods, meal preparation becomes easier. Still, the trick to having enough energy and patience to cook a healthful dinner is to eat enough at breakfast and lunch. If you arrive home ravenous, you'll be more likely to devour a boxful of crackers than prepare a balanced meal.

Low-Fat Strategies

- Use low-fat or nonfat dairy foods to replace cream in sauces.
- Steam, poach, broil, grill, microwave, and bake—rather than sauté or pan-fry foods. Cook meat on a rack so that fat drains off.
- When sautéing, replace butter with olive oil. But remember to measure the oil and try using less than a recipe calls for because even though olive oil is lower in saturated fat than butter, it still has calories. Better yet, use a nonstick skillet and cooking spray.
- When making soups or stews, skim the fat off the top. If possible, cook the broth in advance, chill it in the refrigerator, then remove the hardened fat layer. Or try a fat separator cup that pours broth from the bottom. By cooking the soup ingredients in the fat-free broth, you will eliminate the grease they would otherwise absorb.
- Thicken gravies with a mixture of flour and cold water (rather than a mixture of flour and fat); slowly add this mixture into the skimmed pan juices.
- Season vegetables with herbs and spices, rather than high-fat butter and sauces. Some tasty combinations

Continued on back page

RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

Listening - An Essential Ingredient in Relationships

By Valentina Ibeachum

Some people have the gift of gab. You might be one of those born with a natural ability to talk to people and get your point across. But true communication that builds up a relationship isn't about how well you talk or how persuasive you can be. It's a give and take between two people. Surprisingly, it's a skill that sadly seems to be lacking in most people, because one of the common reasons for relationships breaking up or losing what I call its happy-worthiness is an inability to communicate effectively.

Communication comes from a word that means to "share between...". Webster formally defines it as the exchange of information between individuals. In most cases, people don't have a problem with talking. As long as we're not mute, talking isn't a problem for most of us, especially us women. Communication in a relationship or marriage isn't just about getting your point across, it's also understanding what the other person is saying to us and responding appropriately. You can't understand what you're spouse is saying if you're not LISTENING. We need to learn to close our mouths and listen to what they have to say. We can't hear them if we're still talking or if we keep interrupting.

We actually don't listen with our ears, but with our mind. Why did I say that? Of course, we hear the sound of the words with our ears, but we process what it means with our minds. Our minds are developed to reason or think a certain way by experiences we've had, things we've been taught, what we give our time and attention to, and the various kinds of training we've received. What we hear with our minds determines the response that we give. Lets look at two people listening to the sound

of a car engine revving. If one is a trained mechanic, he will hear something different from the other person who might not be. Both of them will come up with two different conclusions. One has a trained ear, and the other doesn't, but they both heard the same sound.

I've observed that people's previous relationship experiences affect the communication in their current relationship. If they've had difficulties with their past

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."

-Epictetus

partners, it tends to color the way think so they end up responding negatively to their spouse or partner. Sometimes, what happens is that they're hearing something the other person didn't actually say. I had a problem of jumping to conclusions while my husband was talking. Before he even finished what he was saying, I would interrupt him with a reply based on my assumptions. He would simply say, "Why don't you let me finish?" My assumptions about what he was saying and what I thought he meant blocked my mind from hearing what he was really saying and so I couldn't understand him. I learned to stop jumping to conclusions because I got tired of saying "I'm sorry" all the time. Humble pie doesn't taste very nice you know.

I began practicing keeping my mouth shut and my mind open. As a result,

we began to communicate better and understand ourselves better when we talked about one issue or the other. This helped us tremendously in minimizing conflict in our relationship and resolving those times when it existed. Effective communication affects every aspect of a marriage relationship. From money to intimacy. Sex doesn't build up intimacy, communication does. So it's really important that we learn to communicate effectively and listening is a very important key in effective communication.

A lot of times, when you hear your spouse say, "You're not understanding me", take a step back and ask yourself, "Am I really listening with my mouth closed and my mind open?" If you aren't, then learn to close your big mouth, open up your mind and let them talk. It might not be easy at first, but you'll be so glad you did. If not, humble pie anyone?

"I can try to accept gracefully all things that affect my life. I can think and act, I can study and learn, I can listen..."

- Anonymous

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INNER HEALTH

Feeling Stuck: Five Tips to Help You Get Unstuck & Back on Track!

By Lorraine Cohen

In the last 21 years, I have coached and counseled thousands of people individually and in group/workshop formats to achieve dreams and reach goals. Staying self-motivated is a challenge for many; requiring decisions and action to sustain momentum.

Most of the time, clients come to me because they feel stuck. They feel stressed, frustrated and angry (often at themselves!) because they are not where they want to be in their business or personal life. You might wonder how people can lose steam in moving forward on an idea they were initially enthusiastic and pumped about.

Here are 5 key reasons people get stuck:

1. Lack clarity about what they want. Inability to articulate and describe it.

Have you ever found it difficult to put into words what you really want? Have you seriously thought about what you really want? Do you have a sense of what you want, but lack the words to fully describe it? Trying to figure out the "it"?

Tip: You might be stuck because you lack a strong desire for what you say you want. Put your attention on what you really want rather than what you think you should want. Create a picture of what you want your life to look like - write it as a story, paint a picture, create a vision board or collage to capture your heart. Reflect back over your life when you were the happiest for clues. What excites you and evokes your passion? What are your core values?

2. Negative inner thoughts.

Self-talk (the things we tell ourselves inside our heads) has a powerful impact on our ability to assess situations realistically. So often when people get caught up in anticipating what may or may not happen, they lose perspective. Our minds can sift through facts and information that lead to practical choices of action, or scare,

confuse and overwhelm us so that we come to a full stop. Fear and negative thinking are two HUGE reasons why many people get stuck or confused.

Tip: Begin to observe your self-talk and identify which ones are supportive or unsupportive. Actively begin to challenge your thinking so that you can separate the "stories you imagine" and the reality (facts) of "what is". Changing beliefs is a process that takes time and is more successful with professional help. Recommended resource: Byron Katie's book, [I Need Your Love, Is That True](#). Check out her website, www.thework.com, for her worksheets and products. Check out my new fear audio program, www.powerfulliving.biz/audio.shtml.

"It takes but one positive thought when given a chance to survive and thrive to overpower an entire army of negative thoughts."

-Robert H. Schuller

3. Disconnection from heart and spirit.

You lack trust in yourself, the experience, or God (whatever you call your spiritual connections). Do you ever get a gut feeling or strong sense inside about what decision is right for you? Do you follow your gut or override your instincts? If you have followed your heart in the past, how did things turn out?

Tip: Practice meditation regularly to quiet the mind and go within to reconnect with your spirit. Pay attention to your gut instinct; the sensations or inner knowing you sense at different times. If you've followed your instincts in the past, write down what happened. They are usually great success stories to remember. If you're initially developing your "trust muscle", look for opportunities to listen and follow your gut. Be open and flexible to what happens next.

4. Too many options become overwhelming and confusing.

It's great to have a myriad of choices, isn't it? Having so many options can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, having many choices expands the possibilities. On the other, having too many options may not only cause confusion (What do I choose?); it also allows self-doubt and distrust to creep in.

Tip: Look back over your answer to #1 for clarity and focus. Ask yourself if the options move you toward what you desire or away. Grab my eBook, [How Do I Choose?](#) A five step blueprint for making rock-solid decisions! www.powerfulliving.biz/choosing.shtml

5. Other people's opinions.

We can be enormously influenced by the opinions of others. Feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or having low self-esteem and low self-confidence makes people more susceptible to the influence of others. In that way, people give away their power. Inner conflict and fear can cause procrastination and self-sabotage.

Tip: Be selective about your circle of friends, colleagues, and networking community. If family influence is a negative, choose to share less and set boundaries on conversations. Surrounding yourself with people who lift your spirits and bring out your best will keep you moving forward.

One last tip:

Write up a list of actions you will take when you find yourself getting stuck. You might call it your "Breaking Free Formula." View this list as a living document that continues to grow so that it becomes an empowering resource for you in any situation. Include people, things and activities that energize, nurture, and boost you - body, mind, and spirit. Keep this list visible in your home and office.

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