

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has developed a theory on creative flow and the relationship between challenge and skill. When the challenge is high compared to the person's skill, worry and stress inhibits creativity.

On the flipside, when the challenge is limited and the skill is high, then the lack of stretch leads to boredom and apathy. The trick is to strike the right balance between the challenge and your level of skill. This point of balance will be different for each person. As beings created in the image of a creative God, creativity and the ability for original thought is there for all of us to access and develop.

As we engage in ministry, mission, family, life and work we encounter complexities that require creative solutions. Here are some principles for creative thinking and problem solving. Let's find our flow!



Simple Guide to Creative Thinking

By Teagan Dwyer-Riviere

1. Find your happy place



Create an environment where you can be creative. Remove distractions and give yourself the time and mental space you need. Although some people do their best work under pressure, creativity and the development of original ideas usually flows best in a calm environment.

2. Figure out the 'why'



Work out what the end goal, or purpose, is at the start of the project as this will inform every step along the way. Even if your goal is just to relax through creating something, this is still a purpose. There are infinite routes that can be taken to the same destination, however without the end point in mind, your super creative solution might actually lead you to a dead end.

3. Brainstorm it out



Your first idea is never going to be your best idea, but write it down anyway. Ideas trigger each other and sometimes it takes the getting out of all ideas, 'bad' included, before the creative, interesting and innovative ones flow.

4. Change shoes



Depending on who you are, the same problem might look very different... in fact for some it might not even look like a problem at all. In seeking to think creatively about a situation or develop a new idea, look at it from different angles and put yourself in the shoes of those who will be engaging with the final solution.

4a. Bring others in



When you have run out of shoes, bring others into the conversation. Although it's sometimes painful to open up the doors for feedback on your idea baby, it is an incredibly valuable part of the process. Fresh eyes can push your concept to the next level and open your eyes to the ways in which it isn't quite working. Disclaimer though... yes, listen to others and yes, consider their perspective, but sometimes you just have to go with your gut.

5. Give it time



It's amazing the difference a day or even 10 minutes can make to your creative flow. When you have hit the point of being stuck, then stop. Stop for at least long enough to walk around the block and make a cup of tea. After giving your mind a circuit break, and the space to creatively reset, don't be surprised if the solution jumps out at you the next time you look at it.

6. The wheel is fine as it is



Finding a new solution for something only works when it is actually an improvement. Don't reinvent the wheel or make changes for the sake of it. It has to be *better*.

*Creativity,
here we come!*