

## The Creative Process and the Brain

1. Each one of us experiences an unending flow of thoughts, day in, day out. Each of these thoughts is an impulse of creativity that arises from within us and develops. So within each and every one of us is an infinite reservoir of creativity at the source of our thoughts—our soul or being.
2. Thought is the basis of activity: everything man made that you see, from a cookie to a rocket ship, began as a thought in someone's heart or mind.
3. So the question is: how do we get from a thought to the desired goal? By holding on to one of those thoughts instead of letting it dissipate, and having the will to work with the idea and follow it along. This is the creative process.
4. Escape velocity is the speed a rocket needs to achieve to break the force of gravity that keeps it chained to the earth. What holds people down are myths and ignorance of the creative process. In order to be creative, one must achieve an “escape velocity” for each endeavor.
5. I feel creativity is a spiritual process because success depends on trusting the creative process and having faith in its unfoldment.

6. All beginnings are hard. There is tedium and hard work involved. One must trust the creative process and keep going in order to get up to speed to reach escape velocity. You need to overcome your inner resistances and let your expression evolve and unfold.
  
7. People get blocked by thinking their first expression must be perfect. An artist does not start in one corner of a painting and proceed to create the final image from the beginning. She starts off with a rough sketch and then the major masses and works into that. A poet doesn't sit down and write a perfect poem line by line. One needs to start out with a rough draft of whatever comes to mind, no matter if it is the worst sentence in the world. All paintings go through an ugly stage. Just keep going. The art is in the revision. One doesn't start out in "the Zone" – it's good enough to be in the area.
  
8. It is important to experiment and try different genres, mediums, etc. -- to find your strengths and interests. But when you do find them it is equally important to accept yourself and bank on your strengths for all they are worth. In order to develop your voice and your style, you must go deeply into a specific focus.
  
9. What you put your attention on grows stronger. You are actually "making something of yourself" because your body develops the neural circuitry to support the activities you engage in. The more you engage in certain activities the more devolved the neurophysiology that supports the activity. This is how "practice makes perfect" but it also creates the "force of

habit.” Our experiences continually shape our behavior and identity.

10. The “force of habit” is one reason why “all beginnings are hard” and people doubt the creative process or any new experience or endeavor: the established neural circuitry is battling to keep you doing what it is accustomed to doing. This creates a kind of inertia as the brain pulls you to keep functioning in the same way. So transitioning to something new can feel distasteful and difficult. You can feel a kind of confusion and thoughts will come up like “that’s weird,” “I can’t do it,” “I’m not talented enough, smart enough, etc.” (Fill in the blank.)
  
11. This is why it takes time to get into a new book. Students need to understand this to allow themselves to transition into the new world each book contains. Culturally relevant literature will ease this transition. It is also the reason why writers will procrastinate because their brains are resisting making the transition to the creative process.
  
12. Again, the answer is to trust the process and keep going.
  
13. There are two kinds of memory, “explicit” and “implicit.” “Explicit” memory is what we usually think of as memory: recollections that we are able to summon into the working memory of our conscious mind.

14. “Implicit” memories are recalled directly through performances without any conscious effort or even awareness that we are drawing on memory. Riding a bike is a good example.
  
15. Most creative skills are a set of many subskills, each of which must be learned so well they become subconscious. This is obvious to all in musical performance or athletics. But drawing also is like “riding many horses at once.” It can only be done well when the neural circuitry is well established to support these processes. Malcolm Gladwell in his book Outliers reviews the research that shows that it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to become an “outlier” -- to become outstanding in one’s field.
  
16. Degas said “Only when an artist no longer knows what he is doing does an artist do good things.” Degas was not talking about a beginner, but a highly developed artist who can work from (what artists call) “not knowingness.”
  
17. When athletes get nervous and “choke,” what they are doing is trying to make an implicit memory explicit -- and it doesn’t work. So even for a master artist or athlete, the key to working from “not knowingness” is to trust the process.
  
18. We are created in the image of the Great Creator, and not the Great Consumer. The following is my poem of encouragement to keep your soul alive.

19.

Trust Your Creativity  
It is Your Soul's Flow  
The Expression of Infinity.  
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