

13 Maxims for Developing the Creative Process

Robert Cooper
“Maximizing Your Mental Powers”
INSIGHT, #109

- 1. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN AN OPEN MIND AND A SPIRIT OF INQUIRY.** The more often you look at things in the same way the more difficult it is to think about them in any other way. Break out of this “prison of familiarity” by venturing off the beaten paths of your mind. “Destroy judgment; create curiosity.”
Michael Ray
- 2. LAUGH MORE, BECAUSE HUMOR CAN INCREASE CREATIVITY....** laughter increases creativity and flexibility of thought.
- 3. LOOK FOR ANOMALIES, AND REJECT OLD EXPLANATIONS.** This means learning to approach new challenges *and* routine experiences with sharpened inquisitiveness. Professor James Adams wrote, “Be aware that your brain would like to follow a traditional pattern. It would like to simplify your life by applying solutions that worked successfully before. Be grateful for that, but suspicious that the creativity you are looking for may not occur automatically.”
Cultivate the habit of wondering why things work the way they do and whether they should actually that way or could be improved. Virtually anything you do can be done in a slightly different, slightly better way. It also pays to expect the unexpected.
- 4. ASK CREATIVE QUESTIONS....**Insight-seeking questions help establish a climate in which the creative process can flourish.
- 5. CONTINUALLY EXPAND AND DEVELOP YOUR WORK EXPERTISE....**Exceptional proficiency in your field is what makes most abrupt flashes of intuitive thought possible.
- 6. BE WILLING TO BE UNCERTAIN....**”If one is confident but uncertain – confident that the job will get done but uncertain of exactly the best way of doing it – one is likely to have more room to be creative, to be more alert and self-starting....” Ellen Langer

7. **GATHER DATA.** In general, the more you know, the more you can create. Get In the habit of noticing what's happening around you and then ask this question: What's *really* happening?...Reversing how you look at a situation can dislodge assumptions and open up new possibilities....
8. **BE GOAL GUIDED, NOT GOAL GOVERNED....**Blind pursuit of any one goal may hinder creativity and limit the overall level or quality of your achievement.
9. **LET YOUR MIND WANDER.** On every...opportune moment throughout the day, let your mind shift gears and wander looking at difficult challenges *and* routine procedures from odd angles and fresh, unusual vantage points.
10. **TAKE TIME TO PLAY....**The wondrous human spirit is full of surprises....Mixing in laughter, humor and play with your work can be a powerful stimulus to enhancing the creative process.
11. **STRETCH YOUR MIND IN AS MANY DIRECTIONS AS POSSIBLE....**
We've failed to recognize that the purpose of communication is not simply to *transmit* information or pass it along but also to *create* it.
...Develop intellectual interests that can broaden and deepen your perspectives on work and life. Among the suggested areas of focus are history, philosophy, science, and creative writing, both poetry and prose.
12. **TAKE MORE RISKS, AND BE WILLING TO FAIL EARLY AND OFTEN.**
Being creative is risky – but it's essential to take the risk.
13. **GET AWAY FROM IT ALL.** Historically, for the artist, writer, composer, philosopher, inventor, and entrepreneur, the spark of creativity has burned most brightly In a mind working in solitude. Scheduling time to break away from others and be alone, even for just a few quiet minutes, can open the mind to new perspectives and enable you to reflect more clearly on the challenges and possibilities in front of you.