

CREATIVITY



ON DEMAND

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Common Explanations for Creativity and Inspiration

People have been trying to explain the concepts of creativity and inspiration for millennia. It's a subject which both intrigues us and confuses us.

We live in a world that loves to measure things, and yet Creativity cannot be measured. Not in time, nor in distance, nor in amount, nor in weight.

We live in a world that loves to find out where things come from and how they are made, and yet Creativity seems to spring from virtually nothing.

It's unmeasurable, extremely difficult to study and even harder to replicate.

In this day and age we expect to understand, or at least have a theory on, almost every subject under the sun.

So how do we explain creativity?

The Muse

The term 'muse' has been used by artists for centuries to describe that which inspires them to create art. A 'muse' can be anything from a goddess who presides over your area of expertise, to a person whose presence is the source of your inspiration.

Many are drawn to this explanation because it removes the stress of creativity from our own shoulders and gives it to some mysterious force or person who can come and go as they please.

But, while it may help us to describe the mysterious feeling of 'inspiration,' it also comes with hidden dangers.

- **Loss of Control** – Attributing our ideas and inspiration to a muse means we relinquish control of our creative life to the whims of some mysterious force. We can sit down to the page, even tie ourselves to the chair, but if we're waiting for the muse to flit pass and bless us with its inspiration then the success of our day is no longer in our own hands.
- **Lack of Self-Understanding** – By attributing our inspiration, or lack thereof, to a disembodied muse, we deny ourselves insight into what actually helps us or hinders us in our creative process.
- **Disconnected from Uniqueness** – If our ideas come from a muse who visits other writers, we can begin to worry about other writers stealing our ideas. We may also feel inadequate, believing some other writer would be doing a much better job of writing this story than we are.

Creative People

Many imply that there are two groups of people – those who *are* creative, and those who *aren't*. It's supposedly a talent some people possess and others don't.

The clichéd 'creative personality' is supposed to be at least mildly eccentric, produce creative work, impress others and suffer from an underlying mental or emotional problem.

Under this kind of pressure, we stress about staying in the 'creative' category while maintaining sanity and explaining days when we don't feel at all creative.

What are the dangers involved here?

- **Pressure to Perform** - If you're not pumping out stellar work on a regular basis, people may begin to wonder if you really are one of these 'creatives,' or if you're just pretending because you like the attention. You yourself can begin to wonder if you're a fake 'creative' because you're having an off day or you're going through a slump. Your attention then focuses on your self-worth rather than moving through your creative block.
- **Advice Overload** - It's very easy to become overloaded by all the advice out there – especially when you begin finding contradictions. Some people encourage writing prolifically while others suggest you focus on polishing each sentence until it shines. In the end, you can go round and round trying to replicate what other successful people are doing without ever finding what works best for you.

So what's the alternative? Is there another way to view creativity which could avoid all these problems?

A Fresh Perspective

What if there was another way to view creativity that could help you:

- Take control of your writing life,
- Understand your creative process,
- Give you confidence in your writing, and
- Relieve the stress of having to produce creative ideas from nothing?

This view could lead you to a lifelong friend and a whole new world of writing possibilities.

What If Creativity Were Innate?

What if **everyone was 'creative'**? What if Creativity was standard issue with each human being?

We know our brain has different areas that deal with language, memory, sensory information, etc. Well, it also has an area that controls creative thought. So people do come with the *capacity* for Creativity already available.

The next question is: **If everyone could be creative, why are some people more creative than others?**

There are several different answers to this question.

- Some people feel that being 'creative' is immature or not socially acceptable, so they curtail their creative thinking.
- Some people cultivate their creativity and put that ability to use in an artistic way, which we easily identify as 'creative.'
- Some people use their creativity in ways we don't realize, like in the way they cook a meal or [view their life](#). These 'quiet creatives' may not even realize they're using their creativity.

I'm sure you can think of other answers.

The point is you don't have to be eccentric or prolific to be creative. You can view being creative as **activating or exercising a part of your brain that everyone has access to if they wish.**

But how can we view creativity in a way that helps us to create on command?

What If You Could Cancel Out Your Inner Critic?

Most writers are familiar with that voice in their head: the Inner Critic telling them they're not good enough, pointing out every little problem and generally being a nuisance.

Have you experienced this?

At times it can be downright *debilitating*.

But what if you could cancel that voice out? What if you could find a new voice which was positive, inspiring, supportive and exciting? **What if your Creativity had a voice?**

This voice would be unique to your personal Creativity. It would talk you through your writing process, brainstorm solutions to your blocks and tell you when your process is going wrong.

I've been using this technique for several years now. It has enabled me to understand my creative process and grow to be a more confident writer – able to create ideas and write when I want to.

Would you like to meet my Creativity?

Advantages of a Personal Creativity



Hi! I'm Jessica's Creativity. You can tell it's me writing because my text is purple. I love purple and marshmallows and snow monkeys...and lots of other things but I'll save those for another time.

By this point in the e-book you're probably thinking this is all a bit weird and considering whether you're going to keep reading or shut this down and get yourself another coffee.

How about I do you a deal? I'll wait here while you get a coffee and then we can keep reading together.

What do you think?

Drums fingers

Stares at walls

Is tempted to draw on ceiling

Got your coffee?

Let's go.

As you've just read, everyone has the ability to be creative. So how can you make the best of your ability without overwhelming yourself with the stress to perform?

Well, wouldn't you like a Creativity of your own whispering in your ear and helping you along?

Okay, okay. We Creativities can be annoying from time to time, but there are plenty of things that annoy you every day but serve a useful purpose – like toasters and eyelashes and traffic lights.

Hrm... Perhaps that's not the most powerful argument for the case.

Ahem. There are plenty of **advantages** to having a Creativity around. Shall I tell you what they are?

(That's better isn't it? Are you feeling persuaded already? I am!)

Understanding How Your Process Works

Treating Creativity as an innate, personal part of yourself provides you opportunity to understand how your creative process works.

Shall I give you an example?

We Creativities are a sensitive bunch. Some things you do are really helpful – like reading interesting books, eavesdropping on other people’s conversations and painting war stripes on your face with lipstick. Other things can actually be bad for our health – like forcing us to create when we’re exhausted and have nothing left to give or reading very serious books all the time. (Yawn!)

By getting to know your Creativity, you are understanding how your creative mind works. That may sound scary at first, but trust me knowledge is an extremely powerful thing in the right hands.

(Let me see your hands. Hrm. I think they’re okay.)

Control Your Writing Life

There are a number of words Creativities don’t like to hear. ‘Vegetables,’ ‘grammar’ and ‘umbilical cords’ are pretty high on the list. But ‘control’ is one of the worst words of all.

The first thing you have to understand about Creativities is that we cannot be ‘controlled.’ We can be cajoled, prodded, incited and excited, but if you try to control us you’ll quash our creative spark like Jell-O on a flame.

So when I say ‘control your writing life,’ I’m talking about **you** controlling **your** habits, in order to allow for your Creativity’s preferences, cycles and moods.

At times, it’s what you do *before* you sit down to the page that dictates whether your day will be productive or not. Your mindset, expectations and even your knick knacks can all make a difference.

(I love elastic bands and fluffy toys...but I’m wandering off topic.)

Also, by understanding how your creative process works, you’ll realise that the days when you seem to be pumping rancid bilge onto the page are just as important (if not more so!) than the days when your writing flows like warmed honey from your fingers.

By getting to know your Creativity and controlling your writing habits, your creative moments will become more predictable. In fact, you can even learn how to create ideas on cue.

Now doesn’t that sound exciting?

DIY Writing Advice

There are thousands of writing blogs, writing books, writing magazines and writing conferences out there, offering a smorgasbord of writerly goodness.

Overwhelmed?

Me too!

But here's where understanding your creative process and your Creativity is so important! You can [pick and choose the writing advice](#) that works best for *you*. (Apparently this is how real smorgasbords work too. You're not supposed to eat everything in sight. Wish I'd known that earlier...BURP!)

In fact, if you're faced with a situation that's not expressly covered in available writing advice (does such a situation exist?!) you and your Creativity can come up with your own spectacular solution.

Each person is unique, just like snowflakes and homemade cookies. Therefore, there's no perfect fit when it comes to advice. You have to tailor make you own.

Your Voice and Art are Unique

Have you ever been afraid that other people will take your ideas and write a better story? What about worrying you'll never make your mark with all the other writers and books out there? Are you scared you'll be stuck in Cliché Kingdom for the rest of your natural life?

Understanding your own Creativity helps you realise that your voice and the art you create is unique to you.

No one else has your Creativity. They have their own unique Creativity who has her or his individual idiosyncrasies, foibles and fascinations.

Creativity is not some rare mineral that only belongs to a privileged few, and exists in the same molecular state no matter where it's found.

Creativity is not an achievement, which once achieved can never be reached again.

Creativity is within you. **Your Creativity is yours and no one else's.** With training and understanding, you and your Creativity can set out into the world with your distinctive voice and your exclusive art.

You're off on an adventure with a friend inside your head to guide you on your way (although there could be several enthralling detours in your journey, because we Creativities can never travel in a straight line).

How Do You Know What Your Creativity is Like?

Okay, let me as the writer grab the reins back here for a moment or two and talk about the practical side of the subject.

If this concept is resonating with you, the question you're probably wondering is: How do I find my Creativity?

What Does Creativity Mean to You?

The question you should first consider is: What does Creativity mean to you?

As you've already observed, my Creativity is a small girl with a penchant for purple who never seems to stop talking. But your Creativity may be quite different.

Your Creativity is as unique as you are, therefore it may take you some time before you work out exactly how to describe *your* Creativity.

Some people find their Creativity launches in unannounced fully ready to explain himself or herself to you. Others find their Creativity is shy and needs to be coaxed out into the open.

It may take time for you to actually put a mental image to your Creativity, but I encourage you to spend the time thinking about it. As we've already shown, this is your opportunity to understand yourself better.

Your Creativity is one of the most important parts of your writing ability. Learning to read, spell and understand grammar all took time but they are essential to being a writer. Your Creativity is just as important. Therefore, doesn't he/she deserve a bit of your attention and time too?

Creativity has some tips she'd like to share on how you can come to know what your Creativity is really like.

Creativity's Tips

Spread yourself some blank mental canvas.

Begin by thinking of the words you think most describe your Creativity. These can be as nice or nasty as you like. Be honest! Inspiring, infuriating, pink, fickle, infantile, pungent, presumptuous, thin, egocentric, hysterical, floral, serious, fluffy, considerate, untruthful, triangular, strawberryesque...you get the idea. Just grab for words. Don't think too hard.

Now go past words. Think about concepts, images, ideas, smells, sounds. Imagine what you love and what you hate about your Creativity. Envision what those aspects would look like. Try different colours, different shapes, different textures. Try human, try animal, try plant, try rocks, try water – liquid, ice, clouds.

Don't be afraid of throwing ideas, concepts, colours, words etc. at your canvas. Some will stick, others will slide off. The more you throw at it, the closer you'll get. Go by gut instinct. If something doesn't feel right, take it away and try something else. Be bold. Be italicized. But most of all, be excited.

How you going? Don't rush it. You're reaching out to a new friend. These things often are a little awkward to start with, and things rarely gel together on the first go. You may at this point have a rough, fuzzy idea forming on your canvas. You may have nothing at all. That's fine. You may also find your mental canvas keeps slipping away from you. If this happens, get out pencil and paper and do it the old-fashioned way.

Come back to your canvas over the next few days and add to it. Go with what feels right. Don't be afraid to change things to see what fits with your gut feelings.

As you continue with this process, you may also **discover the place your Creativity inhabits**. [I live in a workshop](#) with many wonderful things to keep me occupied, but your Creativity might live anywhere from a museum to a Jamaican beach.

Also, consider that your Creativity may have a **preferred name or title**. It might be Your Royal Highness or Mr. Snuggles or Samson the Magnificent. Experiment and learn. Savour the excitement and fun.

How This Works in Practice

You're forgiven at this point if you're finding the above surreal. This concept can take time to absorb.

A little person running around in your head talking to you sounds like something you should be seeing your doctor about.

But let's face it, most of us have been battling with the voice of an Inner Critic for years without thinking too much about it. So why not a much nicer voice that's more helpful?

Now, let's get back to the reason you're reading this book. You want to know, is it really possible to be creative *on demand*?

The answer is, yes. But here's the catch:

To be creative on demand, you first have to do the things your Creativity demands of you.

So what does your Creativity demand of you? Well, this is where getting to know your Creativity is essential. You have to find out what works for *your Creativity*.

There are, however, demands that just about all Creativities make. Let's start with those.

Preparation

No matter whether you're someone who plots out their novels to the last detail or writes by the seat of their pants, there is still preparation involved.

I'm not talking about character profiles or location research. Before all that you need to be feeding your Creativity on idea fodder.

I mean things like:

- **Good writing**, including your favourite books. If you want to write but you're not yet reading, then you need to get started right now.
- **Writing advice**. Yes, you'll need to be selective about what advice you apply but that's where knowing your Creativity comes in.
- **Juicy facts**. Fill your mind with interesting information. Be intensely curious about everything.
- **Everyday things**. Pick up details in the things you see, smell, hear, taste and touch.

Your Creativity feeds off all these things and uses them to create ideas. If you're not feeding your Creativity properly, then you won't get quality ideas in return.

Mental Space

Your Creativity lives in your head. If your head is cluttered with stresses, 'to do' lists and preconceived ideas, there's no room for your Creativity to operate.

If you want your Creativity to be there for you when you need an idea, you must create some mental space for her/him to work in. And you need to do this in advance.

There's no use clearing space and then immediately demanding an idea. It would be like providing a carpenter a workspace and then immediately asking where the finished piece is.

Your Creativity needs his or her personal space. Yes, your mental resources are precious, but if you want Creativity on demand you need to allocate those resources properly.

Writing Practice

Most of us have heard the famous quote by William Faulkner:

"I only write when I'm inspired, and I make sure I'm inspired every morning at 9 a.m."

By promising your Creativity you'll sit down to the page at the same time every day, you're encouraging her/him to follow suit. Some days your Creativity might be a little late, but if you're demanding an appearance from her or him you'd better be there yourself first.

Find yourself a writing time and be there as consistently as you can. You will get ideas at all sorts of strange times of day (as we'll discuss in a minute) but that'll usually happen when you're consistently working on your writing and your work-in-progress.

As you keep to your consistent routine, you'll find ways to tweak your habits to accommodate your Creativity's unique needs.

Respect for Ideas

There will be times when your Creativity will bombard you with ideas, and times when there aren't ideas to be had. The trick is how you treat the ideas as they appear.

Here are several principles for the care and nurture of ideas:

- **Ideas are seeds.** They are just the beginning of a story or a character or a plot. You will need many of these seeds to create a novel and you will need to care for them all in order for them to grow into your finished work. So start collecting and remain open to unexpected connections.
- **Ideas come in floods and at inconvenient times.** This is the nature of ideas. The secret is to write them down. Don't insult your Creativity by saying you'll remember them. You won't. Get yourself an [idea book](#) and record them. If you prove you'll treat each idea with dignity and respect, you'll end up with more. If you let them slip through the folds of your memory, your Creativity will eventually give up.
- **First ideas are usually lame.** Don't start second guessing your Creativity or getting upset at this point. The first idea is not usually the one you'll use. You want the one after that and the one after that. Like seeds, they may take time before they shoot up into the realms of possibility and still longer before they bloom into the eventual concept you'll use in your novel. Keep cultivating and trusting in the creative process.

So yes, there will be times when you don't have a fresh idea off the top of your head, but if you've done the above then under those circumstances you will have the following options:

- **Keep writing** – You're priming the pump. If your Creativity is a little late this particular day then hang around and keep going till she/he turns up.
- **Use a previous idea** – If you've been keeping your Idea Book up to date, you should have other ideas which are ready to be played with.
- **Give your Creativity a boost** – Your Creativity may need a bit more idea fodder before she/he can get back into gear. Look back at your preparation and see if you've stopped doing one of the things mentioned there.

We've been speaking about theory up until this point so let me show you how having a personal Creativity actually helps in practice. The example I'll use is one which affects all of us from time to time – the dreaded writer's block.

Example — Busting Writer's Block

When faced with the inability to write, I usually ask myself the following questions.

Is My Creativity Bored?

If I'm getting ideas for anything and everything except the thing I'm working on, chances are my current project is not interesting enough to capture my Creativity's attention.

Sometimes I just have to force myself to continue with what I'm writing, in which case I faithfully record the new ideas my Creativity is giving me but postpone any further work on them.

However, there are a number of things I can do to change things up a bit with my current work-in-progress and hopefully get my Creativity interested in what I'm writing again.

For example:

- Change the font of the manuscript.
- Change the word processor I'm using.
- Change the location of the scene I'm working on. (E.g. if the scene takes place in a posh restaurant I might consider moving it to a car rally.)
- Change the character's names. (E.g. Instead of Max and Joanna, I could write about Wilhelm and Mrs. Myrtle.)
- Add a new element into the scene. (Like a new character, a pet, another cause of conflict.)
- Move on to another scene that my Creativity is more enthusiastic about.
- Move to another room or even outdoors and write there.
- Write by hand with my favourite pens or different coloured markers.

Many of these provide just enough change to recapture my Creativity's interest and get her back on the case.

Is My Creativity Exhausted?

If I'm not getting any ideas at all, it's possible I've [squeezed my Creativity dry](#).

This is not the time to panic or to force myself and my Creativity to write further. If there's literally nothing left in the tank, then it's time to refill.

I might try:

- Going for a walk.
- Taking a shower. ([Most of my good ideas happen in the shower](#), and I'm not the only writer who has this happen!)
- Meeting up with some friends.
- Going out to a café.
- Visiting the beach.
- Reading a good book.
- Watching a movie.
- Watching the special features of a movie.

All these things may look like I'm avoiding work, but what I'm actually doing is giving my Creativity opportunity to recharge.

When I do return to writing, there's usually a little gem of an idea waiting for me.

Is My Creativity Stifled?

If the above doesn't work and I'm still stuck with a blank page and no ideas, then I need to look a bit deeper. It's possible there's another reason for the block.

Most likely, my Creativity is locked in battle with my Inner Critic, in which case I need to intervene.

I'll ask myself the following questions:

- Am I being a perfectionist?
- Am I expecting too much of this draft?
- Have I emotionally connected with this story and these characters?
- Am I taking myself and this story too seriously?

I then need to remind myself of the following:

- First drafts are meant to be rubbish. In fact, they *must* be rubbish and rambling and disjointed. If they're too perfect then I haven't explored the subject properly.
- Writing is rewriting. There will be plenty more passes at this information. I don't need to get it right this time around.

- I love writing. It is my passion. Therefore I need to make sure this is enjoyable for my Creativity and I.

I then work out how I can adjust things so my Creativity can once again feel free to create with me.

Now these are all solutions I have found work well for me and my Creativity. But you and your Creativity are unique. To properly overcome a writer's block, you need to work out how your Creativity works and what particular problems you might be facing.

Understanding these things will give you invaluable insight and often the personalized solution to your writing block.

Where Do I Go From Here?

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-book. Hopefully you've discovered:

- Why concepts like 'the muse' and 'creative people' could actually be damaging your productivity.
- The advantages of having a personal Creativity within you to help you with your writing process.
- How you can find your unique Creativity.
- How understanding your Creativity can benefit you when you're facing writer's block.

Needless to say, it doesn't stop here. It takes time to learn about your Creativity and there will be points along the way where you may need help to understand some of the curlier points of the creative process.

This is where [Creativity's Workshop](#) comes in. It's a place for you and your Creativity to hang out, learn together and recharge.

We discuss writing tips in a way that allows you to discover what works best for your Creativity. We share inspiration and activities which help you boost your Creativity. We also provide insight into why Creativities act and react in certain ways.

We also have heaps of fun together while we're doing it.

The subject of creativity is one that has fascinated humanity for centuries. I'm sure you have insights and thoughts on the subject too. I'd love to hear what you have to say, so come and visit us at Creativity's Workshop, or e-mail me directly at jessica@creativitysworkshop.com