

**Wired to Create**  
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- Creative people have messy minds and processes.
- Creative people engage in rapid switching of thought processes and exhibit nearly simultaneous coexistence between a number of these processes, from generating new ideas to expanding and working out the ideas, to critical reflection, to taking a distance from one's work and considering the perspective of the audience.
- The fiction writing process is a voyage of discovery that begins with a seed incident – an event or observation that inspires fascination and exploration and becomes the fertile ground on which creative growth occurs. Seed incidents tend to break the mind out of ordinary understanding and create new meanings for the writer.
- The truth is most of us discover where we are headed when we arrive.
- The common strands that seemed to transcend all creative fields was an openness to one's inner life, a preference for complexity and ambiguity, an unusually high tolerance for disorder and disarray, the ability to extract order from chaos, independence, unconventionality, and a willingness to take risks.
- Scientists generally agree that creativity is not a single characteristic but a system of characteristics, and many theories now emphasize the multifaceted nature of creativity. The characteristics highlighted by these theories include:
  - General intellectual functioning
  - Knowledge and skills relevant to the activity
  - Creative skills and knowledge
  - Creative skills relevant to the activity
  - Creative skills and thinking styles
  - Psychological resources such as confidence, perseverance, and a willingness to take risks
  - Inner motivation and a love of one's work
  - Complex suite of positive and negative emotions
  - Environmental factors such as access to gatekeepers in the field and key resources.
- As with happiness, it seems that the more you strive for creativity, the less likely you are to achieve it.
- Lev Vygotsky went so far as to say that child's play is the very birthplace of the creative imagination. Indeed, if there is one fundamental function of play, it is to contribute to the growth of a flexible brain that is primed for creative thinking and problem solving.
- During play, children develop impulse control, planning, organization, problem solving, literacy and language, symbolism, comprehension of STEM concepts, mathematical ability, curiosity, divergent thinking, cognitive integration of diverse content, flexibility, emotional regulation, stress reduction, integration of cognition and emotions, empathy, respect, social negotiation, collaboration and tolerance for others.
- Direct instruction in the earliest years of life can backfire, making children less curious, less likely to discover new information, and less likely to make new, unexpected connections.
- A hybrid form of work and play may actually provide the most optimal context for learning and creativity, both for children and for adults.

- When engaging in their activity, harmoniously passionate people feel in control of their passions. They are not following their passions; they are one with their passions.
- Harmoniously passionate people are impelled to create, whereas obsessively passionate people are compelled to create by more extrinsic factors.
- Three defining features of inspiration
  - Evocation: People are inspired by something
  - Transcendent awakening: a moment of clarity and an awareness of new possibilities
  - Actualization: Striving to transmit, express, or actualize a new idea, insight or vision
- Inspiration favors the prepared mind.
- It is a dynamic dance between inspiration and hard work that leads to creativity.
- In order to make art, we must find the space to become intimate with our own minds.
- Some degree of isolation is required in order to do creative work, because the artist is constantly working through ideas or projects in his mind and these ideas need space to be developed.
- Goethe: One can be instructed in society, one is inspired only in solitude.
- Albert Einstein: The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.
- While most tests we are given in school are primarily analytical, most problems in life require insightful thought processes.
- Insightful problem solving is uniquely associated with the ability to flexibly switch categories on the divergent thinking task and the ability to break frame on the anomalous card task.
- Expertise and knowledge are very important to the creative process and can even increase the accuracy of intuition.
- A person's most creative contributions in her career typically come before she reaches her peak of knowledge within the field.
- Three forms of cognitive engagement
  - Intellectual engagement is characterized by a searching for truth, love of problem solving, and drive to engage with ideas,
  - Affective engagement has to do with exploration of the full depths of human emotion and is associated with a preference for using gut feeling, emotions, empathy and compassion to make decisions
  - Aesthetic engagement exhibits a drive toward exploring fantasy and art and tends to experience emotional absorption in beauty.
- Intellectual engagement is associated with creative achievement in the sciences, while affective and aesthetic engagement were linked with artistic creativity.
- The desire to learn and discover seems to have significantly more bearing on creative accomplishments than does cognitive ability.
- We need to directly experience a violation of the way we think things are supposed to happen if we want to think in new and innovative ways.
- Periods of immigration have preceded periods of extraordinary creative achievement in various cultural contexts. Immigrants bring fresh ideas, culture and customs to an existing cultural infrastructure, creating more diverse experiences for everyone in that culture (not just the immigrants themselves) and thus trigger creative ways of thinking.
- Creativity benefits from an outsider's mind set.
- Langer: Doing creative work is itself a practice in mindfulness.

- Kabat-Zinn: Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment. No formal meditation practice is needed in order to be mindful
- Constantly grazing on texts, emails, news, and social media compromises our ability to focus on both the external present moment and our internal streams of thought, making it difficult to tap into the default mode's imaginative activity, or as Lynch said, to go deeper.
- Richard Davidson: The way we live today is causing a national attention deficit. The average smartphone user checks his or her device every six and a half minutes (150 times per day.)
- One study showed that a brief mindfulness exercise before an exam helped students identify distracting thoughts, which led to improvements in reading comprehension and working memory. Overall, the exercise led to a sixteen point average boost on the GRE, largely by reducing disruptive mind wandering.
- Meditators showed significant improvements in three aspects of attention:
  - Alerting: the maintenance of an alert state of mind
  - Orienting: directing and limiting one's attention
  - Conflict monitoring: the ability to prioritize competing responses
- Types of meditation that seek to eliminate thoughts (that is, more traditional forms like mindfulness meditation) rather than simply encouraging greater awareness of thoughts are not the most conducive to a creative state of mind, which by definition is open, fluid, and flexible.
- In addition to activating the imagination network and facilitating divergent thinking, one of the key ways these meditation practices boost creativity is by cultivating observational skills.
- Four mindfulness skills
  - Observation: the ability to skillfully notice and attend to both internal and external phenomena
  - Acting with awareness: the ability to engage in an activity with one's undivided attention
  - Description: the ability to verbally describe objects and events in a nonjudgmental way
  - Accepting without judgment: the ability to accept the circumstances of the present moment without labeling or judging
- Of these four mindful abilities only the skill of observation – as cultivated through open-monitoring meditation – was consistently linked with heightened creativity.
- Csikszentmihalyi identified openness and sensitivity as oppositional personality elements that not only coexist in creative performers, but form the core of their personalities. This paradox helps explain how performers can be bold and charismatic on the one hand and emotionally fragile on the other.
- Those who learn to dial down the relentless swooping and creating of emotions that is the almost invariable accompaniment to extreme sensitivity are able to transform raw perception into keen perceptiveness.