

Everyday Creativity



WORKBOOK

with insights from
Dewitt Jones

Welcome to Everyday Creativity

Thank you for your interest in “Everyday Creativity.” By sharing my experiences and the lessons I’ve learned while trying to tap into my own creative potential, I hope to leave you with a new approach to the seemingly enigmatic process of creativity. “Everyday Creativity” offers several techniques that will help you and others within your organization or company apply this perspective.

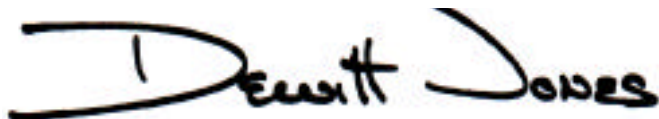
In the video, I strive to show that creativity is not a magical, mysterious occurrence. Neither is it solely the realm of artists and authors. Creativity, in my view, is an attitude. Much of what we call “creative thinking” really results from taking a fresh look — one that is deeper and more determined — at the mundane experiences of everyday life. Quite simply, creativity is looking at the ordinary and seeing the . . . extraordinary.

We look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary; we ignite our passion. It is passion that gives us the energy we need to creatively tackle the challenges before us. When we couple passion with solid techniques and craftsmanship, we can make our vision come to life. This is true whether we’re trying to develop a curriculum plan, to find a better way to schedule part-time workers, or — as my work requires — to capture on film an image that tells a story.

It isn’t always easy. While such clichés as “a burst of creativity” make it sound as if creativity simply alights from out of nowhere, most creative inspirations are the result of persistence, hard work, and the willingness to challenge ourselves. We often must work with time constraints and limited resources. However, when we strive to exercise our creativity as best we can, our work, our relationships, and even our lives become more effective and satisfying.

I hope you will find that “Everyday Creativity” is both exciting and liberating, and that the ideas and techniques it presents will help you every day to look at the ordinary and see the . . . extraordinary!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dewitt Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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About Dewitt Jones

Dewitt Jones has spent his life cultivating his own creativity. As a freelance photographer for *National Geographic* for more than 20 years, Dewitt captured breathtaking images in locales as diverse as the River Tweed in Scotland, the Serengeti plains of Africa, and the Grand Canyon in the United States. Along the way, he became known as a world-class photojournalist.

Dewitt's photographic and artistic skills are also well-known in the business world, where he has brought his talents and unique view to advertising campaigns for such organizations as Canon, Dewar's Scotch, Nikon, and United Airlines.

In addition, Dewitt has directed several motion pictures, two of which were nominated for Academy Awards. He has produced nine books; the most recent, *The Nature of Leadership*, is a collaboration with Stephen Covey and A. Roger Merrill, both of Franklin Covey. Dewitt's column, "Basic Jones," appears monthly in *Outdoor Photographer* magazine.

An accomplished speaker, Dewitt gives numerous presentations to businesses, associations, and nonprofit organizations, including the American Red Cross, Chevron, Fireman's Fund Insurance, Nike, and Merrill Lynch.

Dewitt holds a bachelor of arts in drama from Dartmouth College and a master's degree in filmmaking from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Using the Workbook

This Workbook examines the concepts presented in the video, “Everyday Creativity,” and further illustrates each idea. The Workbook’s purpose is to help you learn and apply the information presented in the video. As you watch “Everyday Creativity” and complete the exercises, think about how the concepts apply to your organization. You may want to examine the particular issues facing you or your group, your group’s goals and structure, and the strengths and weaknesses of your group members.

Notes

Everyday Creativity

Workbook

With

Dewitt Jones

Notes



The Nine Key Concepts

Listed below are the nine key concepts identified in the video. This Workbook includes more comprehensive information on each, as well as exercises that will help you apply the concepts to your own experiences.

1. **Creativity is the ability to look at the ordinary and see the . . . extraordinary.**
2. **Every act can be a creative one.**
3. **Creativity is a matter of perspective.**
4. **There's always more than one right answer.**
5. **Reframe problems into opportunities.**
6. **Don't be afraid to make mistakes.**
7. **Break the pattern.**
8. **Train your technique.**
9. **You've got to really care.**



Key Concept 1:

Creativity is the ability to look at ordinary and see the . . . extraordinary.

From the Video:

“What is creativity? Having spent my life in one creative endeavor after another, I can tell you it’s not something magical or mystical. It’s something very simple. To me, it’s just a moment — a moment where we look at the ordinary, but we see the extraordinary. It happens all the time in my photography. Look at the ordinary. See the extraordinary. We’ve all done it. We’ve all had those moments when the world was extraordinary. And we all know how good it feels when it happens.”

Program Insight:

Creativity often is thought of as a phenomenon that is larger than life or out of the ordinary — something that belongs only to certain people. Dewitt challenges such thinking and shows how creativity is something much more accessible — an attitude.

Most people should find this definition of creativity liberating and exciting. Creativity is no longer out of our grasp, nor is it just the province of a select group of individuals. With open minds, a solid understanding of our crafts, and the willingness to venture beyond what is expected, we can all tap into our own abilities to think creatively.

At the same time, it’s only natural to find this new definition of creativity a bit daunting. No longer can we claim that we’re not creative, and that’s why we can’t devise a better way to tackle a situation. If attitude is the key to creativity and we can control our attitudes, then we also have control over our creativity. We all can look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary.

Question:

Think back to a time, whether it was on the job or at home, when you creatively handled an issue or challenge. How did it make you feel? Can you relate to Dewitt’s claim that it is like falling in love with the world? Keep in mind that your example doesn’t need to be earth-shattering. Perhaps you creatively cut a few minutes from your commute, devised a procedure for more effectively handling customer calls, or designed a more analytical spreadsheet.

Your example: _____

Question:

It's likely that in coming up with creative solutions to various problems, you used some of the techniques Dewitt talks about in the video. Do you recognize any that you've used? List two or three problems and identify the techniques you used. For example, brainstorming can be thought of as recognizing that "there is more than one right answer" while trial and error shows you're "not afraid to make mistakes." (See page 9 for a listing of all of the techniques.)

Example	Technique
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

From "Basic Jones":

The vision we had at *National Geographic* was to celebrate what's right with the world. In my opinion, it's this perspective that has made the magazine so successful over so many years. Much as we are all addicted to a news media that daily tells us what's wrong with the world, *National Geographic's* success springs from the far deeper human need to stand in gratitude in front of what's right with it. It's a perspective that not only has influenced my life, it's deeply influenced my creativity and my photography as well.

For me, creativity is the moment when I look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary. And that moment where I fall in love with whatever I see through the lens is always positive. It fills me with passion. It gives me the energy to manifest my feeling into a photograph. Without the passion, without the energy, the rest of the process becomes a struggle rather than a joy.

Key Concept 2:

Every act can be a creative one.



From the Video:

"I think many of us were raised thinking that we couldn't be creative. When I was growing up, creativity was always related to art, and art to painting and sculpture. If you weren't an artist, forget it, you weren't creative. But, if creativity is just falling in love with the world, then everything I do can be a creative act. My life can be my art whether I'm taking a photograph, or working with a client, or raising a family, or volunteering in my community. In every act we have the potential to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary."

Program Insight:

Creativity often is assumed to mean artistic talent. However, the two are not interchangeable. To create, according to Webster, is "to cause to come into existence." While an artist certainly exercises his or her creativity, so do the rest of us: teachers develop lesson plans, community volunteers find new ways to promote their cause, and moms and dads figure out how to raise their always-changing children.

Similarly, we often think of creativity as existing outside of our everyday lives; like an evening dress or tuxedo, creativity is often thought of as something special we take out just when we have something special to do and want to make an impression. However, as the video explains, creativity can be a big part of our everyday lives. If creativity means being able to look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary, it's clear that this is a way of thinking that can elevate our approach to everything we do.

When we are open to the potential for the extraordinary, we're more likely to focus on finding and extracting it, despite the challenges before us. Our efforts and the insights we gain from our work will enhance our solutions. This is true whether we're figuring out how to boost sales, to train new employees, or to better utilize equipment on the shop floor.

Question:

Did you think of yourself as a creative person before you watched the video? Has your view changed? Will you look at your accomplishments in a new light?

Question:

While we might be excited to take a new, creative approach to situations, we're probably a bit hesitant as well. Why do you think this is? List two reasons. For example, we may worry that even if we come up with a great new idea, others may prevent us from implementing it.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Activity:

Identify one area of your life in which you know you are creative. For example, you might be inventive in your kitchen, good at solving math problems, or talented at getting people to work together. Is there any way you can apply this talent to your work? Explain.

Talent	How can this apply to work?
_____	_____
_____	_____

Explain: _____

From "Basic Jones":

I'd love to be as sharp in my life as I am with my camera. Locking in sharply on the things that excite and interest me, yet fearlessly willing to easily change my focus as the situation develops, and continuously looking for that next right answer.

In my photography, I realize that each new vision requires new exposure, new balance. For example, I'd never stand on the rim of the Grand Canyon at noon, take a light reading, and then return that evening expecting to use the earlier reading to get the shot. Yet how many times have I set a balance in my life and then tried desperately to hold it without any regard to all that was changing around me?

When will I listen to what my photography teaches me every day? That focus and balance are always in flux, that every new experience needs new settings, and that change is all that is constant. My easy and elegant response to change not only ensures my survival but might also elevate life to the level of art.



Key Concept 3:

Creativity is a matter of perspective.

From the Video:

“Creativity is a matter of perspective. As a photographer, the first thing I have to decide is ‘What lens do I have on my camera?’ In other words, what perspective can I take on this problem to help me find the extraordinary in the ordinary view?”

“The right perspective is critical. If we can’t learn to change lenses, we’re trapped. But I’ve learned that there’s always another perspective. When we believe that, it can transform the whole way we look at life.”

Program Insight:

Just as a photographer must change lenses to capture a new picture, the rest of us sometimes need to change our thinking to achieve our goals or to solve our problems. We need to ask ourselves the following questions: Is our angle the best it can be? Which elements of our situation deserve the most attention, and which deserve the least? Do we need to focus on the big picture or the details?

Question:

Answers and inspiration often hit when we least expect them. That’s largely because something has happened to juggle our thinking and to give us a new perspective. For example, your child may say something that sparks an idea that you can use at work. Or watching a mechanic fix your car may help you solve a problem on the shop floor. Can you recall a similar situation?

Question:

We’ve all had times where we’ve hit a mental roadblock and can’t seem to get anywhere with our current project. List four techniques you use to remove roadblocks. For example, perhaps you take a break or talk with outsiders about the situation.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Activity*:

One way to change perspectives is to find new ways to describe a situation. In light of this, try to describe, in several ways, an issue or problem that you're facing. For example, you might write a story or poem about it, come up with a "Top 10" list, draw a picture, or make a collage. Be as inventive as you wish. Take 30 to 40 minutes to complete your project.

Now that you're finished, did your work lead to any new insights? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

* You may need art supplies for this activity.

From "Basic Jones":

Night sounds of the Serengeti infiltrate my tent. It's our last night in camp on the shore of Lake Ndutu, and I can't sleep. It's mostly peaceful in the Serengeti. Thousands of animals are just hanging out, living life. Eating, reproducing, playing, and sleeping. This makes for poor television but good experiences. It all seems to work on this "endless plain" [the meaning of the word *Serengeti*].

For the first time, I have a visceral understanding of biodiversity. I realize that the animals, left to their own devices, exemplify nature's balance. I have photographed animals drinking at watering holes, drowsing in the midday sun, and just walking along, answering an inner call to migrate. I've been touched by the beauty of these extraordinary, mundane moments — glimpses of the real day-to-day Africa.

There are metaphors for our own lives here. Lying there in my tent, I keep imagining my hometown without all of the houses and buildings. I think I'd see pretty much the same things I see here: people eating and drinking, working and sleeping. Just working it out together as best they could. What an interesting perspective.



Key Concept 4:

There's always more than one right answer.

From the Video:

"There's more than one right answer. It seems so simple, but it is the key to creativity. There are a thousand ways to come at a problem to find creative solutions. I know that clearly from my photography, but sometimes it is so hard to bring over into the rest of my life.

"You can't stop with the first right answer. Hey, the first right answer is just doing your job. Anyone ought to be able to come up with one right answer. But, you press beyond it, not in terror but comfortably, knowing that the next answer is out there for you."

Program Insight:

Life is ambiguous. Many situations don't have a single solution that's waiting to be discovered. That can make things difficult, because many of us, even without realizing it, want a rulebook; we want to know that if we do certain things, we'll end up in a certain place or with a certain answer.

However, because life rarely unfolds that way, we need to keep approaching problems and issues from as many angles as possible. We can't stop at the first answer that crosses our minds; while it may work, it's likely to be "tried and true." We need to press on and see what else we can find.

To do this we need a sense of confidence that if we keep looking, we'll find more answers. It's easy to believe that if we don't grab the first answer, we won't get another chance. However, if we keep going, we often find that there are more — and better — solutions than we initially had assumed.

Question:

The idea that we need to keep working on a problem to find more right answers isn't always what we want to do. Why? List two possible reasons. For example, it's easier to declare a problem unsolvable and give up.

1. _____
2. _____

Question:

While it can be foolish to grab the first answer that comes along, it's often not practical to wait until you

have all of the information available before you make a decision. List two ways you can determine when it's time to stop searching for answers. For example, you might stop searching when all of the new information you're finding confirms what you already know.

1. _____
2. _____

Activity:

In ten to 15 minutes, brainstorm, without judging, at least five solutions or answers to your current problem. Then, review the list and if any of the solutions appear impractical, take another ten to 15 minutes to devise replacements. Repeat this until you have at least five workable solutions.

Describe problem: _____

List at least three solutions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

From “Basic Jones”:

I drove into the town of Smith River, California, where 80 percent of the country's Easter lilies are grown and there, in the fog, were fields of lilies stretching off in every direction. I knew I had the makings of a stunning photograph. But I also knew I'd have to tell the whole story in that single shot. The *Geographic* is demanding that way. They never assign a story like “Smith River: Flower of Northern California” — one that tells the story of lily production in great detail. No, they give you a title like “New England” or “Greece” and expect you to encompass the entire subject in 30 or 40 pictures.

Although I felt sure I had my shot, I was intrigued enough with the lilies to keep experimenting with them photographically. My own personal favorite shot happened later that day when I took a helicopter ride at a local festival (of lilies, of course). The chopper had risen no more than a hundred feet above the ground when a dynamite composition caught my eye. I knew it lacked the kind of “tell-the-whole-story” information that the *Geographic* would insist upon, but the graphic nonetheless delighted me. It's important, even on assignment, to take a few shots just for your own creative amusement. It keeps the juices flowing and makes the work fun. Armed with the right lens and the right attitude, you can have a real field day — in Smith River or anywhere else.



Key Concept 5:

Reframe problems into opportunities.

From the Video:

“When you come at the world with a sense of abundance rather than scarcity, you get more and more comfortable reframing problems into opportunities, finding new angles, coming at the same elements from a totally different direction, and being confident that the next right answer will be there.”

Program Insight:

When you view something as a problem, it’s easy to feel intimidated and immediately defeated. After all, when a situation appears insurmountable, why try to do anything to make it better?

That’s why the simple step of changing your perspective to view a problem as an opportunity can improve your ability to creatively approach that same situation. At once, you become more open to ideas that can lead to solutions. You may remember resources you had overlooked. Your attitude may make others more willing to keep working on the situation. As Dewitt notes, instead of thinking, “I won’t believe it until I see it,” we need to think, “I won’t see it until I believe it.”

Question:

Why might we find it difficult to view the world with a sense of abundance? List two reasons. For example, it goes against what we’ve been taught — that everything is limited and that we’ve got to get what we can while we can.

1. _____

2. _____

Question:

On the continuum of looking at problems as opportunities are two extremes: seeing problems and obstacles at every step, and refusing to acknowledge the potential for any difficulties. Where are you on this continuum? Is that where you want to be? If not, what can you do to change?

Where I’m at: _____

Where I want to be: _____

Steps to change myself (if needed.): _____

Activity:

One way to gain a new perspective on a problem and to bring new solutions to light is to describe it using an analogy. An analogy compares two things that, while essentially different, are alike in a significant way. For example: “He is like a lion ready to pounce on his prey.” Think of several analogies to describe your current project. Once you’ve done so, ask yourself whether your analogies help to spark new ideas or better ways to approach the project?

From “Basic Jones”:

The first three days [in the Grand Canyon] were a serene drift through geologic time, slowly adjusting to my own natural rhythms. On day four, floating lazily downstream, I caught shoreline movement out of the corner of my eye. A coyote ran along the rock ledge, paralleling our boat. Coyote. The Trickster in southwestern Native American cosmology, wreaking havoc and transforming reality before one’s very eyes.

He kept pace with us for several minutes, throwing sidelong glances that seemed full of portent. I looked away for an instant, and when I scanned the ledge again, he was gone. Disappeared. A chilly wind blew up the canyon. I shivered with a mix of anticipation and foreboding. “Oh, come on,” I chided myself. “Get a grip. Nothing’s going to happen. No more mythology books before bedtime.”

By afternoon, soot gray clouds scudded across the sky gap above us. We managed to pull into camp just as the heavens collapsed, furiously slinging horizontal rain and hail. At dinner, I discovered that three other folks’ cameras were malfunctioning. That night, thunder reverberated up and down the canyon. I slept fitfully, plagued by nightmares and the unshakable feeling that the Trickster was looming over us like a shadow.

Daylight. Runoff had swollen the river and turned it into chocolate. That day, two more cameras collapsed.

Below Phantom Falls churned some of the biggest whitewater in North America — enormous waves and dory-eating holes. Drifting downstream, I began wishing I were somewhere else. This wasn’t quite what I had bargained for: big water, nightmares, malevolent weather, broken cameras, and a wild desert dog messing with my head. I wanted to go back and start over. Coyote seemed to chuckle from the water beside my boat, “You can’t go back and you can’t get off the river. Nothing to do but go on.” Words brutally honest and strangely calming. Something in me let go. I smiled, wondering if the Trickster was watching. “Got it.”

I had set out on this journey with a full load of expectations — that the trip would be beautiful and memorable in a particular way. It turned out to be beautiful and memorable in quite a different way. I think that’s what Coyote was teaching. Live fully, but hold things lightly. Be alert and attentive; you never know what the Trickster may bring you. And there’s nothing to do but keep heading downstream.

Key Concept 6:

Don't be afraid to make mistakes.



From the Video:

"If I were afraid of mistakes, this is the kind of photograph [the first picture of his daughter] that would cause me to put my cameras in the closet and never take them out again. But I don't even think about it. I'm just looking for the next right answer. Do you know that the average *Geographic* article is shot in 400 rolls of film? That's over 14,000 images to get 30! I'm not worried about making a few mistakes.

"If I were afraid to make mistakes, if I never took the risk to think out of the box, to press the edge of my envelope, to search for that next right answer, I'd still be back here at the beginning wondering why [this photo] didn't work."

Program Insight:

As a child, it's easy to think that you'll reach a point in life where you'll know just about everything you'll need to know. Of course, as we grow older, most of us realize that learning never stops. However, we hopefully assume that our propensity to make mistakes will.

Not only do we continue to make mistakes, but they get harder to take. We learn that bruises to our pride and egos hurt just as much as bruises to our bodies. So we slowly decide not to venture outside of a narrow range of expertise, not to take a risk, and not to try new things. In doing so, we may not make mistakes, but we also don't achieve anything great.

It's always enlightening to look at the mistakes and failures of individuals who are extremely successful. Whether we examine home-run hitters, brilliant musicians, or cutting-edge scientists, one thing becomes clear: Most of the world's greatest accomplishments were produced only after innumerable mistakes.

Of course, nobody is saying that we ought to make needless mistakes. We want to take the time to get as much information and as many insights as we possibly can. Then, if we do make a mistake, we can ask why things happened as they did, what we can learn, and how we can make things work.

Question:

Think back to one of your creative accomplishments. Would you have achieved your goal if you had been afraid of making mistakes? What was your attitude about mistakes at the time?

My attitude about mistakes: _____

Can you identify any mistakes you made along the way?

Mistake: _____

Mistake: _____

Question:

When we make a mistake, it's often hard to recognize any good that will come from it. However, given time and a chance to let our emotions cool, we often discover positive effects. What did each of your group's members learn from their mistakes? How did they correct them or change course? What happened then? Note two examples.

Mistake: _____ Positive Effect: _____

Mistake: _____ Positive Effect: _____

Activity:

If we are overly concerned about making mistakes, our creativity is hampered. How can we be encouraged not to be afraid of making mistakes?

1. _____

2. _____

From "Basic Jones":

Five hundred years ago, when asked about the motivation for a particular sculpture, Michelangelo replied, "I saw an angel in the stone and carved to set it free."

There are so many technical and aesthetic flaws in this photograph [referring again to the first picture of his daughter] that if it came up for review in one of my classes, I'd be reaching deep into my euphemism file to try and find something nice to say about it. The wide angle lens distorts Deanna's feet until they're as big as her face; I've chosen a lousy moment to photograph her face; the disparity between light and shadow leads to hopelessly overexposed light in the background. Not much photographic redemption to be found here.

Yet I saw none of this when I first looked through the lens. I saw only my daughter, the apple of my eye, the cutest, sweetest child in the entire world as far as I was concerned. I literally fell in love with her all over again.

Michelangelo's words cut to the heart of the way I view the creative process: falling in love with the subject and using the passion of that love to fuel the transformation from imagination to imaginAction, from dream to reality, from good to great. I think the same progression can be true in our lives when we focus on the best of who we are rather than defining ourselves by our weaknesses.

So that afternoon I just kept shooting, bringing my vision into sharper and sharper focus. Following a vision of an angel, till I could set it free.

Key Concept 7:

Break the pattern.



From the Video:

“When we’re not afraid to make mistakes and when we believe there’s more than one right answer, that’s when we begin to break the patterns in our lives.

“Patterns, systems — they’re incredibly important. We can’t function without them. But we all know that if we let those patterns go too long unquestioned, they become our prisons.

“When we begin to break the patterns in our lives, then everything is always in question, even when it’s going well. That’s the very basis of creativity. You’re always saying, ‘Why do we do it this way? How could we do it better?’”

Program Insight:

By definition, creativity demands that we break a pattern. In order to bring into existence something that hasn’t existed before, we have to form our own mold rather than fitting into an existing one. Instead of following a rulebook, we have to make it up as we go along.

That’s easier said than done. Even people who consider themselves unbound by convention often find that they work within the patterns of their culture or society more than they realize.

Question:

When you get right down to it, not many of us want to go against the grain. What are two reasons that we refrain from “breaking the pattern”? For example, we risk being wrong, or we may have to disagree with or upset other people.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Question:

One reason we don’t break patterns is our fear of what others might say or think. How receptive is the environment that you and your colleagues have created for those who want to break the patterns? Ask yourself these questions: Do new ideas get shot down at meetings? Are colleagues encouraged (even subtly) to think a certain way? Can the atmosphere be improved? If so, how?

Activity:

By interacting with others, you often can find patterns or rules in your own life that you may be overlooking. In this activity, ask someone from another department or area to describe what he or she believes are your rules at work.

For example, you may meet with someone from the shipping department who believes that all of your packages must be sent overnight. This may, in fact, not be your rule at all. The important thing is to find out, for yourself, what the rules are that people think you follow.

From “Basic Jones”:

[At Marine World Africa USA, an amusement park], I found myself watching a row of dancing water fountains. The water would jump from cylinder to cylinder, spurting in a semi-random pattern from holes in the top of the fountains. I was captivated and so were several kids. One little boy in an oversized baseball cap and hot pink sunglasses was bent on intercepting the water as it left the hole.

I brought up my camera and began to shoot. The first photograph illuminated the child's intense focus as he covered the hole with his hand, ensuring success in capturing the water, regardless of when it might appear. The second photograph was exactly what I expected. I was ready when the water sprayed through his fingers, soaking him, and I captured the moment. It's a fine photograph; nothing wrong with it.

Yet if I'd been limited by my expectation, I would have lowered the camera and missed the best shot of the day. But I was ready for the unexpected and clicked the shutter when this boy yelled with delight and surprise at his unforeseen drenching.



Key Concept 8: Train your technique.

From the Video:

“We have to train our technique. That’s critical, because vision without technique is blind. In photography, I want my technique honed to a razor’s edge, so that when there is a decisive moment, I’m not worrying about what film is in my camera. I’m there, ready to capture that extraordinary view.

“So I have to train my technique, then I have to put myself in the place of most potential — the place where I have the most possibilities of finding multiple right answers.

“Life presents us with windows of opportunities, or what the great French photographer Cartier-Bresson called ‘decisive moments.’ Moments when it all comes together. And we have to be there, ready to take advantage of them.”

Program Insight:

While passion and inspiration, and heart and soul are critical, we can’t kid ourselves that they eliminate our need for a solid command of technique. Whatever our game is, we need to learn, know, and become so well-versed in its fundamentals that they become second nature. Knowing and respecting our crafts will help us bring our visions to life in ways that are clear and profound.

By training, honing, and refining our techniques, we can concentrate on our visions; all of the other tasks we have to do become second nature. Then when an opportunity arises, we know we’re ready to seize the moment.

Question:

Can you recall a time that you weren’t prepared and, as a result, an opportunity slipped away? Maybe you went on a sales call without knowing much about the company you were about to visit. Perhaps you interviewed for another job without taking the time to figure out why you would be a good candidate.

Opportunity: _____

Reason it slipped away: _____

Question:

Now, think back to a time when you experienced one of Cartier-Bresson’s “decisive moments.” Perhaps you gave a knockout presentation, ran a winning campaign, or directed an outstanding play. How did you prepare for the experience? Why was this the time when everything came together?

Decisive moment: _____

How I prepared: _____

Why everything came together: _____

Activity:

Are there any area(s) of your job in which your skills are weak? How can you improve?

Area(s) : _____

Plan(s) for improvement: _____

From “Basic Jones”:

Photography legend Ansel Adams once shared this pearl of wisdom: “Luck is what befalls a prepared mind.” That statement set me to pondering: What if luck isn’t just a random occurrence that befalls us as a happy accident? What if we can cultivate luck by allowing for the unexpected, by making space for what is wanting to happen? Certainly, talent, discipline, and luck are needed in different quantities at different times.

Each photograph has its own recipe. My photographer friend Rikki Cooke photographed a Hawaiian monk seal and her pup for 12 solid hours. Actually, he watched the animal sleep for approximately 11 and 3/4 hours, and photographed in small snatches when the mother roused herself to deal with her pup. Discipline and perseverance, some luck, and readiness for the unexpected yielded extraordinary photographs of this endangered animal.



Key Concept 9: You have to really care.

From the Video:

“Creativity isn’t just about vision and passion. It’s about technique and perseverance as well; a balance of emotion and intellect that springs from really caring about what you do, really caring about the people you work with and the projects you work on.

“When the people I photograph know that they are as important to me as my pictures, they open like flowers. And I find that the light that really illuminates my pictures is not the light from the outside — it’s the light from within.”

Program Insight:

Few of us can accomplish what we want to do without the help of others. However, viewing others simply as ways to get what we want or to go where we want isn’t right. Nor is it effective. People want and deserve to know that they’re valued for more than their contributions to a project.

Similarly, we have to care about the work we’re doing. When we take pride in what we’re doing, and are willing to give it everything we’ve got and then some, the quality of our products and services rises to a new level.

Question:

How might thinking of others simply as a means to an end backfire? For example, people won’t put their hearts and souls into something if they don’t feel a connection beyond their paychecks.

Question:

In the work world, how do you reconcile concern for others with the harsh realities of making a living? You may truly care about a customer, but you also need to make sure that you meet your sales goals. Or, while you may think highly of an employee, you may decide another employee is better suited for a promotion. How do you handle such situations? For example, you deliver tough news with compassion and concern.

Activity:

For people to bring the best of themselves to their work, they need to really care about what they do. What is important to you? What do you really care about?

From “Basic Jones”:

It’s a staggeringly beautiful day any way you look at it. And what a way to look at it, standing on the north side of Molokai [Hawaii], atop the world’s highest sea cliffs, gazing across the azure Pacific and feeling so alive I can hardly contain myself.

Whoooooaa! From out of nowhere appears an apparition — so startling I am almost tumbled backward. Wait, it’s not an apparition; it’s real. Frigate birds, huge with black wings, motionless, rise like Harrier jets straight up from below the cliff edge.

Higher and higher they soar on that indiscernible funnel of air. Did I say indiscernible? Not for them. I watch the subtle movements of their wings. Never a full stroke, simply tiny adjustments to bring them back to the place of maximum lift. Higher and higher. Without struggle.

I am thunderstruck. I fall into the grass with a force that reminds me only too clearly that I do not have wings. I sit staring into the sky where the birds have been. It was much too powerful an experience not to have meaning. Slowly words coalesce in my head, words that make me smile, “Quit your flapping and ride your thermals!”

Oh, how true!

The frigate birds are gone now, the sea is quiet, the clouds hang motionless. The only movement is the grass at the brink, dancing in the breeze from below. The edge beckons.

I don’t know about you . . . but I’m going.



Activity Page

Everyday Creativity

So, where do you go from here? How can you start to put these techniques into practice? You have watched and discussed the video, and you've begun to apply the concepts to your own situation. This worksheet is designed to help you apply the concepts to new projects and problems that arise. Make one copy for each project or problem.

Project/problem: _____

Goal (at least for now) that I want to reach: _____

Change your perspective.

Describe your current perspective. _____

What is another way to think about the project/problem? _____

There's always more than one right answer.

What is your first right answer? _____

List at least two more possible answers to your project/problem. _____

Reframe problems into opportunities.

What problems do you anticipate facing while working on this project/problem? _____

What “opportunities” might arise because of these “problems”? _____

Break the pattern.

Describe the “rule” you are using to solve this problem. _____

If you did not have to follow this “rule,” how would you solve this problem? _____

Train your technique.

Describe the skill you will have to develop to solve this problem. _____

Describe what you will have to learn to improve this skill. _____

You’ve got to really care.

Why is solving this problem important to you? _____

How will solving this problem help others? _____

Notes

Notes

Notes



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