

# Swimming in a Sea of Ideas

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Creativity can be one of the best strengths to have. It helps you to solve problems, makes you versatile and able to roll with change, which in this world is a real plus. Typically my creative clients tell me that they usually do well at anything they put their hand to. For all its merits, creativity can be one of the most incapacitating strengths because sometimes there are just too many ideas to follow. Having choice is a good thing but having too much choice can be debilitating. Being focused, having choices, and not too many of them, helps creativity work for you.



Creative people are like curious divers in a beautiful coral sea. They are free to explore the colorful shapes, new and interesting adaptations. They can sit and watch a tiny crab searching for its dinner or follow a clown fish to see where it goes. Maybe they get distracted by something more interesting and follow it for a while just as one idea replaces another. Synapses fire and recombine in fascinating and odd ways, which can be inspiring and rejuvenating. This is the ideal part of genius, a head swimming with ideas. The ability to be curious and open minded spits out new approaches and ideas no one has thought of before. One thought begets another.

A client once told me that she wasted a lot of time watching her bird feeder. To me, this was how she relaxed, replenishing her creative and spiritual needs; hardly a waste of time. She was opening up to what was, living in the moment. This is most definitely a good use of time unless she does it all day. Sometimes our need to be productive and efficient gets in our way.

Among the clients I work with are creative people who get stuck. I believe everyone is creative to some degree. They want more out of life; they recognize they have some talents but they either lack focus, discernment, or confidence in their abilities. After a lot of trying, they have little to show for their gifts but feelings of confusion and a sense of frustrated potential. It doesn't help that generating ideas and solutions is generally underappreciated and undervalued. It's no wonder how a lot of creatives feel like they are spinning their wheels in the mud.

Creativity is pretty amorphous. It means different things to different people and the general sense I get is that most people seem to think it has to do with being artistic. To me, creativity means making something out of nothing: generating a solution, a

useful idea, a song, or solving a problem. The emphasis is on *create*. It's all well and good to have lots of ideas, lots of choices but what good are all they if you don't use them to create something, especially for your own benefit? It's when you know you have a great idea and follow it with all your drive and passion that you can be truly creative. If you are not actually creating, you might be facing some obstacles.

Let's have a look at these obstacles:

**Lack of focus:** Creativity by its very nature is unfocused. Productive creativity needs a container to help focus ideas. Having goals and a vision of where you want to be in five years may be all the focus you need to follow some ideas and ignore others. By container, I referring to parameters or a bit of structure that helps you focus.

**Lack of Discernment:** Some creatives never met an idea they didn't like. We all need a way to discern how we want to spend our time. Creatives are notorious for starting something then abandoning it when an even better idea comes along. To be able to create means you have to see things through to completion. When your needs, values and goals are in alignment it is easier to discern what ideas will take you to your goals.

**Lack of Confidence:** As creativity is generally misunderstood and underappreciated, it's typical for creative people to give their ideas away for free and fail to reap the rewards. When others undervalue our strengths, it's easy for us to undervalue them too, leading to a lack of confidence and frustration.

**Lack of Responsibility/Awareness:** Not taking responsibility for our strengths lead us to down play them, even make a joke of them. There may be underlying fears or a lack of awareness of the power of their ideas that keep creatives from taking them seriously. Creative people who are still "in the closet" tend to downplay their abilities, make jokes about them or tend to be humble about their ideas.

With creativity being so nebulous and individual, you may be wondering how I coach my creative clients? Although each style of creativity is exclusive to the individual, creatives tend to get stuck in the same ways.

**Focus:** I encourage my clients to narrow down their goals and their vision of how they want to live their lives. I help align their needs, goals and values so they can understand how to make creativity work for them in a focused and sustained way. I encourage them to consciously create "containers" or structures where their creativity can grow.

**Discernment:** By being a mirror, giving them perspective and questioning them, it helps give them a bigger picture that puts their ideas into context. Looking at past decisions we narrow down the criteria for discernment in accordance with their values, beliefs and needs.

**Confidence:** Through feedback my clients begin to understand and value how unique and important their creativity is to them. Helping my clients understand how to turn the flow of creativity to their benefit can really boost confidence and awareness.

**Responsibility:** I help my clients understand, become aware and take responsibility for who they are and what they can accomplish. Being creative is who you are and you have a responsibility to use it wisely, make it work for you or be overwhelmed by it.

Having some awareness of how creativity generates its own obstacles will help you avoid them. Not only will you be more adaptable, you will be more productive and get what you need. Appreciating and valuing your own strengths is the first step toward having others appreciate and value you. Knowing yourself is the key.

Creativity is fluid, sometimes it's there and then it's gone. Like anything to do with us, our own creativity is too close for us to judge. It's like asking a fish to describe what water feels like. It doesn't have any idea because it has nothing to compare it with. It helps to have a second pair of eyes to look over your shoulder, be a mirror and give you feedback. Like the shoemaker's children who went shoeless, creatives are often the least likely to benefit from their ideas.

Creativity doesn't thrive in a vacuum; it needs some sort of a container just like a builder needs a blueprint to build a house. Most creative people rankle at too much structure and many believe that they need little or no structure. It's my belief that creativity needs a container to be most productive and focused. If I told you to be creative, I'd probably get a blank stare. But if I said I had a particular problem that I needed a solution to in ten minutes, I'd probably get some pretty good solutions within the time limit. It helps if you can make your own container, some parameters, dimensions and yes, even a bit of structure to make creativity work for you and helps you focus on productive solutions.

To make creativity work for you it's important to nurture your creativity; learn how to discern great ideas from ephemeral ones; consciously create a container for your thoughts, keep focused until you see the idea through and take responsibility and value your ideas. If you find yourself getting stuck, see if you fit into any of the categories above and harness your creativity to get going again (or call me). Good luck!

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