



Creativity (1)

by Julie H. Ferguson

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Many have tried to define creativity, which has resulted in almost as many definitions as there are definers. But everyone agrees that we recognize it when we see it.

One way of looking at creativity is that it is the human ability to generate new ideas. But it is more complex than that, as my early research is showing, and includes layers of cognitive ability, environment and culture, and personality traits that predispose towards creativity.

The process itself includes knowing, perceiving, and conceiving (the cognitive ideation phase); then comes preparation; followed by incubation and illumination; lastly, the translation phase transforms the idea into reality. This process is familiar to writers – it is a sequence we tend to follow, consciously or sub-consciously, when we write. However, creativity is easily stifled. Adults tend to judge what they are doing while they do it. This tendency destroys creative writing. We should reserve our judgment for the editing phase.

So can we “learn” creativity? Psychologists and other experts say we can. We are at our most creative when we are relaxed, away from our usual work environment. The best time is during the drowsy state when we wake naturally without an alarm clock and before we get out of bed. Other opportunities to practice the process arise during quiet activities, like taking a bath or wallowing in a hot tub, meditating, or having a massage. Music, not heavy metal but Baroque, and the sound of trickling water encourage our creativity too. Moderate aerobic activity releases endorphins and increases blood flow to the brain, which explains why many writers go for a walk/run when in a “dry” patch. Having fun and being happy (playfulness) have also been linked to enhanced creativity.

Experts also say we have to practise our creativity or we will lose the edge. Here we go again – “Use it or lose it.”