



Being Creative (when all you really want to do is take a nap)

By Dana Kader Robb

First, let's address the title of this article. If you really, truly need a nap – take one! There's no way you can be creative under those conditions. And, who knows, a great idea might come to you in your sleep.

Now, for those other times when you just can't come up with "the" idea, here are some helpful hints for getting the (terribly cliché) creative juices flowing.

Phone a Friend. Long before they asked the televised question "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" creative people understood the value of asking for help. If you've got people in your office, use them. If not, call someone whose creativity you admire and let them know what's got you stuck.

Take a Walk. Moving your body often gets your mind moving. Walk alone and let your brain wander too.

Breathe Deeply. Here's an experiment. Think of the word "elephant". Now, while holding your breath, think of a different word. Tough, isn't it? You can't change your mind or accept new thoughts if you're not breathing.

Look at the Ordinary Differently. Way back when, most families had both a Wards and a Sears catalogue. Wards deliberately designed theirs to be smaller so it would be set on top of the other catalogue and be more likely to be picked up first. Pretty creative, huh?

Surround Yourself with Inspirational Props. Copy quotes and post them on your walls. Display photos, poetry, cereal boxes, crossword puzzles, whatever inspires your creativity.

Think Positively. Give yourself permission to do things creatively. Let go of your fear of failure or lack of confidence. There is no such thing as a person who is "not creative".

Talk to a Kid. There's no-one more creative than children. Find one and ask how they would handle the situation. Whatever their answer is, it'll probably get you thinking in a whole new direction.

Don't take yourself so seriously. Tap into your wild side. Crazy ideas are potentially brilliant inspirations. Put on a clown nose, turn a cartwheel in the hallway or sing at the top of your lungs. Let go of your inhibitions and open your mind!

Write Down Your Ideas. Make notes, doodles or sketches. Not every one will be a winner but at least you'll have a record of your ideas. Something that doesn't seem right immediately might be just what you need later.

Mind Map. Write down a central idea. Working quickly, branch from that with 5-10 main ideas that relate to that word or phrase for you. Then do it again with each of the words you have just added. The idea is to write whatever comes to mind immediately, not taking time to weigh the pros and cons. This way you are not rejecting ideas early on in the process. This map will give you a new perspective on your original concept.

Set Do-able, Measurable Goals. It may not be realistic for you to sit down and write a whole newsletter at one time. Plan to do an outline, research an article or write a page. When you're done, celebrate your progress (I recommend chocolate!).

Brainstorm. Brainstorming is not just a matter of "thinking of stuff". That would be more of a brain drizzle. What you want is an all out electrical storm. Gather a couple of people together someplace you can make some noise. Tell them to pretend they are going to get \$100 for each idea they offer (emphasize the word "pretend"). Write the ideas on a flip chart. Keep the activity constant and enthusiastic – no negatives!