



THE ART OF CREATIVITY

The end result of the creative endeavor is ultimately the evolution of human consciousness. But creative inspiration can be illusive. How does creativity work and can we harness our creative capabilities?

Familiar to millions of people all over the world, the lyrics to *The Sound of Silence*, written by Paul Simon, describe an idea coming to the narrator in his dreams.

*“Hello darkness, my old friend
I’ve come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence”*

But how did the melody for this global hit and the instantly recognisable words come to Simon? The creative spark did not occur while he was asleep but rather when locked in his bathroom, for better acoustics, with the lights switched off, to better concentrate. >



Above: Creative works can appear quickly and seemingly out of nowhere

Below: Hemingway wrote 47 different endings to his novel *A Farewell To Arms*

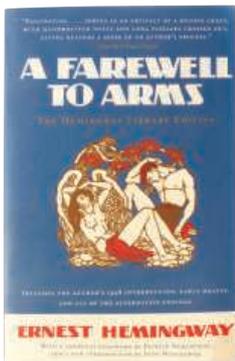
The wellspring of creation didn't just gush forth in one fortuitous night either. Simon had to persistently labour with his creation. It took him six months to write the lyrics, which deal with alienation. Simon & Garfunkel originally released it as an acoustic song on the debut album *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*, which flopped and the duo split. It was only with the creative intervention of the pioneering producer Tom Wilson, who overdubbed the track with electric instruments, that it hit No.1 in the US on New Year's Day, 1966, reuniting Simon & Garfunkel for a long and successful career.

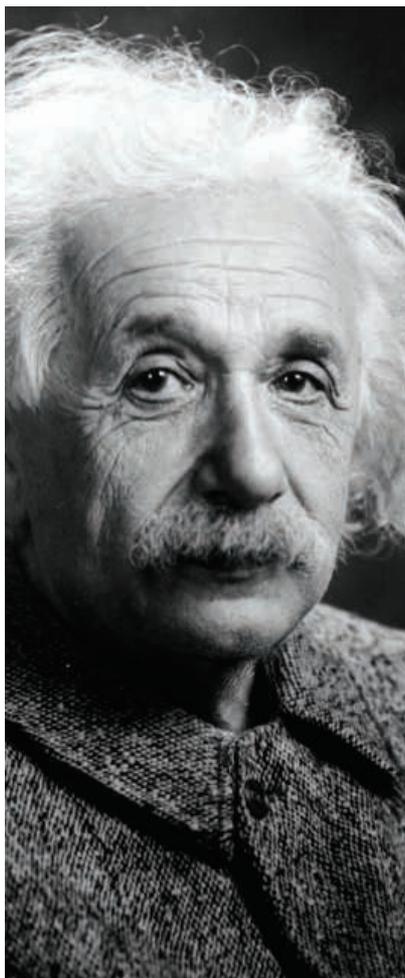
They were lucky, as creativity is nothing if not capricious. Where it comes from and when it will strike are impossible to really know for sure. Who knows when your creative cup will run over, or when it will be dry? But what is widely agreed upon by creative minds spanning the centuries is that there is a lot of unadorned damn hard work behind most creative works.

The hugely influential Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning American author Ernest Hemingway offers another example of the hidden toil behind celebrated creative achievements. Hemingway wrote 47 different endings to his novel *A Farewell To Arms*. All those re-worked pages and the fact he even asked his rival F. Scott Fitzgerald for help are testament to how he struggled to get it just right.

Stephen King, the popular novelist whose books have sold over 350 million copies, also relates to the efforts of the creative task, saying: "Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work."

Popular creative works can, of course, appear quickly and seemingly out of nowhere. The first hit single by The Rolling Stones, *I Wanna Be Your Man*, was created in a few minutes by John Lennon and Paul McCartney in the corner of a room while Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were talking – but overall these are the exceptions and great creations of





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Above: Albert Einstein

Above right: The first hit single by The Rolling Stones was created in a few minutes

any kind generally involve a deliberate and painstaking process.

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One of the greatest thinkers in history, Albert Einstein said: “To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science... Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

Humanity evolves through its relationship to new and progressive ideas and every human being is a creative agent in some respect. Whatever a person’s job, vocation, hobby or craft, we all have an inherent ability to be creative. Whether it’s solving a problem at work, painting a watercolour at the weekend or

simply making a sandwich, our creative urge kicks in on some level.

Widely varying theories of creativity abound and there has been much empirical study into why some people are more creative than others and how to tap into creativity, but there are no absolute answers, only interpretations. There are scores of creative processes and approaches proposed from disciples including psychology, linguistics, theology and education, which describe how creativity occurs, but there is no overarching consensus. With so many overlapping theories and methods it begs the question of whether there are any simple ways to access creative sources and boost our creative abilities?

In recent years, scientists have studied brain circuitry and posited some straightforward methods about which there is common concurrence. Scott Barry Kaufman and Carolyn Gregoire collated some of these in their book, *Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind*. >



Above and below right: Detachment, meditation and solitude all help with creative thinking

Perhaps unsurprisingly, detachment, meditation and solitude all help with creative thinking. Neuroscientists refer to a mental state that is conducive to idea creation as “constructive internal reflection”. Left to our own devices and free from distraction, we are able to invent.

Curiosity and being open to try new things is another crucial facilitator for creativity. This has a neuroscientific basis involving the neurotransmitter dopamine and Kaufman and Gregoire cite extensive scientific evidence to suggest “the drive for exploration, in its many forms, may be the single most important personal factor predicting creative achievement”.

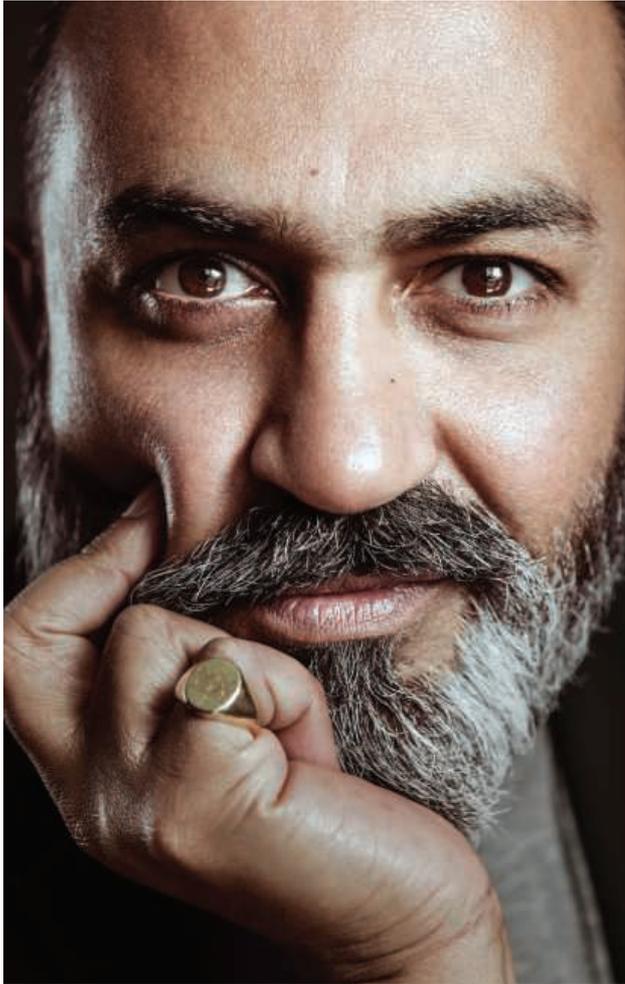
A final example is simply taking a long shower. In a 2014 study conducted by Kaufman, 72% of respondents around the world found that the steady stream of water and the isolation of the shower often resulted in new or unexpected insights.

A pattern involving intentional separation and solitude is prevalent and to quote Albert Einstein again, he noted: “Creativity is the residue of time wasted.” So, arguably, boredom can trigger creativity. The problem there is that we live in an age of over-stimulation, where any spare second is instantly occupied by some distraction or another, most frequently delivered by a smartphone.

So, if you want to get your creative juices flowing, maybe start by putting your phone down. In order to explore the concept of creativity further,

Flashes spoke exclusively to entrepreneur, designer and marketing expert Gaurav Sinha, whose day job is crafting strategic creative campaigns for some of the world’s most powerful brands. Sinha is the Founder & CEO of Dubai-based brand enrichment agency Insignia Worldwide and the author of the forthcoming book *Compassion Inc.*, which focusses on the economics of empathy in life and business.





GAURAV SINHA'S FOUR P_s OF CREATIVITY



Passion



Positivity



Persistence



Purpose

Above: Gaurav Sinha claims creativity is an expression of curiosity and optimism

Sharing his own methods for channeling creativity, Sinha revealed: “I tend to meditate in the mornings and spend more time reflecting on the problem and not rushing the search for a solution. I’m the ‘why’ guy with a ‘why not’ disposition and my personal formula is all about passion, positivity, persistence and purpose – my four Ps of creativity that have allowed me to shape the narrative of some of the world’s most revered brands and destinations. It’s essential to always remain inquisitive – I have often said that human beings are like radios, we can only transmit what our antennas pick up so it’s important to keep tuning your antennas to what’s happening around you.”

Reflecting on why some people are more creative than others, Sinha added: “Creativity is an expression of curiosity and optimism. The most creative people I know, whether they are adults or children, have this immense sense of wonder and inquisitiveness to understand how the world works; this is one of the cornerstones of staying creative and

harnessing one’s ability to understand how others feel, think or behave. Creative people are also empathetic people; they have a high emotional quotient as they are trying to solve problems on behalf of others or simply expressing themselves in the most emotive manner. When emotionally engaged and curious people approach life with a sense of positivity, then they have their own secret sauce for creating genius.”

Scientific research, expert analysis and empirical studies are all of value for logic-based explorations of what creativity is, but one of the most important factors when it comes to creativity is your own opinion. If a person finds pleasure in a particular creative work or process, that’s what matters, there is no right or wrong. We live in a time where creativity needs to be encouraged and elevated as creative thinking is essential for confronting humanity’s biggest challenges and restoring balance to our beleaguered planet.

Considering this need for enhanced creativity, Sinha added: “As the old adage goes, ‘necessity is the mother of invention’ and some of the most creative ideas were born out of sheer need. This is the power of human ingenuity as it works to solve problems. I think complexities fuel creativity so it’s important to always seek out questions or issues that need resolution. Whether these are global issues like climate change, sustainability, water conservation or even audacious endeavors to travel to Mars – creativity is fueled by a desire to improve humanity and create positive impact.” †