

# Creativity

By Susan Lee Bady, CSW, BCD

Creativity, the ability to put old ideas into new combinations or to create new ideas out of nothing is usually associated with those persons designated as "artists" - writers, painters, dancers, singers, etc. But everyone has the potential to be creative. Creativity can be expressed through your clothing, hobbies, home decorations, job activities, relationships, use of time and, ultimately, what you can create out of your life.

Similarly, everyone faces creative blocks, those moments when ideas won't come, thoughts won't flow, inspiration disappears, nothing works and everything stagnates.

Creative blocks are different to cope with, whether you are dealing with a creative product or some problem in your life. There are several helpful guidelines to follow, however, in dealing with those blocked moments. They are: Don't panic. Find a balance. Have fun.

**Don't Panic.** Blocks happen to everyone at one point or another. It's a part of being alive and trying out new experiences. Have faith in yourself that you can overcome your difficulty because the more you have, the more likely it is that you will succeed.

**Find a Balance.** It is easier to overcome blocks if you remember the value of balance in several areas of the creative process - between flow and organization, between perseverance and relaxation, and between involvement and detachment.

Creativity is a flow of ideas, images, sounds, etc. allowed to come forth without censorship, whether it be in the art studio, dance hall, therapy session. Too often, however, people censor their first ideas, believing them too silly, scary or overwhelming to consider - thus blocking themselves from the start. At those moments remember, you can always edit the superfluous and organize the chaos. In fact, flow without organization is emotionality, not creativity. It's just that if you don't get all your ideas out, you have nothing to organize. Only you or your therapist, or your close friends need see the messy parts anyway. So let it come out so that you can have a look at all there is inside you, knowing that you will organize and edit later.

Creativity is hard work. You must persevere at your task in order to succeed. Yet if a block persists and creativity turns into obsession - stop. Take a break. Share your difficulty with a friend or do something entirely different. The mind works best when allowed to relax and refresh itself, and creative solutions often come at unexpected moments from the unconscious when you are resting. Therapists often note that important insights occur after a silence, or in between therapy sessions, a fine example of the balance between perseverance and relaxation. You may find it helpful to keep a pad handy to jot down ideas and images that occur to you unexpectedly.

And, have faith. If you believe that you can ultimately succeed at your creative endeavor, you can more easily take a break from it, rather than plug away over and over in frustration.

Be involved in your work. Some blocks occur because the individual is uninvolved in his pursuit. It may please someone else, but if it doesn't interest you, you are bound to block. During the organizing phase of your creativity, however, you need to take a detached and objective view of your work. Otherwise, the necessary evaluation and editing of your endeavor feels like a personal affront, not an important fine-tuning of your work.

**Above all - have fun.** That's the most important aspect of the creative process. You will almost certainly encounter moments that are hard, painful and frustrating. However, if you have faith in your eventual success, you will be able to enjoy the challenge of overcoming obstacles. And the more you do it successfully, the greater your background of success to build upon for future work. Above all, consider yourself involved in an exciting adventure to discover what is inside your mind, what is out there in the world and what new aspect of being alive will open up for you.

*This article first appeared in a 1987 issue of The Park Slope Shopper.*