

Introduction



At the heart of *Seeing Creatively: How to Unlock Your Imagination* lies a mission to ignite your creativity and transform your life. Let me guide you on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment through the art of creative imagination and visualization.

As a child in elementary school, I did not have confidence in my artistic abilities. My good friend Susan was amazing in her drawing skills. I looked up to her and wanted to be proficient at drawing, too. I worked hard and drew whenever I got the chance. Practice, practice, practice. Eventually, I got more confident in myself and my drawing, but I was more confident in music, and followed that path as my first choice. My choir teacher for grades seven, eight, and nine was my mentor in music, but when I went into high school, art came back into my life, and I embraced it with all my being. I entered California State University at Northridge as a music major, but quickly chose art and education as my fields of study. Learning every nuance of art captured me and my passion for art took me through a whirlwind! After graduating college with my degree in hand, I went directly into teaching art at the elementary level.

Because of my experiences, I wanted every child to feel confident in themselves and I only required my students to 'do their best.' I held this requirement for all of my students in every school and every place I taught. Art builds young minds, incorporating many other subjects like math, language, science, music, and creative and

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analytical thinking. Art is a type of freedom if you take the chance to embrace how it can make a difference in how you look at life and the world around you.

Seekers of inspiration, dreamers, and those on the path of personal growth are offered a roadmap to unlock the untapped potential inside their minds. After teaching for nearly four decades, I am sharing my practical techniques, experience, and applications of successful lessons. By blending real life stories and a rich tapestry of creative exercises, I'm providing you with the tools you need to manifest your dreams, reduce stress, overcome difficulties, and cultivate a life of purpose, joyfulness, and fulfillment.

Within the first nine chapters, you will be led through observational exercises and on journeys embracing nature's canvas. Hear a seaside symphony and the unveiling of a theatrical tapestry. Go on a museum expedition. You will be guided through observation and gratitude on a passage through art. You will engage in seven distinctive exercises in observational sketching of what you now can visualize in your mind and interpret into your sketchbook or journal.

Part One will guide you in finding the building blocks of creativity, defining what it can do for you and how you can look at life from a different angle. Learn to boost your creativity, understand cognitive techniques, and gain greater visualization skills. Visualization is a powerful tool that can positively impact many aspects of physical and mental well-being. Each chapter acts as a steppingstone along the path, guiding you through a series of insights, tools, and exercises designed to light the way forward by exploring your potential through creative visualization.

In Part Two, you will learn about how artists see things that others may not see or understand. You will be taken into your mind's eye and learn about ways for the blind to see. An artist's eye is like having a unique way of seeing things. Artists observe small details and find beauty or meaning in seeing the world creatively and interestingly.

Part Three introduces three iconic artists, giving the world distinct tools to see the past, present, and future through their amazing artworks. Each artist had a style and concept to create new art movements, from cubism to painting iconic objects and places, through pop art and neo-expressionism to kinetic art. You will be amazed by the examples of their works in photographic and pictographic form.

Part Four will take you through what you have imagined, observed, and visualized to be able to create new ideas into a sketchbook or journal. You will learn about the external realities and touch upon the internal realm of emotions and individual interpretation.

The objective of *Seeing Creatively: How to Unlock Your Imagination* is to learn new techniques, expressions, and challenges and to engage in creative activities that foster personal growth and self-discovery. Engaging in these creative activities such as art, writing, dance, music, or theater can serve as a form of relaxation and stress relief.

This book is designed to guide you, even if you think you are not creative or that you have no talent but are *willing to learn* how to see life differently. You will understand:

- Perfect vision is not necessary to be the best at what you can accomplish through art.
- What are the commonly recognized principles for successful visualization, for example: clarity, attention to detail, belief in yourself, persistence, and emotion so that you can see through the eyes of others and recognize everyday objects as unique and beautiful or meaningful pieces of art.
- Artists, composers, athletes, writers, business leaders, and other successful individuals can improve their performance without actually engaging in the activity. By visualizing your goals, your brain can be trained to eliminate the doubt, worry, and fear that control your subconscious to allow positivity and creative growth opportunities.

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- Vincent Van Gogh used visualization, the power of mental imagery, for what he wanted to achieve in his mind, “I dream my painting, and then I paint my dream.” So will you.

Join me as we embark on a voyage where the mind’s eye becomes a catalyst for positive change. By applying creativity and visualization, you will unlock your imagination and improve your life as well as the lives of others around you.



PART I

Building Blocks
of
Creativity

ONE

What Is Creativity?



“Creativity is intelligence having fun.”

–Albert Einstein

So many individuals tend to think that creativity is binary; either you have it, or you do not. The reality is, we *all* have it. It is just a matter of how our creativity is interpreted in our minds.

Within these chapters, you will have guidance to exercises that offer a variety of ways to improve your life and form better relationships personally, at work, or within your community by developing new skills to best interpret your creativity through visualization and imagination.

Visualization is the process of forming mental images or representations of objects, concepts, scenarios, or information. It involves creating a vivid mental picture or scenario in the mind’s eye.

Visualization is used as a cognitive technique for various purposes, including:

Goal Achievement: Visualizing the successful completion of a goal or task to enhance motivation and focus.

Performance Enhancement: Athletes often use visualization to mentally rehearse their actions and improve performance.

Stress Reduction: Creating calming mental images to reduce stress and promote relaxation.

Creative Thinking: Imagining different scenarios or solutions to stimulate creative thinking and problem-solving.

Memory Improvement: Creating mental images to aid in remembering information or details.

Positive Affirmations: Using visualization to reinforce positive beliefs or affirmations.

How do you use creativity in your daily life? You might say or think, “I’m not an artist, so I don’t use creativity at work or in my day-to-day routine.”

That is where you need to have more clarity. No matter what type of work you do, or school you are attending, or if you are looking for a change, or even considering retirement, you will use your creative skills to make decisions or problem-solve every day.

Creativity is about *how* you see everything. Whichever term you choose—view, observe, witness, perceive even glimpse—they all encompass using insight, interpretation, and experiences to know what it is you are seeing.

No two individuals will see things in the same way.

The creative process often explores thoughts and emotions through the art-making process. Using various techniques and strategies helps the unconscious mind tap into the inner creative process. The ultimate goal of the creative process in art is to help gain insights, self-awareness, and creative expression.

The creative process, the engagement of the holistic self, and the presentation of art provide healthful benefits. Through the process of creating art, you will have the opportunity to explore your feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and imagination in dynamic ways. Ultimately, you control your creative process and what you choose to express through your art.

The creative process of art-making helps you to explore feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, and achieve insights

that can help to improve and enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Artistic expression can take many forms. Here is an exercise to help you explore your creative side, open your imagination, and promote freedom of thought through creative visualization. It will be a mindful expression and let your creativity flow. This is just a starting point.

Materials you will need:

- Sheets of blank paper
- Several colors of markers, paint, pens, crayons . . . whatever is available.
- Drawing instruments, rulers, cookie cutters, protractors . . . whatever is available.

Express yourself:

- Take a sheet of paper and draw whatever comes to mind, without censoring your thoughts or ideas.
- Use different colors to draw lines, shapes, and patterns any way you feel like.
- Express yourself freely without limitation and change colors/shapes as you feel moved to do so.
- Continue this exercise for about five to ten minutes or until your paper is filled.
- Now look at the colors, shapes, and patterns you have created. Some of it may resonate with you. It is okay if it does and okay if it does not.
- Reflect on how you felt and what you may have been thinking about when you were creating this piece.

Did you feel your creativity during your art-making process?

Originality is both a skill and a process. It is something that you learn and develop. You will get better at it through practice and patience. You will be provided with actionable insights and exercises to unlock your imaginative potential, fostering a transformative journey toward unleashing your creative superpower. Fostering and expressing creativity can yield numerous positive outcomes and advantages in different facets of life.

Consider the following potential results of nurturing and showcasing creativity:

Innovation

Creativity is a driving force behind innovation. Innovation beyond imagination involves connecting creativity and visionary thinking to develop groundbreaking ideas and solutions. In businesses that sell products to consumers, they use product innovation to introduce new features or functionalities to existing products, or they develop entirely new products to meet emerging market needs. They might improve the quality or efficiency of existing products through technological means. Innovation within the arts involves balancing creativity, expression, and aesthetic principles to inspire new ideas, foster collaboration, and solve complex problems. Sounds like this could also be under a business umbrella. Participate in the power of the arts to engage communities, foster dialogue, and drive social change. Artistic interventions, public art installations, and community-based arts initiatives can create spaces for collective reflection, collaboration, and action, leading to innovative solutions that address pressing social and environmental issues. What brings innovation to the forefront? An open mind and a vivid imagination mixed in with a technical ability.

Problem Solving

Creative thinking enhances problem-solving skills. It allows you to approach challenges with fresh perspectives and generate inventive solutions. Clearly state the problem or challenge you are facing. Take time to understand its basic causes, limitations, and consequences. Use techniques such as problem framing (identifying key factors that contribute to the problem) and root cause analysis (used to identify the underlying causes of problems or incidents) to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and boundaries in order to solve any problematic issues so they do not happen again. Engage in deliberate exercises to stimulate imagination and creative thinking. Visualize alternative scenarios, ask “what if” questions, and challenge assumptions to break free from conventional thinking patterns. Experiment with creative techniques such as representational thinking, analogical reasoning, and role-playing to explore new perspectives and possibilities.

Personal Growth

Engaging in visionary activities fosters personal growth and self-discovery. It encourages you to explore your interests, express yourself, and develop a deeper understanding of your capabilities. Imagination and creativity play crucial roles in personal growth, fostering a range of benefits that contribute to individual development and well-being. Engaging in inventive activities provides a healthy outlet for processing emotions and coping with stress. Imagination allows you to explore complex feelings, release tension, and cultivate emotional resilience by channeling negative energy into constructive pursuits. Creativity fuels a lifelong journey of exploration and discovery, driving continuous learning and personal growth. By embracing curiosity and experimentation, you expand your knowledge, skills, and capabilities, evolving into a more well-rounded and adaptable individual. Creativity fosters connections with others through shared experiences, collaborative projects, and mutual inspiration. By engaging with a community of

like-minded individuals, you cultivate meaningful relationships, expand your network, and draw support from others on your journey of personal growth.

Stress Reduction

Engaging in creative activities such as art, writing, dance, theater, or music can serve as a form of stress relief. It provides an outlet for self-expression and promotes relaxation. Creative pursuits have been linked to improved mental well-being. They can help alleviate not only stress but anxiety and depression, providing a positive impact on overall mental health. Engaging in resourceful activities often brings joy and a sense of fulfillment. Whether it is painting, writing, or any other form of expression, the act of creating can be inherently rewarding.

Mindful Meditation for a Successful Calmness

Meditation techniques often involve deep breathing, relaxation exercises, and mindfulness practices, which can induce a state of relaxation and calmness. By focusing attention on the present moment and letting go of worries about the past, present, or future, meditation helps reduce tension and promote relaxation in both the body and mind. Research has shown that regular meditation practice can lower levels of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. Mindfulness meditation involves paying deliberate attention to the present moment with openness and curiosity. By practicing mindfulness, you can develop a greater sense of clarity, perspective, and acceptance, which can help reduce rumination, anxiety, and reactivity to stressors. By calming the body's stress response system, meditation helps regulate the body's physiological reactions to stress and promotes overall well-being, thus leaving your mind open to creativity, innovation, and a borderless imagination.

Creativity is crucial in education. It enhances learning experiences, encourages critical thinking, and helps students develop a love for learning. Students who show original thinking will often demonstrate high

levels of adaptability and are more likely to embrace change. Students also view challenges as opportunities for growth. In essence, creativity serves as a potent and adaptable influence capable of bringing about positive transformations in both personal and societal realms. The teacher's role is to model creative behavior. Teachers who demonstrate their creative thinking and problem-solving can inspire students. Teachers should act as guides and facilitators, encouraging exploration and supporting student-led initiatives. Creating a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe to take risks and express their ideas without fear of judgment is crucial. Teachers should give their students access to materials and experiences that can stimulate creative thinking.

There are challenges in implementing creativity in education. Rigid curricula can stifle creativity, leaving little room for exploration and innovation. Insufficient materials, time, and teacher training can hinder the implementation of creative practices. Measuring creativity can be subjective and challenging compared to traditional academic skills. Emphasis on standardized tests can limit the opportunities for creative learning.

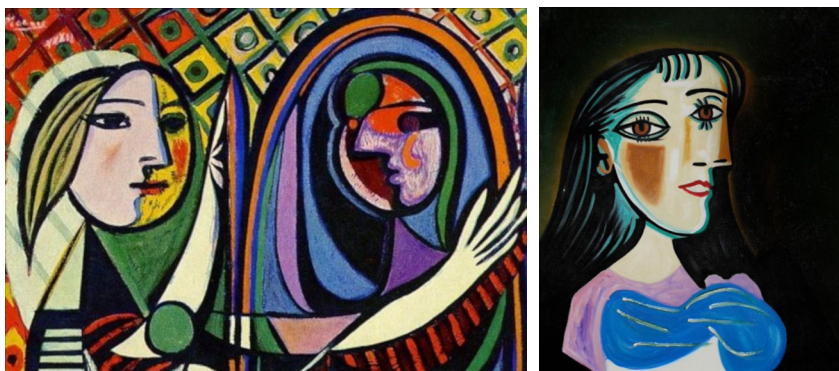
During my teaching days, when state testing would occur, I found my students filled with anxiety and stress, and they felt incapable of being spontaneous or even relieved by having an art class on the same day. This was my challenge.



What could I do for them to ease their frustration? For my eighth graders, I pulled out their sketchpads. Free draw! Draw anything you'd like to draw or draw your emotions in color. I put on some popular music and said GO! As usual, I loved drawing with them. This is what I drew just to make them laugh.

Of course, they were all in better moods as they left my class, and so was I. My mission was accomplished.

On another day I asked one of my kindergarten classes to look at Pablo Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror"¹ and Picasso's "Portrait of a Woman."²

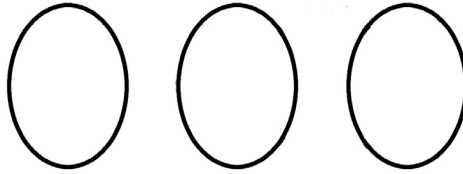


This class of five-year-olds and six-year-olds was like any other kindergarten class in any school in any state in the USA. The difference was, they were mine for the next forty minutes. At first, they had no idea what was going to happen. They were confused and silent. Joey, who was in the back of the room, began to laugh. It was quiet but contagious. I heard a few more snickers, but still waited patiently. I saw a hand go up and called on Joey. "Do you have a question?" I asked.

He said that the pictures looked all mixed up and funny. Ah, there it was, my lead into the lesson.

As they took a few minutes to look at the portraits, I explained to them how to see just like Pablo Picasso. We chose partners so we could experiment with side views and frontal views of each other's

faces. I remember making them laugh as I exaggerated, showing them my smiling face going from side view to frontal view and rotating onto the other side view. As they were giggling, I drew a series of three ovals on the board, explaining that these ovals were heads. Now I had their attention.



They were going to learn to draw profiles and forward-facing faces. Most decided to add ears with no prompt from me. They used their neighbors' profiles and mirrors for themselves to see their features. At first, many of them made funny faces, but they ended up being able to draw the initial faces with a black marker following my directions. The next lesson was to add any color anywhere on their artwork that they wanted, and I told them that they could use the whole paper if they desired. One reminder was to take into consideration how Mr. Picasso, most importantly, used the elements of art and color in his portraits.

Here are two of their colorfully finished drawings. Absolutely amazing!



Both drawings are from my former students: Julia, and Tucker.

You can use your creativity to paint a picture or to draft a poem. You may also use it in practical ways. You can create viable solutions for work or educational dilemmas or reorganize your living spaces within your home.

Originality encompasses inner vision, imagination, and the ability to look at things from different perspectives. Creativity can be used to make products, processes, and services better and it can be used to create them in the first place. In business, it is expected that increasing your creativity will help you increase your productivity, profitability, and improve your organizational skills. Your customers become happier through improvements in your quality and quantity of output.



Have you ever noticed a picture of a lightbulb, usually yellow, associated with someone having an idea or an example of creativity? What do you think Thomas Edison would say about that today?

Creativity is a characteristic of someone or some process that forms something new and valuable, or a physical object like a painting. Creativity enables us to solve problems in new or innovative ways. Michael Boyle, A freelance writer, wrote in the January 25, 2022 issue of Harvard Business School Magazine, that creativity benefits businesses by encouraging innovation, boosting productivity, enabling adaptability, and fostering growth.

Creativity is bringing into being something that did not exist before, either as a product, a process, or a thought.

You would be *demonstrating creativity* if you:

- A. Invent something that has never existed before
- B. Invent something which exists elsewhere but you are not aware of this existence
- C. Invent a new process for doing something
- D. Reapply an existing process or product into a new or different market
- E. Develop a new way of looking at something (bringing a new idea into existence)
- F. Change the way someone else looks at something

We are all creative every day because we constantly change how we think about the world around us. Creativity does not have to be about developing something new or different to the world; it has more to do with developing something new to ourselves. When we change ourselves, the world changes with us, both in the way that the world is affected by our changed actions and in the way that we experience the world.

When studying children, we find that they are highly creative and imaginative individuals. They constantly act on their impulses. They will voice thoughts aloud as quickly as they pop into their heads. Sometimes their imaginations translate into their actions. Make believe to them is acting out real situations, like putting out fires or directing traffic. Give a child a choice of dressing up in a variety of costumes and you might see them become a firefighter, policeperson, racecar driver, princess, dinosaur, or gymnast.

As children grow older, they are taught to control their creative impulses. They may still think about it, but often push these thoughts aside, ignore them, or keep them to themselves. Is this a good thing? At

what age? How can we rediscover that impulsive, imaginative creativity we experienced as children? Rediscovering the impulsive, imaginative creativity experienced in childhood involves tapping into a more uninhibited and curious mindset. We can foster a sense of curiosity by asking open-ended questions about the world. Why does something work the way it does? How could it be different? Allow yourself to try new things without worrying about the outcome. Experiment with different art forms, writing styles, or hobbies. Interacting with children reminds you of the joy of uninhibited play and imagination. Stop limiting your creative abilities by shutting them down. Allow yourself time to daydream and let your mind wander. Some of the best ideas come when you're not actively trying to think of them. Embrace your inner child and enjoy a freefall of positive potential!

What is it you would like to do or experience? How can you convey your message to others? How do you begin the process?

This book is designed to guide you, even if you think you are not creative or think you have no talent but are willing to learn how to see life differently. You will be able to go to museums and look and enjoy art through a broader lens. To lessen your stress or anxiety through a different path to freedom. To feel excited about finding your potential and validating that you have these skills and have a way to access them for the first or the hundredth time. You may learn new terminology, but to better understand, you can look at the glossary of terminology at the end of this book.

**“Creativity is seeing what others see and thinking
what no one else has ever thought.”**

– Albert Einstein

Some artists and writers begin with a thought or meditation. You might say inspiration ‘hits’ us. That would be a fair statement. Sometimes, inspiration comes when you are in nature and are awestruck by

what you are experiencing. That's when you jot it down, enter it into your smartphone, or maybe sketch it on a coffee-stained napkin, or you may write about how you emotionally feel on a receipt you found in your vehicle's glove box.

If you are artistically inclined, you may study every aspect of what you are seeing. If you are ambivalent, you may not be impressed enough to investigate what others find extraordinary. It all comes back to how you see things and how you can relate that to your writing, acting, drawing, dancing, singing, or painting. This is where we need to investigate the different paths to sparking your ingenuity through your honed-in visualization and imagination.

Ready to experiment? Of course! Let's do this!

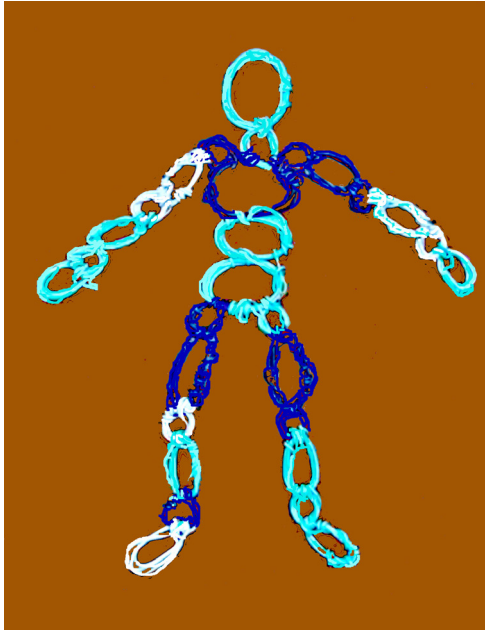
Take ten to twenty seconds to study the picture below.

Now, close your eyes and express what you see in your mind. What are the colors and implied textures? Did you paint a picture in your mind? What did you notice first: the flower or frame?



by Nicole

Try this one.



by Lindy

If you saw circles and ovals, you're correct! If you saw a person, you'd also be correct. If you saw circles broken up into a jointed person made from colored wire, now you're looking closer and digging deeper than the first two answers. That's the way to see it differently.

This activity is used for older or more senior adults as an example of how to close their eyes to remember something specific. It could be a market list, a program they wanted to watch, or a person they wanted to call.

Here is a list to look at for five to ten seconds:

- Cover your eyes
- Cross your legs
- Cover your mouth
- Cover your ears

Now close your eyes and tell me which statement is different from the rest. It's another example of what we are speaking about, to see the actions in your mind.

Here's another list to look at for five to ten seconds:

Get the mail
 Get a package
 Give a gift
 Get the job

Again, close your eyes and tell me which statement is different from the rest.

Did you see the actions in your mind?

Here's the last one to look at for five to ten seconds:

Scream
 Shout
 Listen
 Sing

Again, close your eyes and tell me which statement is different from the rest.

Did you see the actions in your mind?

Observational Exercise 1

A SEASIDE SYMPHONY

Tools: Need a sketchbook or journal and pencil

Introduction

- Embark on a sensory journey as you immerse yourself in the serenity of a beach. This exercise encourages you to observe the captivating elements of the coastal environment, capturing the essence of the sea, sand, and the dance between them.

Arrival at the Beach

- Begin by taking a moment to absorb the first impressions as you arrive at the beach. Feel the sand beneath your feet, breathe in the salty air, and listen to the distant rhythm of the waves.

Sights and Colors

- Look around and notice the spectrum of colors. Observe the hues of the sky, the water, and the sand. Pay attention to any unique features, such as seashells, rocks, birds, umbrellas, or coastal flora.

Sounds of the Sea

- Close your eyes and focus on the auditory tapestry. What sounds surround you? The rhythmic crashing of waves, the calls of seagulls, or perhaps the distant laughter of beachgoers?

Dynamic Waves

- Direct your attention to the waves. Observe their ebb and flow, the patterns they create on the shore. Take note of the varying sizes and shapes, and how the sunlight reflects on their surfaces.

Seaside Scents

- Inhale deeply and identify the scents carried by the sea breeze. Is it the salty tang of the ocean, the aroma of seaweed, or the subtle perfume of coastal flowers?

Human Elements

- Acknowledge the presence of fellow beachgoers. Observe their activities—playing, sunbathing, or strolling along the shore. Consider the sense of community in this shared coastal space.

Feel the Texture

- Run your fingers through the sand. Explore its texture and temperature. Notice how it shifts beneath your touch. If you're near the water, dip your toes and feel the cool embrace of the sea.

Capture the Moment

- Use your journal to sketch or write about the scene before you. Notice the interplay of elements and your emotional response to this seaside sanctuary.

Conclude your day with a reflection on the tranquility and energy of the beach. Express gratitude for the sensory feast and the unique moments experienced in this coastal haven. This exercise serves as a testament to the beauty that unfolds where the land meets the sea.