



Biffmitchell.com presents

The Creativity Workshop



Everyone is creative

This isn't a mind-boggling, back-breaking treatise on creativity. Much has been written on the subject and there are hundreds of approaches to help you become creative. In this workshop I cover a handful of these...the things that have worked for me and for the folks who've taken my writing workshops over the last decade and a half.

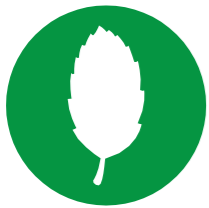
Keep this in mind: Everyone has a creative wellspring. Many of us lose it for whatever reasons, but it's still there and you can release it.

That's what this workshop is all about.

What this workshop will give you...



A method to overcome your inner critic and let your creative self be the boss of you



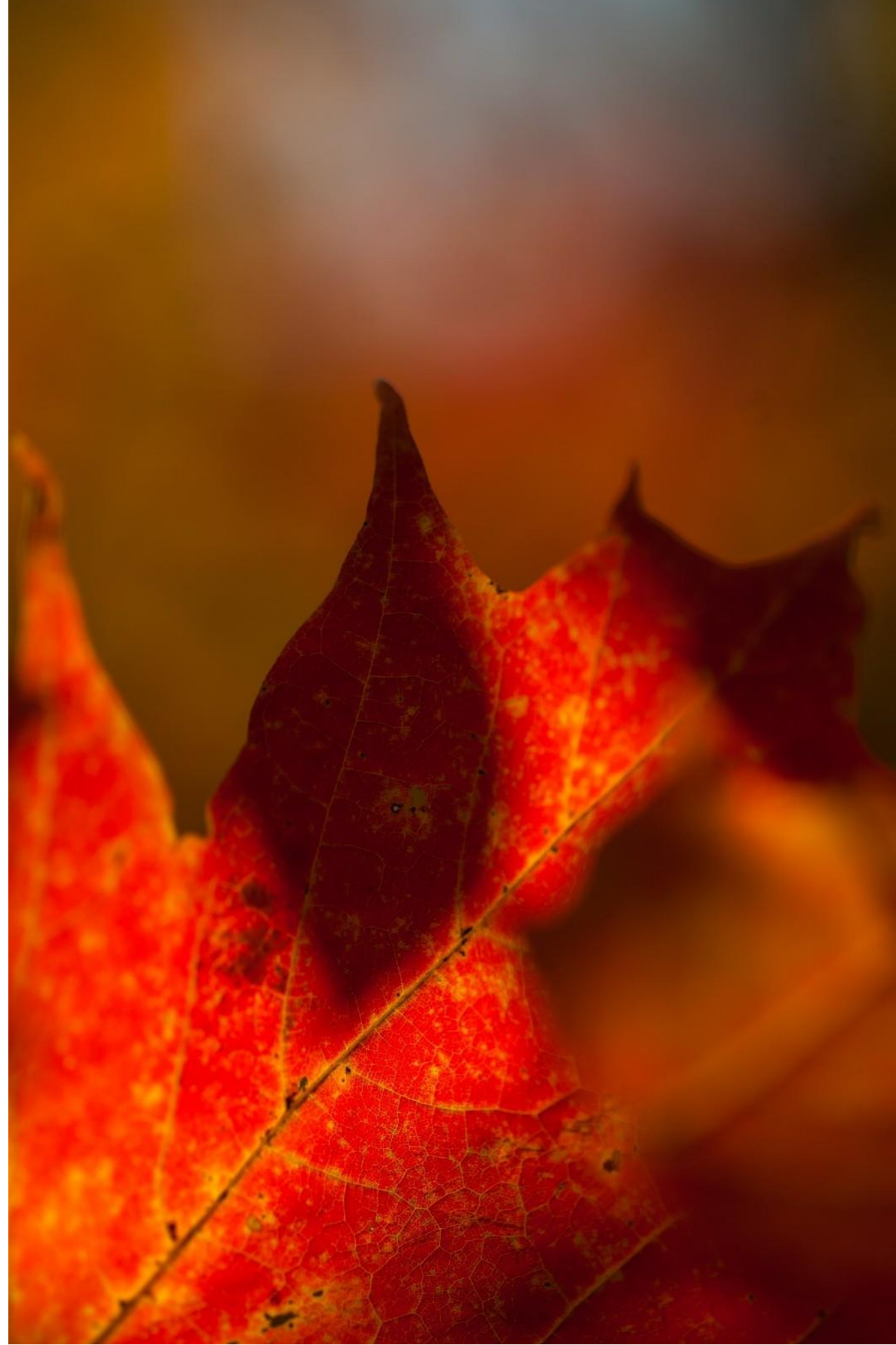
Exercises and tools to help you release the awesome, really awesome, wellspring of your creative self and see the world in a whole new way



Tools to help you explore possibilities and make them real



Relaxing pictures to look at before you start each section (some will be used in exercises)

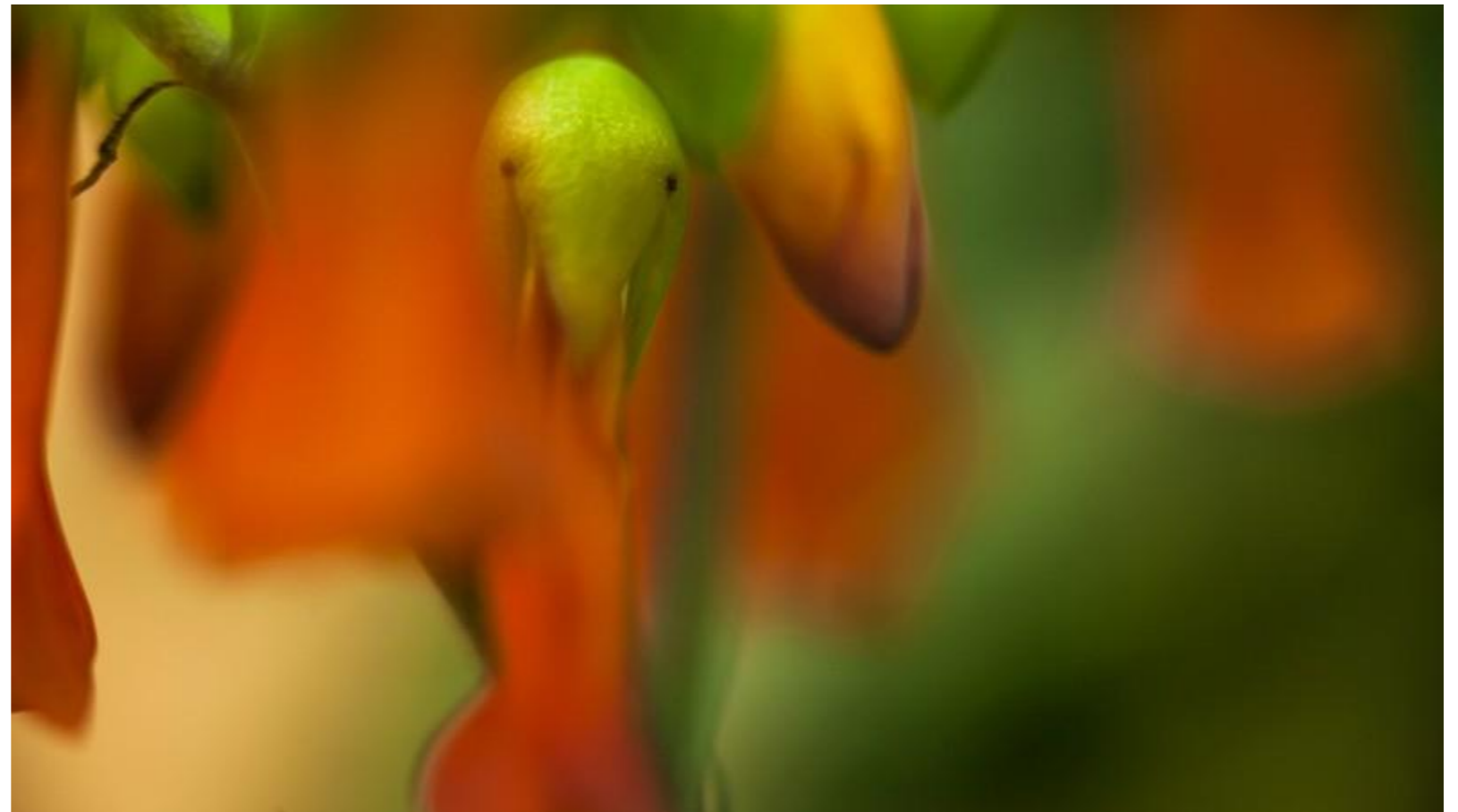


What went wrong?

We started our lives with wonder and curiosity. All of us. You can see this in every newborn's eyes. Later, in school, we drew things with crayons and finger paints. The drawings may not have looked like anything we would recognize today but at that time they were expressions of how we saw the world, how we interpreted it. They were our creations. We were free to express ourselves. We were creative.

But then the straight jacket of other's expectations took hold and tightened its grip as we grew. We were forced to join the herd and be as much like everyone else as possible. It started in school and continued into the workplace. We began living by schedules and routines and, bit by bit, our creativity was swallowed by the need to conform dress codes, work schedules...and anything else that made our thinking mundane. As we age, the need to think creatively becomes less urgent and less used. We become wrapped up and tied down by schedules and routines and we sleep against our biorhythms until we lose our wonder and curiosity and focus on the sameness of our jobs and routines.

We can see this in how children are taught in school and how adults are taught. Once out of school and on-the-job, learning becomes less exploratory and generalized and becomes linear and focused on specific tasks that relate to work. Adults can still take courses and workshops that



aren't related to work but these are called extra-curricular or non-essential. Most businesses will not pay for courses that are not related to the workplace. I say most...some businesses see great value in a creative and curious workforce but they're in the minority when it comes to actually paying for it.

Our creativity, our curiosity and our wonder tend to die off in a world more concerned about getting and keeping a job and buying things than

with nurturing those things to which you can't assign a dollar amount. Creativity is one of those things.

But here's the good news: You never really lost your childhood creativity. It's still there, living and breathing in your right hemisphere and you can get it back.

Hopefully, this workshop will help you to do that.

In this section you'll learn how to break some of the barriers that inhibit your creativity. You'll also begin to develop your own personal voice.

Mindless Writing.

The single biggest block to getting started on the first line or paragraph of a novel is the expectation that the first line will be the greatest thing you've ever written and that it has to be perfect.

The truth: the longer you spend trying to make the first line perfect, the less likely it is that you'll ever finish what you started to write. You may never even finish the first sentence.

The only way to write consistently and regularly is to write without unrealistic expectations of yourself, without editing, and without your imagined readers looking over your shoulder at everything you write. The best way to break this blockage is to write mindlessly.

Do this every morning for 5 to 10 minutes. Pick something to write about. It could be a dream you just had, it could be a conversation you heard, it could be something you read in the news or heard on the radio, it could be an object in your room, it could be symptoms you're feeling from a cold. Just pick a subject and start writing.



Here's the tricky part—you pick a time to start writing and you *stick with it*, whether you have something to write about or not. You may start off by writing “I have nothing to write about” over and over until something else comes into your mind.

Once you start writing, *you can't stop*. It doesn't matter if you run out of things to say, you keep writing, putting whatever words come into your head onto the paper. If you find yourself wandering away from your topic, go with it. Just

keep writing down whatever comes into your head.

When you time is up, stop writing. You've made a deal with your subconscious. Keep it. You're building a sense of trust between your conscious mind and your subconscious...opening a portal into the wellspring of your creativity so that your creativity can emerge freely, without judgment or criticism.

In short:

1. Pick a time period (beginning and end)
2. Pick a subject
3. Write continuously, without stopping
4. Write for the time period you agreed on and then stop whether you're finished or not

EXERCISE

Look at the image on this page. Think about it for a moment or two and then start writing about it. Once you start, don't stop until the 10 minutes are up.

If you stop to correct spelling, grammar, punctuation or a change of mind, a 10,000 pound ball of steel will drop on your head. But don't think about that...just write. Do it now.

And that's it. You did it. You wrote continuously for 10 minutes without stopped or judging. You just let your mind dive into the creative wellspring and dabble around for no reason other than doing it. You just did what the vast majority of the planet's population will likely never do: free your mind.

The Benefits of Mindless Writing

Mindless writing is exploratory and spontaneous. You relax and expect nothing of yourself other than to put words on paper for a specific period of time—you let the words flow out of your subconscious without stifling them by editorializing, evaluating or judging. Editing and reviewing can be done later. Here are just a few of the benefits:



- Opens your creative mind for the rest of the day
- Helps to break down the hold of that inner judge
- Helps to release your creative potential and subconscious thoughts
- Overcomes writers' block
- Helps to develop your personal writing voice

Do this exercise every day. You can do it in the morning before you go to work or class. It'll set your mind to creative mode for the rest of the day. After doing this for a few weeks, you'll find it easier each day to use your creativity when you need it.

BTW, the concept of mindless writing was developed

by Dorothea Brande her 1934 book *Becoming a Writer*.

Mindless Drawing

Like mindless writing, mindless drawing forces you to let go of criticism and judgment. You don't have time to acknowledge an inner voice that says, "This is a waste of time." It's just you allowing you to express yourself on your own terms...without evaluation even from yourself.

It follows the same process as mindless writing: you think of a word, idea, event...anything. Think about it for a few minutes, then put a pen or pencil on a piece of paper and make it move. Try to keep your original thought in mind as you move the pen over the paper...but keep drawing.

Your pen should never stop for more than a couple of seconds for things like moving it to another area of the paper. If your mind wanders from your original thought, go with it.

Your drawing might be awful. That's OK. Keep drawing.

As with mindless writing, pick a period of time and stop when you've reached it. During that time, you shouldn't stop drawing. If you draw a line you don't like, leave it.

Whereas mindless writing is more cerebral, mindless drawing is visual and appeals directly to your right hemisphere. Doing this a few minutes a few times a day will keep your creativity active. It'll also relax you, and relaxation allows your creativity to flow more freely, without blockages like criticizing what you see. Just accept it and keep drawing.



You might want to carry a notebook or sketchpad with you for drawings. On the other hand, they might be so awful that you'll do them on scraps of paper that you can fold up and eat before anyone sees them.

It doesn't have to look like anything. It can be as abstract as you want it to be...just lines made on the paper wherever your eyes lead your hand.

Awful drawings are OK. You're not trying to be Rembrandt, you're just trying to relax and let your creativity flow. If you draw, no matter how bad it is, then you've accomplished your goal. You can throw it away when it's done, or keep it.

After doing this exercise for a few weeks, you might want to start a drawing sometime in the morning and keep at it, off and on, for the rest of the day. I do this at work. When I switch from one task to another, I draw in between. It's usually something I start in the morning and come back to during the rest of the day. I use a black gel pen and computer paper or postcards with a surface for watercolor painting.

Mindless Drawing 2

My work designing online learning, involves a wide variety of tasks (research, interviews, working with various software programs, and so on). I draw between each of them. It keeps my mind active and open to creativity.

EXERCISE

Grab a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Look at the flower picture to your right for a minute or two and then start drawing without looking at the photo. Try to keep the ink or graphite flowing without stopping except to put the tip on another part of the paper and keep the flow up.

You can throw the drawing away when you're finished. It's done its work.

EXERCISE 2

Do the same as in Exercise 1 but use a larger piece of paper, like a full sheet of computer paper. Start the drawing in the morning with a minute or two of drawing and put it away. Bring it out a couple of hours later and do some more drawing.

Keep this up until you feel the drawing is finished, at which point you can throw it away or keep it. It's done its work.

When you first start doing this exercise, you'll probably hate what you see and think something like, "Well, that does it...I can't draw worth a damn."



Most people can't. This exercise is not about the quality of the drawing, it's about the quality of creative thought it releases.

Try it for a couple of weeks and see if it works for you.

Mental Awareness

Putting your mind into something else like a person or an object will give you new ways of seeing and feeling the world around you.

As a creative person, you need to be empathetic, to everything around you on a personal and emotional level that few others experience. You have to be part of your environment, not just something passing through. The ability to get into the minds and hearts of other people and see the world through their eyes is a key advantage in any pursuit or occupation.

The salesperson who can get into the mind of the buyer is more likely to make the sale than that salesperson who has no idea what the customer is thinking. In my own experience, the best salespeople were highly creative thinkers who empathized with their customers.

You might not always agree with the other person. You might not like the way they act, talk, think or dress. As a creative person, though, you *accept* them for who and what they are and try to see the world the way they see it.

When you listen to someone talking, make an effort to understand what they're saying. Given the storm of media that assails us every day, we tend to listen less than we should. Break out of this attitude and make a conscious effort to listen to actual people. You might discover a lot of things you missed.



EXERCISE

You'll need someone else to help you with this. Face someone about 4 to 5 feet away and look directly into their eyes as they look into yours. Do this for 5 minutes without looking away. This will be painfully difficult for most people. Don't talk. Just stare. And as you stare, try to think about what's going on inside the other person's head. How is that person responding to looking into your eyes? What can you tell about a person's mind from looking into their eyes? After the 5 minutes, grab pen and paper and write down everything you can about what you felt.

EXERCISE 2

Close your eyes and imagine you're a tree. Visualize your trunk, your roots, branches and leaves. How does it feel to be a tree? What does each part of you feel like? Can you feel the wind rustling your leaves? Can you taste the earth your roots sink into? Can you feel insects burrowing into your bark? Do this for 10 or 15 minutes and then write about it mindlessly for 5 or 10 minutes. The more you do this, the more you'll become aware of the world around you on a much more intimate level.

Physical Awareness

We rush things. We're impatient to the extent that we click out of a website if it takes more than 10 seconds to load. We're in a hurry that puts our lives on an A to Z route that has little or nothing in between. We miss a lot of things.

As a creative person you need to notice those things for the richness of experience they'll bring into your life.

For instance, stop occasionally and close your eyes...listen...sniff the air...touch a tree trunk... touch the rock foundation of an old building... not just with your fingers, lay your hand on it and run it along the surface...is it cold or warm, smooth or coarse, are there variations in the surface? Eat a blade of grass. What does it taste like?

Listen to snippets of conversation. What sounds do the traffic lights make? Are there birds in the air, on power lines, on eaves? What kinds of birds? What sounds do they make?

What other sounds do you hear? What are the faraway sounds? Is there an underlying sound? What is the most pervasive sound?

Are there other people on the street? What are they doing? What do they look like? What color is the sky? How many other colors besides blue are there in a blue sky? How many colors are there in a cloud? Is there a breeze? What does it feel like? Does it carry any smells?



EXERCISE

Pick a spot along the street. Stand or sit in that spot. Look around you. What do you see? Close your eyes. What do you hear? Keep your eyes closed. What do you smell? Touch things around you. Kiss them, lick them, smell them if you want. Notice the textures, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings. What impact do they have on you? Does this setting evoke memories, feelings? Are they positive, negative?

Now, with your eyes closed, tune yourself into the complete environment around you. Try to zero in on the single most over-riding impression

you get. Jot that down and write mindlessly about it for 5 or 10 minutes.

Ask Questions

Creative people ask questions. They want to know how things work, why things are the way they are...and there's no better way to learn these things than questioning.

Questions open new ways of seeing things, things that might lead to understanding and insight, things that might help you make sense of world and things that you might not want to know.

Suppose you find yourself becoming angry and more aggravated by everything more often. You might just chalk it off to a bad week or month or the full moon. But you might ask yourself, "*When* do I get into these bad moods?" You might ask, "*Where* do I get into these bad moods?" You might find these questions leading to the same thing. It might be your work, your marriage, something important to you. It might mean having to make life-changing decisions, giving up your comfort zone.

Or you might have to give up strawberries because your questions led to seeing a doctor whose diagnosis was: "You're allergic to strawberries. They turn you into a crazy person."

Questions give you deeper insight into things; for instance, life. Life is layers. The layers have a surface that might mean something to you and something completely different by the person standing beside you in the airport. And that layer may not come close to reflecting the layers beneath.



For instance, you might know someone at work who does their work so efficiently that they're promoted to a management position in record time. Everyone sees this person as confident and always in charge of things. But they never smile.

You might ask the person why this is and find out that they don't believe for one second that they deserve to be promoted. Asking further, you might find out that this person was accused repeatedly as a child of being worthless and a failure by a nasty parent. Upon further questioning, you might learn that this person did well in spite of the parent, but somewhere deep inside that voice is still there, "Who do you think

you are to be successful? You don't deserve this." And thus the lack of smiling.

EXERCISE

Pick a ritual or habit you have, maybe chewing your nails or procrastinating when you have an essay to write or some work to do for a friend. Ask yourself why you do that and when you get an answer, question the answer. Keep asking until you run out of questions.

Ask the **who**, **what**, **when**, **why**, **where** and **how** questions as much as you can.

The Story Dump

We all have ideas, some of them great, some not so great. Some get out there and make a difference in people's lives. Most don't. Most ideas are never developed, generally because we just see part of them and not the whole. It might be a single line of dialog or a visual image deep in our heads or an idea we've had for a novel or play that's been stuck in our heads for years.

I know people who have been talking about the same novel they're going to write for decades. They talk for about five minutes, which works out to one or two pages of writing. I see them again in a few years and they're talking about the same thing and they still have only one or two pages of writing.

The germ of an idea is never enough. You need an idea that's more like a seed, something that will grow and take on form, direction and life. You do this with the story dump. The story dump is like a box into which you throw any and all ideas you have and when it fills up you empty it and put things together so that they make sense.

I use a hard-back notebook and pens. I can carry these around with me everywhere I go and they never run out of batteries. But you can use a laptop, cell phone or whatever device that fits your comfort zone.



Begin by writing down all the ideas you have so far for your novel **or** project. Get this down as quickly as possible. If new ideas come to mind, make a quick note but don't develop anything. When you have everything written down, go through your notes and start asking questions. How does so-and-so manage to get into a job he's obviously not qualified for? Who murdered Little Joe and why? Why did Janice do this? What was she thinking when she did it? What research will I need to back this up?

As you develop each of your ideas, more ideas will come. As you answer questions, more questions will come. Writing a story dump is like

rolling a snowball down a hill. As it rolls down, it gets larger and larger. The more you write in your story dump, the more you'll have to write about.

I start each my novels off with a story dump but it can be used for any type of project...an essay, a proposal, a thesis, a non-fiction book, a series of blog postings...anything.

The Story Dump

Take your story dump to dental appointments, social events...everywhere. When you run out of things to write, go back through your notes and read them. New ideas will come. Do backstories for your characters. See the link in the resource section for backstories. Sit two of your characters down in a confined space and write up a conversation for them.

Basically, the story dump is just that...a place where you dump everything that comes out of your head. Write about the characters, the plot, the settings, the mood, the themes, the story structure, everything you can think of about specific scenes, dream sequences, snippets of conversation, anecdotes, observations, topics to research, relevant news items...everything.

Go into as much detail as you want, but don't feel obliged to push yourself to do things like write perfect conversations. At this point, you're just getting whatever comes off the top of your head, writing quickly and mindlessly and having fun. The detailed writing comes later, after you've committed to the story. At this point, you're just trying to decide if you're really that committed to spend months or years on this idea. You're trying to determine if you really have enough to write this story, or if this story is compelling or interesting enough that anybody would want to read it.

The best way to do a story dump is to ask questions and then answer them and let the answers go wherever they will.



After you've become familiar with the general idea of the story, start asking yourself what scenes you'll need and write mindlessly about the scenes. Come back to them later and develop them more. The more scenes you write, the more scenes they'll inspire.

If you can't help yourself, and you ramble on for several paragraphs, then go ahead. Be random. Let your mind relax and just write what comes into your head. After a month or so, you'll know if you have a good idea and if it's something you can commit to until it's finished.

If it isn't, then come up with another idea and story dump it. The beauty of a story dump is that it allows you to size up your idea and decide if you can really stick with it before you spend several months or years writing a story that you're never going to finish.

The Story Dump

On the other hand, you might begin story dumping an idea and a better idea might come out of it. This is why you should treat the dump as a huge mindless writing exercise. Don't think too deeply at this point. Don't commit to anything. Let your thoughts wander all over the place. Nothing you do at this point is wrong. Don't make it a brain buster. You can linger over something for a minute or two, thinking about how a character might respond to something, or what details would be necessary to make a setting real but don't get caught up in this. The idea is to be writing. If you can't think of anything to write about, look back further into your previous notes and start writing more about them. The more you add to the story dump the more you'll release thoughts and ideas about your previous notes.

Keep writing. Tell yourself, "If I stop writing, a ten thousand pound weight will drop out of the sky and land on my beer."

NOTE: Make labels in the margins of your story dump. If you have a character description on the first page using Sarah G, then wherever you describe her in the following pages, label them Sarah G. You might even want to put extra notes like Sarah G – conversation with X, or Sarah G – on catwalk.

EXERCISE

Using these four scene elements, write a story dump. Write down anything that comes to mind...even if you begin to digress.



Character: Adam

Event: Adam's brother died this afternoon.

Setting: The street was deserted.

Mood: Something wasn't quite right...it was eerie.

Plot: The victim's throat had been cut from ear to ear.

Jot down notes as fast as you can. They can just be snippets of ideas, conversations, theories, observations. Or maybe you have an idea for a novel. Start a story dump for that. Stop when you have 5 or 6 pages of notes. You'll be using these for the next couple of exercises.

When the Idea Box Is Full

This is going to be different for everyone. At some point, you have to stop story dumping and start arranging all those disparate ideas into something coherent, something that is **plotted**.

I use two methods to do this: the *treatment* and the *storyboard*. Let's look at them.

The Storyboard

You have a notebook (or maybe two) bursting with notes spread all over the place. Now it's time to put them in order. You may have notes for a novel or an essay...maybe a business proposal.

In a novel, you order your story in terms of scenes beginning with the opening scene and ending with the part where they sail off into the sunset.

In an essay, you order in terms of initial ideas and move into more detail so that idea builds on idea. But getting all those notes out of the dump?

Enter the Storyboard

You'll need a wall for this but it's worth it. You write down just the briefest note about each scene/idea from the story dump on cards...one card for each scene/idea. When you have them all on cards, look at them and guess at their order. You don't have to be accurate. Tape the cards to a wall in that order. You should have 20 or 30 cards on the wall. Study them, asking questions like, "Should this card be back a few cards? What other cards with scene/idea do I need towards the beginning to make this one make sense?"

With a storyboard you can see where your project is going at a glance. You can see what's missing, what's irrelevant, what areas need to be combined...all at a glance.

It's a lot of work, but it pays off big time. I've written five novels using this method. If it grabs



your interest, you can read more detailed instructions here:

<https://biffmitchell.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/storyboarding.pdf>.

This storyboard is for a fiction novel, but the principle applies to any large body of information that you want to assemble into something you can use.

EXERCISE

Using the story dump from the last section, create a story board.

For this exercise you don't need a full wall. In fact, you can do it on the floor.

Some people use specialized software to create storyboards. I use walls because they're bigger than computer screens and give me a more intensely visual experience.

The Treatment

I've used treatments for years for multimedia projects. Sometimes I use them in conjunction with a storyboard when I'm writing fiction.

A treatment is generally seen as a clear high level statement of an idea, but it can be more than that.

I use a table to create a treatment for my novels. The table is divided into three columns: Scene, Content and Notes.

The Scene is the scene number from 1 to whatever number of scenes in the novel. This column can also be a series of titles that indicate the tasks in a project. You enter the task titles in whatever order makes sense to you and then re-arrange them later when you have all the tasks entered into the treatment table.

The Content column is a statement of the content that will go into the scene or task. This doesn't have to be developed at this time. It could just be a high level outline of the content, or you can put all of the content here.

For a novel, this will generally be an outline of what will appear in the scene. You can even write the entire scene here if you want.

Use the Notes column to indicate things like research you might have to do, the purpose of the content, any thoughts you might have about the content...problems, challenges, background.



You download a copy of the treatment template right [here](#). It's free.

EXERCISE

Take a look at the treatment in the link and then create a treatment for the story dump you did above.

Feel free to modify the treatment in any way that makes sense to you.

A Space to Create

By doing the exercises in this workshop, you'll dig into your creative wellspring and it shouldn't matter where you are...your creativity is a part of you and you carry it wherever you go.

However, some people like to do their creative thing in a specific space. Artists paint in studios, writers write in coffee shops or a corner at home, project managers write reports in offices, students write essays in libraries, photographers do portraits in studios or outdoors and programmers create software in dungeons. Some people can create anywhere: they can write a novel on a train, paint in a store showcase window, write a proposal in the lunch room, or turn a perfect piece of pottery in front of thirty people.

I don't like writing at home. That's where I watch movies and waste time. I write in coffee shops and as soon as I sit down with a cup of coffee the words start to flow because that's where I make the words flow.

It doesn't matter where you create as long as you create. You might have several spaces or you might have just that one special space.

Here're a few things to keep in mind:

Access

You need a space you can get to when you need to get to it. A place that's a two hour drive away is probably not going to work. A space that keeps irregular or undependable hours is not going to



work. Make sure that you can get to your space easily and whenever you want.

Ease of Use

Your space to create should have everything you need to create. In my case, I take a laptop, paper and pens. You might need more...like food or a power cord.

Comfort

Your space should be relaxing for you, whether it's noisy or not, busy or quiet, hot or cold...if you're relaxed you're more likely to create.

No Distractions

If you're easily distracted, then you need a private space like a home office or the library. If you choose your home office or a kitchen table put everything else out of your mind. If you wash dishes or vacuum when you should be creating, then home is not your space to create.

A Place to Create 2

A Space that Inspires

I know artists who can't do a thing at home, but as soon as they get to their studios, they're off! There's something about an art studio that makes you want to create something. Other places might be outdoors with great scenery like the beach or the middle of a rain forest. This is obviously a nice-to-have, but it's something to look for when you're looking for a space to create.

Personal

I've known people who've shared creative spaces with other people and things worked out nicely but I've also seen the opposite, with one person feeling that they're being blocked from creating by someone who's in the space too much. Make sure that your space is always available to you, personally.

Long Term

Make sure that you have access to your space all year round. If your space is a park bench you might have some serious problems in winter. Unless you're a poet...read on.

EXERCISE

Experiment a little. Try doing something creative like writing (it can be mindless writing) or drawing (it can be mindless drawing) in a variety of places...even a park bench (best if you live in a warm, tornado-free place).

Try for as much variety as possible. I know a woman who walks around the city in the summer



drawing things wherever she goes. She sees the world as her studio.

It doesn't even have to be a physical space. I know a writer who does all his writing on his cell phone. He writes on buses, in waiting rooms, on the toilet, in bed...wherever he happens to be. For him, the phone is his place to write.

I know a poet who used to stop people in the street and demand a penny for a poem. I saw him one day writing one of his poems on a park bench. In the winter.

Man eons ago, I knew a flutist who could only play the flute during a full moon. He played brilliantly for a few days each month and couldn't play worth a damn the rest of the time. His perfect creative space was a time, no matter where he was.

Experiment.

Using Your Camera or Phone to Visualize Ideas

One of the best ways to develop an idea is to “see” the idea, or see the “shape” of the idea through visual connections.

I did this with a novella called the *Ladies of the Fountain*. The story begins at a fountain in a park area called The Green and ends in an entertainment area called Piper’s Lane, which is several blocks away from the Green.

The action in the story plays out in various places along the several block walk to Piper’s Lane.

I walked the route with my camera, taking pictures of each place that was used as the setting for a scene in the story. This helped me to plot the story, gain a better visual grasp of the action in each scene and generally make the story more real to me, which helped me to make it more real for my readers.

When I arrived home, I downloaded the images and pasted them into a Word document in the order in which they appear in the story and I pasted the notes I had for each scene into the document below their respective pictures.

Looking at the picture as I wrote the scene made it easy for me to visualize and write the action in the scene.

You could even glue or tape some pictures of scenes right onto the storyboard cards because each card is a scene, though I’m not sure how this would work for an entire novel with a



hundred or so scenes...maybe best for short stories and novellas. Your choice.

EXERCISE

Go for a walk in a place you frequent. It could be a street, a park, a building, a beach, a wooded area...anywhere you want. When you get there, imagine a story or event happening there. It could be a chase, a murder, two people having a conversation as they walk, an alien invasion... whatever you want.

Take pictures of the place. If the action in your story or event happens in chronological order,

then order the images from beginning to end and mindlessly write following the pictures.

For a non-fiction book, say on *The Ultimate Egg Boilers Book*, you can take pictures of the process from beginning to end and then write about it. Your writing will likely be a lot clearer and more entertaining than if you did the whole thing with words only.

Your Creativity

Everyone is born creative.

Bit-by-bit, as we grow older it becomes buried under schedules, routines, other's expectations, judgment, criticism, fear of being wrong, fear of being right, insecurities and a myriad of other creativity killers.

Like anything, if you don't use it, it becomes rusty, difficult to call up when you need it and something you no longer associate with yourself.

But it's always there, just under the surface of everything you've been taught to believe and accept. You just have to start using it.

Hopefully, the information and exercises in this workshop will help you break through the barriers you've placed between you and your creativity.

This may sound a little over the top, but one way to release your creativity is to associate with people who encourage it, people who show an interest in what you do and make you feel that you are, in fact, creative.

This might mean removing yourself from elements that don't support your creativity. You might have to stop hanging around with an overly critical friend (or friends), or a work



environment that leaves you feeling emotionally stifled or choked at the end of the day.

You may have to change your lifestyle. Generally, creativity flows more freely when you're relaxed than when you're emotionally turbulent. Taking a course in meditation might help...or removing yourself from situations that stress you out.

On the other hand, I've known people whose creative juices don't start flowing until the heat is on.

Your creativity never left you; you left it. Now it's time to get it back.

EXERCISE

Think about the things that you think might be holding back your creativity. Make a list. Think carefully about the things on your list. See if you can identify changes you can make to your life so that you get your creativity back and keep it.



Free Resources

Most of these resources are slanted toward fiction writing but the concepts can be incorporated into non-fiction writing to give you a creative edge in anything you undertake.

Becoming a Writer by Dorothea Brande. This is the best single publication on the creative process ever. It's cheap. Buy it.

<https://tinyurl.com/2kt64tzb>

Storyboarding 101: How to Create a Storyboard That Will Amaze Your Visitors

<https://biffmitchell.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/storyboarding.pdf>

How to Explore Character Through Backstory and Motivation

<https://vocal.media/journal/back-story-and-motivation>

How to get published. This is a workshop I gave at the 2011 Maritime Writers' Workshop. It's dated but still has some useful information. <https://biffmitchell.com/free-stuff>

eMarketing Tools for Writers, 3rd Edition This is a few years out of date, but it will introduce you to basic internet marketing and show you how to develop your own marketing plan.

<https://biffmitchell.com/free-stuff>

Sad Story

Biff Mitchell lives in a hovel at the edge of the world. He has no life. He has no friends. Neighborhood children throw stones at his hovel. At night, Biff throws stones at his hovel.

Someday Biff plans to write a book about a man who lives in a house that is stoned daily by neighborhood children who—through some magical twist of events—turn into snowmen.

When Spring arrives, the man's house melts.

You can visit what's left of biff at <https://biffmitchell.com>



