



CHAPTER FIVE

# Wrappers, Boxes and Other Limitations

Creative Barriers and Roadblocks - Your's, Mine & Our's

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## Every day creative ideas are killed!

Who kills them?

What causes them to be killed?

**Barriers** and **Roadblocks** to creativity are what kill them. What might they be? Barriers and Roadblocks can be physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual. They can be internal: our own self-doubt, low self-esteem or low self-confidence or external thoughts and actions of our bosses, managers, supervisors, peers, friends, family members or total strangers.

How can will remove or deal with them? First thing is not to cope with or tolerate them. **Barriers** and **Roadblocks** need to be dealt with directly.

You may choose to

go around them

go over them

go under them

choose another direction or avoid them.

But do not cope with or tolerate them. If you do their power over you will not be lessened.

There are three specific reasons many of us are not as creative as we each might be that I call the **Creative G.A.P.** It represents three falsehoods or myths that prevent natural creativity from being developed, accepted or used.

**G. Gift      Creativity is a gift only a very few of us are born with.**

This is falsehood that is disproven daily by teachers and consultants through the teaching, training, and enhancing of creative thinking skills. Creativity is a gift we all possess.

**A. Attitude    A person is either creative or not their attitude has nothing to do with it.**

An individual's attitude is continually shown to control their creative output. If you are positive, enthusiastic, excited, challenged and desire to be creative you will be.

**P. Process    Creativity is natural and not the result of a process.**

Creativity can be the result of the use of many different processes ranging from highly rational to instinctively intuitive. Creativity is practiced as a process world-wide on a daily basis by individuals and groups universally.

From now on remember that your creativeness is a **GIFT**, is the result of your **ATTITUDE** towards it and that you can tap into it or further develop it by using a deliberate **PROCESS**.

Have you ever awoke feeling CREATIVE, feeling you wanted to do something new, wanted to think up new ideas, or wanted to solve problems creatively? If so, have you ever been met with any of the following reactions?

**“Why that’s impossible!”**

**“We don’t do things that way!”**

**“We’ve tried that before.”**

**“I wish it were that easy.”**

**“Who told you, you could change  
the rules.”**

Add some of your own favorites you hear at work, home or among friends or even strangers.

## TOMBSTONES OF CREATIVITY

The statements or remarks you just read and wrote down from your own experience are what I call **TOMBSTONES** of creativity.

During the average day in any office, school or home ideas are killed left and right by the hundreds. Because of the daily killing of ideas the population of the **cemetery of creativity** is continually increased, deliberately or not. Because of what is done to new ideas, generally, the only thing left of them are their epitaphs.

Listed here are some of the most common epitaphs found in the cemetery of creativity. Read this list to look for ones you may have carved in tombstones recently.

- |                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. What a lemon?                    | 2. This is absolutely incorrect!    |
| 3. It won't work because I said so. | 4. You're on a bum steer.           |
| 5. What a crack-pot idea!           | 6. This is contrary to tradition.   |
| 7. Don't make waves.                | 8. This doesn't conform.            |
| 9. This is eccentric.               | 10. It doesn't sound good.          |
| 11. Is that ever fool hardy!        | 12. Talk about far-fetched!         |
| 13. Get serious!                    | 14. GOOFY!                          |
| 15. Hairbrained much?               | 16. That has been tried before.     |
| 17. I never did it that way.        | 18. I will think about it.          |
| 19. Just do it our way.             | 20. It'll never get approved.       |
| 21. Impracticable.                  | 22. That's indefensible.            |
| 23. Never saw it before.            | 24. It'll never get off the ground. |
| 25. It would be the first time.     | 26. No logic to that.               |
| 27. It's not essential.             | 28. Illogical.                      |
| 29. You've got a hole in the head.  | 30. Not reasonable.                 |
| 31. Outlandish, it won't work.      | 32. Not constructive.               |
| 33. Pie in the sky.                 | 34. Too extreme.                    |
| 35. Let's have a meeting on it.     | 36. The boss won't like it.         |
| 37. Not in the budget.              | 38. No one else is doing it.        |
| 39. Too expensive.                  | 40. Too simple.                     |

# TROPHIES OF CREATIVITY

Instead of letting the **Tombstones** of Creativity lay to rest potentially great ideas in your office or on your project, reward the idea creator with a TROPHY. These trophies are words or phrases that show the idea-sharer that you are open to his/her idea and will listen without passing judgement or criticizing. Always keep in mind that when someone comes up with a new idea (at least for them) they become a majority of one until it is proven to be a worthwhile solution. Very rarely are ideas...solutions. Ideas are only the first step. Therefore if you are the one chosen to hear the IDEA don't stomp it to death. Europe would be a crowded continent if Isabella hadn't listened to Christopher Columbus. Hundreds of thousands of people would not be working in the aerospace industry if Orville and Wilbur had agreed with their critics when they were told "Boy, you guys must be NUTS."

Put these **TROPHIES** on your shelf to hand out the next time you receive a new IDEA. The more of these you use the more creative ideas you will receive from peers, friends, relatives and even strangers.

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. That sounds like a winner. | 2. Fantastic.                      |
| 3. That may be advantageous.  | 4. It is memorable.                |
| 5. That's really alive.       | 6. A bold idea.                    |
| 7. Very appropriate.          | 8. Worth a try.                    |
| 9. An inspiration.            | 10. Best I've heard.               |
| 11. Charts new paths.         | 12. Clever approach.               |
| 13. Commendable idea.         | 14. A lot of foresight.            |
| 15. Worth a change.           | 16. Does make waves but that's ok. |
| 17. Crazy enough to work.     | 18. Elegant solution in that.      |
| 19. Engineer's delight.       | 20. A good challenge.              |
| 21. Expertly conceived.       | 22. Opens extra markets.           |
| 23. Extraordinary.            | 24. A new viewpoint.               |
| 25. Impressive.               | 26. Novel.                         |

- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 27. On target.             | 28. Noteworthy.        |
| 29. Overcomes the problem. | 30. Outstanding!       |
| 31. Thought inspiring.     | 32. Thought provoking. |

In addition to the Creative G.A.P. and Tombstones of Creativity there are Barriers and Roadblocks to Creativity that prevent us from using our natural creativeness at home, work or school. Which do you think stop you?

1. Fear of Failure
2. Reluctance to Play
3. Seeing Very Limited Resources Available
4. Being Too Certain
5. Avoiding Frustration or Pain
6. Paradigm Paralysis\*
7. No or Little Fantasy Life
8. Fear of the Unknown
9. Need for Balance
10. Not Using Influence
11. Not Letting Go
12. Emotion Avoidance
13. No Balanced Yin-Yang (no balance to your life)
14. Not Using All Your Senses

How might you deal with these barriers and roadblocks?  
Here are a sample of strategies for each of them.

## 1. **Fear of Failure.**

Take time by yourself to think about what types of failure you might fear. List them in a journal. Then examine them. Are they big or small fears? If they are big one strategy is to break them down into small pieces and work on one at a time. When we focus on the “big” picture too much we tend to become overwhelmed by the size of it, the time involved, the necessary energy it requires and feelings of lack of control or impossibility fill our thoughts. For small ones take them on one at a time and ask In What Ways Might I become a little successful at \_\_\_\_\_. Or you might say where or from whom could I learn how to become

successful at it? Or who might simply help me do it because I currently lack the skills, abilities, or resources to accomplish it successfully. In either case focus on stopping yourself from spending time worrying about it. Instead focus on where and when you could get help and then go ask for it.

## **2. Reluctance to Play.**

Add some play time in each day. It could be 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or 60 minutes and more. In any case spend time each day playing by yourself or with a friend or family member. Go bowling. Play tennis. Do a crossword puzzle. Read a comedy magazine. Preferably DO SOMETHING ACTIVE do not simply watch television or go to a movie or play. PLAY. Involve your body. Do something just for fun. On a lunch hour you could go visit a toy store, a hobby shop, an amusement park or center.

## **3. Seeing Very Limited Resources Available.**

Take time to become better acquainted with the various resources you have available. Ask someone else to help you list the resources available. Go talk to a librarian. Call up an expert on the subject and ask what resources they think are available. In most cases we only see the “tip of the iceberg” of resources that are ever available to us because we are trapped by our current knowledge or viewpoint or our emotionally induced “tunnel vision”.

## **4. Being Too Certain.**

Back off and develop a list of questions to ask yourself.

1. What might go wrong?
2. What might go right I haven't considered yet?
3. Who knows more than I do?
4. What would a kindergarten class say about the challenge?

Deliberately force yourself to examine other viewpoints and perspectives. Generally success produces failure,

especially instantaneous success that is not understood or explainable.

## **5. Avoiding Frustration or Pain.**

List what you avoid. Deliberately plan to try again. Ask for help. Ask an expert. Ask someone who knows nothing about the situation or problem.

## **6. Paradigm Paralysis\*.**

Weekly practice breaking an old paradigm (way of doing things you do almost unconsciously). Examine how you put your clothes on in the morning. Which leg do you put in first? Which order? Which side of the face do you start with when putting on your make up or shaving? Which side of your mouth do you start flossing? Once you know deliberately change your typical patterns or procedures (paradigms). Do this for a week. Then start looking for other bigger or work related paradigms to adjust, rearrange or break. (\*Term coined by Joel Arthur Barker.)

## **7. No or Little Fantasy Life.**

Read a science fiction book. Read fairy tales or other children's books. Take an acting or mime class. Sit back for 15 minutes occasionally and simply fantasize about "If I could be any where right now where would I be?"

## **8. Fear of the Unknown.**

Make unknowns known. Read up on them. Talk to knowledgeable people. Take an after school class on the subject.

## **9. Need for Balance.**

Examine your life. How do you spend your time?

Mental or thinking	Physical activities
Work or professional	Time with Family
Time with friends	Time alone
Playing	Religious or spiritual
Civic or social	

If you find yourself spending most of your time doing only one or two activities I suggest that you rearrange your schedule and time and add some of the other types occasionally each week. The key is to focus on enjoying your life not just earning a living or existing.

## **10. Not Using Influence.**

Take classes, watch video tapes or read books on negotiation, persuasion, public speaking, martial arts, debating, assertiveness.

## **11. Not Letting Go.**

Examine why you are holding onto something or a particular idea or belief. Then ask yourself how would I benefit if I let go? Then ask how would I lose if I never let go? Then gradually let go. Then examine what you gained or lost by letting go slightly. Perhaps you would be better off by not letting go. Only you will truly know. Give yourself the opportunity of knowing that you can let go. Try just a little.

## **12. Emotion Avoidance.**

You might read a book about adding emotion to your life. You might attend a lecture or presentation on the emotional side of life. Read books that focus on emotions, all different types. Being a passive, sedate person or being an active, enthusiastic, excitable person is up to you. I suggest that you examine if you are holding yourself back and hampering your creativeness by not being more emotional.

## **13. No Balanced Yin-Yang (no balance to your life).**

This one is a combination of numbers 9 and 12 plus the idea of balancing the male and female aspects of your nature. As a man ask yourself if you are avoiding some of your natural nature simply because society or your circle of friends say you must be a “manly man”. If you are a woman are you avoiding some stereotypical male characteristics because they are not “feminine or lady-like”? Many Oriental philosophers and writers have been saying for

thousands of years that yin (female) and yang (male) natures are simply human natures and not only one “right” for one gender or the other only. Experiment. As a man let yourself feel. Allow yourself to experience a full range of emotions. As a woman speak out, stand up for what you believe, let yourself come from thoughts more and put feelings on hold, if, you generally base most of what you do on feelings primarily.

## **14. Not Using All Your Senses.**

Take time to use, experience and enjoy all of your senses. Truly taste your food by slowing your eating down and savoring each bite. Smell flowers, things, rooms, etc. Close your eyes and simply focus on hearing. Touch an entire room. Feel the differences in the textures, surfaces, temperatures. See more by taking time to focus on specific visual aspects of a room: everything that is blue, red, yellow, brown (one color at a time), everything that is rectangular or square in shape.

Practicing each of these will help to release some of the barriers and roadblocks you have accumulated over your lifetime. Remember you are the result of your total lifetime. Some of these barriers and roadblocks may take a long time to lessen their impact on your creativeness.

One other human nature (apparently mostly an American characteristic) can be demonstrated by the following exercise. Take 3 minutes to complete the exercise before reading any further.

# What is Creative?

The following are 87 answers that people in a Creative Thinking workshop generated. Read the three columns and choose which you believe are “Creative” answers to “How else might you use a paper clip? How else might you market or promote new uses of paper clips? Work for three minutes.

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> jewelry         | <input type="checkbox"/> tie tack           | <input type="checkbox"/> fence           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> art statue      | <input type="checkbox"/> clean nails        | <input type="checkbox"/> pipe cleaner    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gas appliance   | <input type="checkbox"/> dwarf trombone     | <input type="checkbox"/> anchor          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cleaner         | <input type="checkbox"/> ammunition         | <input type="checkbox"/> magnets         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sling shot      | <input type="checkbox"/> bubble blower      | <input type="checkbox"/> pin             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> eyeglass frames | <input type="checkbox"/> zipper             | <input type="checkbox"/> house wiring    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decoration      | <input type="checkbox"/> plug puller        | <input type="checkbox"/> corn skewers    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> handles         | <input type="checkbox"/> belt hanger        | <input type="checkbox"/> swinging bridge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> jump rope       | <input type="checkbox"/> bobby pin          | <input type="checkbox"/> curler          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fork            | <input type="checkbox"/> ear cleaner        | <input type="checkbox"/> toothpick       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> missile         | <input type="checkbox"/> welding rod        | <input type="checkbox"/> tie clip        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fish hook       | <input type="checkbox"/> chain link         | <input type="checkbox"/> cheese slicer   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tie wire        | <input type="checkbox"/> skewer             | <input type="checkbox"/> stirrer         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> needle          | <input type="checkbox"/> toad stabber       | <input type="checkbox"/> ladder          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hammock         | <input type="checkbox"/> tire poker         | <input type="checkbox"/> coat hanger     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hypo needle     | <input type="checkbox"/> knitting needles   | <input type="checkbox"/> eye scratcher   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sword           | <input type="checkbox"/> paint stirrer      | <input type="checkbox"/> flower holder   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> picture hanger  | <input type="checkbox"/> spring             | <input type="checkbox"/> snowshoe        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lightning rod   | <input type="checkbox"/> ice skate blade    | <input type="checkbox"/> scrap iron      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ski pole        | <input type="checkbox"/> toe brace          | <input type="checkbox"/> tracer tool     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> finger brace    | <input type="checkbox"/> boot strap         | <input type="checkbox"/> boot hook       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> animal trap     | <input type="checkbox"/> sled               | <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wind chime      | <input type="checkbox"/> cigarette holder   | <input type="checkbox"/> ornaments       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tinsel          | <input type="checkbox"/> languages          | <input type="checkbox"/> alphabets       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> numbers         | <input type="checkbox"/> hanging lamp chain | <input type="checkbox"/> plant stake     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> doll clothes    | <input type="checkbox"/> bracelet           | <input type="checkbox"/> crochet needle  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hanger          | <input type="checkbox"/> hood ornament      | <input type="checkbox"/> ring            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> electric coil   | <input type="checkbox"/> ruler              | <input type="checkbox"/> hat rack        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> metal pretzels  | <input type="checkbox"/> wheel              | <input type="checkbox"/> ceiling hanger  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lock pick       | <input type="checkbox"/> hinge pin          | <input type="checkbox"/> etching tool    |

Now that you are done, how many did you choose as creative ideas?

Did you choose 5, 10, 20, 30, or all of them?

How many you chose may give you some insights into how you might be limiting your creativeness or the creativeness of other people: peers, friends, or relatives.

How you chose them was probably determined by the criteria you used to determine what makes an idea creative or not? Is it practical? Will it work? Is it new? Is it unusual or unique or just cute? Does it make sense? Will we accept it?

Each of these are valid if you are attempting to judge the usefulness of a **solution** but they are deadly if used to preview the potential of **ideas**.

Our natural tendency, at least among most Americans, is to immediately judge all **ideas** as if they were **solutions** and rather than simply **alternative possibilities**.

To open up the potential of natural creativeness and creative thinking we need to accept that our tendency to establish criteria to judge with needs to be put on hold when we are dealing with ideas. Our criteria generally limit our thinking and cause us not to even consider possibilities because they are not immediate solutions. Therefore, if you learn only one thing from reading this book learn and remember this from now on:

**Never judge (kill) another idea  
yet  
Challenge every solution before you try it.**

Whether it is because of the Creative G.A.P., Tombstones of Creativity, Barriers and Roadblocks or the natural American tendency to “judge” ideas we can each eliminate these limitations of creativeness within ourselves and all other people. Make a promise today that you will work at no longer killing any more ideas. Store them, enrich them, rework them, test them out, but no longer kill them.

