



CHAPTER ONE

The Potential Hidden Within the Paper Wrapper

Chances are because you have picked up this book and are reading it you have **BROKEN** a **CRAYON** or two. You may not think so but chances are you have **BROKEN CRAYONS** during your life at home, with friends, in school or at work.

BROKEN CRAYONS and the act of **BREAKING CRAYONS** represent **creativity, creative thinking** and the efforts of **creative people** to me. I was allowed and encouraged, even taught to **BREAK CRAYONS** by my elementary school art teacher, Mrs. Johnson, at John Trix Elementary in Detroit, Michigan. Throughout my life, my greatest accomplishments have happened because I took her advice and paid attention to what she tried to teach me:

1) be creative, 2) challenge what exists, 3) continuously strive to grow and improve and 4) always be open to unlimited possibilities. My other memories from those years remind me that most of my other teachers in elementary school also encouraged my classmates and me to be creative and strive for our best. They only requested and required that we “stay within **most** of the lines”, when we were being creative.

How often do you **BREAK CRAYONS**? Lets take a look. The following is a short exercise that will help you discover how easily you **BREAK CRAYONS**.

Are You a Crayon BREAKER?

Read over the following 32 human traits and check or mark the ones you believe are you at work or school, if you are not working full-time. You may choose as many or as few as you want. Some definitions are provided for words that are often mis-understood or may be unfamiliar to you.

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| ___ 1. sensitive | ___ 17. ingenious |
| ___ 2. not motivated by money | ___ 18. energetic |
| ___ 3. sense of destiny | ___ 19. sense of humor |
| ___ 4. adaptable | ___ 20. self-actualizing |
| ___ 5. tolerant of ambiguity | ___ 21. self-disciplined |
| ___ 6. observant | ___ 22. self-knowledgeable |
| ___ 7. perceive world differently | ___ 23. specific interests |
| ___ 8. see possibilities | ___ 24. divergent thinker |
| ___ 9. question asker | ___ 25. curious |
| ___ 10. can synthesize correctly often intuitively | ___ 26. open-ended |
| ___ 11. able to fanaticize | ___ 27. independent |
| ___ 12. flexible | ___ 28. severely critical |
| ___ 13. fluent | ___ 29. non-conforming |
| ___ 14. imaginative | ___ 30. confident |
| ___ 15. intuitive | ___ 31. risk taker |
| ___ 16. original | ___ 32. persistent |

Once you have completed reading and marking your choices total up how many you chose and write that number down here _____. Then turn to page 4 and continue reading.

Some Definitions

can synthesize	you see patterns or the big picture quickly
divergent thinker	look at things in many different ways at the same time
flexible	willing to try things in many different ways
fluent	produce lots of ideas or possibilities when working on a challenge or simply choosing a restaurant to go to.
open-ended	don't fix on a single idea, keep looking for many different ideas or ways to do things.
self-actualizing	focus on developing yourself to the best you can be and to discover your specific unique talents.
sense of destiny	believe that you have a special mission or purpose in life you plan or hope to fulfill.
tolerant of ambiguity	accept multiple answers or causes to a single problem or challenge.

The 32 traits are all traits of highly creative people according to at least five experts on creativity from education and psychology. I collected the 32 basic traits while I did a survey in 1980 of hundreds of articles published in 4 separate journals from 1950 to 1980 on the traits of creative people. These 32 were the only ones that at least 5 experts agreed were traits of creative people. Since 1980 I have been using this exercise throughout the United States in programs on creativity to help emphasize my belief that everyone is creative or has the potential for being or acting creative if they choose to. With several thousand people I have never found anyone who did not mark at least 5. For years I have believed that creative people or people who could be creative by choice would mark at least 5.

How many did you mark? 5, 10, 15, 20, all of them? Occasionally people will mark all of them if they don't feel intimidated by others in the group or by me.

Each of these traits, if emphasized mildly to strongly, will help you be more creative. Any of these, if emphasized extremely, could yield disastrous results. Number 28 is often one that people do not mark because of the feeling of the word severely. But think about it. Aren't highly creative people extremely critical? When they are, what are they most critical of?

Themselves or their work. Often they are their own worst critics (or enemies).

Now let's look at how each of the traits can help you be more creative and become a true and effective CRAYON BREAKER. Look specifically at which ones you marked and then at the ones you didn't mark? Often we don't mark certain ones or choose to exercise certain ones because of the potential negative results they can produce for us with other people.

1. Sensitive

Being sensitive helps creativeness in many ways:

- a. it helps with awareness of problems, known & unknown
- b. it helps people sense things easier
- c. it helps to cause people to care and commit themselves to challenges or causes.

2. Not Motivated By Money

As important as money is in most societies or economies it is not a driving force for a creative person. Generally they have an intuitive sense of the amount of money they basically need and once that need is fulfilled then money stops affecting or driving them.

3. Sense of Destiny

Intuitively creative people know that they have a purpose, a destiny or they realize that they can choose or create one to drive them to reach greater heights of skill, ability, or talent.

4. Adaptable

Without the ability to adapt people could not become creative. But rather than adapt to something they choose to adapt things to suit them, their needs or the goals they are striving towards.

5. Tolerant of Ambiguity

Two or more things or ideas being right at the same time challenges the thinking of a creative person. They love to be ambiguous to challenge other people and ideas. Ambiguity helps them see things from many different perspectives all at the same time.

6. Observant

Creative people constantly are using their senses: consciously, sub-consciously and unconsciously, even non-consciously.

7. Perceive World Differently

Thoreau talked about people “drumming to a different drum beat”. Creative people thrive on multiple ways of perceiving: seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, sensing things. These different perspectives open up their minds to unlimited possibilities.

8. See Possibilities

Average people, people who don't believe they are creative, people who are fearful or resistant to creativeness or creative thinking prefer to work within limits with limited possibilities. Creative people love to see many, even infinite possibilities in most situations or challenges.

9. Question Asker

Creative people, especially highly creatives, probably came out of their mothers' wombs asking questions. It's in their nature to question. Question yes, not actually criticize. Their questioning nature often mistakenly appears as criticism when it is simply questioning, exploring, examining, playing with things as they are or might be.

10. Can Synthesize Correctly, Often Intuitively

This is the ability to see the whole picture, see patterns, grasp solutions with only a few pieces, even with major pieces missing. Creative people trust their intuition, even if it isn't right 100% of the time.

11. Able to Fanaticize

“Stop looking out the window Billy.” “Susie pay attention.” Teachers, parents, and even friends often tell creative people this. Highly creative people love to wander through their own imaginary worlds. This is one of the major themes of the very popular cartoon strip Calvin and Hobbes©. Both Calvin and Hobbes (Calvin's alter ego?) are perpetual CRAYON BREAKERS.

12. Flexible

Creative People are very flexible when they are playing with ideas. They love to look at things from multiple points of view and to produce “piles of answers”, “maybes”, “almosts”, when other people are content with “the” or “an” answer or solution.

13. Fluent

It could be a door stop, a boat anchor, a weapon, a prop, a weight for holding down papers, etc., etc., etc. This is what a creative person would say about the possible uses of a “brick”.

14. Imaginative

Creative people love to use their imagination to play to make things seem real to experiment.

15. Intuitive

The more creative a person is the more they tap their intuition skills; the abilities to see answers with minimum facts, to sense problems even when they aren't happening.

16. Original

Being original is a driving force for creative people. They thrive on it.

17. Ingenious

Doing the unusual. Solving unsolvable problems. Thinking what has never been thought of before. These are all traits of a creative person that help them be ingenious at times.

18. Energetic

Challenges, problems, new ideas, once committed to by a creative person, truly excite them and provide them with seeming unlimited amounts of energy; such as Sherlock Holmes once he grasps a sense of the mystery.

19. Sense of Humor

Laughter and creativity truly go together. Many experts believe that creativity can't occur without a touch of humor believing that seriousness tends to squelch creativeness or creative thinking.

20. Self-actualizing

The psychologist Abraham Maslow created this term in the 1960's representing the ultimate motivator of people the need or desire "to be all you can be", "to be what you were meant to be".

21. Self-disciplined

This is one trait that appears to be ambiguous in highly creative people. They can appear disorganized, chaotic at times while at the same time they are highly self-disciplined. At the same time they greatly resist the discipline of other people who are not of like creative mind.

22. Self-knowledgeable

During my life I have read biographies and biographic sketches of over 4,000 people, mostly considered to be the highest of the highly creatives in their respective fields. One of the few things they had in common is that they all kept some form of journal and were constantly striving to better understand themselves.

23. Specific Interests

This is still another ambiguous trait of creative people. They appear on the surface to be interested in everything, while at the same time they have very specific interests that they commit their true energies and efforts to. By being willing to be exposed to seemingly unlimited interests they discover more about their particular specific interests.

24. Divergent Thinker

Creative people love to diverge from the norm, to look at things from multiple positions, to challenge anything that exists. Because of this they are seen at times to be off-key, deviant, atypical, irregular, or uncharacteristic.

25. Curious

Like the Cheshire Cat of Alice in Wonderland, creative people are continuously curious, often child-like.

26. Open-ended

In order to explore many possibilities creative people tend to stay open-ended about answers or solutions until many have been produced.

27. Independent

Creative people crave and require a high degree of independence, resist dependence but often can thrive on beneficial inter-dependence.

28. Severely Critical

Yes creative people challenge most everything, every idea, every rule. They challenge, challenge, and challenge some more to the point that most other people see their challenging as severe criticism.

29. Non-conforming

Conforming is the antithesis, the opposite of creativeness and in order to be creative, creative people must be non-conforming and go against the norm, swim up stream.

30. Confident

This is another ambiguous trait in creative people. When they are at their most creative they are extremely confident. When they are in a stage of frustration when nothing seems to be working they often lack confidence. After much positive experience they begin to trust themselves and know that they will become depressed, frustrated nearly devastated but their internal sub-conscious confidence keeps them moving or at least floating until they experience or discover an aha! (a breakthrough idea or piece of information).

31. Risk Taker

This trait is a general mis-understanding of many non-creative people or people who fear the creativeness of creative people. Highly creative people are not really risktakers because they do not see what they are doing as a risk. They simply see it as a possible solution or path towards a solution. They have other possible solutions, often many others in their head or their notes to use if a particular idea or solution does not work. As Thomas Edison once said when asked how it felt to have failed nearly 7,000 times trying to discover the best filament for an incandescent light bulb, “those are not failures, they are solutions to problems I haven’t started working on yet.”

32. Persistent

Charles Goodyear (discover & inventor of vulcanized rubber) and Chester Carlson (inventor of electrostatic copying, the Xerox™ process: xerography) are two of the best examples of this trait in creative people. Both of them worked over 30 years trying to make a solution they discovered work. Creative people do not give up on things that mean a lot to them.

The more of the 32 traits you choose the more creative you are or you have the potential to be or become. And the more potentially you are a CRAYON BREAKER.

How many of the traits did you first mark as fitting you? The more you mark or use the greater you will be able to capitalize on your natural creativeness. Some of them you may use at work, some at home, some at school. Ask yourself why? Are there some barriers that prevent you from using some of the traits anywhere you choose?

I have found that some times it is helpful to deliberately practice particular traits to release my creativeness when I am feeling stale, dull, or blocked. We all experience creative block at times. The causes may be situational, physical,

emotional, mental, relational or even undefinable. Later in the book you will read about additional specific actions you can take to break creative blocks.

Everyone of us can choose to be CRAYON BREAKERS. As you read further you will discover more about the **WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW**, and **WHAT** of BREAKING CRAYONS and being a **CRAYON BREAKER**.

