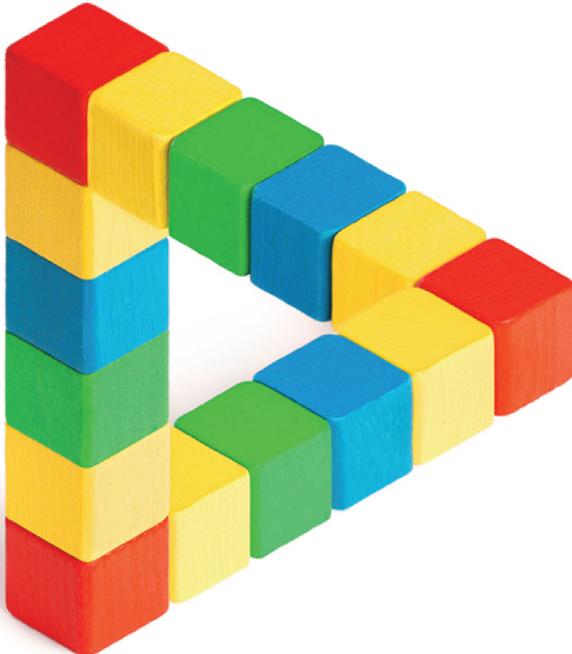


JEFF DEGRAFF AND STANEY DEGRAFF

AUTHORS OF *THE INNOVATION CODE*

THE

CREATIVE MINDSET



**MASTERING THE SIX SKILLS THAT
EMPOWER INNOVATION**

SAMPLE

ENDORSEMENTS

“In this era of AI and increasing automation, creativity is what sets us apart. Jeff and Staney DeGraff show us how to master the creative mindset with practical processes and new ways of thinking that we can all adopt and implement in our work.”

— **Tan Le, Founder of EMOTIV**

“Jeff and Staney DeGraff have written a book that will be the foundation for the prosperity of our country over the next 100 years...In the end, teaching our people the habit of creativity will change the world for the better.”

— **Steve Kwast, United States Air Force Lieutenant General (Retired)**

“I love that Jeff and Staney emphasize that small acts of creativity can have huge consequences and that ordinary people can do extraordinary things if they can see the opportunities in front of them. It’s inspiring and practical.”

— **Mitch Jacobson, Executive Director, Austin Technology Incubator and Blackstone LaunchPad, The University of Texas at Austin**

“We can all use a bit more creativity in our lives! Jeff and Staney DeGraff have made it easy for anyone—in any organization of any size—to take their free-thinking up a few levels. In this concise and creatively put together volume they share dozens of down to earth, easy to implement, ways to enhance our creative energy.”

— **Ari Weinzweig, Co-founder, Zingerman’s Community of Businesses**

“Finally, a book that maps out the practical side of creativity and makes it doable for anyone! The specific skills and relevant examples provided in this book will enhance creativity in your professional and personal lives. Thus, this is the must-read book if you are thinking about innovating some aspect of your work or life.”

— **Lynn Perry Wooten, President, Simmons University**

“The DeGraffs have successfully transformed a complicated concept of creativity into a series of practical, easy to understand but very effective techniques to enhance our thinking and ability. They are truly leaders and mentors in the field of creativity and innovation.”

— **John Evans, the Charles D. Miller Endowed Chair, Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, Auburn University**

THE CREATIVE MINDSET

Mastering the *Six Skills* That
Empower Innovation

JEFF DEGRAFF
AND STANEY DEGRAFF



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PREFACE

DO WE REALLY NEED ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT CREATIVITY?

Take a quick lap around your favorite bookstore and you will surely find volumes on how creativity can transform you into a successful entrepreneur. Others celebrate the lives of the heroes of our imagination. Still others encourage us to relax and let creativity flow as we conjure up silhouettes in the clouds that float above us. This book takes a very different approach.

The Creative Mindset is about practical, everyday creativity—the kind of creativity you use when you are trying to come up with something a little special. Maybe you would like to take a fresh approach to your blog to make it stand out. Or perhaps you are trying to come up with a unique side hustle to bring in a little extra cash. It could be that you are just looking for ways to generate some inspired ideas that liven up your work routine. This book is a how-to guide for anyone trying to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. Creativity starts with creating a better mindset, a new mindset, a creative mindset. As the celebrated Apple ad put it, “Think Different.”

Although a creative mindset is necessary for most imaginative endeavors, it’s not sufficient. Creativity, like any competency, requires real skill for you to take purposeful action. Even the most accomplished artists like Leonardo da Vinci and writers like Charles Dickens focused on the craft of creativity. These skills are what moves you from coming up with an interesting idea to

producing something remarkable and tangible. It all starts by developing the ability to clarify the challenge and continues on to skills for ideation, communication, and evaluation, among others.

However, creative work is never fully completed. Think about how there are versions of software or editions of books. There are always more ideas and improvements to make, even though you may lose interest in a project or simply run out of time or money. With each project, you build your creative abilities and confidence. After all, you are your greatest work of art.

The Democratization of Creativity

If you're a creative genius, congratulations; this book is not for you. If you are not, however, this book might be just what you need. *The Creative Mindset* is designed for a wide range of readers—from individuals looking to make changes in their own lives to leaders who wish to empower others with the creativity tools and techniques necessary to make innovation happen. From accountants to zoologists, *The Creative Mindset* can be used as a personal road map and useful field guide.

Corporations spend billions of dollars each year trying to get their employees to innovate. What they miss is that the personal creativity of individuals is the driver of innovation. Here lies the blind spot of innovation that so many leaders miss: the space where the corporation and the individual meet. A company is at its most creative when its people find personal inspiration in their own lives. We need to understand creativity as a force that doesn't exist in a single fixed place like an office, boardroom, or workshop but one that pervades all aspects of our everyday lives. Innovation is about doing the creative work the company can't. All we need is a creative mindset and some basic creativity skills.

Our personal creativity allows us to level the playing field and democratize innovation. As the spirit of Chef Gusteau pro-

claims in the Pixar classic *Ratatouille*, “Anyone can cook.” Everyone, every day and everywhere, can be creative in his or her own way. All they really need is an effective way of thinking and a few inventive skills to overcome their challenges and capture their opportunities.

How to Use This Book

Anyone can learn to be more creative. *The Creative Mindset* introduces six essential creative thinking skills that can be easily mastered with limited practice and remembered as the mnemonic acronym CREATE: Clarify, Replicate, Elaborate, Associate, Translate, and Evaluate. These terms are carefully selected as the key elements of a creative mindset. They are a mental road map to guide you from a creative idea to a successful result. These six skills emerged from the most important research on creative thinking, simplified and summarized, and are drawn from over thirty years of real-world application in some of the most innovative organizations around the globe.

Each of these six skills has its own dedicated chapter in this book, complete with examples and space to practice. These skills are arranged like stages in a process. We suggest that as you read this book, you follow the sequence in order. However, *The Creative Mindset* is designed so that you can skip around as needed. Still, you may find it useful to start with getting the challenge right (Clarify) and finish by assessing the best ideas (Evaluate). The four skills in the middle—Replicate, Elaborate, Associate, and Translate—focus on different creativity techniques and tools to generate diverse and varied ideas and to transform your ordinary idea into something extraordinary. These four skills are arranged from the simpler (Replicate) to the more elaborate (Translate).

Some readers may find that the latter skills are more difficult to master than the previous ones. This is natural. It’s important

that you get comfortable practicing these skills. The more you are immersed in developing a skill, the easier it will be for you to achieve a level of mastery.

If the order of the skills doesn't work for you, just follow what does work. Understanding your own creative power and how it works is a part of developing your creative mind. As Lewis Carroll (2011) put it in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "Begin at the beginning . . . and go on till you come to the end: then stop" (p. 114).

Developing Our Creativity

For more than thirty years, Professor Jeff DeGraff has taught some of the world's leading innovators in his classes at the University of Michigan. Through their Innovatrium Institute for Innovation, Jeff and Staney together have worked with over half of all Fortune 500 companies on ways to make innovation happen. *The Creative Mindset* provides this proven systematic approach to mastering creative and design thinking to everyone.

Creative breakthroughs can and do materialize anywhere, at any moment. Being creative doesn't require an advanced education or a particular technical skill set. Creativity is a naturally occurring process. Our brains assimilate and accommodate information and experiences to generate new and unique connections. Although we use our creativity in our everyday endeavors, such as finding an alternative way to prepare a meal when we discover that we are out of a specific ingredient, we are often unaware of how we do it.

Over the past few decades, researchers have gained a new understanding of how the brain functions, and new theories about how our mind works have emerged, such as the impact of meditation, dreaming, and creativity on brain development. Yet the term *creative thinking* covers a wide array of cognitive processes.

Preface

In *The Creative Mindset*, each of the six skills we introduce requires a different pattern of thinking. For example, the way in which you use an analogy to make something strange seem familiar is distinctly different from the way in which you evaluate and select a winning idea. There are hundreds of different ways in which your mind makes inquiries and gains insight. This book has reduced them to the six essential skills that you need to make your projects, your daily routines, and yourself better and new. Using the six skills, you can apply little acts of imagination to the challenges of the day—developing your mindset and skills to create works of art, products and services, and solutions to pressing problems, or simply experience the joy that comes from expressing a fresh idea that is personally meaningful. This is the essence of *The Creative Mindset*.

Introduction

Demystifying Creativity

MIRACULOUS, SINGULAR, PORTENTOUS: these are the earth-shattering, grandiose words we normally use to describe acts of creativity. In our collective imagination, creativity is an epic breakthrough achieved by lone geniuses with extraordinary intellectual powers. Surrounding creativity is a magical, rarefied—indeed unapproachable—aura: it's a realm widely considered accessible only to the privileged few who have been endowed with the innate gift of invention. In the popular mind, creativity is a kind of divine state—we mere mortals, excluded from its process, may only enjoy its fruits.

Yet the most game-changing innovations in all domains of our world are minor, incremental, *simple*. They don't burst forth in the middle of the night in the isolated labs or studies of masterminds and virtuosos—they arise in crowded rooms of diverse thinkers, during late afternoons in the middle of the week. These people don't completely reimagine the game or start totally anew. Instead, they make slight adjustments or modifications to existing things, which in turn have surprisingly far-reaching implications. They think big by working small.

Consider Jim, a real estate agent who was looking for ways to increase his business in a housing market that had never really

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come back after a recent recession. He had tried numerous innovative approaches to marketing and financing, but nothing seemed to work. One day, while driving past a row of houses near the local university usually occupied by students, he noticed something unusual. At the end of the street was a house in much better condition than the others. On the porch was an old couple talking to a student. In an uncharacteristic move, Jim got out of his car and walked up to the couple. He asked how long they had been in the home. He naturally assumed that they had been in the neighborhood before it became mostly student housing. Much to his surprise, they had purchased the house only four years earlier. Even more astonishing, they were not a married couple but friends. In fact, they had been classmates at the university fifty years earlier. Along with two other classmates, they had purchased the house. The couple noted that several of their other classmates were looking to do something similar. Living together in a learning environment gave them a newfound energy and sense of community. This strange encounter profoundly changed Jim's approach to real estate. He started marketing student houses for sale to retirees. The response was overwhelming, and business picked up. Simply by paying attention to something unexpected, Jim discovered an opportunity in plain sight that had gone unnoticed by his competitors.

Similarly, the story of Starbucks' meteoric, but gradual, rise to the top of the industry it invented also starts from a much smaller opportunity space. Although today we think of the company as an unstoppable force responsible for spawning a mass obsession with coffee, Starbucks began modestly, and its growth was incremental. When writer Gordon Bowker and teachers Jerry Baldwin and Zev Siegl put their funds together and took out loans to found Starbucks in 1971, their intent was merely to sell coffee beans.

Less than a decade later, Starbucks emerged as Washington's biggest coffee roaster. Still only a coffee bean distributor, Starbucks saw early visions of becoming something more in the early 1980s,

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when then-marketing director Howard Schultz went on a trip to Italy, with the goal of collecting new kinds of beans and new ideas. Schultz fell in love with Italian coffee—but became even more enamored with the Italian cafés where people drank it.

Schultz returned to the US with a wild suggestion: let's start brewing and serving coffee at Starbucks. Baldwin and Bowker turned the idea down, so Schultz left Starbucks to launch his own coffee venture, Il Giornale. The chain of coffee bars was off-the-charts successful. Riding on the triumph of Il Giornale and the support of new investors, Schultz bought Starbucks himself and merged it with Il Giornale to create a coffee-roasting and coffee-making enterprise. The new conglomerate became a publicly traded company in 1992.

Schultz's initial hope was to bring Starbucks beyond Seattle to more locations. The new cafés were a sensation. The immediate years were ones of staggering growth. Eventually, Starbucks added new dimensions to its café experience, branching out into pastries and then making music a key part of its java culture, acquiring Hear Music in 1999.

Starbucks is a case study in the power of simplicity when it comes to innovation. Its architects understood that in order to make a splash, they needed to do something new, but they didn't need to reinvent the wheel. While McDonald's, the largest coffee establishment at the time, was focusing on keeping everything the same, Starbucks was incrementally adding to its offerings: moving from commodity product (coffee) to upscale product (cappuccino) to theater experience (modern coffee house).

This is exactly what *The Creative Mindset* is about: being creative in small ways that have big consequences. These small creative sparks can come together to produce innovations that change the way we live.

One reason for contrasting a singularly fortunate case with a more modest one is to make it easier to identify what traits both

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cases share. At first, it may seem that Jim, the real estate agent, and Howard Shultz, the founder of the Starbucks we know today, have little in common. One is someone whom we might call an average person with an ordinary opportunity; the other is a celebrated billionaire. However, the path each took to success is surprisingly similar. Both saw what others had overlooked. Both challenged the conventional boundaries of their profession. Both escaped assumptions about how their business should work. In other words, both exhibited many of the traits of a creative mindset.

Creativity and Innovation

It's important here to make a distinction between creativity and innovation. For the purposes of this book, we are not taking an academic perspective on creativity. Instead, we're approaching this subject from the experience of seasoned practitioners, teachers, and consultants who have worked with organizations in various industries to differentiate themselves in the marketplace and make innovation happen.

Creativity is the conception of a useful novelty, and innovation is applying that creativity into a desired result. In other words, innovation is the tangible “product,” or the result or outcome of a creative endeavor. Creativity is the power that generates innovation. To learn to innovate, we need to learn to be creative. To become creative, we need to first develop our creative mindset and learn various tools and techniques to enhance our creative skills.

The Creative Mindset is a state of mind—a way of thinking, a way of seeing opportunities to sprinkle creativity into ordinary practices. When we are using our creative mindset, we are more aware of the problem or challenge we're working on and where we can add a little creativity to change it. The act of adding creativity to ordinary items to transform them into something extraordinary is what we call *creativizing*.

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Creativize is a neologism—a made-up term. It is the act of adding creativity into something, thus transforming it into something more: more beautiful, more useful, more novel, and so on. We assume the role of a *creativizer* when we make the ordinary extraordinary. Creativizing is taking something that already exists and building something new onto it. Creativizing is taking a creative mindset and putting it into action.

We see a creative mindset everywhere. Great product design firms often start the innovation process by building mock-ups with cheap plastic tubing or carving prototypes from a bar of soap. Famously, the *Apollo 13* crew and Mission Control Center brought the spacecraft safely back to earth through the imaginative use of spare parts that would have impressed MacGyver. Successful software firms mash up code and content from existing products and websites to quickly determine what is functional and beautiful before they invest in a big plan of action. It's no wonder that according to the 2010 IBM Global CEO Study (2010), creativity is considered the most important attribute in managing the increasingly complex business environment. The study described the characteristics of creative leaders who can translate their creativity into future success. These individuals are

- Hungry for change
- Innovative beyond customer imagination
- Globally integrated
- Disruptive by nature
- Genuine, not just generous

Those who adopt and master a creative mindset are ordinary people who make things extraordinary just through their ability to see options, create solutions, and gather the resources

other people overlook. We seldom notice these individuals, because they conjure up their modest bits of magic everywhere, every day.



STANEY'S STORY

Consider Andy, the retired autoworker who noticed that there were fewer children riding their bicycles around the neighborhood in the last few years. Remembering all the adventures he had had with his own bicycle when he was a child, he decided that he could make time to refurbish junked bicycles. He would then leave them out on the sidewalk in front of his yard for any child whose dreams of adventure needed some wheels.

Andy did this for an entire summer. Soon, people in the neighborhood started to bring bicycles that their kids had outgrown and leave them in his yard. If they needed fixing, he would fix them. His yard became a free market for bicycles, where people would leave what they did not need anymore and take what they needed. People started bringing little parts to Andy, such as bells and streamers, and asked what else he needed.

Gradually, unexpectedly, Andy's action transformed his neighborhood. Neighbors started to talk to each other more and develop a better relationship with each other. A stronger sense of community, care, and belonging emerged. What started as an act of one man ended up affecting the entire neighborhood. This is what it means to adopt a creative mindset. It's not about one big event or one big action. It's the small creative acts that really make a difference in our lives.

Mastering Creativity

Is everyone creative? Sure they are—but in very different ways and to varying degrees. There is a big difference between the folk song you wrote for your college sweetheart and a symphony composed by Beethoven. If you go to a top-shelf art fair, the difference in creative abilities between an accomplished artist and amateurs or dabblers is immediately obvious. The same goes for everything from poetry slams to reality talent shows.

What we need is meaningful appreciation of the different creativity skills and how we can use them to increase our own potential. What we need is a way to increase the magnitude of our own creativity and to manifest it in real innovation. We need to give power to our creativity and use it to translate ideation and inspiration into reality.

Whether in the research lab of a corporation or in the garage of your own house, innovation emerges from something small and with many constraints. We build with available materials. We add and subtract. We diversify our approach as we learn what works and doesn't. We tweak. We keep looking. With a little luck and some Krazy Glue, we may catch a glimpse of the solution. Now the chase begins in earnest. Successful innovators are not any more intelligent than the ordinary person. Rather, they are more motivated. This motivation can come from necessity or the internal drive to succeed. Either way, we must have both skill and will to make innovation happen.

The Creative Mindset begins with the understanding that behind creativity are concrete skills that anyone can learn. This book presents the techniques of the innovation process as six skills of creativity:

1. Clarify: getting the challenge right
2. Replicate: mimicking and reapplying ideas

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3. Elaborate: multiplying ideas by adding new ones
4. Associate: connecting ideas with analogies
5. Translate: creating stories from ideas
6. Evaluate: selecting the best ideas

Moving through each of these six skills, you will develop increasingly advanced capability—much as you develop muscles by exercising. Think of this as the innovation learning process, a mathematics of creativity: from the algebra of seeing and playing with ideas, to the geometry of redesigning them, to the trigonometry of transferring them to different domains, to the calculus of experimenting with higher planes of shifting ideas.

Although thinking of *The Creative Mindset* as a mathematics course underlines its teachability and brings creativity back down to earth from the rarefied realm of so-called geniuses, there is also the element of real life that we must take more seriously than any simple curriculum can convey. *The Creative Mindset* requires more than concrete steps and mastery, more even than ingenuity, time on our hands, or junk to tinker with. It calls on us to look for and actually see possibilities where others see dead ends—it asks us to be open to what the world might give us and to be prepared to turn it on its head in a way that no one else will see coming.

The Creative Mindset is a theory of practice. It doesn't attempt to provide an in-depth clinical explanation of the mechanisms of creativity, both personal and situational, or an exhaustive compendium of creativity methods and techniques. Nor are the six skills scientifically precise ways of organizing creativity according to increased neurological firing. Rather, the six skills, reflecting the innovation process, are based on their relative complexity. However, because everyone has a different way of learning, a given technique that seems difficult for one person may be quite straight-

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forward for another. This book is a simple framework to give you a basic understanding of how to develop your creative abilities in a practical way, and apply them everywhere and every day to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Let's get moving.

What Is the Creative Mindset?

WHEN WE COMBINE two seemingly basic elements that haven't been brought together before, we can build something extraordinary. When we eliminate something or add something on to an already great product or service, we can make it even better. This is what a creative mindset is: making minor, slight, incremental changes to preexisting things, which can take us surprisingly far.

The Creative Mindset won't make you smarter. There is no secret. It doesn't promise you riches or success. As with all learning, a creative mindset requires practice and persistence. Think of it as though you are learning to speak a foreign language or play a new instrument. It doesn't matter if you are eight or eighty, you still have to work at it to develop a level of mastery. The aim here is to make the journey enjoyable and worthwhile.

There is a powerful, quietly revolutionary impulse that underlies all acts of the Creative Mindset: a rejection of the boundaries that traditionally delineate creative acts. The Creative Mindset opens up the possibility of innovation in all realms of our everyday lives.

The Creative Mindset

In this spirit, the Creative Mindset asks us to be constantly on the lookout for the potential to innovate, to be deeply attuned to our larger world.

The opportunity to innovate may be right in front of your eyes, but turn around or blink and you'll miss it. Seizing on a moment of potential growth or creativity is about having the right field of vision. Think of watching a spectacular sunrise. People often miss out on sunrises because they're not looking in the right place. They can't see the horizon. They can only see the light of the sun when it's high in the sky, and by then it's too late—the sun has already risen.



JEFF'S STORY

When I was in second grade, I wanted to be a knight for Halloween. My father, fond of quoting Teddy Roosevelt—*Do what you can, with what you have, where you are*—and never one to throw scraps of any kind away, was eager to help with a homemade getup. In this case, he took an old plastic bucket, cut a slotted visor, and covered the whole thing with shiny aluminum foil. An old feather duster became a regal red plume. He fashioned a sword from a piece of floor molding that he spray-painted gunmetal gray so that it looked like a forged blade. My armor was a silver tanning blanket cut up and reconfigured through the miracle of duct tape. The next morning, I was as chivalrous and gallant as Lancelot himself, parading through the halls of my elementary school while the rabble stared with envy.

Transforming the Ordinary into the Extraordinary

My dad embodies the Creative Mindset. Like so many people with this attitude, he is a thoughtful and innovative maker of small moves and little miracles. He can improvise on the spot in the most improbable of situations. On one family camping trip to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, our car broke down just when we had run out of food, gas, and money. What followed was some of his finest work ever. We hitchhiked to the dump to find parts. We went fishing for dinner. We traded food staples with the other campers. We bartered services with gas station owners. One day and four hundred miles later, we pulled into our driveway in Kalamazoo. My mother gave a huge sigh of relief, but Dad said nothing. He knew he had had it in the bag the whole time.

My dad is still practicing the Creative Mindset well into his eighties. Every time I visit him, he is working on recreating or repurposing something that perhaps you or I might not have a use for.

When I watch him at work, I know I'm not in the presence of greatness. Although his gifts are innate and powerful, their magic lies in their ordinariness. For the longest time, Franklin, Edison, and Disney were the heroes of my imagination. But the longer I live, the more I appreciate the modest, resourceful person—like my father—who, through small yet brilliant moves, transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Becoming Creative

Anyone can master a creative mindset. That's because the hallmark of the Creative Mindset is its teachability—it's a state of mind that can be learned and developed. It's about being a student of the world, cultivating a curiosity for your surroundings that will lead to the insights that will change those surroundings.

The Creative Mindset

Paul Torrance (1962), who is one of the first researchers of creativity, found that highly creative people have the following attributes:

- Tolerance of incongruity
- Conceptual fluency
- Conceptual flexibility
- Originality
- Preference for complexity
- Independence from judgment
- Deviance
- Questioning of authority
- Impulse acceptance

In order to gain and practice those attributes, we need to employ a creative mindset. At a moment when Khan Academy, TED, Big Think, and tons of other open-access educational resources connect us to the best and brightest with a single click, it's easy to learn in a vacuum without others around, but what we really need to study first is ourselves. We need to become experts on our own potential. We need to know our strengths and weaknesses. We need to turn inward before we explore outward.

The late psychologist Max Wertheimer is largely credited as the founder of the modern study of creativity. In his book *Productive Thinking* (1945), written almost eighty years ago, he lays out the process by which we make ourselves ready to create. Wertheimer explains that preparation must precede incubation. That is, you must be emotionally and intellectually ready before you can truly generate novel ideas and recognize them as such. In subsequent studies, it has become clear that Wertheimer was right. Using a

What Is the Creative Mindset?

creativity technique is of little value if you are not first positively predisposed to seeing what is often missed or overlooked as a potential solution, and working through the ambiguity to better understand it.

It might be useful to think of creativity skills as a collection of lenses for a camera. Change the lens and you can change your perspective on a subject—wide angle to telephoto. Now think of the Creative Mindset as the photographers looking for an interesting shot. The photographers perceive, discover, and make sense of what they survey while looking through the lenses. Changing the angle of the shot is not enough to change the interpretation of what that shot means. Without the right frame of mind, the answer may be right in front of you, but you won't recognize it.

So how do you get into the right frame of mind? Here are some strategies that you should practice before and during your journey through the six skills:

- 1. Notice when, where, and how you are creative.** Let's find the optimal conditions under which creativity seems to come to you more easily. Is it in the morning before the family has woken up, or late at night when everyone is asleep—or is it right after lunch in the bustle of the afternoon? Do you get ideas when you are engaging in a discussion or when you think about the issues at hand during a quiet time in your office?
- 2. Be prepared at all times to capture ideas when they begin to flow.** Keep a pad and pencil in your purse or pocket, or take your smartphone with you to record your thoughts. Some people find it useful to keep a journal and a keepsake box or scrapbook full of ideas.
- 3. Pay attention to who and what gives and takes your energy.** Is it the playlist on your phone that puts you into a

creative mood or the inspiring coworker who always gets your spark going? Do you get ideas when you interact with other people or when you walk around?

4. **Consult the muses in your mind.** Think of some creative people in your life. Ask yourself, “What would my late Aunt Eleanor the painter say about this idea?” Or, conversely, “Is this what my super-conventional Uncle Bob would do?”
5. **Look for signs, incongruities, or anomalies.** The leading authority on sensemaking, Karl Weick (1995), stated that one way to enhance our sensemaking is to always look for disconfirming, not confirming, feedback. Be aware of your situation. Always ask yourself, “What if what I see is not quite accurate?” or “Am I interpreting what I see correctly?” or “Does it mean what I think it means?” or “What if I’ve gotten the situation wrong?” What would be the telltale signs? Are you ignoring some clues?
6. **Challenge boundaries and authority.** In the words of Paul Torrance (1993), become a “Beyonder.” A Beyonder is a highly creative individual who always pushes beyond boundaries, with a clear sense of purpose and an abundance of courage to be different. Do not take anything at face value; dig deeper for the purposes behind existing systems and procedures.
7. **Escape assumptions about how things should be.** Wage war against “This is how we’ve always done it!” Be comfortable in being unique, flexible, and different. Question everything, especially conventions. Make a list of procedures or processes that you need to “break” to fix them. Cultivate your unique voice and write an epic novel in multiple languages.
8. **Have a sense of destiny.** To be creative, you need to have courage to believe in yourself. Start by finding your mission

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in life. What will your life's work be? What's your Holy Grail? Compose small phrases of music on your phone, and over time combine them into a soundtrack. Envision what you want to do or be in the future and work toward it.

When it comes to the creative mindset, understand that the world is your classroom, that anything and everything might become a game-changing lesson.

The Creative Mindset is something you can develop and cultivate, and it requires constant practice to achieve a mastery of craft.

Let's start creativizing!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jeff and Staney DeGraff are partners, both in life and in business. They have raised three children and four Shetland sheepdogs. All their children have left the house, except for the most beloved Belle, a very bossy, very demanding, but also the loveliest sixteen-year-old Sheltie. They are expecting their first grandchild with anticipation.

Often asked how they can work together and stay married to each other, both Jeff and Staney would agree that they practice what they preach: they create constructive conflicts. This means that they do listen when the other disagrees, respect their differences, value each other's strengths, and accept each other's weaknesses. The process of creating constructive conflict is highlighted in the first book they wrote together, *The Innovation Code: The Creative Power of Constructive Conflict*, published by Berrett-Koehler in 2017.

That book and this one are written based on their experiences in working with diverse clients through their consulting

About the Authors

firm, the Innovatrium. Jeff and Staney, with the Innovatrium team, develop their clients' innovation ecosystem by creating a sustainable and dynamic innovation culture, competency, and community. They work with Fortune 500 companies and others across various industries, art and music organizations, and government entities.

In addition to being an author and consultant, **Jeff DeGraff** is also a sought-after speaker and a professor at the University of Michigan, Ross School of Business, where he has been teaching innovation to MBAs, BBAs, and executives for more than thirty years in fulfillment of his mission to democratize innovation. He has written many other books (including *Creativity at Work*, *Leading Innovation*, and *Competing Values Leadership*) and has been featured in a special program with public television (*Innovation You*) and in *The Next Idea* on public radio. Prior to joining the University of Michigan, Jeff was one of the executives who built Domino's Pizza in the 1980s.

Growing up on the west side of the state of Michigan, Jeff loves the outdoors, especially the Great Lakes, and has fond memories of camping and going fishing (even ice fishing in subzero weather) with his family during his childhood. Jeff has a deep aversion to doing nothing (such as relaxing on the beach) and is compelled to do something productive at all times.

Jeff earned his PhD from the University of Wisconsin in Madison in two years. For more information about Jeff, visit jeffdegraff.com.

Staney DeGraff is the CEO of Innovatrium (Innovatrium.org), the DeGraffs' consulting firm and idea lab in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She loves working with and mentoring students in her role and especially finds joy in seeing them grow. She is interested in the intersection of business, technology, and education. Her research

About the Authors

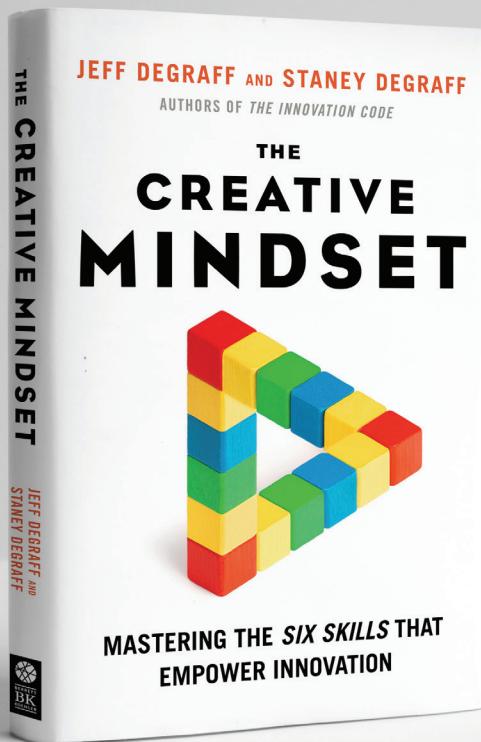
projects are in collaborative innovation, diverse innovation culture in high-performing teams, and quantifying the value of innovation.

Staney also collaborates with the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan in developing and teaching the Certified Professional Innovator program. She also designed and developed a collaborative innovation network tool for the University of Michigan and won an award for that effort.

Unlike Jeff, Staney loves relaxing and reading on the beach. She hates camping. She has fond memories of spending time on the beach with her family and a not-so-fond memory of a terrifying camping experience when she was in middle school. She pledges never to go ice fishing. She grew up as a Chinese minority in the beautiful country of Indonesia and misses the many different tropical fruits she can't find easily in America.

A true Wolverine, Staney received her MBA and MSE in computer science and engineering from the University of Michigan.

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