

Clearing Creative Hurdles

With Martha Lanaghan

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Am I...

Stuck

Is something in the way of my movement forward?

OR

Stumped

Do I need new ideas or to solve a problem before moving forward?

Questions to help me move ahead

These five issues may be causing your creative block. Often, two or more of them are at play at the same time. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to help you diagnose and clear those hurdles.

Hurdles might be...	Questions to help clear the hurdle
Fear	What will success look like when I complete this task? What would it look like if I didn't complete the task or complete it poorly? Are there consequences of remaining stuck? Should I be doing this task at all? How can I name the fear and move beyond it?
Fatigue	Am I overly stressed or burned out? Have I had enough rest recently? How could I create space to refresh or rejuvenate and then come back to this task?
Perfectionism	Can I create a BAD FIRST DRAFT to get the basics down, and come back and edit later? What (truly) are the consequences of moving too fast, or of doing this task 80% right?
Distractions	Where else could I work that would have fewer distractions? Am I distracted as a way to avoid this task? Should I be doing it in the first place?
Discouraged or Defeated	Why am I doubting my abilities? How could I get help to bring new ideas to the project? What is the root of my feelings of discouragement?

Seven Great Exercises to Energize and Move us Forward

All of these ideas can be executed alone or in a group as a way to stimulate creative thinking. 5-7 can be very interesting with a team or group that is facing a common challenge.

- Thought Walk**
Get up, take a walk. Purposefully focus on your project, and your surroundings. What inspiration or answers can you get from observing nature, or the city, etc.?
- Sprints (and Marathons)**
Set a 15-minute timer, eliminate all distractions and interruptions. Work as fast as you can and create the roughest first draft, no editing, just GO.
- Five Senses**
Think about your project through your unique senses. Get creative and really focus on one sense at a time, how do you experience this project if your sense was heightened? Diminished or gone?
- Right Brain/Left Brain**
Left = logic and language; Right = creativity, emotions and images. Think of your challenge in terms of statistics and words. Now, shift to images and emotions for the project. Shifting back and forth can stimulate inspiration and be energizing.
- Different Perspectives**
Imagine the issue/ project from widely differing perspectives. What would a 90 year old think? A 4 year old? How would someone from Iceland, versus someone from the Sahara think about this challenge?
- Assumptions**
Write down everything you know about a challenge or situation—then ask yourself if all of those things are really true, and how you know they're true
- Worst Solution / Worst Case**
Work with a team to come up with the absolute worst idea ever to solve the problem (poisonous cereal, for example). Then, examine that idea for similar ideas that are positive (cereal with added vitamins). This exercise is fun for groups, and can stimulate a variety of creative solutions.