



**Creative Thinking:**  
My Random Thoughts on Making the Creative Leap  
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**There's a Good Chance that You're Normal and I'm Not,  
or I'm Normal and You're Not, and so we Both May Actually be Normal!**

I am going to share some random thoughts with you on creativity. These are just my thoughts, and they are about my journey and my own need to be creative, and my own way that I have sought to nurture my innovative tendencies and creativity. The words here are not cradled in exceptional writing ability or fantastic grammar. They are really just a bunch of raw thoughts given a chance to become words others can read. I hope they will help you, or possibly entertain you at the very least. Most of all I would love for these thoughts that are now words to help you see how very normal you are, and how very special you are as well, and that the genius in you is just a person, and this person needs to be loved and nurtured! Don't be hard on yourself. Recognize that you are a creative being, and let your own personal creativity give way to a beautiful life. No one else can be you, or make YOUR contribution to this world. That is your calling, and others can be the better for it!

**Make a Leap for Creativity**

In my opinion, the best indicator of future behavior is *NOT* past behavior. The best indicator of future behavior is whether or not someone can ignite an interest or a passion within his or

her own heart. Sometimes this involves the help of another. Mentors and people who care can make a huge difference for someone when it comes to making a leap for a new idea, an inspiring dream or belief, or a better way of life.

I was a high school drop out from Long Island New York. Dropping out of school was fairly normal in the culture I grew up in. There were a select few people that came into my life as a young girl that made all the difference for me. They were living full, dynamic lives, and I wanted that too. Seeing it helped me to believe that I personally could have a better, more enriched life. I was ready to make the leap.

### **Know There are Many Approaches**

I never finished the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I barely started it. I knew I wanted a life that would connect me to people who were thinkers. For a high school drop out, going to college was unheard of. I moved from N.Y. to Texas and tried to go back to high school, but it was very difficult for me because of the new culture and also because of the oddness I felt in coming back to school after being a drop out. I went to night school to get my G.E.D. I basically mentored and schooled myself. I took the A.C.T. exam. At age 18, I traveled to Lufkin, TX. from Houston, TX. to begin classes at a junior college there. In order to finally go on to a university, I had to get creative. The very next semester, through a bit of lateral thinking, I managed to get a special interview with one of the Deans at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX. This was almost unheard of back in 1981. I was up front and frank with him, and he let me into the university—having only taken the A.C.T. exam and about 5 classes at a junior college.

With no study habits, no adults to really guide me, and only pennies to live on, I began my university career with confidence and a knowing that I belonged there just as much as anyone else.

## **Don't Look at the Problem—Look for the Solution**

For me, being in a university was a tremendous challenge, especially in Texas. I had a full 9<sup>th</sup> grade education, no money, and a thick New York accent. I was also very rough around the edges from my non-traditional upbringing.

Up to this point, my existence had involved a get-it quick, get-it now mentality. I went from one event in life to another, with no patience to speak of. You could think that it made sense for a creative person to jump around constantly, but for me, my cultivation of true creativity was going to involve slowing down.

For the first time in my life, I had to be willing to subdue my will and submit myself to a process that caused me to have to relinquish a certain amount of control in order to gain more. An education took time and discipline, both of which I was never really willing to give to myself before. Ironically, my creative process involved conforming to a system temporarily in order to gain control of myself and benefit in the long run.

The story gets long, and wild, and it makes a few turns, and jumps a few cliffs, but I did eventually finish my college career with two degrees and a Masters degree. Along the way it took a certain and definite mental focus and enormous physical and emotional effort to keep going—to believe the day I would receive the prize would ever finally get there, but the whole time I knew I was creating a better life, and not just for myself. By the time I was through, it all felt completely right—as if I were standing in the reason I began the journey in the first place.

## **Generate an Array of Options**

I am definitely a language, or word type of person. Many times, when I am talking and I say a certain word, I can actually see the word written out in my imagination.

I absolutely think of myself as an idea person and an innovator. I pull all of my resources and alternatives in when I am thinking on a new idea. I also don't ignore an idea because it seems bizarre, unsound, basic, or silly. I know that other ideas may grow from that one. I learned a long time ago to write all of my very creative thoughts down on paper. I have written on paper cups, bathroom tissue, and my leg. I don't want to lose an idea. I also learned that if you brainstorm, and write out all of the ideas that come to your mind, you may find that the ones you wrote down towards the end of your list are some of the better, more original ideas. They were deeper down in your creative process. That is why it is a good idea to keep writing even when you think you have run out of ideas.

### **Enjoy Being Flexible**

I love change. I actually thrive on it. This is a great thing in my opinion (however, I can also see how this love of change could hinder my creativity if the need for change interrupts the creative process of a certain thing before that process is complete).

Sometimes, when I am trying to be creative, my mind will jump around, and I do not sit on one topic, item, or train of thought. I do this deliberately, and I have done it for so long that it is second nature now.

Flexibility is the willingness to consider, try, or even embrace new ways of possessing, thinking, behaving, reasoning, and doing. You must always be open to what is not coming from your own head. If you want change and improvement, you won't get it from what you already do. You will get it from something different. Being flexible is an exercise of the mind and the actions, and it is always an exercise that you must practice and keep sharp. As you get older, and become immersed in responsibilities, you can begin to let your structure and routine take away from your flexibility. You have to guard flexibility the way you guard your heart.

## **Embrace Originality**

My main motivation for being original is that by getting out of the ordinary, I have more opportunity to place myself next to great thinkers. This is important to me. I purpose to surround myself with those who are, in my opinion, greater thinkers than myself, and with people who have had grander experiences than I have encountered. I want to grow and develop my mental faculties and go beyond societal and self-imposed limits. I want to listen to the minds of others, those who are not afraid to be different—those who don't even think too much about being different because they are so busy simply thinking. I want to see their thoughts.

Many times, almost daily, people in my life comment on my original and creative ideas. I am always involved in some sort of project or adventure. For me, some of the ideas most people think are incredible or creative are just standard operating procedure.

## **Emphasize Utility**

I tend to “Emphasize Utility” in life. Although I value and love to think on new planes, I am definitely a very practical person. I want my ideas to help others to make their lives better. Look at the needs of a group of people, identify the problem or objective for the group or the individuals within the group, and then get creative in helping to bring about a positive solution with as little negative consequence as possible. The ideas born of creativity can—and most of the time should—be used on a practical level, although the birth of those ideas many times must originate from a higher ground.

I like to look at things from new and different angles. I don't think I am more intelligent than other people. I think I just enjoy doing something that others may not always enjoy, and that something is experiencing the challenge of seeing things in a different light. In the long run though, I always try to *apply* what I find in a very practical way. This is true innovation to me, and the meaning of “emphasizing utility”.

## **Elaborate with Some Restraint**

In my career as a success coach (and over the years as a home fashions designer), I know that it is important to elaborate on ideas. This is particularly true when dealing with clients who hire me to help them find or see new and creative concepts for their businesses. As a professional, I have to help the client to identify their personal vision, even when they think they do not have a particular vision. I sometimes start by helping them to understand what they do NOT want. Then we can begin to plan and to solve problems and build solutions. I ask them a lot of diagnostic questions. I help to birth an idea in them that actually originates in them and not in me. I simply help them to bring it to light.

Once we (together) develop a plan of action that will thrust them forward in their careers, it is important for me to keep their action steps clear and somewhat simple so the client does not feel initially overwhelmed, so that they feel excited and hopeful instead. This is especially true when they have just gone through the effort, or even the pressure, of identifying their most meaningful goals and true business and personal lifestyle desires. The last thing they need or want are too many actions to take at one time. I let them bask in their newfound direction and creativity peacefully for a while. Later on they can add new goals and action steps to their life as they grow in this new skill. Initially though, a moderate amount of information and a nominal number of decisions will act to empower my clients without causing them frustration or discouragement. This gets them standing solidly on the road to self and business improvement with amazing positive results. By the way, this same type of process works enormously well with the decorating client, too.

## **Stay Open to Discomfort**

Most of us like to feel the sense of completeness when it comes to tasks, projects, and finding solutions to problems. We want to get out of the uncomfortable places and back into comfort. This is our natural inclination.

I have found that my most substantial growth comes when I allow myself to stay in the process of learning to the point where it is uncomfortable. To stretch my thinking and learn new things, and to stretch my mind to think in new ways, takes real effort. I think it is much like having a baby. To birth something spectacular, there is pain, or as some people who have never had a baby would say, there is unsettling pressure! The creative mind is willing to fulfill the creative process in spite of the pain or pressure. There is no other way.

I think it is important to surround yourself with great minds who will not allow you to go through life taking the more easily traveled road. Creative people elicit and provoke thought in one another without even realizing it. Just being in the presence of a thinker, a problem solver, or an idea person can be enough to trigger new and exciting thoughts in you.

There are greater minds than your own—**always**. Your ideas and thoughts may seem ingenious—to you! There are others who may challenge these thoughts. Some people will challenge just to threaten you, and some to intimidate you. Who cares about all that! Some exceptional people, however, help you to stimulate your creative process by causing you to be accountable to the soundness of your ideas. Your challenger may be another person, or it may be yourself.

### **Notice Your Emotions, and Use Them for Growth**

I have had to learn to channel and control my emotions. I've learned not to let them drive me, but rather to let them work for me.

I am a very emotional person. I can cry easily at sentimental T.V. commercials. I can feel things so deeply sometimes. I can easily relate to how others may be feeling about their dealings in life. I can hardly watch the news because sad happenings cause my heart to ache for people and their families, even though they are strangers to me.

I am very sensitive, and I feel as though I can read people. Sometimes, I think I can understand their motives just by watching their behavior. This has been a blessing and a

curse. I have shed many tears and I have protected myself from harm, and I have also let myself be hurt many times when I shouldn't have. Eventually I learned though, never to take things too personally to the point of hurt feelings, even when people disregard me or are selfish towards me. I have learned to use the behaviors I see as a teaching tool, to better myself and understand human nature in general. I really know that people do not usually plan or intend to hurt others, but they are dealing with emotional deficits many times. Most people just want to feel important and feel loved.

I try to let my emotions be a catalyst for greater personal development. I am learning every day not to react, but to respond, and to be proactive, and to bring my emotions and all of their positive energy into the creative process. This allows me to grow instead of being emotionally crippled or instead of shrinking back.

### **Position Your Ideas and Actions within a Meaningful Context**

I am always seeking to create meaning in my life. Everything that I do must have meaning and a purpose. Other than when I am just plain having fun (which actually serves a purpose), I never want to be involved in projects or ideas that are frivolous.

Here is an example. As I grow one of my businesses, I want to know that the people I hire as contract workers truly benefit from working with me. I want to contribute to their lives economically. I want to know that the people that I chose to help me in my business are people who really derive value and benefit from the relationship. It is not enough to just pay someone. I want to contribute to the prosperity and self-esteem of others. I would never hire workers because I can get the labor cheap, and meanwhile take away from the soul of another individual. I want everything I do that involves others to build and contribute, and never tear down or take away.

I think it is also important to see the big picture. I think seeing the big picture, say in my company or in my relationships, allows me to form ideas and contribute to them so that they

are in line with my real life objectives. I almost always function in terms of seeing the big picture, and placing my life experiences and relationship interactions within that big picture.

## **Synthesize Ideas**

Brainstorming involves combining ideas. I love to connect ideas that would not normally be thought of together. I have made a name for myself in my profession by taking concepts from one industry and fitting them into another. Combining ideas is just a way I have learned to think.

I have several businesses that together form the DeGangi Group. Although these are distinct areas and niches, they all work together as a positive whole. They synthesize into one big idea, that of personal and professional growth for true, authentic, and passionate living, and creating environments that fully support that mindset.

I think that the culture you live by, and resonate with—the culture you personally create (not an ethnic culture) — is the driving force behind the combining and synthesizing of every aspect of your life. One culture can support a myriad of ideas, innovations, designs, projects, thoughts, and accomplishments. Your personal culture that you design is the mastermind that creates and ties together everything in your existence.

## **Visualize What You Want with Detail**

When I was 18 years old, I read a book called Psycho-Cybernetics. That book was masterful to me. The ideas it laid out were commanding, and they changed my life. I learned I could visualize things before they happened. I could see it, and therefore experience it.

The night after I read the book, I went bowling with a group of friends. I was determined to put my newly found theory into practice. I would visualize my arm swinging back and coming forward to release the ball. I would visualize the ball rolling down the alley. Then, in my imagination, the pins all fell down. I did this mental routine in my mind just after I stood

up to take my turn; it took about 10-15 seconds (I had to exercise patience and self-discipline to visualize it). The result was that I bowled the best game of my life, and everyone was extremely impressed. I became a believer!

I am also a strong believer in acting out the life that I want in order to achieve it. I do not say, "someday, when I have enough of..." rather I say, "what do I want?" And then I say, "what do I need to do to have it?" I believe I have a right to it.

Suppose I wanted to live in Hawaii, but the cost of living was very high. I am not the type of person to wait until I could afford it before I moved. I would move there, and then make it work.

Most of the time I also believe that I should think and act first, and "feel like it" later. For example, if I want to be a professional speaker, I should think I am one, and behave like one, and eventually, I will feel like one. If I want to be happy, I should behave in a happy way. Then I will feel happy. I also believe that I am already happy and sometimes things come along that try to disturb this happiness. My job is to remove those disturbances. I without a doubt believe that my thoughts create my reality.

### **Enjoy Imagery and Make Use of Fantasy**

This is a practice I have enjoyed since I was a child. It all has to do with visualization and desire, as well as a deep longing to experience greater things.

I journal a lot, and my journals all involve speaking of a life I have yet to attain, and expressing ideas that have yet to come to full fruition. I write them down because to me they are as real as if they were materialized. There is no difference to me except that the reality can be experienced tangibly. The joy of visualizing what I want is as exciting and fulfilling as getting it! Interestingly enough, when I go back and look at past journals, it is clear that I have actualized almost all of the things I wrote down.

I have used fantasy to expand my thinking. I have visualized myself sailing the world, designing huge office buildings in New York City, rescuing women from horrible situations, having fun with my kids, enjoying an exciting life with my husband, becoming very well known nationally in my trade, getting jobs, getting clients, getting a position on the board of directors of an organization, and enjoying success as a writer. I have fantasized about having conversations with important people, and having lunch with Wayne Dyer. Benjamin Franklin and I have walked down the street together, and he, along with Sojourner Truth, have come to one of my parties.

Fantasy is just another reality. It is not tangible; you cannot touch a hard surface in the world of fantasy. Yet, because fantasy is a life created by thought, it is real, and it exists. I have learned more in this world than in the one we all can see. One of the benefits of fantasy is that it actually brings many of those things you desire into existence in your real life. This has happened for me many times over.

### **Allow Movement and Noise!**

Creativity is motion. Motion is fluid. Creativity is also animated. It has life. Life moves and life makes sound. My thoughts are alive. It only makes sense that during the creative process the body shows movement and projects sound. All of the ideas that are swarming around in the brain need a path to move on.

I think doodling is motion, and I think it is noise. It is a way to help us to process our thoughts as living things. Naturally, as you write or sketch or think or create, if there is a pen in hand, funny and unusual marks will manifest onto the paper. This is natural, and it is fitting. Creativity is not static or inanimate. It is not motionless or unexpressive. You can see thoughts, feel them, and hear them. They are alive!

## **View it in a Different Way**

I find it fun and challenging to look at a common object or idea in a new and different way. This is the basis of innovation. One day, long, long ago, someone tore a little hole in the top of a plastic lid on their coffee cup, and suddenly a whole new world opened up for coffee cup lids and coffee drinkers alike. The same old object was seen with new eyes.

This concept works well with people, too. I have been married for over 20 years. I look at my spouse with new eyes fairly often. It makes our marriage exciting and fun. My love for my husband deepens when I do this. On the other hand, when I get stuck in a rut, and see him in one way, as a person that is not dynamic and new, I behave differently towards him. Our relationship suffers, not because he has changed, but because I have become stagnant in the way I look at him.

## **See Beyond, to what is Inside**

This is essential for expressive creativity. Seeing the “inside” involves my emotions more than it involves processes and tasks. It involves exciting scenarios and some fantasy rather than creative thinking strictly for the sake of problem solving.

Going beyond the mere surface in thinking about problems or in creating new ideas is the essence of my creativity. What is hidden becomes important. What is not seen becomes an issue as well as a tool for new and innovative thoughts and positive outcomes. Some of my deepest innovativeness is embedded within me, and is waiting under layers of common thought. So many of my most powerful thoughts have been repressed and compacted by common and routine thinking. I often have to crawl out from under this mound to find a new light that shines on my mind to reveal a more creative way of processing information. I need to look inside as part of the creative process.

## **Broaden and Extend the Boundaries**

Sometimes creative thinking involves new ground. I have not always had footsteps to follow, or mentors to guide me. I have been faced with situations where a new idea or a new way of thinking is essential, and setting myself apart meant coming up with “a color that has never been imagined” so to speak. This is the hardest part of creativity for me. Many of my ideas spring from the minds of others, and even small improvements or changes to another’s ideas or thoughts have solved problems for me or allowed me to grow both professionally and personally.

Extending the boundaries involves being willing to really take something apart and view it from all sides. I have opportunity at times to apply effort to look at problems from a whole new vantage point. What actual, decisive steps can I take to make a positive change? If a certain strategy has not worked in the past, why should I do more of this or why should I use that same strategy but with minor adjustments? What if I look for a totally new and better strategy? What if I erase the old way of thinking and doing things, and search for something completely different? I’m just saying, “what if”?

Sometimes extending the boundaries is when I must tap into that ultimate mastermind- the mind that is all thought. I really do believe that so much of creative thinking, if not all of it, is simply about tapping into the source mind, the energy source. I think it is interesting that some of the inventions that we enjoy today were created by several people at the same time. There were people in history who were writing down their ideas at the same moments in time that others were writing down those same ideas. The only difference is that someone made it into the public eye first.

Maybe there is nothing new under the sun. Maybe the new ideas originate not under the sun, but above it, where the mastermind resides. I have access to this mind, and I can line up with it at will, tune in so to speak. Then, rather than striving to grasp for creativity, I let it simply come to visit me.

## **Allow Humor to Come; Welcome and Befriend it**

Good humor is born of positive thought. Laughter and humor are natural medicines produced by the apothecary of a creative mind.

Humor comes to me from my creativity, and humor breeds more creativity in me. Humor is alive and exciting. Humor has helped me to cope with pain and sadness and low self-esteem. Humor has helped me to not look at myself as more important than I really am. Humor makes me human.

Playfulness is part of my personality. It allows me to be free and unencumbered. It helps me to relate to others, and it allows them permission to relate to me. It is a way that I can communicate to mere strangers the understanding that I am just like them. We share common experiences. Humor is one of the easiest ways to connect to strangers without infringing on the line of privacy or personal space.

Having a sense of humor keeps my mind clear and unobstructed. It is like having a clean bloodstream. Emotional disease cannot breed easily in the soul who has a sense of humor. Emotional health and creativity are given a safe environment to grow in where laughter and lightheartedness are present.

## **Create with a Better Future in Mind**

The point of creativity, of problem solving, of new ideas and innovation, is for someone to experience them. This is futuristic thinking. I bring productive thoughts into the physical realm in the form of workable products, ideas, solutions, art, and literature, for example, so that people, including me, can experience their benefits. The thoughts are nice, but the manifestation of creative thinking is the actual fruit that others can really enjoy.

Vision is absolutely tied to creativity. Most of my creative energies and pursuits are substantiated by the belief that I am creating a better future for others and myself. I can see

a better future. I see it as if it actually exists. This drives my efforts everyday. This is why I never get tired of accomplishing new things. Life is a process, not a destination. There will always be a future. I can experience the things I create as I travel along the way. I am experiencing today what I helped to create yesterday. That is exciting to me. That makes me feel alive. I am part of my future, and I help to create it.

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