



How to Unleash Your Creative Genius

“Creative types” are a myth. It’s not because they don’t exist. It’s because we’re all creative. Some of us simply lose touch with our creative sides along the way.

We don’t all have to be artists and writers, but there are benefits to taking up creative endeavors. They help us express ourselves, relieve stress and anxiety, and give us a sense of freedom.

If it’s been a long time since you’ve doodled, painted, or written freely, you simply need to spark your creativity. Here are four ways to do so.

Put your phone away. Boredom or free time is great for getting creative, but we’ve gotten so used to taking out our phones whenever we have a free second. Try a digital detox for a few hours or a few days and see what happens.

Listen to or watch something creative. A documentary about an artist or chef or a TED talk by a creator can be a great way to inspire your own creative thoughts.

Go outside. Head out into nature for a walk or jog, or just to sit and reflect. Natural beauty and wildlife can help lift a creative fog.

Just do it. Set aside some time and grab a notebook and a pen, or watercolors and a canvas. Then dive in. Don’t think about what you’re going to write, sketch, or paint; just start and see what happens.

If you practice these techniques, you might be surprised at the creative juices that start to flow!

Thinking of Buying a Home?

Get My Free Guide!

Buying a home is a complex process with many factors to consider. Prepare for the decisions you’ll need to make along the way. Make it easier by requesting my free guide. Just call and I’ll send it right out to you.

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6 Must-Haves to Set the Stage for a Quick Sale

Is your home ready to welcome potential buyers? To create the best appeal (and fetch the best price), it is helpful to stage your home.

Home staging refers to preparing your space to make it appealing to the highest number of buyers, with the goal of selling the home quickly and profitably.

While each house offers unique appeal, a few staging tips are helpful for nearly any home. To roll out the red carpet for your potential buyers, include the following must-have items.

Plants: Greenery makes a room feel warm and inviting. Use floor plants, tabletop plants or shelf plants to bring life to the corners of the room.

Candles: These provide a nice touch, but be sure to choose unscented or lightly scented. You don’t want to overwhelm visitors with an aroma or risk choosing a scent they don’t like.

Flowers: Add color and cheer to your yard and your interior with in-season blooms.

Throw pillows: Adding these to your beds, chairs and/or couches can provide a nice finishing touch to your décor that makes the space more appealing.

Towels: Coordinated linens in the bathroom create a clean, crisp, and luxurious atmosphere. Make sure towels are hung neatly and are in good condition. A brand-new hand towel can provide a nice touch.

Artwork: Neutral artwork on the walls is preferable to family portraits. Remember, the goal is to make your space appealing to as many buyers as possible. This means depersonalizing so they can envision *themselves* in your space instead of you.

Are You Sure This Is a DIY Project?

A major remodel can be expensive, making DIY an attractive option. But as you ponder tackling a home improvement project on your own, here are a few things to consider:

How extensive is the project? A complete remodel might include relocating walls, reconfiguring spaces, and replacing floors, fixtures, and plumbing systems. A refresh could involve painting walls, refacing cabinets and countertops, and maybe changing out hardware.

How old is the home? Older homes often present bigger problems. Antiquated electrical and plumbing systems can be dodgy for a DIYer. And issues such as mildew, mold, asbestos, and lead paint require treatment and/or removal by an experienced contractor.

Are permits required? Are essential systems up to code? You may need a licensed contractor to obtain necessary permits.

Do you have the right tools? Before you start, determine what tools you'll need and the cost to obtain them. You might find that hiring a contractor is more cost-effective than buying tools.



Thanks for All Your Referrals!

I succeed when people like you refer me to your friends, neighbors and loved ones. It's the best kind of feedback I can receive.

So thanks for continuing to pass this newsletter on to people you care about.

Are you able to transport and store tools and materials? Remodeling projects often require large tools and heavy materials.

Are you prepared to undertake the job, and are you resourceful enough to respond well if something should go awry? Mistakes can be expensive. In the end, you could end up saving yourself time, money, and frustration by hiring a pro to do the work. Alternatively, you might try a hybrid approach and do some of the before-and-after work yourself.



Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

How has the price of your home changed in today's market? How much are other homes in your neighborhood selling for?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I'll be able to help. Just give me a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation.

I won't try to push you into listing with me or waste your time. I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value. And maybe I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Just give me a call at 978-478-8656 to arrange an appointment.



Worth Reading

New Uses for Things in Your Office

By Real Simple staff
Real Simple

Home offices sometimes become gathering places for miscellaneous household items. Before tossing items, watch this slideshow for advice about recycling them. Learn how to use elastic bands to label sandwiches and adhesive gift tags on file folders. Have an extra pitcher you've never used for beverages? Put pencils and other office supplies in it instead. **More:**
<https://tinyurl.com/worth05191>

What to Do When You Lose Your Job

By Alison Doyle
Career Toolbelt

It's sad but true: most people will lose a job, in some way, at some point in their working life. It can be jarring, and you may feel ill-prepared about how to proceed. Check out this article. It gives more than generic advice about writing resumes or preparing for interviews. It groups related items of advice together, lists things in the order in which you should do them, and provides further resources. **More:**
<https://tinyurl.com/worth05192>

What to Wear to Work—Tips for 4 Types of Office Dress Code Policies

By Jacqueline Curtis
Money Crashers

Businesses don't always do a good job of explaining what's required by different dress codes. The lack of clarity leaves employees wondering what to include in their professional wardrobe. This article does a great job of describing what men and women should wear in different work environments, and gives suggestions about sensitive topics like hair length and tattoos. **More:**
<https://tinyurl.com/worth05193>

Top Design Trends for Today's Homes

Wondering what's hot and what's not for interior design? Whether you're hoping to create a buyer-friendly look as you prep your home for sale or simply want to stay on trend, these finishes will help you keep your surroundings looking sharp.

On the walls: Neutral is still in, but cold whites are fading away. Designers are reducing their use of these cold tones in favor of softer whites. These trending paint colors help make modern spaces feel warmer and more welcoming.

In the kitchen: Designers are moving away from all-white kitchens to add splashes of color. Deep blues, greys, and greens are growing in popularity for kitchen cabinet choices. All the cabinets don't have to be the same color, either. One hue may be chosen for top cabinetry and accented with another shade for

bottom cabinets. Contrasting metals in the hardware and fixtures complete the trend.

Off the presses: Recent enhancements to printing processes and modern materials have increased the quality of faux finishes. This emerging technology is allowing homeowners and designers to achieve the look of stone and other high-end finishes for flooring at a fraction of the cost and with easier installation. Choices such as marble and concrete will likely see a downturn as they are replaced by faux options.

From the outdoors: Homeowners are looking to connect with nature in their décor. Wood finishes are a top solution. Wood offers beauty and flexibility to apply to a variety of surroundings and suits a broad range of tastes. Designers can also incorporate this material to create a lighter and airier space, which is what many clients are seeking.

For the future: Builders and buyers are more environmentally aware than ever before. Current trends include eco-friendly materials and processes that reduce a home's carbon footprint. Contractors and homeowners are striving to make sustainable choices that have a positive long-term impact on the environment.

What do you think about these trends? Have your design preferences changed over time? If you're looking for any of these in a new home or thinking of making changes to your home, let me know how I can help.



Hosting Tips to Enhance Your Hospitality

The secret of a successful party is comfort—yours and that of your guests. Yet all too often we are so concerned about doing everything right that hosting turns into a stress fest. When you are the host, you want your friends to feel welcome and at home. Everything you do in preparation for the event is in service of that goal, and the less you fuss, the better it is for everyone. See if these tips make hosting easier next time.

No one wants to feel uncomfortable because they can't eat what you have prepared. Reach out ahead of time and ask about food allergies or restrictions.

Make the table pretty without a lot of fuss. Flowers add color and warmth to the setting, but keep arrangements low so they don't interfere with conversation. Soft music is a lovely addition. Instrumental or easy listening is usually best.

Prepare a meal you've made successfully before, so you're confident about the outcome. Keep it simple. Serve a pleasing dessert (or maybe two) to complete the meal sweetly. And relax! Remember, hospitality is all about comfort. With less stress, you'll be a great success, and your guests will feel sincerely welcomed.

Household Chores: How Often Should I...

The thought of spring cleaning may make you want to hibernate. It doesn't need to be this way. It might help to determine what chores need to be done daily, weekly, and monthly. Use this as a guide.

Daily: Make your bed. Wash dishes after every meal or at the end of each day. Clean spills and messes as needed.

Weekly: Bedsheets and pillowcases should be washed weekly. Towels should be cleaned at least once a week, if not

more. Clean sinks, bathtubs, and toilets each week. High-traffic areas should be vacuumed once a week; sweep and mop at this time, too.

Monthly: Each month, organize bedroom drawers and closets and clean the inside of the refrigerator, garbage cans, and recycling bins. To make monthly chores less overwhelming, do them throughout the month: pick a different chore for each week.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

What if the seller doesn't accept my offer?

First, it's important to realize that this is common. In many cases, sellers don't accept the offer given to them by the potential buyer. Instead, they make a counter offer.

This is likely what will happen when you make an offer on a home. If this occurs, your offer has not been rejected. It has simply been countered. The seller will typically ask for a higher price than you originally offered and may request an alteration of other terms on the contract as well.

When a counter-offer is made, you will work with your real estate agent to review the offer and decide if you want to accept it or make another counter-offer.

It is normal for negotiations to go back and forth several times before all parties come to a final agreement on terms. This could happen in a matter of minutes, but it often takes up to several hours or days.

The Coco, Early Report

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Sudoku instructions: Complete the 9×9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3×3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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Marinated Eggplant

Serves 4 as a side dish

2–3 medium eggplants
Olive oil for brushing
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
1 tablespoon chopped basil
3 tablespoons lemon juice
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
Red pepper flakes, to taste

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Trim the ends off the eggplants. Cut into thirds widthwise and then into wedges. Line the wedges on a large baking sheet, skin side down, and brush generously with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and roast for 15–20 minutes or until they are soft and golden brown on the edges.

Meanwhile, whisk together the herbs, pepper flakes, lemon juice, olive oil, and crushed garlic in a large bowl.

While the eggplants are still hot, add them to the marinade and toss to coat completely.

Allow to marinate for 2 hours before serving.

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