

# The Creative Mind

An Overachievers guide to boosting creativity  
& Mental performance



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ani is an Executive Coach and International Speaker, specializing in the neuroscience behind stress and burnout in high performing managers.

She is passionate about giving the gift of knowledge to those who are struggling under the pressures of expectation and limited resources and believes that leaders who achieve by habit should not be told to slow down. In fact, the opposite is true.

Ani's mission is to promote awareness of the structure, function and power of the brain's natural tendencies to fight mental fatigue to promote optimal performance.

Stress is not our natural state; it is a learned state, and can be unlearned using naturally powerful techniques that Ani shares in her "Avoiding Leadership Burnout" speeches, books, workshops and VIP coaching.

### THE SIMPLE TRUTH

Henri Poincare famously once said, "It is through science that we prove, but through intuition that we discover". Creativity and Intuition come hand in hand; when we develop one, we strengthen the other. We are neither Analytical nor Creative by nature when we are born; these are traits that we strengthen through experience and choice. Our brains are perfectly wired to develop equally both the left and right hemispheres and yet as adults we all relate to having a dominant side, often falling back on this as a way of explaining why we're either not creative or solutions driven.

To excel in management positions, some level of creativity is a must. It's not enough to navigate new issues with old proven solutions any more. Leaders are required and looked upon to come up with creative, innovative new ways to address old problems. However in our ever growing hyper-kinetic world, where goal posts are forever changing and stress is a natural fall back delimiter, the area of the brain associated with creative thinking is demoted and lays dormant.

Essentially the tap has been turned off. This eBook is your guide to opening the floodgates once more.



## The state of leadership

During instantaneous moments of stress, such as when a car pulls in to your lane without warning, a myriad of chemical and neural responses occur to push you safely in to defense mode. Blood is shunted away from your organs towards your extremities to give you power and strength, and neural intent goes in to overdrive for survival traits and thinking.

This explosion of immediate impulses ensures your safe arrival to work and it's God's gift to humanity. Our brain works in perfect harmony with every other system in our body and we recover to a balanced state within a few short minutes.

Imagine staying in that state of 'shock' for years on end. Unwittingly, this is exactly what 68% of high performing managers and leaders are currently experiencing.

In 2014 Forbes surveyed over 3,000 executives across the globe and found that almost 3/4 admitted to feeling excessive or extreme stress on a daily basis. Although we think that our leaders are provided with an enormous salary to marry that stress, the sad truth is that they're not. Even those with salaries that far outweigh the average expectation; there is no amount of money that will cover the damage that this stress is causing on the human brain.

The truth is, when a high performer, who is predominantly left brain hemisphere dominant, feels that they are being impacted by stress in a negative way (perception), a few fundamental shifts occur:

The Executive Functioning Centre of the brain, located in the prefrontal Cortex, slows activity.

This is the area responsible for Planning, Decision Making, Troubleshooting, Strategic thinking and Risk Mitigation



Our Hippocampus activity is impaired (brain cells die) causing forgetfulness and inhibits the learning of new cognitive skills

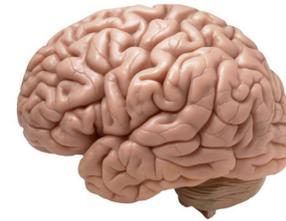


We start to shallow breathe, or skip breathe, meaning fresh oxygen fails to be supplied in full to the brain. The brain requires 20% of all O<sub>2</sub> inhaled in order to remain in optimal function.

And to make matters worse, when the stress cycle impairs our hormonal and chemical processes, our limbic resonance with others (that's our heart to heart compassion and empathy) fades meaning we no longer inspire others to think creatively on our behalf!



**ALL OF WHICH MAKE FOR AN UNINSPIRED & UNINSPIRATIONAL LEADER!**



## Hemi-Synching

It's long been thought that right brain dominant people are the most creative. Studies have indeed shown that the right side of the brain is highly active when doing tasks that are deemed 'creative' by nature. However, new research is showing that creativity is actually determined by how active your corpus callosum is. This is the part of the brain that connects the two lobes. Studies have shown that the corpus callosum is thicker in diameter in people who score highly on creativity tests. The thicker the corpus callosum, the more efficiently the brain synchronizes its activities. In other words, creativity is enhanced by an increased use of the whole brain; irrelevant to whether you're naturally left or right dominant.

**THIS IS GOOD NEWS FOR US ALL...**

Hemi-synching is a term used to explain bi-lateral usage of the brains hemispheres; in short, we use Hemi-synching techniques to open the connections and pathways between our left and right lobes.

To enhance creativity, as well as build resilience to daily stressors, there are a few easy techniques that we can use.



### Widen your eyes!

Try raising your eyebrows and widening your eyes. This fun & simple technique has been backed by research published in "creativity Research Journal" - It literally broadens the scope of your ideas.

### Write with your left hand

Start teaching yourself to write with your least dominant hand. Tough ask! But, specifically if you're right handed, this act will assist in opening right brain functions including creativity.



### Left Nasal Breathing

Block off your right nostril with your thumb, and breathe through your left nostril. Studies show this activates the right side of your brain. Quick & simple!



### Brain Gym

Train your brain to work in harmony by having fun with Brain-Gym activities that require both sides of the brain to work in synchronicity.

Some easy brain gym activities are:

- Rapidly shifting your eyes from left to right and back again repeatedly
- Crossing and uncrossing of the arms and legs
- Swimming or crawling (where all 4 limbs are required in motion)
- Any motion where your arm crosses the midline of the body, such as drawing a large infinity sign in front of you
- Symmetrical drawing - Draw a symmetrical object (such as a butterfly, or apple) with 2 pens, drawing both sides of the object at the same time.
- Dance like nobody's watching!

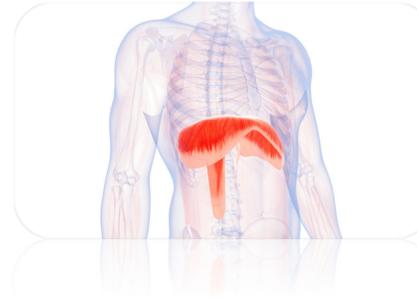
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## Beta to Alpha

The average white collared worker spends 90% of their day in a brain wave pattern of Beta and Gamma, which is above 14kp per second. We're fired up, and on high alert from the moment we get up in the morning. Studies in to mindfulness and meditation have shown that optimal learning actually occurs when the brain is relaxed and in a reflective state with lowered brain wave patterns of around 7-10kp per second.

This is known as Alpha state.

Studies at Stanford University (2015) found that the human brain is able to access dormant creative processes when we move in to Alpha state, even when we're tired and seemingly suffering from brain fog.



### Diaphragm breathing

Practice diaphragmatic breathing; take a long, slow breath in through the nose, making sure your tummy rises and pushes out when you do

so, hold that in for a count of 5, then slowly breath out again through the nose.

There are multiple activations at work here; when you slow your breath, you are sending a signal to the brain telling it that you're safe, and therefore to stop production of the stress hormones and chemicals that shut off creative thinking.

Nasal breathing also ensures freshly cleaned oxygen (via nose) reaches the brain efficiently.

### Get in to Nature

Another study performed at Stanford University also showed that the simple act of getting outside, in to nature (not walking between buildings, but through trees or at the ocean) was enough to change a students brain state instantly to Alpha.



**GO HUG SOME TREES!**

Other simple techniques to swiftly move from Beta (or Gamma) brain wave activity to an Alpha state of calm are:

- Spend time in meditation or quiet introspection
- Listen to calming, relaxing music
- Go for a long swim or walk, as long as it's methodical and repetitive in nature.
- Book a massage (concentrating on the touch instead of your extensive to-do list!)
- Socialize with fun friends who force you to relax and laugh



We don't grow in to it -  
we grow out of it

Thought you were analytical and had no creative bone in your body like I did? Think again. It's within us, we simply need to reactivate that ability again by promoting communication between the specific areas of our brain that are responsible for creativity.

Creativity in itself is a relative term. Who says that you're not already truly creative? Like Sheldon says in the Big Bang Theory: "In a world where Rhinoceroses are domesticated pets, who wins the Second World War?"

Confused? Aren't we all? But sometimes such a simple question can force us to think outside that box...



Gesture with both hands. Odd but true. This simple act has been shown to prompt the brain to consider issues from multiple perspectives.

Ensure you're in a positive mood. Feeling loved, or even thinking about love has shown to best encourage creative thinking.



Look at something Blue or Green! Weird, I know! These colors have been proven to enhance performance on cognitive tasks!



### And finally...

Throughout this booklet, you've learnt scientifically proven techniques to promote creativity within the brain. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand how easy this stuff is. It's simple, effective and if any of the above are done on a regular basis, can promote optimal performance of your mental state through replacing old, non serving paradigms and programs.

So the next time you reach for the old adage "I'm not creative", think again. It's within us all. And when you come to realize that the most well liked, popular leaders of the world are those who balance creativity and analytical thinking within their leadership style, you'll have yet another reason to try.

*Einstein famously said,*

*"The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it intuition or what you will, the solution comes to you and you don't know how or way"*