



JOOL Deep Dive *into Creativity*

SESSION 2

Welcome back. This session and next, we'll be focusing on the Discovery phase of the creative process. We're all pretty good at playing the critic, so we'll spend less time on the Evaluation phase. Ok, Discovery. This is where you let your intuitive, associative mind run free. No judgement. Discovery's all about the quantity of new ideas and connections; we'll worry about quality later. During Discovery, fill your head with information, images, sounds, memories, feelings; you name it. Dive down rabbit holes. Shun the familiar in favor of unknown territory. There are even studies that reveal that exposure to new and unique information or environments can actually reprogram neural networks so you "see" things in completely fresh ways. Think different, indeed!

But first, what's up with today's session title: *Forget Everything You Know*? This really means two things: 1) place all preconceived notions and biases on hold and, 2) put any sacred cows out to pasture. During Discovery, your brain needs to be able to go rogue. No walls or fences -- just a very large playground where anything is possible...and welcome.

So, let's try out this "forget everything you know" concept with an exercise we call **The Brick**. Why's it useful? It's a way of looking at something as if for the first time, divorced from any previous knowledge or understanding. Let's take a common builder's brick and describe it:

- Rectangular - But what's a "rectangle"? Remember we're forgetting "everything" we know. Perhaps we can describe it as an oblong shaped object that measures roughly 4" x 2.25" x 8", has 4 sets of paired opposing sides created by 12 straight edges. *You can drive yourself a little crazy if you take this kind of questioning to an extreme. What matters is that you keep an open mind – thinking beyond what you know or think you know. Above all, have fun.*
- Weight: a little under 6 lbs.
- Color: Reddish brown
- Material: Some kind of organic composite

Ok, we no longer know what a brick is for but we have a pretty good notion of what it is. What can we do with or to it.

1. Give it a title and place it in an art gallery (apologies to Marcel Duchamp and Kevin Bacon)
2. Use it as a doorstep
3. Crush it and use it as a reddish pigment in paint
4. Use the crushed material as a base for a cosmetic
5. Can this powder become a skin cleansing abrasive?
6. How about using it for juggling -- what else would we juggle with it?
7. A serious posture correction device

You get the idea. How many more can you come up with? A group of architects attending a workshop with JOOL Health founder Vic Strecher came up with 35!

Speaking of groups, let's briefly talk about brainstorming. These days, not everyone's a fan of brainstorming. We think that's because it only works if you have something more to work with than 1) "Let's get everyone together and see what happens" and, 2) "Remember, there's no such thing as a bad idea." Successful brainstorming needs the gentle nudge of a leader -- someone to keep things on track. Here are a few guidelines:

- **No dead weight.** Don't invite everyone. A small group 5 - 7 max is best and only those with something to offer in terms of both knowledge and creative skill or inclination.
- **Know the problem.** Have the problem fully defined up front. Don't waste precious time doing something that one or two of you could have done in advance.
- **Prepare** Send out your problem definition and any supporting materials prior to the brainstorm to allow participants to review. Their unconscious minds will thank you.
- **Come loaded.** Bring everything and the kitchen sink; any related materials plus a truck load of random materials of all shapes and sizes to fuel associative cross-pollination.
- **Have a plan.** There are loads of good books and resources on creativity (see the Resources section below). For brainstorming, we recommend Thinkertoys and ThinkPak (a card deck) by Michael Michalko, and Gamestorming by Dave Gray. All three are packed with techniques for wringing the most creative juice out of a brainstorm session.

And, yes, there are no bad ideas. Nothing can kill off a brainstorm session quicker than someone jumping forward into the Evaluation phase during Discovery. Chase out all persistent naysayers/"realists," or negative nitpickers as soon as they identify themselves.

That's all for now. Keep on the lookout for an invite to Session 3 in a few days. Till then...bye!