

As seen on  
**TED**



**CREATOR**  
**FIVE STEPS**

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to a  
**CREATIVE**  
**MIND**



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by Frankie Bonilla

**From Consumer To Creator:**  
**5 Steps to a Creative Mind**

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**From Consumer To Creator:**  
**5 Steps to a Creative Mind**

For many years I have been praised for my creativity and my ability to spontaneously react in an innovative manner. Often I believed that I did “have the juice” as many have called it and that I possessed an innate special ability that allowed me to think out of the box. Today I know better, CREATIVITY is not a magic potion, it is a learned skill that we can all harness and develop. The following five step approach was developed as a multisensory experience to promote a creative mindset regardless of prior experiences, training or atmosphere. In addition it is intended as a vehicle to aid the transitory necessities required to go from consumer to creator.

# STEP 1



MINDFULNESS

I CAN  
I WILL  
I MUST

- Eric Thomas

***Enjoy Failure:***  
**#TrustTheProcess**

The idea of “enjoying failure” to many may seem like a contradictory oxymoron. Failure is most often defined as a lack of success while enjoyment is defined as the ability to possess and benefit from something. So then the question becomes, how can one benefit from lacking success? The answer is simpler than we may think. In essence the idea of success can never be quantified by one particular event or experience. On the contrary, success is always measured by the full body of work that has been amassed. For example, we don’t define Michael Jordan’s greatness by his ability to score thirty plus points on one particular game. No, we define his greatness by his ability to win six NBA championships as two separate sets of three-peats?, a feat that has seldom been accomplished. What we often overlook is that he won those six championships during a nineteen year span in which he retired twice and did not make the NBA championship game in thirteen of those nineteen seasons. But his process fueled his success. His failures prepared him for his wins. Failure then becomes a motivational tool that allows us to measure what we’ve achieved against what is necessary to attain our defined success. In short, if we view success as a process in which a series of actions are taken in order to achieve a particular end, then the inevitable failures will serve us as beneficial experiences that empower our impending triumph. Enjoy the process and you’ll never truly fail.

Only God Can Judge Me  
That which does not kill me  
can only make me stronger.

- Tupac Shakur

***Prosecutor, Judge & Jury:***

STOP Judging Yourself!

One outstanding trait that differentiates us human beings from other earthly mammals is our ability to recollect and relive specific memories from our past. See, in the wild, animals don't dwell on their failures or what they were not able to accomplish the previous day, let alone the previous year. Lions don't cry about the antelope that they almost caught and then are so sad the next day that they decide to lay around and not hunt. They don't have that privilege because their very existence is predicated on their next step. Their end goal is always simple, it's to eat. They don't focus on past failures nor do they anticipate future ones. They strive in the now because that's all that matters. Our most important state will always be the present one. Don Miguel Ruiz in *The Four Agreements* calls us auto domesticated animals. We base all of our judgements on the societal beliefs that have been taught to us. And society teaches us to be so judgemental that we become our own prosecutor, judge and jury. By agreeing with these beliefs, we reject all of our normal and instinctual tendencies to strive in spite of the circumstance. As students we are taught at school that failure is the worst thing that can happen. If you fail you will have to repeat again and will not be able to move on until an entire new year has passed. The embarrassment and humiliation that follows needs no introduction. Despite this being true in most traditional academic institutions, when it comes to creativity and the real world, that is not the case. It is essential that we undomesticate ourselves by disagreeing with the incorrect outlooks that have been taught to us in the past. And more importantly that we cease from holding ourselves accountable to standards that do not match our desired outcomes.

Fall seven times,  
Get up eight.

- Japanese Proverb

### **Forget What You Know:**

#### *New Beginnings*

Knowing our desired outcome is key when constructing a new mindset. Forgetting what you know and starting over may seem very daunting at first. As creatures of habit we become accustomed to routines that are directly tied to the way we are raised and the values that we've been taught. In addition, the human brain is constantly analyzing sensory information from current and past experiences in order to best predict outcomes and techniques. The question then arises, what does one do when our routine doesn't produce desired outcomes anymore? Easy, we start over! There really isn't any other choice to make. Not doing so will promote stagnation along with repeated undesired outcomes. If we want results we've never had before then we have to do things we've never done before. Even more specifically we have to be willing to divorce our past failures and tendencies. We cannot move forward if we remain anchored into systems that don't allow for progression. We are born into a societal system that's constantly reminding us of the impossible and what cannot be done, especially if you are born into specific cultures that are tied to specific socio economic groups. The truth is that something's impossible until someone actually does it and makes it into a possibility. Impossibility at its root is simply a mindset that one either accepts or chooses to overcome. Let's think about it, at one point there were no planes, no ink, no paper, no cell phones, no internet, no boats, no running water and no automobiles. All things that seem normal and everyday necessities for us but yet never existed before.

See it,  
Believe it,  
Receive it.

- Mark 11:24 (Jesus)

### **See the Finish Line Champ:**

#### *Visualize Victory*

One of the most incredible sport stories is that of Roger Bannister and the four minute mile. It is said that starting as far back as 1886 many runners were attempting to break the four minute mile mark. For years the most gifted coaches and athletes around the world attempted to do so to no avail. Many believed that it could only be done under what experts considered the perfect set of circumstances. The temperature had to be sixty eight degrees and no wind. The track had to be of hard and dry clay. And of course, it had to take place in front of a huge and loud crowd that would cheer the runner into his best ever achievement. In retrospect these circumstances seem so romantic and almost movie like. The perfect day for the perfect run. Instead, on May 6, 1954, a cold day, on a wet track, and in front of only a few thousand observers, Roger Bannister set a new four mile record with a time of three minutes, fifty-nine and four-tenths of a second. When asked how he was able to accomplish such a feat, he stated that he constantly would visualize crossing the finish line at the three minutes, fifty-nine second mark. What's amazing is that by the same time the following year four others had also broken the record and three of them did it during the same race. Mr. Bannister not only achieved what was seen as unachievable but he did so with no prior example. He visualized a victory that only he could attain. He saw it, he believed it and he received it.



“ABRACADABRA”

Is actually a Hebrew phrase meaning,  
“I Create What I Speak.”

### **Create Your Mantra:** *Daily Affirmations*

At its most fundamental use, a word is a tool by which to express either an agreement or a disagreement. Don Miguel Ruiz in the Four Agreements admonishes us to be impeccable with our words. With the explosiveness of 80's and 90's Hip-Hop, we all grew up hearing the phrase “Word is Bond.” TV mothers taught us that a man is measured by his ability to keep his word. Even at church, the preacher would hoop and holler “and the Word was God!” Despite all of these ideals surrounding us, at least for me, it was difficult to comprehend the importance of the internal word, the inner conversation and our daily affirmation. Daily affirmations have become a necessity for success in a world filled with sensationalism and negative news. The ideals behind the phrase “sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me,” are only useful if the negative words directed at us are being supplemented by positive words of energy from those that matter most to us. When we were children, we were taught to formulate words in order to express ourselves and communicate our wants and needs with those around us. As we grew older we became more independent in our expression and began to form our own ideals while becoming self reliant in the process. Creating your personal mantra as a daily ritual allows us to metacognitively mold our brains to form new clusters of positive thinking. They will serve as a daily reminder of your true self.

- 1.) I am the architect of my life; I build its foundation and choose its contents.
- 2.) Today, I am brimming with energy and overflowing with joy.
- 3.) My body is healthy; my mind is brilliant; my soul is tranquil.
- 4.) I am superior to negative thoughts and low actions.
- 5.) I have been given endless talents which I begin to utilize today.
- 6.) I forgive those who have harmed me in my past and peacefully detach from them.

- 7.) A river of compassion washes away my anger and replaces it with love.
- 8.) I am guided in my every step by Spirit who leads me towards what I must know and do.
- 9.) (If you're married) My marriage is becoming stronger, deeper, and more stable each day.
- 10.) I possess the qualities needed to be extremely successful.
- 11.) (For business owners) My business is growing, expanding, and thriving.
- 12.) Creative energy surges through me and leads me to new and brilliant ideas.
- 13.) Happiness is a choice. I base my happiness on my own accomplishments and the blessings I've been given.
- 14.) My ability to conquer my challenges is limitless; my potential to succeed is infinite.
- 15.) (For those who are unemployed) I deserve to be employed and paid well for my time, efforts, and ideas. Each day, I am closer to finding the perfect job for me.
- 16.) I am courageous and I stand up for myself.
- 17.) My thoughts are filled with positivity and my life is plentiful with prosperity.
- 18.) Today, I abandon my old habits and take up new, more positive ones.
- 19.) Many people look up to me and recognize my worth; I am admired.
- 20.) I am blessed with an incredible family and wonderful friends.
- 21.) I acknowledge my own self-worth; my confidence is soaring.
- 22.) Everything that is happening now is happening for my ultimate good.
- 23.) I am a powerhouse; I am indestructible.
- 24.) Though these times are difficult, they are only a short phase of life.
- 25.) My future is an ideal projection of what I envision now.
- 26.) My efforts are being supported by the universe; my dreams manifest into reality before my eyes.

27.) (For those who are single) The perfect partner for me is coming into my life sooner than I expect.

28.) I radiate beauty, charm, and grace.

29.) I am conquering my illness; I am defeating it steadily each day.

30.) My obstacles are moving out of my way; my path is carved towards greatness.

31.) I wake up today with strength in my heart and clarity in my mind.

32.) My fears of tomorrow are simply melting away.

33.) I am at peace with all that has happened, is happening, and will happen.

34.) My nature is Divine; I am a spiritual being.

35.) My life is just beginning.

#### CLASSROOM USE:

At the beginning of each session I dedicated the first six minutes of class to the video presentation of a motivational speaker. It was usually a compilation of sorts with dramatic music in the background. Below are website links to some prominent motivational speakers.

Eric Thomas: <http://etinspires.com/page/videos>

Tony Robbins: <https://www.tonyrobbins.com/>

Gary Vaynerchuk: <https://www.garyvaynerchuk.com/>

Art Williams: <https://www.artwilliamsbest.com/>

# STEP 2



**MOVEMENT**

Movement is the only way you have of affecting the world around you.  
— Daniel Wolpert

### ***Concentrate to Elevate***

For several years of my professional career I was a high school Spanish teacher. To say the least, I am very energetic, entertaining and loud. All of these traits truly enhanced my ability to capture young people's attention, if even for just a couple of minutes. All these things worked to my favor until the 2009-2010 academic school year. What happened you ask? The iPhone 3G was released and it seemed like every one of my students had one. At the time I just didn't get it. I was still using flip phones. My view of cellphones was that they were only needed to make phone calls. I didn't understand why they were staring at the screen the entire class period. Then something changed. I got my first iPhone and life as I knew it changed forever. It was amazing and quite captivating. Fast forward ten plus years and meet a generation of people who are born and so acquainted with modern technology that they don't recall a time without it. Merriam Webster defines concentration as direction of attention to a single object. So the idea that young people cannot concentrate is absurd. The hours spent on their phones is plenty evidence to refute that notion. The arising issue then becomes, how do we train ourselves to concentrate on the right things at the right time? The answer is Movement! Neuroscientist Daniel Wolpert claims that our brains have evolved not to think or feel but to control movement. He examines it further by relating our love and respect for athletic performances through the enriching of athletes as further evidence of our innate understanding of the mental difficulties and levels of concentration necessary to achieve those feats. It takes an enormous level of concentration to put a ball with a circumference of 29.5 inches into a rim with a diameter of 18 inches sitting 10 feet above the ground. A number of studies have proven that immediately after just one session of physical activity, the human brain can increase attention, memory, focus and concentration. A test conducted at the University of Illinois used brain images that read neural activity. The images compared the neural activity following sitting and walking for 20 minutes. The results were of polar opposites. Something as simple as walking will instantly elevate your cognitive powers!

It's an accomplishment,  
that you put yourself through something  
to get something better out of it.  
I feel that that's Beast Mode.

- Marshawn Lynch

**Beastly Increase:**  
*Attention & Memory*

With the rise of the digital evolution, the ways by which we plan, think and execute ideas has been drastically revolutionized. Simple mental tasks like remembering phone numbers, names and driving directions have been definitively outsourced to our smartphone apps and functions. This has created a cognitive deficit within what used to be our normal everyday rational. Neuroscientist Manfred Spitzer describes this occurrence as “Digital Dementia.” He further defines it as an overuse of digital technology resulting in the breakdown of cognitive abilities including the deterioration of short-term memory pathways. Today the use of technology has become a prominent component of the human experience and its significance does not appear to diminish any time soon. History has shown us time and time again that every civilization that did not possess or ignored technological advances in one way or another was faded out of relevancy and existence. The opposition of technology is not the answer. But if it’s true that our brains have evolved to control movement then it is through physical activity that we can trigger the habits necessary for cognitive rehabilitation and creative augmentation. The application of the mind is defined as attention. Memory is the power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned and retained especially through associative mechanisms. The results of a study of children who were randomly assigned to either a waitlist or to participate in a physical fitness program for 9 months is staggering. Physically fit kids demonstrated memory and efficiency of the brain by dispensing working memory to complete tasks. Every single session of physical activity was associated with improved concentration and more efficient transfers of information from short- to long-term memory. Consistent physical activity helps us to stay focused and remain on task for longer periods of time. Causing a beastly increase in information consumption while subsequently converting it into a grander creative exertion.

Accept the challenges  
so that you can feel  
the exhilaration  
of victory.

- George S. Patton

### **Feel the RUSH!**

*Endocannabinoid system:  
Psychoactive receptor of Cannabis*

Most of my adolescent memories revolve around the exhilarating feeling I had while racing around in my bicycle. I felt free, uninhibited and extremely elated. It was a daily rush I looked forward to. Every afternoon during the 1993-94 school year in Puerto Rico I had one routine. Get home, change clothes, ride bikes. That euphoric internal chemical change was naturally evoked by my body's movement. It wasn't a pill, a shot, a drink or any other form of drug. It was my body's movement. We currently live in a society that relies heavily on drug induced chemical reactions to deal with excitement, stress, depression and relaxation. Surely that list can be much longer, but you get the gist. In an era of instant gratification we also tend to do things that make us feel better without fully understanding the repercussions nor exhausting other natural options. Creating a dependency on the external and never tapping into what can become from within. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, bursts of bodily action can have influential effects on our temperament. The runner's high - that feeling of physical invincibility - is a real thing. Although the exact cause of it isn't unequivocally clear yet, it is certain that it is affixed to how the body and distinctively the brain, modify during exercise. Past research accredited endorphins, hormones released within the brain and nervous system that set in motion pain relief. More recent research has denounced the notion that endorphins greatly affect the brain as a result of their inability to quickly pass the blood-brain barrier due to their larger size. Newer scientific exploration suggests that endocannabinoids, the type of chemical that our bodies release with an impact similar to cannabis, yes marijuana, is a greater determining factor to that exultant feeling. Even more intriguing is the notion that it doesn't have to be a runner's high. It's really a fitness high that can be induced through any regular routine workout. Our body's homemade opiates generate the enhancing rush required for our brain to recognize its own superhuman ability to overcome every obstacle it is confronted with. Feel the RUSH and enjoy the HIGH!

Divergent thinking is the route,  
Not the obstacle,  
To Innovation

- Tim Brown  
IDEO CEO

## **DIVERGENT**

Futuristic movies with apocalyptic implications in which society has regressed are some of my favorite ones to watch. One particular series resonates with me and the current state of our academic education. In the Divergent trilogy the main character is a sixteen year old named Tris. Tris has just turned sixteen and is expected to join one of five available factions. The factions are bravery, kindness, intelligence, selflessness and honesty. She chooses bravery but during her initiation finds out that she is a Divergent. She possesses the qualities of all five factions. She is brave, kind, intelligent, selfless and honest. Within her society being Divergent is not celebrated. It is feared and comes with a penalty of death. Divergence keeps the character from the limitations that each particular faction poses. Unfortunately within today's academic environment we continue to see the ideals behind strictly keeping one methodology of thinking. Convergent thinking is greatly praised. Young minds are expected to sit still, work on one specific problem and generate one single solution. Not arriving at the popular solution is perceived as failure. The irony is that the internet generation has induced the largest number of self made millionaires we have ever seen. They have attained their riches through the invention of "things" that never existed prior. Many attest these rags to riches stories to luck and such. But luck has very little to do with divergent thinking. In mathematical terms, divergent is defined as an infinite sequence that does not have a limit. Divergent thinking is the free roaming, idea-generating component of creative thought. This kind of limitless process is seen in very young children. As we grow older we regress by choosing one order of thinking through which we set our own stifling ceiling of possibilities. Divergent thinking for many is something attributed to "geniuses" and not something tangibly available to the "common" folk. Fortunately that is not true and a simple daily walk in the park can prompt a divergence detonation. Thoreau, Nietzsche and other creatives claimed that walking gives wings to the imagination. Psychologists have recently provided experiential support that confirms the bolstering of the divergent mind through physical activity. Through consistent conscious movement we are able to remove the limitations we have been trained to think through. A moving body will lead to a boundless genius.



Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.

- Anthony J. D'Angelo  
Founder  
Collegiate Empowerment

### **Miracle Gro: BDNF**

*(Brain-derived neurotrophic factor)*

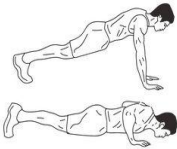
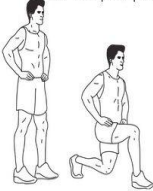
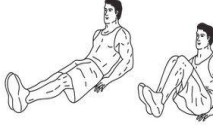
In their song Time, Pink Floyd famously penned “The sun is the same in a relative way but you're older. Shorter of breath and one day closer to death.” American culture is infatuated by youth and has become overtly disrespectful towards the elderly. Hip-Hop music teaches us that the good die young. But truth be told this is not a new phenomenon. From Herodotus to Juan Ponce de Leon, the search for a fountain of youth has been a human obsession for thousands of years. Youth reminds us of endless possibilities, beauty and physical strength. One fact will always remain the same though, we will all physically die one day, that's unavoidable. If the neuroscientific belief that the brain has evolved for movement is true, then how does movement boost the brain? Like most relationships, one sidedness, is unacceptable. The brain is designed for movement. Movement helps the brain to GROW! How so? Exercise stimulates the brain to yield more of a protein known as brain-derived neurotrophic factor. BDNF, also known as “Miracle-Gro for the brain,” is a potent protein that boosts brain cells to grow, interconnect, and communicate in new ways. Researchers now recognize that the brain continues to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. Many cultures around the world and a number of ancient civilizations regarded the elders in high esteem. The American notion that life ends after retirement is bogus at best. Greater movement not only spawns greater physical health, it also causes the brain to increase in functionality and execution. The production of BDNF in the brain as a result of exercise produces new brain cells regardless of one's physical age. Past civilizations may have never found the fountain of youth but neurologists have found the cause for the Mental fountain of youth. Exercise, and your brain will become strong, beautiful and full of endless possibilities. Never. Stop. Growing.

CLASSROOM USE:

The second session consisted of 12-15 minutes in which students were able to opt into two distinct forms of exercise. I ran a martial arts infused section while my teaching partner engaged her group through the rhythmic movements and sounds of Zumba. Below is a chart with low impact, no equipment and self guided exercises that can be performed within smaller spaces. Also included are links to the Zumba website along with some MMA fitness suggestions.

day 7 30 Days of Change

# Bodyweight Training

<p><b>1.</b> high knees 60 seconds</p> 	<p><b>2.</b> push ups b: 5 4 3 i: 10 8 6 a: 15 12 10</p> 	<p><b>3.</b> forward lunges b: 10 8 6 i: 20 15 10 a: 50 40 30</p> 
<p><b>4.</b> crunches b: 12 10 8 i: 20 18 16 a: 60 40 20</p> 	<p><b>5.</b> squats b: 12 10 8 i: 20 18 16 a: 40 30 20</p> 	<p><b>6.</b> knee pull-ins b: 12 10 8 i: 20 18 16 a: 40 30 20</p> 

*rest between sets*      **beginner:** as long as you need  
**intermediate:** up to 60 seconds  
**advanced:** 40 seconds

Zumba:

<https://www.zumba.com/en-US/>

MMA fitness:

[https://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/best\\_martial\\_arts\\_workout.htm](https://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/best_martial_arts_workout.htm)

Brain Gym:



# STEP 3



**PLAY**

“There are only patterns, patterns on top of patterns, patterns that affect other patterns. Patterns hidden by patterns. Patterns within patterns.

If you watch closely, history does nothing but repeat itself.”

— Chuck Palahniuk

### **Pattern Seeking Machines**

As an educator I am still amazed at how much we distance ourselves academically from our learning origins. It is through play that we learn about everything first hand. Before I ever drove, I first played with cars and imagined what it would be like to drive. For goodness sake, we chose to either be the “good” or the “bad” guy while playing cops and robbers. Play makes things fun. Fun makes us invested. Becoming invested increases concentration which leads to gains in focus and determination. Unfortunately societal norms have drawn a line for us between work and play, as if in some way they are at opposite ends of the productivity spectrum. On the contrary, Mary Poppins states that “in every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun and snap! The job’s a game.” Even within the animal kingdom, lessons are learned through play first. Cubs within their litter practice hiding and pouncing on one another prior to ever accompanying the pride on group hunts. Jane McGonigal asserts that games have four defining traits. An achievable goal, limiting rules, a feedback system that tracks progress and voluntary participants that accept the goal, rules and feedback. That sounds like school to me. These four defining traits play right into our strengths as human beings. We are learning machines equipped with pattern hunting brains. Since the dawn of time we have explored and experimented. It is how we became the fittest to survive. Monash University scientists have presented an interconnection between brain size and playfulness in mammals. Our huge brains crown us the most playful of all. Neurologically we are predisposed to seek pleasure and desire. Experiences that are pleasurable, like receiving a reward, release opioids into our brain. Experiences that we desire, like getting what we want, are fueled by dopamine. When the brain does not receive rewards it lowers the released doses of these chemicals. The body then is invigorated to search and crave for more rewards, the brain then quickly recognizes the patterns to the reward. It is argued that human intelligence is nothing more than an intensely sophisticated pattern detection tool. So master your tool. WORK HARD. PLAY EVEN HARDER. We were made to WIN!

The past cannot be changed.  
The future is yet in your power.  
- Unknown

### **I GOT THE POWER**

Power is defined as the ability to act or produce an effect. It is the possession of control, authority and influence over others. I love working and surrounding myself with young people. They are honest, insightful and the curators of global culture. One of my preferred ways to bond with young adults has always been through the play of basketball. It's important to point out that I stand at an imposing five feet seven inches, I can't go left and never developed a jump shot. Needless to say at this point, I never made varsity. Yet we went undefeated for years at annual staff vs. students games. I mean we didn't even practice. It's startling that a group of out of shape adults with aching bodies can defeat a group of athletic and physically dominating young adults at a game that better suits their set of skills. The truth of the matter is that we rely on the fact that they don't believe that they can beat us. LeBron James had to leave Cleveland in order to learn how to win. In Miami he was taught how to win by Pat Riley. Riley has won multiple champions as player, coach and president of basketball operations. Winning is a learned skill. If our students understood and knew the power that they possessed on the court they would have been running us off instantly. Skills accompanied by belief can be an unstoppable force. Unfortunately in today's world we often feel disenchanting by the system. Albeit work, school or our personal lives. We become discouraged and lose motivation. Time and time again I see this within our young scholars. Growing up as disenfranchised youth can take a toll on the mind. This is one of the many reasons why games are so appealing and therapeutic. Games serve as a practice stage in which we can control the action by making our own choices. It's not just a way by which to keep a child busy. It's a training ground for the mind, for adults and children alike. Games provide the liberty to act and interact within a specific system. While a lack of control generates frustration, autonomy and control create a greater sense of self. Our brains are malleable! Our neurological wiring can change through the introduction of new habits and behaviors. We can literally change our minds. Neuroplasticity is real. Norman Vincent Peale famously said, "Change your thoughts and you change your world." **YOU HAVE THE POWER!**

You gotta flow Joe,  
You gotta flow Joe  
You gotta gotta gotta gotta  
Let em know Joe

- FAT JOE

### ***Flow Joe***

On January 22, 2006 Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers scored 81 points versus the Toronto Raptors. Of those 81 points, 55 were scored in the second half. He was on fire. He was in the zone. He was unstoppable. He was in a state of Flow. Any given task can provide a human being with two extreme reactions. It will either induce anxiety or impel severe boredom. But flow is that fantastic balance in between the two. A place that you do not ever want to leave. It's a place of immersion, engagement and internal recognized achievement. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "human beings achieve a state of optimal experience when our skills are continually in balance with the challenges we face." Jane McGonigal uses the game of Tetris as a perfect example of how one can teach and train the mind to develop mental states of flow. If you have ever played Tetris you already know that it is pretty much a guarantee that you will end up losing. If you have never played, that may not sound very appealing, but if you have experienced it, you know how addictive Tetris can be. It's fun, it's difficult, and it never ends. It's always pushing you to your limits. As soon as you get rolling, it gets faster, it forces you to adapt quickly. You will only get as far as your adaptability takes you. But if you can get into the flow of shapes, it's a thing of beauty to continue to escalate to higher and higher levels. While conducting research in 1975 Csikszentmihalyi found a dismal absence of flow in normal adult activities. Far too many of those that he observed and interviewed, saw the responsibilities of life as depressing chores. He advised that we as a society remake our realities to function in parallel to games. I still remember the depressing words that I heard from many grown ups as I was growing up myself. "Life is not fun," they would say. But I challenge that. Life can be as fun as we make it. There are ways by which we can educate our phenomenal brains to not only step into a state of flow but also to excel in it. Kobe's 81 points were not a miraculous arbitration to his specific set of skills. Or a lack of skill within his opposition. No, on the contrary, they were a testament to what can happen when one commits to long term improvement. Practice and persistence will forever lead to our best lives. Play. Flow. Get in your zone.

There is just one life for each of us: our own.

- Euripides

### ***The ONE***

Albert Einstein famously said: "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales." Yup, that's right, Mr. E=mc<sup>2</sup> said that. Too often, society, family and school provide us with the necessary limitations that stifle growth, imagination and the conquering of the unknown. Through the fear of the known, we easily succumb to the lowering of expectations and the hypnotization of disbeliefs. Much like the Fairy Tales of old, games have the ability to transform us into everyday heroes. Our greatest myths and stories follow a very similar hero's journey. The "Chosen" one answers the call to greatness. He is educated by a knowledgeable sage, sets on an adventure filled with trials that take him to the brink of destruction, leading to the awakening of his true higher self. It is in this awakened state that our hero fulfills his potential by victoriously defeating his nemesis. In a world in which our day jobs fail to align with our aspirations, games give us a clear sense of purpose. Games allow us to retake control. They give us the opportunity to create temporary perfection away from the absolute order of the "real" world. We are able to take risks and experience fear in a controlled environment. That continuous repetition of simulated challenges rewires our minds to react differently to situations that may have brought about defeat in the past. We all want to matter. We all desire to be the "Chosen" one, regardless of our race, age, gender or socioeconomic status. Games give us Glory! A sense of incredible meaning and importance in an alternate reality. It affords our minds an escape into a world without limitations and never ending potential. A world by which we can attain total control of our destinies by defeating our greatest nemesis, our previous personal best. Games give hope to what can be. They empower us to create our narrative of choice. How do "we" want to be known. What do "we" want the outcome to be. Literally, take control and take control of your destiny. Create the world in which you want to live and then dominate it because Hero is not a noun, it is a VERB!!



“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

- Helen Keller

**Optimism:**  
*Power Up!*

In the 2018 blockbuster hit “Ready Player One,” we are introduced to a future society in which people seek regular escape from life through the virtual reality entertainment universe OASIS. The visuals to this film are captivating, mesmerizing and extremely nostalgic. It further exacerbates our love and infatuation with our ever evolving gaming culture as a behavior modification tool. In the 1960s psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman pioneered the early research surrounding the concept of learned helplessness. His experiments managed to prove that helplessness could be taught and therefore learned through our generalization of prior experiences. The idea that things have always been this way, therefore they will always be this way. Traditionally most of us are only able to change when we are forced by extreme life altering events to do so. Unfortunately these often coincide with emotional reactions to “negative” stimuli that in turn promote high amygdala activity. Research shows that this kind of elongated activity leads to high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, and ulcers. Despite there being a plethora of pharmaceutical solutions to alleviate the aforementioned health conditions, at its source, high amygdalar exertion can be curbed through an optimistically charged POWER UP! Games consistently provide an intense desire within us to be better than the rest. This has an exceptional side effect, the concept of illusory superiority, in which we think we’re better than we actually are. The beauty of this “boastful” yet delusional mindset is that the generated boost of confidence changes our outlook on difficult scenarios. It is an instinctual survival skill. Our very ignorance to the unknown outcome lends itself to the endless possibility of solutions. As we take action with a desire to master the problem we evolve and learn as we achieve. This is the very essence of video gaming. BELIEVE. ACHIEVE. LEARN. RESET. Games, specifically video gaming, can prove to be an ally towards the fight against the overcoming of psychological inertias caused by the faulty beliefs of perceived helplessness. The belief in the process of optimistic self improvement will be rewarded with the mental “level up” demanded by this game of life.

## CLASSROOM USE:

The third session consisted of 8-10 minutes of a tic-tac-toe tournament in which participants faced off in one and done elimination rounds until a champion was crowned. It's quite amazing to see the level of engagement and competitiveness that such a simple game of strategy can evoke in children and adults alike.

Alternative options can include actual video gaming in your favorite gaming console, phone apps, online games, board games or card games. The objective is to simply PLAY in controlled, scheduled short spurts.

# STEP 4



**CREATE**

Creativity is putting your imagination to work, and it's produced the most extraordinary results in human culture.

- Ken Robinson

### ***Bloom's TOP***

Bloom's Taxonomy was published in 1956 by a team of cognitive psychologists at the University of Chicago as a classification system used to define and distinguish different levels of human cognition. The six different classification levels: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation have been typically used by educators to inform or guide the development of assessments, curriculum, and instructional methods. As of 2001, the revised classification levels are now Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating. What stands out the most between the first and second iterations of Bloom's Taxonomy is its initial void of a Creativity level within its classification system. Unfortunately many academic settings continue to use the unrevised version in addition to solely focusing on the lower cognitive tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy. The omission and underuse of creativity as a measured human cognition continues to undermine the connection and correlation of academia and the real world. It is of no coincidental correlation then that some of the more recent great minds of the 21st century have all been college dropouts. Three of the most notable ones are Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg. These three men in particular are largely responsible for the online technological revolution we are currently experiencing. These three men are widely considered some of the greatest minds we've encountered in recent times. So why didn't college work for them? The answer is simple. Our traditional methods of education do not cater to the creative mind. We are taught to isolate and compartmentalize knowledge first, foremost and sometimes even solely. The idea that I need to know a prescribed amount of knowledge before I am ever able to create, test or innovate anything is preposterous. We are consistently taught limitations masked as rules and requirements all the while never training the mind to expound on solutions to the impossible. Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg all saw a world that first only existed within their minds. They created the change that they wanted to see even if no one else could. Today's online specialized knowledge economy leaves little to no space for one dimensional thinkers. Many companies no longer require college degrees for six figure salaries, just ask Google, Apple & IBM. Creativity sits at the TOP!

You will never find time for anything. If you want time you must make it.

– Charles Buxton

**Don't Wait for Inspiration:**  
*Create a Framework For It!*

Our current social and economic globalization has left us in a constant up-to-date state. I'm not just talking about social media and such, I'm referring to our day to day work schedules. We are constantly checking our emails and updating our extensive daily work list. Oftentimes we feel like if we can just "catch up" we'll be able to focus on our passion and creative impulses at the days end. But truth be told, that never happens, we ALWAYS have something else to do. And let's not even get into those of us who are parents, are currently in a relationship and/or have an uncompromising family commitment. I often hear my friends, colleagues and loved ones state how they wish they could be creative but just don't have the time. My response is always the same, just make time. Of course I'm met with an eye roll, a "that's easy for you to say" and a long to do list. But it's really just that simple. The problem with the catch up first approach is that you end up spending your best mental energy on other people's needs. We end up hoping for a rapture-like inspirational moment in which we are overtaken by an uncontrollable genius level creative idea that will change our lives forever. Creativity is a developed skill that with practice can be readily attained. We have an infatuation with pro athletes and their magnificent feats. We're tantalized by their final deliverables and performances. But that's because we only see the final result. We are not present during drills, practices nor moments of sacrifice. These high performers understand that victory starts with practice and that practice leads to consistency, growth and ultimately Greatness. Creativity is about commitment to self. Creativity is about willing yourself to find that inner genius that has been silenced inside of you by societal responsibilities and commitments. Creativity is about reverting back to that childlike genius that once dominated your brain. Don't wait another second, avoid the traps of workaholism, open your planner, take charge and schedule time for creativity today!

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.

- Aristotle

## **FREQUENCY**

In an era of instant gratification and highlight reels we're too afraid of being "corny" at something we love and respect. The fear of social ridicule and humiliation can have a stifling effect on our psyche's attempt at tapping into our highest cognitive levels of creativity. From the gate we have a tendency of comparing ourselves with the grates. That's both egotistical and straight up maniacal. Although it is healthy to be inspired by the work of the greats that we admire, it is also contradictorily insane to compare our first go at something with a refined piece of genius. Look at it from this perspective, is it fair to compare a two year olds first sprint out in the yard with Usain Bolt's record breaking Olympic dominance in the 100 meter, 200 meter and 4 X 100 meter relay? Not at all. It wouldn't make sense to do so. The same holds true with our creative genius. For most of us, we've lived within a world that has not encouraged the practice nor execution of creative thought. So in turn, like with any other acquired skill, it will take a while to supplant our old habitual reasoning styles. For this reason it is imperative that we develop a daily creative ritual. Part of creating a great framework for inspiration is not only setting a specific time aside, but also creating an environment that is both comfortable and conducive to the creative experience. Create an ambiance within your designated space and fill it with associative triggers. Find an inspiring song, light an inspiring scent, use the same tools (paint brush, pen, beat machine, etc.), and set a start and an end time. By cumulatively doing the same things in the same way, we are repeatedly creating a trained framework for our minds to be triggered into daily creative states. Frequency makes starting easier, keeps ideas fresh, sparks creativity and nurtures even more frequency. As Anthony Trollope stated "A small daily task, if it be really daily, will beat the labours of a spasmodic Hercules." As in life, this also holds truth in creativity, what we do daily is of greater impact than what we do sporadically once in a while. Creativity demands frequency and in turn frequency will lead to Greatness.

What is originality? Undetected plagiarism.

- William Ralph Inge

### **STEAL!!!!**

Originality is defined as the ability to think independently and creatively. Creativity is defined as the use of the imagination. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes famously said that there is nothing new under the sun. Often we also hear that history repeats itself. For many of us creativity is a foreign concept because we view it incorrectly. We think that creativity means that we have to make something from scratch that never existed before. But that is not so. Think about it, airplanes were designed to mimic the flight of birds, submarines to travel underwater as fish do and helicopters to imitate the propelling of flying insects. The beauty of today's smartphones is that they possess a multitude of preexisting functionalities that are encompassed within one device. Apple was not the first company to invent mail, typewriters, cameras, radios, phones, computers or the internet. But they were the ones who thought to put all of these devices together as one functioning apparatus. Wilson Mizner said if you copy from one author, it's plagiarism, but if you copy from many, it's research. In the book *Steal Like An Artist*, Austin Klein urges us not to steal the style of our heroes, but instead to abstract the reasoning behind the method. You don't want to look like the ones you admire, you want to view their creations through their lens. You want to understand their genius and in doing so, you find your own. When you copy, you imitate, when you emulate, you break through and make your own lane. Transforming and recreating a piece of anything is a testament and credit to those that came before you all the while transforming your own greatness along the way. So how does one start? By stealing and recreating everything you admire without fear of aesthetic outcomes. Go all in! I dedicate time daily to unnecessary creativity where I take ten different styles, images, sounds and/or creations of someone else's and recreate it in my own distinct way. Sometimes I'm amazed at the outcomes while others leave me understanding that I need to either try it again or do something else completely. But there lies the beauty, you'll never know, until you do. Don't be afraid to let someone else's genius guide you to yours.

Sharing is Caring.

- Salvation Army

## **SHARE**

As a creator, I personally know how difficult it can be to share a creative piece of content with your family and/or friends, let alone the entire world. The restrictive methodologies of traditional education train us to be afraid of failure and refrain us from ever appreciating its unique connection to innovations and design improvement. We spend twelve plus years submitting work based on the memorization of facts to one adult individual who determines, through a grade, whether the submitted content is acceptable and/or worthy of an accolade. With failure being dreadfully viewed along with the lack of an encouraging growth mindset, the idea of sharing and publishing can easily feel insurmountably overwhelming through the triggers of academic trauma. This is especially true when one is beginning to immerse into new and unknown genres of which one may be insecure and then add to that, the fear of public ridicule. But guess what, we are NOT in school and most of the people in the world DO NOT CARE. It's not that they are mean or cruel, most of us are just too busy with our day to day. So unless you have garnered some buzz within your particular area of interest, you have nothing to worry about. Nobody is checking for you. So publish away, share online, be fearless of your mistakes. Fail often and get better. Do good work and share it with people. Enjoy the obscurity, because those that are watching will be a testament to your growth, and when opportunity comes knocking you'll be an inspiration to all. Collaborate with others doing the same, either at a higher level or at the same as you. By sharing you are creating a community with like minded individuals. Constructive criticism can cut down in years of mistake making and fruitfully fast forward the rigor of your creative output. And please don't be one of those paranoid and secluded individuals who do not share because someone may "steal" their idea. To that extent, physicist and computing pioneer Howard Aiken attests, "If your ideas are any good, you'll have to ram them down people's throats." Don't be selfish, SHARE.



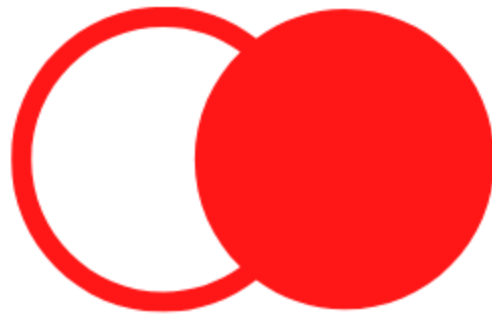
#### CLASSROOM USE:

The fourth session consisted of 15 minutes of group artistic creativity. First, examples of Picasso's cubist style of paintings along with Basquiat's neo-expressionist style are displayed on the screen for perusal. Second, participants were broken up into groups of four and provided with a large 25 X 30 inch sheet of white paper along with colored markers and pencils. Thirdly, within those small groups they were all assigned to create an authentic piece of art that included the shapes and colors of their choice. The aesthetic is to be determined by the creators and all participants must visibly participate in the creation of the new never before seen piece.

Other suggested options for creativity:

1. Super Mario Maker 2 for the Nintendo Switch.
2. Any game in which worlds and missions can be created.
3. Garageband or any other music creation application for electronic devices.
4. Copy anything you'd like to recreate and give it a shot!

# STEP 5



**REFLECT**

“You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life; and the procedure, the process is its own reward.”

— Amelia Earhart

### **Document the Process**

Up until this point we've discussed in detail the crucial elements vital to the mental and physical preparation and subsequent execution of creative productivity. Much like in our everyday lives it's essential that we reflect daily while exercising creativity as a tangible output. Just like we look in the mirror to gauge our reflection while we inspect our appearance, it's beneficial to keep tabs on the effectiveness of preferred processes, habits and outcomes. In the book, "Steal Like an Artist," Austin Kleon urges us to keep a log of our daily achievements. His ideology is that just as we chart and document goals and future events we should also chart and keep up with our past accomplishments. Not like a dairy, but more like the logbook that sailors kept in order to keep track of how far they'd travel. Doing so will allow for the creative to have a sense of pace. Growing as a creative can also be viewed through the athletic lens, more specifically, that of the body builder. It's a journey of self discovery and growth that pushes your limitations at every level. As whimsical as creativity seems to many and as euphoric as it seems to others, it is a systematic science that can be activated through procedural practice. Just take a deeper look at the bodybuilder, he has to keep a log of sets, reps and weight. He doesn't rely on memory nor does he rely on a feeling or a charismatic inspiration. He relies on the accurate documentation of his process in order to chart his growth and productivity. That's how he knows how much strength he's gained and that in turn grants him an opportunity to set attainable future goals. You are not in competition with any rival nor any specified metric, you are defining your body of work and shaping it into your likeness and image. Documented reflection permits the participant to experience a sobering view of the man in the mirror as a guide to a pure reflection of one's creative journey.

“The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate.” — Oprah

### **Celebrate Success**

There is such an amazing feeling of exhilaration when I am able to complete the daily tasks I've set out to do. I am a to do list type of person and man oh man do I love crossing things off of that list. As much as knowledge is for the mind, experience is for the body. Being able to create something that ideally existed in your mind either as an idea or as consumed knowledge and then forming it into something tangible that can be experienced through one or all of the senses is a huge cause for celebration. As first timers we often get stuck on the aesthetical perception of others and fail to recognize our greatest achievement, which is to push our cognitive habits to their highest zenith, creativity. In order for the creative process to become a habitual norm in our lives, celebratory recognitions must take place. I'm not talking about parties, awards, medals, public shout outs or things of that nature. Of Course those things are amazing in their own right but that's not what I aim to reference here. I'm referring to the chemical reactions that take place within our brains when we are emotionally invested in an experience, specifically a new one. Events are chemically recorded in our brains as we actively embody what we've learned. Therefore when we are able to create something we've never created before, our emotional state serves as a kind of bookmark to the technicalities that are taking place. When we are able to associate creative experiences with positive emotions of celebration and joy, these moments then become long term explicit memories that we can later recall and replicate. Kleon advises that we keep a praise file for positive comments or emails for the rainy days in which we may need a boost. When it comes to creativity I suggest that we raise it up and take it up a notch as the goal for the novice creator is to turn a creative spark into a continuous state. By consistently charging our creative experiences with positive celebratory emotions regardless of the aesthetic outcome, our minds will then create an imprint for the creative process and not just the final tangible creation. Due to the positive connection to the creative process, the reproduction and repetition of these episodic memories will transform into automatic skills, habits, behaviors and attitudes. And in turn transitioning creativity from a recollective event into an implicit, constant, state of being.

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.”

— Scott Adams

### **Learn from Mistakes**

Thomas Edison famously failed 1,000 times before successfully inventing the prototype of the light bulb. When a reporter asked him how it felt to fail 1,000 times, his answer was astonishing. Edison replied that he did not fail 1,000 times but that the light bulb was simply an invention that required 1,000 steps to complete. As a seasoned educator I've observed that creativity is not often noted synonymously with academics. As I mentioned before, too often it is viewed as some kind of special gift that only a few possess. But if we take a deeper dive into the processes and the different iterations of inventions that have changed our societies and our ways of living, we can see that none were birthed nor finalized after one single stroke of creative fairy dust. There is always a process. There will always be failures. Mistakes will be made. Roadblocks will arise. But breakthroughs will also take place. “Aha” moments will leave us tantalized at the thought of greater possibilities and will raise an internal rigor to exceed expectations. Many believe that the Scientific Method has been used since the ancient times. It is a concept first formalized by Sir Francis Bacon after tremendously being inspired by the works of Nicolaus Copernicus and Galileo Galilei. The Scientific Method is not a methodology that is singular to traditional science. In fact, the word science itself is defined as a systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject, any subject, even creativity. The Scientific Method is a great format to use, even if used partially and sparingly, to grow as a creative. Specifically steps one, three and five can prove to be helpful in the development of productive habits and constructive growth. Step one is simply to select something that you're curious about. Step three is all about experimenting and trying new things. And in step five we analyze our creation and determine if our chosen strategy was effective. This is not an intent to diminish the other other steps of the Scientific Method, on the contrary, it's an attempt to simplify it in a way by which creatives can see the benefits and connections to systemic approaches and rituals. The use of these steps can help us determine if we are using the right brushes to paint, the right sounds to produce or the correct training to athletically perform. Thomas Edison also famously said, “I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” All we have to do is find the one that does.

“It was all a Dream!” — The Notorious B.I.G.

### **Dream —→ Test**

Logic is the methodology that allows us to reach a conclusion and form an opinion based on available information. Reason is our ability to generate an argument on why and how that conclusion was reached. Whether its historical context, family lineage, oppression or institutionalized legalistic beliefs, many of us accept things as they are because we are taught that they are what they are. In humanity's attempt to compartmentalize, control and ease the transferring of information, we often provide and obtain knowledge in concentrated manipulated increments but rarely from a holistic view. We find ourselves divided by race, culture, customs, location, language, beliefs and preferred ways of communication. Each one with its own backdrop and defined tiered expectations. We accept and marry those ideals so that we can survive within our respective tribes and social enclaves. Dreams on the other hand are an escape that transport us to a surreal world where logic and reason have no reign. Where the rules, beliefs and expectations that are set by parents, schools and other governing parties have no sense of authority. Logic and reason both live in our conscious mind. They help us to navigate through daily scripted routines that have become our subconscious life programs. As we become physically drained, our bodies along with our conscious minds rest and turn off. Our subconscious and all of its obtained information does not. As the physical body is healing through rest, our subconscious mind is neurologically connecting all of the absorbed content and generating possibilities not defined by anything, anybody nor any time. This genius level of creativity can be reached because in a dream state we cannot be ruled by limitations, everything becomes fluid, interchangeable and undefined by common standards. Possibilities are limitless, ever changing and magnificent. As beautifully electrifying as sleeping dreams can be, daydreaming, creating and inventing are that much greater. It's imperative that we adopt ways of thinking that challenge the status quo and redefine accepted norms, albeit judicial, artistic or sonically, we have to push past limitations, it's the only way to grow and innovate. We have to dream and then go out there and test that hypothesis to see if it works. As Tupac famously stated, “I'm not saying I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world.” By creatively dreaming and manifesting those thoughts we are not only exceeding our own expectations, we are doing our part for the holistics collective growth and the inevitable transformative change that follows.

Winning takes talent, to repeat takes character. — Coach John Wooden

## REPEAT

Practicing one, several or all of these five steps can quickly enhance your creative output. It will inevitably give you a rush, an energizing sense of fulfillment, a neurological boost and a new belief of self that you may have never experienced before. But that feeling will flee and the euphoric high will come down. Every creative experience will not be one of astronomical proportions. It will require consistent efforts to transition from a solely consumerist mindset to one of creativity. But excellence and innovation are not birthed out of one offs nor are they for immediate gratification. From Coach Wooden's seven straight championships at UCLA, to the Bill Russell led Boston Celtic's eight straight NBA championships, to Michael Jordan's two three peats with the Chicago Bulls, it takes character to repeat greatness. With ease I use sports analogies to compare the creative process because athletes practice what seems like redundant drills to those of us from the outside looking in. But what practice does for the athlete is take the thinking out of the action and make it a subconscious reactive movement. The professional basketball player doesn't have to think about dribbling, taking two steps for a layup or shooting with form. Consistent drills in practice and the repetitive running of plays make game time easy and fluid. The great players rely on their instinct and become the game. In the same manner, the goal of these five steps is not necessarily that you will sit and create an amazing piece of art aesthetically pleasing to the masses. I mean, it can happen, but that is not the overall goal for those reading this book. The goal is that with consistent creative practice you become creative in all aspects of life. That you will begin to create and as Ghandi famously said "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." That you will see every problem as an opportunity to create a brand new solution. Creativity is not a gift for the few, when learned and repeatedly practiced, it is a transformative skill available for the many. From Consumer to Creator that is where the brilliance lies.

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