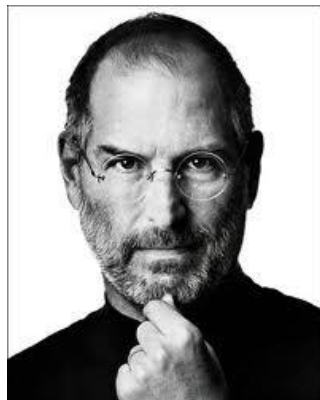


**ADVANCED MEDIATION
SKILLS: CREATIVITY,
CULTURE, AND CONFLICT**
CADRE'S SIXTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

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Creativity and the Brain

“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things.”



Steve Jobs

“Creativity can be described as
letting go of certainties.”

Gail Sheehy



“The chief enemy of creativity is
‘good’ sense.”

Pablo Picasso



CREATIVITY AND THE BRAIN

- ◉ Imagination is not separate from other kinds of cognition. It is not in one part of the brain. It is a combination of thought processes.



- ◉ The pre-frontal cortex, through a process called “cognitive disinhibition” screens out “unnecessary” information that it deems irrelevant.
- ◉ The more focused your thinking and the more deliberate you are, the more extraneous stimuli are screened.
- ◉ Less subtle, more creative ideas are lost. Creativity needs convergent *and* divergent processing.



- Productive daydreaming (relaxed thinking and free association) enhances creativity.



- ◉ Fragmented thinking, which reassembles thoughts the “wrong way,” occurs during sleep. These are called “binding errors.” Creativity is enhanced.



- An “a ha” moment is a spike in the gamma-wave rhythm - the highest electrical frequency in the brain. It often happens when one might think the brain is at “rest” - i.e., not focusing.



- Creativity is often preceded by frustration. But frustration should occur without fear and not be due to personal attack.

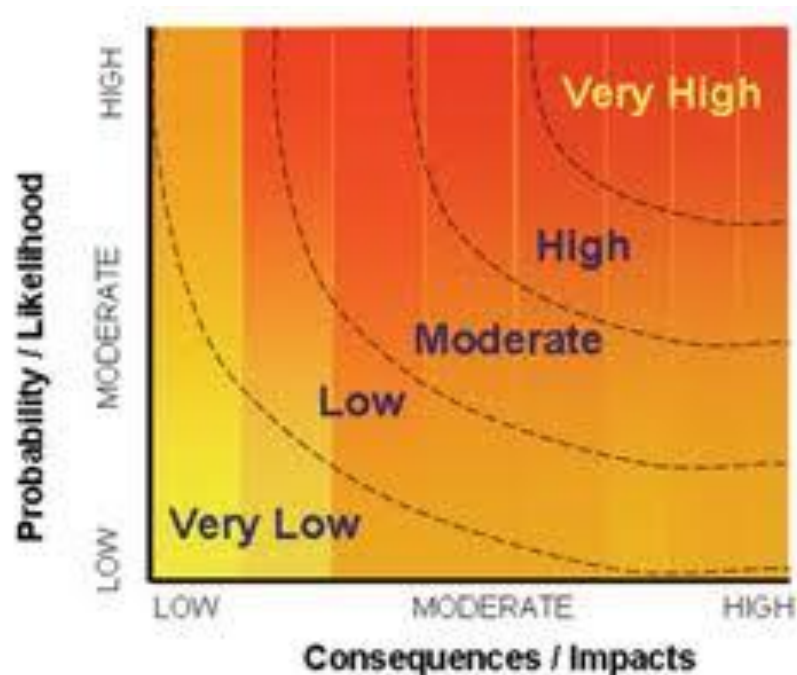


- Creativity is difficult to produce “on demand.”
 - “Okay, let’s put on our thinking caps and get creative.” Hmmm, not so much!



HOW DOES FEAR OF CHANGE IMPACT CREATIVITY?

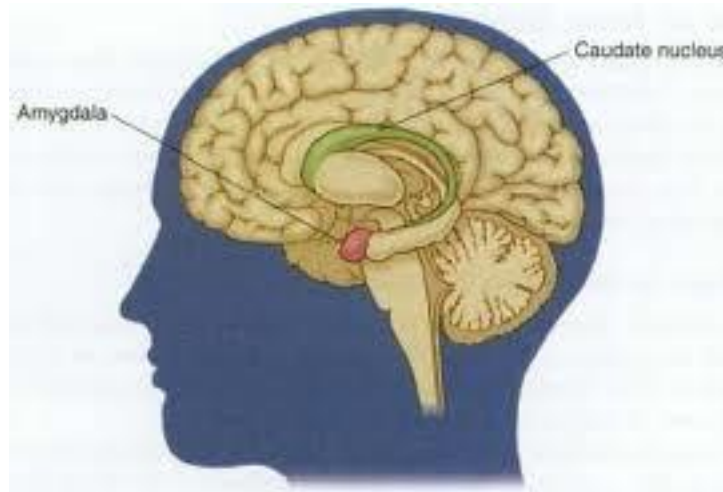
- ◉ Unique ideas feel riskier.
- ◉ If the action affords little or no benefit, the risk feels bigger.



- A greater possibility of failure, worry about social rejection, loss of face, uncertainty of completion, and criticism by others occurs.
- Unspoken negative associations with creativity exist even when there is a stated preference for creativity.



- If someone is feeling fear, they are in a higher state of arousal.
- Their amygdalae are “hijacked.”
- It is, therefore, difficult to think creatively.



WHAT IS COGNITIVE OVERLOAD?

- ◉ The amount of information is too great. The processing demands go beyond the processing limits of the listener producing stress.
- ◉ The listener is unable to integrate new information with what they already know.
- ◉ Without connection or meaning, the information does not go into the “working memory.”



INTERACTIVE EXERCISE

- ◉ Find a partner.
- ◉ One person will be “it.”
- ◉ The “it” person will tell the other person about a topic in which the “it” person is an expert and the listener is not.
- ◉ The “it” person should use “terms of art,” technical terms relating to the topic, etc.
- ◉ The “it” person will talk for three minutes with minimal involvement by the listener.

WHAT IS TRADITIONAL BRAINSTORMING?

- Developed by Alex F. Osborn in 1953 for use in his ad campaign company
- Wrote Applied Imagination
- Guidelines:
 - Create diverse groups - optimum size of 12.
 - Focus on quantity of ideas.
 - No criticism or development of ideas.
 - Keep going - don't lose momentum, don't give up.

HOW TRADITIONAL BRAINSTORMING CAN LIMIT CREATIVITY

- ⦿ **Brainstorm together?**
 - More ideas and better quality if solitary thinking occurs. (18 of 22 studies)
- ⦿ **More ideas are better?**
 - Too many ideas can be overwhelming and can create cognitive overload.
- ⦿ **No criticism?**
 - Constructive criticism, timed correctly, helps creativity.
- ⦿ **No quitting?**
 - Incubation helps creativity; without rest, decision fatigue can occur.

MORE “DOWNSIDES”

- Free riders
 - Not involved in the process - disengaged
- Social matching
 - Need for reciprocity / same level of production
- Evaluation Apprehension
 - Concerned about others’ opinions
- Production Blocking
 - One person takes over the process

EVEN MORE DOWNSIDES.....

- Illusion of Group Productivity
 - Primed to believe “group think” is better; self-evaluation results higher than objective
- Different learning and processing style
 - Monochronic and polychronic processing
 - Linear vs. multi-processing
 - Absorbers and reflectors
 - Sequential speech vs. cross talking

ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY

A NEW MODEL OF BRAINSTORMING

- ⦿ Be clear about the problem to be solved.
- ⦿ Allow time for preparation.
- ⦿ Realize creativity is a combination of convergent and divergent thinking. Don't force one over the other.

- ◎ Create a safe environment for:
 - reinforcement and constructive criticism
 - different processing styles
 - effective time management

- ◎ Define constructive criticism - questions of inquiry vs. questions of attack.

- ⦿ Do not set artificial time constraints.
- ⦿ Give breaks - preferably enough time to get a change of scenery or go outside.
- ⦿ Watch the “tempo.”

- ◉ Be cognizant of “absorbers” and “reflectors” in the room - give time for incubation of ideas.
- ◉ Establish time for both “free flowing discussions” as well as individual participation.
- ◉ Encourage different processing styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic).

- ⦿ Check in and make sure you are not losing someone to “zoning out,” overstimulation, or cognitive overload. Be sensitive to the amount of information that is being discussed.
- ⦿ Remember “jars of jam.” Focus on quality, not quantity.
- ⦿ Individualize the number of options/alternatives discussed based on an individual’s/group’s cognitive capacity.

- ⦿ Don't just brainstorm within your "sphere" (work, your friends, etc.) Be diverse.
- ⦿ Acknowledge that frustration can be a good thing. Be patient with yourself and others.
- ⦿ Try to remove pressure, if possible, but be aware of externalities that you do not control.

Working with Communication Issues

Misunderstandings in the *process* often create more difficulties than disagreements over the *outcome*

Cultural Miscommunication

WHAT IS HIGH UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE?



⊙ Uncertainty

- Subjective feeling, not objective risk analysis

⊙ High Uncertainty Avoidance

- Low tolerance for ambiguity, new ideas and risk. Desire to minimize uncertainty in most aspects of life.
- HUA is not related to trust.

⊙ Low Uncertainty Avoidance

- Higher tolerance for uncertainty
- More flexibility and openness for change

WHAT IS SITUATIONAL DISTRUST?

- ◉ Situational distrust is situation specific and/or person specific.
- ◉ It often creates reactive devaluation which causes a reluctance to embrace or support the other's ideas.
- ◉ Creativity flounders due to lack of trust.



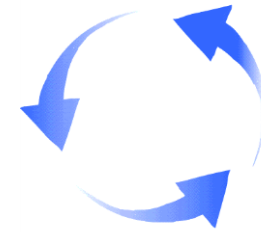
SO, TRY...

- ◉ Asking questions to determine whether the issue is HUA or situational distrust
 - “Are you someone you normally likes a lot of detail in your discussions or agreements?”
 - “Is there anything about this discussion that is different for you?”
- ◉ If situational distrust, working with trust issue
 - Is there anything that the other person can do that would regain your trust?
 - What specific things could happen to show you that you can trust the other person?
- ◉ If HUA, normalize the need to other party (depersonalizing the need for more structure/order/detail etc.)

WHAT ARE HIGH AND LOW CONTEXT CULTURES?

⦿ High Context (indirect speech)

- Implicit understanding - intuit from situation
- “Circling around” the topic - indirect
- Collective cultures



⦿ Low Context (direct speech)

- Explicit information is abundant
- Direct, to-the-point, linear
- Individualistic cultures



SO TRY...

- ⦿ Be aware of your own bias
- ⦿ If you are more high context
 - Be aware that others may perceive you as vague, ambivalent, or not being truthful when what you intend is to maintain harmony, help save face, and to create a collective environment.
- ⦿ If you are more low context
 - Be aware that others may perceive you as rude, aggressive, or domineering when what you intend is to be straightforward, direct, honest, and to the point.

SO TRY...

⦿ If you are high context

- Realize when others do not share your context and may not understand/intuit your meaning.
- Be patient, “circle in.”

⦿ If you are low context

- Do not “reframe” a high context speaker’s statements too directly.
- Be patient and listen carefully - the answers are there!

Psychological Miscommunication

WHAT IS STATUS QUO BIAS?

- ◉ The tendency to prefer the status quo and not to accept change, even when past practice/beliefs become counterproductive
 - Ex: opt in vs. opt out choices



SO, TRY...

- ⦿ Neutral framing (all options are equal) vs. status quo framing (one choice framed as status quo, the others as alternatives)
 - “Here are some ideas..” instead of “You may have done it that way in the past, but are you open to new ideas?”

Gender Miscommunication

RAPPORT AND REPORT TALK

○ Rapport Talk

- The goal is to create or repair relationships, build a connection, commiserate, share, or spend unstructured time with someone. No action is usually expected.



○ Report Talk

- The goal is to provide or exchange information, ask for an opinion, create a plan, seek agreement. Action is often expected.



SO TRY...

⦿ As a speaker

- Be clear as to your expectations
- Let someone know if those expectations change
- End the conversation with a clarifying statement
 - “I am so glad that I had a chance to tell you what I was thinking. I really have some closure now.”
 - “I am so glad that I had a chance to tell you what I was thinking. I am looking forward to seeing what steps we/you are going to take next.”

○ As a listener

■ Clarify the speaker's intentions

- Thank you for sharing that information. I feel I have a much better understanding of how you are feeling about the issue. Let's talk about what happens now.
 - Do you feel that additional action needs to be taken?
 - What would you like to see happen?
 - What needs to change in order for you to move forward?
 - How can I best help you?
 - Would you like me to give you some options or ideas of things we/you can do?

Situational Miscommunication

REACTIVE DEVALUATION

- The discounting of another's beliefs, opinions, ideas, or suggestions based on a pre-existing feeling of antipathy or dislike towards that person or that person's role.
- Reactive - from the gut, emotional, not thoughtful
- Devaluation - making less valuable or less valid

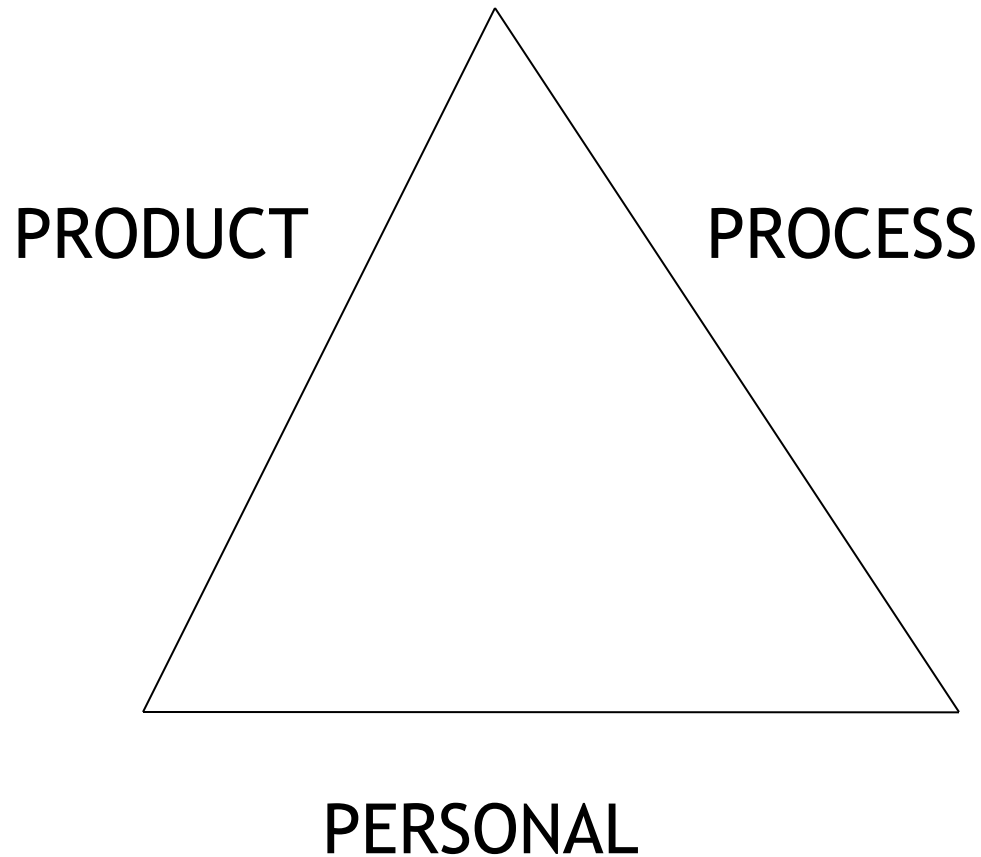


SO TRY...

- ◉ Be aware of the potential of reactive devaluation.
- ◉ If you are the speaker, have someone in attendance that the listener can relate to.
- ◉ Keep your own ego out of it - someone else may be a better person in *this* situation to give information or give suggestions.
- ◉ If possible, try to create a new relationship or a new role with the listener that could change their pre-existing bias towards you.

Summary

SECRETS TO SATISFACTION



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