



# Welcome from the Executive Editor

## Jenny Willis



As Norman explains in his Commissioning Editor's piece, we decided to experiment with crowd-sourcing articles for this edition of Lifewide Magazine, using a Google+ website which we called Our Creative Life (#creativelife). Invitations were extended to possible contributors early in November 2015, and initially, the response was good, but tailed off as the month went by. It has been an interesting experiment, teaching us much about the process of crowd-sourcing, and producing some rich, thoughtful material.

Norman and I asked questions or offered a prompt and references, sometimes to an expanded blog, with the aim of stimulating responses. The conversation ensuing from Norman's welcome post led to discussion of the sources of creativity and then to some illustrations of how this creativity was channelled through poetry. Examples are provided in the articles by Shelley Tracey and myself.

Occasionally, our efforts to stimulate responses appeared to have fallen on deaf ears, as in the case of Norman's opener on blogging, which he backed up with an extensive discussion in his portfolio (see below). However, it seems that some sown seeds take time to germinate, and we were delighted to receive the lively story from Graham Morgan.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the educational backgrounds of many Lifewiders, a conversation started by Barbara Nicholls, on the theme of pedagogy, elicited the highest number of responses (9). The article below demonstrates that this was a different sort of conversation, a practical one, where participants shared knowledge of specialist resources. We see a similar sort of correspondence in the dialogue initiated by Russ Law.

By contrast, the conversation between Scott Johnson and myself provided an opportunity for us to explore experiences in an almost therapeutic way, empathising and offering a platform for stating honest, sometimes critical, political views. The theme of creativity recurred in another conversation,

where the experiences and words of others illustrated how love can be the stimulus for creativity and development of the qualities necessary to realise an idea. We hear the words of a then 12 year-old speaking to her deceased father.

Even when our prompts did not receive a direct reply, the prompt itself might derive from an insightful on-line source, as with the story of Zimbabwean architect, Gerald Phiri.

Food was a popular and accessible theme for discussing creativity. We include here an article by Michael Tomlinson and a discussion it led to.

Sometimes, we addressed our questions directly to individuals, which proved to be a productive approach. John Cowan's amusing contribution illustrates this.

These, then, are some of the stories included in this edition of Lifewide Magazine. We set the scene with some conceptual reminders then launch the discussion with a delightful piece by David Burkhart on how coffee stimulates his creativity. This is followed by a moving account of a young Dutchwoman, Marinke's, struggle to control her depression through creating in crochet work. Tragically, she lost her fight.

As always, we update you on some of the activities we have been engaged on since our last issue of Lifewide Magazine. These include reports on conferences and our publications.

Finally, you may have noticed that the front page illustration of this edition is different from our usual style. This is due to our artist, Koboko Hachiyon's current ill health. I am sure you will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

With thanks to all our contributors, and to you all for your loyal following of Lifewide Magazine. A very Happy Christmas to you all and very best wishes for 2016.

*Jenny*



The cover image for 'Our Creative Life' is by Barbara Broido from 'Barbara's Doodle Blog, entry #6. It shows Jeff, her husband and a systems programmer, in his element immersed in his surroundings with the things he loves and the things he loves doing. This picture is rich in the possibilities for personal creativity and it captures well the idea that everyday life is full of potential for creative action if we are able to see and utilise these opportunities.

Sadly Barbara passed away in April 2014 following a short illness. But we are very grateful to Jeff for allowing us to use her picture for our cover and hope that she would view it as a tribute to her insights and creative work. Available at Barbara Broido <http://clamsend.com/eBay/doodleblog/entry6.htm>





## Commissioning Editor's Introduction

Norman Jackson

Ideas often come together in unexpected ways. As the Commissioning Editor for Lifewide Magazine I am always on the lookout for new ideas that will enable us to produce an issue that we hope will help us advance our thinking on different aspects of lifewide learning, development and achievement, and be interesting and useful to our readers. For this issue we picked the theme of personal creativity. Our creativity is clearly an important aspect of our achievements and it can manifest itself in any aspect of our life. But while we are happy to recognise creativity in others most people don't like talking about their own creativity. This is partly because culturally it is considered inappropriate to publicly broadcast our own talents and achievements and partly because we are just not used to talking about it and don't have the language to describe it in a meaningful way. Which is why people like Steve Jobs have helped by explaining creativity in simple down to earth language.

If we want a more creative world there is a job to be done in encouraging people to share their own stories about being creative and what creativity means to them. But I can't promote this idea without doing this myself so here is my perspective on Steve Jobs' idea that creativity is just about connecting things.

In late September I joined the #creativeHE mini MOOC, an on-line course on the theme of 'creativity for learning in higher education' organised and led by Chrissi Nerantzi (a member of Lifewide Education's team). I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and as a result of participating in it I developed new insights into how such on-line communities form and develop, and how the process of sharing perspectives leads to new understandings. I had never experienced being involved in a google+ community before, where people are continually sharing their perspectives and their lives.

As the course was coming to an end in late November, and realising that we had to produce the next issue of Lifewide Magazine, I had an idea, or more precisely I connected three ideas that had previously been unconnected. I put together the ideas of producing the magazine by crowd sourcing the content through a google+ community. As soon as I thought of it I knew we had to try doing it.

*"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

Fortunately, Executive Editor, Jenny Willis, who had also participated in the #creativeHE course liked the idea, so I set up the google+ community and spent a couple of days connecting to existing social network communities - google+ , Linkedin and Academia.edu. inviting people to join our crowd sourcing project and collaborative writing community. I also sent out many personal invitations to people I thought might be interested.







## Finding and Being in our Element

*The context in which people work, study, play with and make things, and socialise includes the 'mediums' through which they are able to express themselves through what they do and how they do it. The medium is an agency or means of doing and accomplishing something. In the context of personal creativity it is the means or mode of creative expression.*

*For an artist the medium includes his artistic expression (drawing, painting, sculpture, performance, film or other artform) and it includes the materials and tools he uses to create his art. For a writer his medium for self-expression is the words he writes with a pen and paper in a notebook (old technology) or a computer / word processor, and as several of the stories show, their words may be published through a personal blog.*

*For a performer like a footballer, his medium is the football field and the game of football which enables him to interpret and interact with the ebb and flow of the game to utilise his talents and skills to play football. For Jeff (front cover) he was in his element when playing with code on his computer surrounded by the things he loved and cared for.*

*Finding the medium for creative self-expression is an important and continuous search across and through all the spaces and opportunities in our life if we want to find joy and live a fulfilled and meaningful life. Personal creativity flourishes when an individual finds their 'element': the particular contexts and challenges in which they can fully utilise their aptitudes, abilities, talent and enthusiasm for doing something, because they care deeply about what they are doing and are motivated to perform in a committed and inspired way to achieve things they value.*

*We invited our community artist Kiboko HachiYon to show us what being in his element meant to him.*

### Being in My Element

#### Kiboko Hachiyon (Lifewide Education Magazine Illustrator)

My life as an illustrator and painter has made me largely a solitary individual. I work in a home studio that I recreated in 2012 and self-stimulation and surrounding myself with inspiration is paramount for my practice. As an artist colour and lighting are of great importance to me and they are everywhere in my space, especially yellows, reds and oranges. This compensates for the lack of heat, warmth and light in the winter period and is also good stimulus and lifts the spirit at any given time. The studio space is also completely white washed, to again balance the abundance of colour, and also double as a gallery space to hang and reflect on my paintings and illustrations.



I have my own personal growing library of books, mainly design and art based, but there are also a few works of selected literature. I also collect a variety of figures, sculptures and items of interest. These objects are points of reference in my life as well as sources for inspiration.

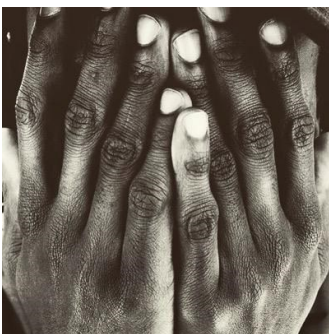
Being in my element and creating a space that allows me to feel and say that I am in my element is crucial, not only for my creative practice, but for my personal well being.

This space harbours my thoughts, ideas, anxieties, moments of genius, trials, tribulations, the list continues. I can lock myself inside and disappear, emerging victorious or pensive, as well as host and have meetings and previews of my works in progress. I can function on multiple levels and evolve, and the space evolves with me, echoing my personal and creative growth, thought process and hosting and cataloguing my varied life experiences.

My work tools vary depending on what I am creating. For painting, I use mixed media, acrylic paint, house paint, spray cans, and a variety of markers. Painting is a much freer form of expression because my works are created without a pause. There is a thought process but it is not hindered in any way, I start and stop automatically. My use of colour, is highly influenced by Africa, earthy tones, red, yellow, green. Spending much of my teens in Kenya and my experiences there continue to resonate in my work.

For illustration, I use mainly pens and pencils, a graphic tablet and a computer. The process is more labour intensive, as the works tend to have continual revisions. To keep the element of freedom alive, I created a process that enables me to keep the work free and evoke the same feeling I have when I am painting by keeping the initial sketches free and fast, and tightening the finished works. The process is almost similar to traditional cell animation.

My studio space has been specifically tailored to allow me to be in both my elements at the same time. One half is for illustration, another for painting and they are separated by my bookshelf that houses my library.



**Painting Portfolio:** [i-paint-too.tumblr.com](http://i-paint-too.tumblr.com)

**Illustration Portfolio:** [kibokohachiyon.tumblr.com](http://kibokohachiyon.tumblr.com)

**Blog:** [84thdreamchild.wordpress.com](http://84thdreamchild.wordpress.com)



## The Experience of Flow

**FLOW** is a positive psychological state associated with being in your element in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus and deep enjoyment while fully involved in the activity and the context. Flow is characterized by complete absorption in what one does. According to Csikszentmihalyi, flow is completely focused motivation. It is a single-minded immersion and represents perhaps the ultimate experience in harnessing the emotions in the service of performing and learning. In flow, the emotions are not just contained and channelled, but positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) identified six characteristics of flow:

- intense and focused concentration on the present moment
- merging of action and awareness in the moment
- a loss of reflective self-consciousness
- a sense of personal control or agency over the situation or activity
- transformation of time it feels that more or less time has passed than has actually passed
- the experience intrinsically rewarding

Those aspects can appear independently of each other, but only in combination do they constitute an experience of flow.

According to Csikszentmihalyi and his colleagues, to achieve flow, one must be faced with a challenge that is a match for his or her skills and offers new knowledge and new inspiration. Since flow is characterised by absolute enjoyment in the process of completing the activity, anxiety or boredom restricts the state of flow. If a challenge is too great, then the individual will be anxious. On the other hand, if one's skills are too great, then the individual will be bored. Tasks and activities that result in flow are about an enjoyable absorption in the process even if it is demanding and stressful.

It has to be said that most everyday experiences of being creative are not associated with feelings of flow but in this next article, Steve Pavlina shares his experience of being in a state of flow.

### Source:

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997) *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* New York: Harper Perennial.

## My Experience of Creativity

### Steve Pavlina



Steve is widely recognized as one of the most successful personal development bloggers on the Internet, with his work attracting more than 100 million visits to his website, [StevePavlina.com](http://StevePavlina.com)

The act of creating something, whether it be an article, a poem, a website, a computer program, or some other creative human expression, is one of my most cherished activities. It usually takes a while for me to fully enter the highly creative flow state, but once I'm there I lose awareness of everything but the present moment and the ideas flowing through me. I forget who I am. I lose all sense of time. I don't even perceive my fingers typing.

When I'm in this state of mind, I experience massive internal resistance to anything that attempts to knock me out of it. I lock my office door. I ignore the telephone. If someone knocks on my door, I'll shout, "Go away!" My defensive reactions are subconscious and automatic — I'm rarely consciously aware of them. Usually I don't even recall the interruptions. Erin could pop into my office and say something to me, and I wouldn't even remember she came in.

Once I'm immersed in creating something, I usually maintain the state until I complete a meaningful chunk of work such as finishing an article, I run out of time due to a pending appointment, or I'm overwhelmed by a physical sensation like hunger or exhaustion. As an example I began writing my last article at 6pm one evening. I worked on the article six hours straight from concept to completion and posted it just after midnight. I remember seeing 7pm on the clock at one point, but after that I lost all sense of time. For those last five hours I never got out of my chair, not even to use the bathroom. I forgot to eat dinner. I didn't notice that the rest of the family went to bed at some point. I went to sleep at 12:30am and awoke just before 5am feeling totally refreshed.

For some reason these periods of intense concentration tend to reduce my need for sleep, much like doing an extended meditation. The more creative work I do, the less sleep I seem to need.

I don't normally feel like I'm channelling creative work — I've experimented with channelling on occasion, and that's a completely different sensation. But most of the time I don't feel like I'm consciously cranking out my work either. There is mental activity, but it flows effortlessly. If I think about the state from the outside looking in, it seems like work. I think, "It's time to write another article. I'll need a few hours for that." And it seems like it will be an effortful event. But when I'm in the creative flow state, it doesn't feel like work at all. I don't care whether it takes two hours or six — the duration seems irrelevant when I can't perceive time.

When I do creative work, I don't worry about being right or wrong. I simply allow the ideas to express themselves. Creation is an exploratory walk through idea space, and the final creative work is but one of many paths through that space. Every path provides a unique perspective on the whole of the space, so all paths are valid and worthy of consideration. The more paths that are explored, the better the space is understood.

Sometimes when I re-read an old article of mine, especially one from several years ago, I no longer resonate with the mindset I experienced during its creation. I've since explored other paths and broadened my perspective. Consequently, I never fully identify with anything I've written. The ideas flow through me but do not define me. I'm only a conduit.

When I create something, I aim to explore the interesting paths surrounding an idea. As I begin exploring the idea space, I encounter branches upon branches upon branches. To produce a creative work is to explore an interesting subset of those many branches. But the branches of even a single idea are endless, so our creative potential is effectively infinite. What stifles creativity is when we cling to a particular branch and lose awareness of the others. The more branches you resist exploring, the less creative you become.

When I return to a state of beta consciousness, I regain my sense of discernment and can consciously choose which perspectives I find most empowering for any practical situation. When I'm presented with a problem to solve, I evaluate which perspectives seem most helpful under the circumstances. For example, if I want to improve my physical fitness, the path of self-discipline appears more useful to me than the path of laziness.

Some of my best personal growth experiences have come from the creative exploration of opposing ideas. To truly understand one perspective, you must understand its alternatives. For example, you cannot know abundance unless you understand scarcity. You cannot know courage unless you understand fear.

Creativity is an adventurous exploration of ideas. Some paths run in circles. Some are dead ends. Some lead to wonderful treasures. No single path has all the answers though. It's the creative journey itself that matters.

When you attempt a creative act, do not be concerned with producing something good or bad. Simply experience your own path through the world of ideas. Some paths may seem more valuable than others, but all paths are uniquely beautiful.

**Source:** <http://www.stevepavlina.com/about-steve-pavlina.htm>





## How & Where I Sometimes Get Creative Ideas

David Burkhart

*David is a corporate trainer in Munich, Germany*

When I drink coffee, I get the craziest ideas. Let me tell you about that:

A few hundred meters from our apartment, there is a bakery where it is possible to drink coffee. Normally, I work by myself in my own office. So I am happy to leave the apartment or my office and drink a cup of coffee in the bakery. This is quite pleasant. Part of the pleasantness is that the coffee in the bakery tastes so good.

On the way to the bakery, I don't get any ideas. My attention is on observing the world around me for a while. During the rest of the time, I listen to my own inner voice. And I can't wait to find out what it will tell me.

In the bakery, while I am drinking my coffee, I get some kind of an important idea, which I write down. I always write down any idea no matter how unimportant it is.

Often, I spend the entire time writing. At the same time, I notice that the coffee tastes very very good and that is something worth noting.

On the way home, while I am walking, I get some great idea.

Several factors contribute to the formation of a new idea:

### ***The factor of time***

Drinking coffee is a relaxing activity. I take time for that. I even take time to walk slowly, and to observe everything around me.

As if with new eyes. Time is one of the hot buttons of creativity!

### ***Contact with the unconscious mind***

Our unconsciousness is the center of our wishes. When we do pleasant things, then we come somewhat closer to our unconscious mind. In this short story, several things happen which are quite pleasant for me:

- Even the fact that I take time is very pleasant. Otherwise, I am busy with professional responsibilities
- Walking is pleasant
- The coffee tastes very good and smells good
- It is also pleasant to leave my own four walls and to experience something different

The whole experience is pleasurable but why does that facilitate my creative thinking? Because the unconscious mind is the source which stimulates or enables all creativity!

### ***Flowing***

When a person drinks, the body is in a state of flux. Bodily processes begin to flow. People are basically very simple. Flowing is flowing! When bodily processes begin to flow, then thoughts also begin to flow.

In the bakery, I write down any thoughts I have. It doesn't matter what those thoughts are or how important they are!

However, this writing down is a very important -- for several reasons. Firstly, I would really like to simply stand there and drink my coffee. But no, it is important to write these thoughts down! For that, I sacrifice the most pleasant minutes of my day. That means: I take myself and my thoughts seriously! Writing down my thoughts



stimulates my thinking in a very general way. It doesn't matter what these thoughts are. By writing them down, my thinking begins to flow. This flowing also allows me to come up with ideas that I think are brilliant.

### ***Letting go***

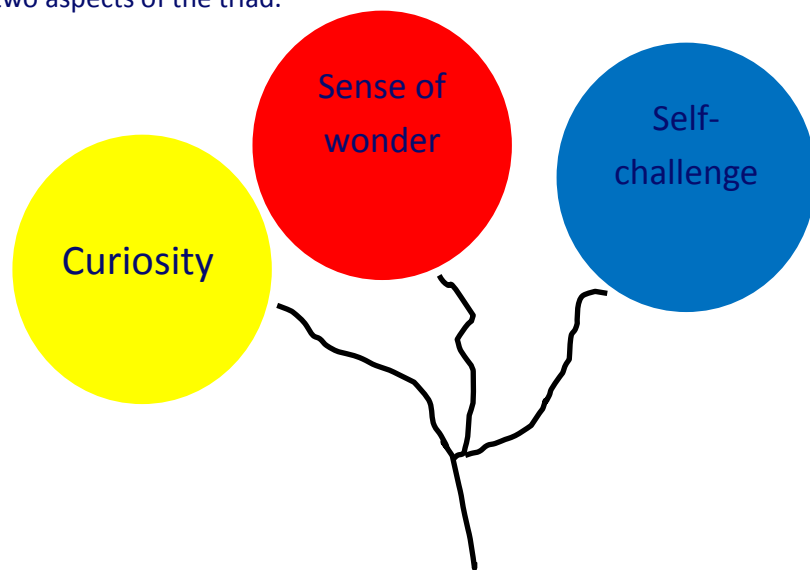
I tell myself many times, I guess I'm not going to get any ideas today. Then, I am disappointed. But there's no sense in forcing new ideas. That means: I do not put myself under pressure. Any pressure to perform counteracts my creativity. Creativity can only occur when I feel that there is no pressure to create. That's important! When I do not apply pressure, then I can be creative. I let myself go. And I tell myself, it doesn't matter if I don't get any ideas. That's okay. That's when I get most of my ideas.

### ***Confidence***

I always get ideas, I am always creative. I don't have to worry about that. That is a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is powerful! Because I know that I will think of something creative -- that's why I will think of something. That is fantastic. It's probably this way: because I am so confident, I do not apply pressure to myself. Then the creativity can flow -- and then it does flow.

### ***Exercise ...***

facilitates my creativity. There are several reasons for that. When I move around freely, then I have time. When I move around, then I begin a simple process of flowing. I get my circulation going. This flowing facilitates creativity very much. Exercise is always a pleasant activity. When I move around freely, then I see my surroundings more intensively and alertly. When I do this in my time off, then this process is even more intensive. Then sometimes I am suddenly curious. Sometimes, I noticed things that were always there. And I am astonished about everyday things. These are two aspects of the triad.



### ***My triadic bag of tricks***

I must admit: I have three tricks up my sleeve. I have invented this triad myself and it embraces my curiosity, my sense of wonder and challenging myself. I experience these in combination again and again. I believe in my own creativity and when I apply these habits I will almost always be creative.



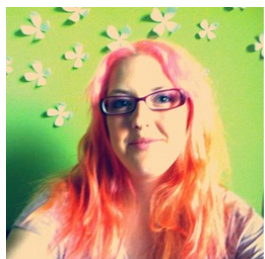
# In Honour of Marinke a creative being

One of the great joys and pleasures in life is to discover people whose presence is deeply buried in the internet. It takes quite a lot of effort to find them but it's worth it when you do.

As I wandered across the internet of people and their thoughts I stumbled across a wonderful colourful blog created by a young Dutch woman called Marinke. Through it she shared the passion of her life and the things she had made using Crochet as her medium of self-expression.



the crochet blog for creative & colourful people



*"Hi! I'm Marinke, but you can call me winkieflash. I'm a 28 year old creative person who loves crochet, colouring her hair pink, reading thrillers and creating beautiful things. Why? Because I can! In the summer of 2010, I hit an all time*

*low, personally. I won't bore you with the details, those don't really matter anyway, because everything worked out just fine. During those difficult times, I found that I could take my mind off things by creating. And I mean creating; I was painting, drawing, designing, cooking, and learning how to crochet! I'm diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, and for me, crochet is a great way to deal with all the issues that come along with that. My goal is to spread my crochet love around the web, showing you all what I've made :) I plan to share most of my patterns, which you can check out here.*

## 'Why? Because I Can'

I was struck by the simplicity and power of her reason for being creative - 'Why? Because I can, and I was also struck by the wonderful coloured patterns displayed on her page. But almost immediately I was overwhelmed by sadness as I read her most recent post.

*"Hi everyone!*

*Some of you know that this year has been tough for me. As a result, I am now being treated for a severe depression. I am in a very dark place right now, and I am looking for the light at the end of a very long and*

*dark tunnel. So I'm taking a break. Taking a moment, pressing pause on my life; to figure out which path to take, and in what direction. I will continue to blog, albeit sporadically, because I am still creating things. Crochet used to be what keeps me sane, and I'm trying really hard to find peace in crafting again. As long as I'm crafting, I'm alive, and as long as I'm alive, I might be able to find my way out of the darkness.*

*Thanks for sticking with me; I hope to be back in full force soon.*

*xo, wink"*

Sadly, Wink did not manage to emerge from her depression as I read this tribute to her from her younger sister.

## GOODBYE, NOT FAREWELL

June 29 2015

*"Hey everyone,*

*This is not Wink, but her little baby sister writing to you. When Wink started this crochet blog back in 2011 she told you guys how crochet saved her live. As you might know Wink was in a dark period of her life the last couple of weeks. Unfortunately I have to tell you that last Friday it did not save her, her depression got the best of her and she took her own life. We are all very heart broken by this news, it was an absolute shock to all of us. She is leaving a mom, dad, little brother and sister and her loving boyfriend behind.*

It's funny because when Wink started crocheting she got all her friends and family addicted. During her stay at the hospital even other patients started crocheting and some of them even bought her book! But not me, it just wasn't something for me to do. I said; "When we get a baby you can crochet a pair of socks or a stuffed animal. But that's the only crocheted thing in our house!" Last Christmas she gave me a 'how to crochet' book, yarn and some hooks. I tried it, I made a square! But that was all. Now, I can't wait to hang one of her Mandala's on my wall. It's Wink! Sadly this had to happen to make me do that.

Wink was such an inspiration to all of you. She created beautiful things and with all her heart she made the first Scheepjes CAL. I know that the crochet community will not be the same without her, she will be thoroughly missed. She enjoyed all the trips she made to meet all of you guys. She published her first book earlier this year; one couldn't even imagine how much joy and pleasure it gave her to sign them for you. Her second book will be published later this year, unfortunately she won't be around to see that.

...We have created a memorial site in her memory for everyone to pay their respects. But if you, as a community, would like to pay your respects to her in person we can always organize a memorial at the cemetery. So please let us know if we should do that! She will be missed, but this is a goodbye, not a farewell. We'll meet in Heaven again, I'm sure of that.

xo, tinc"



### A life of giving purpose and hope to others

I have to admit I was both shocked and moved by this tragic ending of a young and talented person's life as I thought and felt for the people who loved her. But I made myself look through her blog and my eyes were opened to Marinke's creative works and words that inspired and gave hope to so many readers of her blog.



Free patterns


Free patterns for Tuts+


my free patterns

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### Just three of the 860 comments made in response to news of Marinke's passing

**Tina**

June 29, 2015 at 3:38 pm

I am shocked and so sad to hear about this terrible loss. My heart and my thoughts are with Wink's family and indeed with all of those who's lives have been made richer for having known Wink, whether in person or through her blog, her books and her glorious art. She will remain in the homes and hearts of so many. Peace finally my dear girl.

**Lisa**

June 30, 2015 at 3:16 am

Tinc, my condolences to you and your family. Your sister was a wonderful young lady who had a profound affect on my life. I have an incurable, debilitating disease and I deal with physical pain and limitations. It is a depressing disease and I struggle daily. I first saw your sister's blog last summer. I found it on Facebook on a day that was a day of struggle for me and her words "crocheting and color have saved my life" was just what I needed. My Mom taught me to crochet when I was 17 but I didn't keep up with it. I'm now 58. I started crocheting last summer at your sister's urging. She suggested I start an Instagram account and post my work. I now have crochet friends all over the world, some of whom also struggle with this disease. I wish I had known of her struggle. I wish I could have helped her. RIP my dear friend Wink. You made a difference in my life

**Shelley**

June 29, 2015 at 11:04 pm

Looking over Winks blog shows such incredible beauty and creativity in her designs. As someone who has fought depression myself I am in absolute awe of her incredible talent, but more so that Wink chose to share this with all of us in the crochet community. Such generous spirit. Even fighting this awful illness she still shared these beautiful things about herself with people she had yet to know.

*Editor's note: these blogs have been reproduced verbatim, without correction of errors or standardisation to British English.*

## Marinke's creative legacy

We all know that one day we will die and we all have thoughts from time to time about the value of our life - our most precious creative product. Marinke used her creativity to achieve a special thing. Firstly, by giving expression to her ideas and emotions through the beautiful colourful crochet pieces she created, it must have given meaning and purpose to her life and helped her overcome her depression - even if only for a time. But more than this, by sharing her ideas, her craftsmanship and the beautiful things she made through her blog, she inspired and influenced others. This is so evident in many of the 860 messages of sympathy in response to hearing the news of her passing. Marinke shows us that a creative life that helps and inspires others is the greatest gift we can leave behind.

Kathryn Vercillo from [crochetconcupiscence](http://crochetconcupiscence.com) has set up a project to honor Wink.

**#MandalasForMarinke** project.

*"This is a collaborative crochet art project designed to honour Wink's life and work and celebrate her amazing creativity in a way that allows her art to keep inspiring others even though she is now gone. It is intended as a way to help the many affected crafters channel their own grief and complex feelings upon hearing the news. And it will raise awareness about depression."*

### Source

If you would like to experience Marinke's creativity - here is a link to her blog

<http://www.acreativebeing.com/about/>



## Crowd-sourced Stories and Examples of Creativity

*The following pages reproduce some of the stories that emerged from our on-line experiment, Our Creative Life (<https://plus.google.com/communities/106367720977059375674>) which we ran for the month of November 2015. If you want to read more, or add your own story, just visit the site and follow additional links to individual portfolios and sites.*

*The conversations clearly had their unique characteristics and (usually) implicit objectives. However, we begin with a discussion around the theme of creativity and some of the examples that were shared. Shelley Tracey began by suggesting that her creativity is a response to challenge and adversity, and occurs in a liminal space. She was asked what triggers her creativity, at which point she and Jenny Willis exchange experiences of writing poetry.*

### Creativity as response to challenge, adversity and liminal space

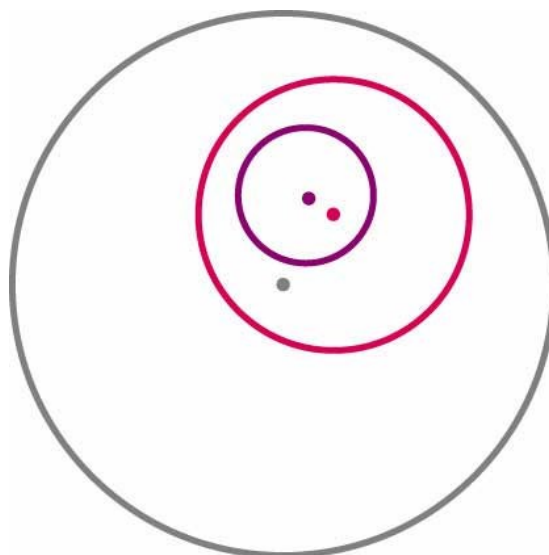
#### Shelley Tracey

Although I am creative in a "traditional" way - I am a poet - I value to a higher degree that facet of my creativity which is a positive response to challenge and adversity. This was inspired and influenced by Viktor Frankl's 'Man's Search for Meaning'.

I believe that some situations provoke creativity, such as emigrating as an adult. I experienced this at the age of 33, when I changed countries and cultures with my husband and young family. Not only was there no family support in our new home, but there was also a good deal of social, sectarian and political conflict in a divided society. Even if I had wanted to assimilate, I was too "different" from the norm to do so. I was challenged by racist and homophobic attitudes. The process of trying to understand these attitudes helped to tease out and illuminate my own values and beliefs.

Being an outsider was a good opportunity to try new roles and learning experiences out, to take risks, and to capitalise on the idea expressed by colleagues that I was "eccentric". By this, they meant different and therefore unacceptable; I took it to mean that I had my own way of seeing and doing things, and I created my own identity project to develop my sense of who I was and might be. This involved embracing new experiences, playing with new ideas, and focusing on creating new connections. These were both cerebral and social.

The liminal spaces in which I have found myself, between home and here, cultures and religions, personal and professional roles, have fostered my capacity for seeing things from multiple perspectives and increasing my capacity to embrace uncertainty. To me, this capacity is at the heart of creativity.



Academy Artworks

**Image source:** : <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/e2/b3/71/e2b3710e22da6ef9ef5c9b5bed9e2773.jpg>

## Triggers of writing, and the creative process

### Jenny Willis and Shelley Tracey

For me, the process varies. Sometimes I express my emotional state verbally (A Wingless Butterfly)... On other occasions, I try to translate my idea into a visual. In this case (An Existence), I wanted to capture the sense of movement. (JW)

#### A Wingless Butterfly (1998)

Crushed  
with the callousness  
of boots on frost leaves,  
my fragile joy lay shattered,  
a million teardrop shards

#### An Existence (1996)

Yesterday  
I was nothing  
today  
little more  
this after  
NOON  
declining  
tonight  
expired  
tomorrow  
all gone

Both of your responses ring true for me, Jenny. They remind me that many of my poems are actually about the process of making poetry, or of meaning-making itself. A number of these poems were created in the process of my doctoral research, to explore the challenges of capturing creativity and identifying how it operates. (ST)

#### CREATIVITY CONFERENCE, CAMBRIDGE, 23RD NOVEMBER 2009

Outside the room where meaning's being created,  
the sky's deciding how it might like to be:  
the underbelly of a riverbed  
transforming through the flowing;  
or perhaps a winged seed prying loose  
from deep inside the flesh of day.  
The light is sliding through the clouds,  
or possibly the clouds are endsmoke  
of a light that overheated.  
The winter trees, inclining,  
have turned their backs,  
shaking their heads,  
pretending they were never present.

#### IMPOSSIBLE

Impossible to say the rain.  
The paintings have their references and marks,  
But words are full of falling, empty sound.

#### POEM

In its absence from the fruitbowl, I reinvent the orange.  
My memory recreates its scent, its internal rhythms.  
In the lowveld, rows of orange trees are hunched like crabs.  
A round gold sun upon my palm, a small fire simmering.  
A cratered sphere of stalactites.  
Everything clings to the centre.



## Creativity as an Act of Love

*Creativity was also the subject of another conversation, where the act of creating was born of a desire to express love. This thread began with an account by Jenny Willis of her niece's secret plans to celebrate her mother's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Drawing on a wide range of skills, Amrutha was able to realise perfectly the idea she worked on over a period of months.*

### Surprise party

Our 15 year old niece, Amrutha, had spent the last few months planning a surprise party to celebrate her mother's 50th birthday. The two have always been very close, and since her father's sudden death 3 years ago, they have become inseparable. This is a story of creativity born of their mutual love.

During our visit to Canada in August, Amrutha described the event she had in mind. She and I designed a cake that would represent her mother's interests, and which a friend would make following the chosen theme: a soft pink. Two months on, Amrutha and two friends had choreographed a dance routine for the party and were rehearsing regularly: ostensibly, they were rehearsing for a school assembly. She had prepared a schedule for the party, interspersing adult and children's games with dance and music. An accomplished musician, she had selected a classical Indian piece that she would perform solo on the violin.

When we returned to Canada in November, Amrutha had assembled a slide show of 72 images that she had scanned from old photographs and sequenced to show her mother from infancy to the present. To accompany the show she recorded herself playing one of her mother's favourite Tamil tunes on the flute. She had no music for this piece, so had transcribed it by listening to a recording she found on line, then practised it to perfection. She then co-ordinated the timing of the slides with her recording.

Each of these details reveals creativity: Amrutha had a vision of the event and set determinedly about realising it. For months, she kept it a secret from her mother and was resilient when plans were undermined: in one of those uncanny coincidences of life, her father had died four days after her mother's birthday. Hindu tradition

plots anniversaries not by the calendar but according to planetary positions. This year, the anniversary fell on the same day as her mother's birthday, so the date of the party had to be changed. Then it had to be changed again due to another obstacle.

Being a minor meant that Amrutha had to enlist help to ensure that the necessary liquor licence was in place. She was reluctant to accept assistance, but in this



respect it was essential. Money was another issue on which she had to compromise: although she had negotiated a contract with the banquet organiser, and had exact figures of the sum needed, she had unrealistic ideas of how she could come by such a large amount of money.

For her mother's birthday, Amrutha had bought her a pink sari, chosen to match with the colour scheme of the party. She had devised a cover story for the night of the party: one of their best friends was having a birthday party for her brother. They were invited and dress would be formal saris.

Planning a party for 70 people is no easy task yet Amrutha's love for her mother enabled her to succeed, developing new skills along the way. The party she created was a huge success and came as a genuine surprise to her mother.

*Impressed by this demonstration of creativity, respondents wondered how Amrutha would be able to harness her creativity as she gets older. Jenny set out some of her possible directions, and concluded with words that Amrutha had written independently, at the age of 12, to her recently deceased father.*

Amrutha has always wanted to follow in her uncle's footsteps and become a doctor. She is very musically talented and plays a number of instruments as well as being classically trained in vocals, so I am sure she will continue to find creative outlets in her public performances.

She is also a very good writer, so maybe that could be an avenue? I suspect not, given cultural contexts. I'll post separately what she wrote, as 12 year old, for her father's funeral ceremony, so you can judge for yourselves.

*Goodbye, Appa*

*I am really thankful for your presence to pay the last respects to my loving dad, in a time that Amma and I are devastated by the untimely death of a beloved husband and a caring dad. I just cannot believe that I am delivering a speech for my Appa's funeral at the age of twelve. In this speech I will be sharing with you about Appa, the memories that are deep rooted in my heart and what I have learnt from him as a loving dad.*

*Appa was an outstanding brother, brother - in - law, friend, cousin, husband and a wonderful father. There was always something special about appa. Appa was a calm, quiet, kind, honest, man and when it came to get-togethers, a jolly good fellow. Appa was a take-it easy guy. He was a brilliant man during his academic years and developed a career in telecommunications from the day he graduated from the University of Peradeniya, which he was quite proud of. I am very proud to have a dad with such extraordinary achievements in life. As you all know, he was (and is) my father, guide, guardian and above all my best friend. He would always be there for me and I would always be there for him.*

*Appa and I would do every single thing together. We would eat together, go to school together, go to parent teacher interviews, he would take me to classes etc. Whenever I go to school, he would give me my bags, I would say, "wish me good luck" and he would do so every single day. We would shake hands. I always tell him to be safe at work and drive safely, and he would say ok ok. He and I said the exact same words on Wednesday, the day of his death. I am a bit happy that he told me good luck because I know he meant good luck in my life. I knew I was blessed by my Appa. Appa would always sign my school tests. Whenever he signs them he would always say proud comments and tells me to do better and better. Whenever I practise violin at home, he would always get moved by the music. He would always put songs on Youtube of violin players, after I finish practising. We would both listen to the music together. Also in the evening we would both argue for the TV remote. But we always find out a way to watch something we both enjoy. My Amma would call both of us little babies and we would have a nice laugh. In my mind, nobody can ever be extraordinary as him. (Nobody)*

*Appa has taught me many great things. He even taught me to be calm in some serious situations. That is why I feel I am brave even though Appa's physical presence is no more. Appa will always be with me. I know he is there watching over me. I can feel him around me. Even though he is in heaven, I can sense the feeling that he is guiding me. Appa knew that I wanted to be a professional one day in my life. That made him tremendously happy. Appa, I am going to fulfill yours and my dream. I will never give up APPA!!!! You always taught me to never give up and keep going. I WILL MAKE YOU PROUD!!!!!!*

*Appa I hope you are listening to me. I have run out of tears. Thank you so much for living with me for the past 12 years. Those 12 years were remarkable and enjoyable. Amma and I thank you for always being there for us, loving us and protecting us. WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU!!! I hope you are in a better place. Please guide me through my whole life and protect me. May your soul rest in peace Appa.*

## Discussion around Pedagogy in Higher Education

*Given the academic background of many of our readers, it is hardly surprising that pedagogy was another popular theme, producing 9 responses to Barbara Nicholls initiating post. There, she recounted her efforts to improve the creativity of portfolios in HE and succeeded beyond her own expectations. She now shares her experience to the benefit of new generations of students. Here is her introductory blog: you can go to her portfolio to see her work in action <https://sites.google.com/site/myprofessionaleportfolio/bn/>.*

*The conversations arising in this thread were markedly different from those of the two previous examples. This was a patently task-oriented discussion, where there was an explicit objective. Participants exchanged their knowledge of different on-line tools, whilst also shedding more light on the need to share the products of our creativity, as observed by Norman Jackson.*

Bored with the usual lectures where the tutors talked through the never ending PowerPoint slides, I was exploring new ideas and experiences to spice up how I see familiar things in new and different ways. For instance, the MSc in technology-enhanced learning course, required the submission of a portfolio of learning and development for assessment; IT was the opportunity for me to take risks, be creative and change/improve how portfolios have traditionally been adopted in HE.

I decided to develop My ReTALE, a Google Sites digital portfolio which integrated multi media employing a variety of tools: images, videos, podcasts. I created hyperlinks to external sites: Blogger, PbWiki, YouTube, Picasa to tell the story of my learning journey. It seemed to be my natural response to a typical student's pain, suffering and boredom in a classroom. The result: I made, thought or did something that had not been made, thought or done before. My attitude of openness to new ideas and experiences has made me the proud owner, controller, manager of a digital portfolio created with open access tools without institutional funding or IT support! I also decide who I share my ePortfolio with. This experience has demonstrated that the world is filled with endless possibility – and I want to leave my footprints. I am an opportunist, a change agent a creator!

Since graduation, I have been sharing my experience with colleagues and students on staff development days: what I see as opportunities for them to develop an ePortfolio (NMC revalidation, HEA Fellowship

application etc.) and my interpretation that these opportunities develop reflective practitioners despite these professional bodies not requiring the submission of an ePortfolio. Moreover, thanks to creative managers and leaders at my university who believe in the possibility of the impossible (that implementing a new idea will hurt the budget), I have been facilitating the integrating of ePortfolios in courses such as Allied Health, Education, School, Public Health and Community Nursing, Sports. Many of the newly developed courses have been successfully validated due to their move away from stagnancy and changelessness and course teams' desire to be different for the sake of their students.

My creativity has benefitted myself in the sense that I am more aware of the discipline specific purposes of ePortfolios: learning, assessment, marketing and therefore, adapt my marketing strategies and widening my PLN; besides, the courses that have integrated the ePortfolio are addressing the digital literacy need of their students and preparing them for the uncertain world of employment while the university might consider incorporating the ePortfolio concept into the annual staff PDR. Here is my Professional ePortfolio which is work in progress. (BN)

**Norman replies:**

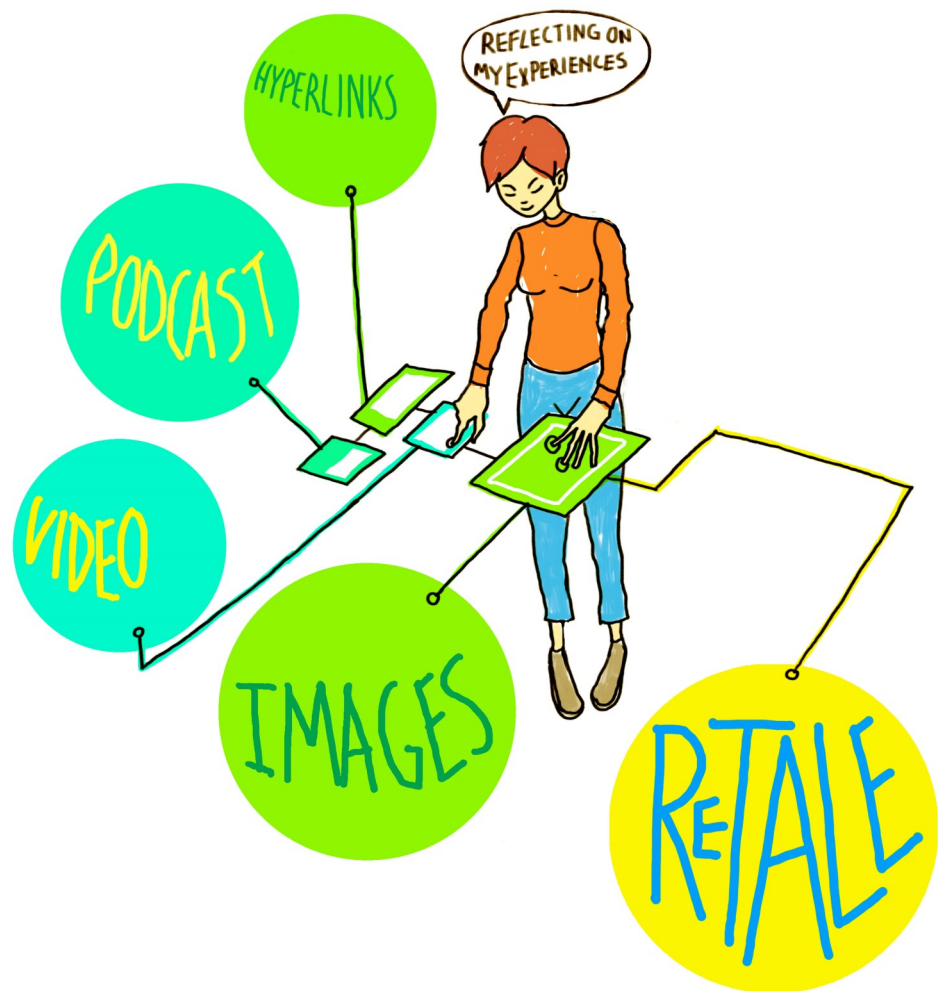




### Openness and willingness to experiment

It seems that your creativity arose from a desire to escape a situation you felt to be inadequate. Openness and a willingness to try out new ideas, tools and possibilities connecting and combining these in ways that were new to you. It also seems to have been important to you

to move beyond the intrinsic value to you of your invention to share it and perhaps the way you made it with other colleagues. (NJ)



Kiboko Hachiyon

## Blogging for Creative Self-Expression

*Occasionally, an inspiring prompt may give rise to individual reflection but does not receive a direct response from other course participants. Typical of this is Norman Jackson's example of self-expression, which actually DID receive replies on Liz Carlson's blog site. But of course that is a well-established blogging community, which is another significant factor. Just listen to Liz's joyful words and the meaning she derives from blogging.*

Several stories reveal that one of the most important forms of creative self-expression is to make something using words - for example a poem, a story or a song, as we see in pieces from Shelley, Amrutha, Jenny and Graham. The Social Age has opened up many more possibilities for word-based compositions as it has provided new tools for self-expression and the sharing of compositions. In searching for material for the magazine I came across a number of blogs like Marinke's for example, that were clearly the vehicles for creative self-expression. Blogs, are like books, they can be formed around any and every subject e.g. I came across a blog by Liz who describes herself as a young, adventuress who writes a blog about her travels. In it she talks about the way her blog had provided her with new opportunities for creative self-expression through her writing and her photography. What was inspiring about the piece was the way she encouraged others to blog and the way some of her many readers responded.



### How blogging taught me to be creative again

**Liz Carlson**

I'm a wanderer. I think if there is any verb in the English language that describes me best, it must just have to be this. In fact, it is so meaningful to me that I have that quote tattooed on my ribs, right next to my heart. I am a twenty-something self-proclaimed wanderer, travelling the world in search of my next big adventure. I have been living in Córdoba, in sunny southern Spain for the past year "teaching" English a small elementary school in a little village called Espejo. This consisted less of teaching verb tenses and vocabulary and more of trying to prevent my kids from eating paste and taking their fingers out of their noses. But hey, I got paid to colour, play games, and live in Spain. No complaints from me!

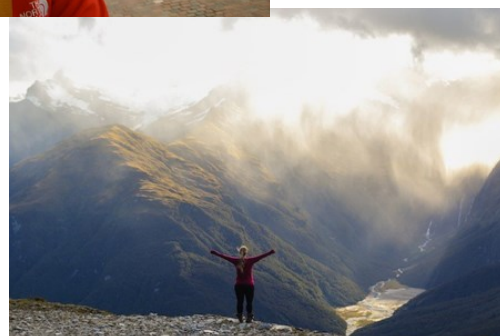
***Wander (wan-der) / wāndər, / verb (no object): to ramble without a definite purpose or objective; roam, rove, or stray. To go aimlessly, indirectly, or casually; meander. (with object) To move or travel slowly through or over (a place or area). To walk or move in a leisurely, casual, or aimless way. Origin: Old English wandrian; related to wend and wind.***

I first fell in love with Spain (and Europe) and discovered my love of wandering 5 years ago when I studied abroad for a year in Salamanca, and during which time I back-

packed around most of Europe (minus Finland and Liechtenstein). Since that glorious year I have done everything in my power to come back. I spent a winter in Rome, studying ancient architecture and history, a spring break in Peru, and another summer in Madrid, researching in the National Library and then travelling around the UK, Slovenia and Croatia. It didn't take long for me to figure out that 9 to 5 jobs and cubicles are not for me, so as soon as I graduated from my wonderful college in New England (Mount Holyoke), I filled my big backpack again and flew back to Spain for a year in Córdoba! Now I am living out part 2 of my life in Spain teaching adventures in Logroño, La Rioja in the north: land of castles and vineyards. Bring on the *vino tinto* and *pinchos*, I am ready!



Rioja in the north: land of castles and vineyards. Bring on the *vino tinto* and *pinchos*, I am ready!



**Posted October 23, 2015**

I can still remember back in high school in Virginia when I had to make a choice between continuing with art or following a more university-driven curriculum. Painting 101 or AP Physics. Why the hell did I go with physics? Why???

Ever since I was a little girl, I loved to draw and paint. I always preferred to play on my own and create things inside my head, reading and writing stories as often as I could, sketching out imaginary lands on the back of homework assignments. But somewhere along the line when I was around 15, things changed. At least where I was from in Virginia, everything shifted and I found myself pushed in a more academic direction, taking more advanced classes and thinking about college applications instead of creating things.

And over the years from high school to university to the working world. my paints got pushed aside for textbooks and having a degree become more valuable than creativity. Now and then I would pick up my brushes and pens and spend hours lost in another world of art, but it's so rare now I can't even remember the last time I did that.

So where did all this rambling come from? Out of the blue much! I probably shouldn't admit this, but I don't know if you guys have noticed, I have not felt super inspired on my blog lately. I am still stoked to tell travel stories but I haven't felt many inspirational kicks to share "bigger philosophical life" blog posts in ages. More on this soon but I am definitely in the middle of the biggest burnout I've ever had. Ugh.

I suppose writing and creating things is just a series of ups and downs, nothing is ever static or predictable, which makes it both awesome and infuriating in equal measure.



This week I was on a big Instagram photography trip with Craig Parry around the top of New Zealand's

South Island. We had hours to kill driving, and after I annoyed him with enough Taylor Swift, we compromised and started to listen to some TED talks in the car. You guys know I love [TED talks](#), so I couldn't resist.



We listened to two of my faves – Liz Gilbert's Your Elusive Creative Genius and Ken Robinson's Do Schools Kill Creativity? So so SO epic, have you seen them? Watching talks like these really inspire me. Like, makes me want to pull over to the side of the road and get out my laptop to start writing away inspired.

My mind started to wander and I began to think about my own imagination and creative path in life, and I was able to make super easy but quite painful comparisons. All those years through high school and university; it's almost like they are the "lost years" for me, when I was no longer creating things, just staring and analyzing the work other people had done before me, walking down the path in someone else's life. That is until 2010, when I started this blog.



I owe so much to this blog which has allowed me to follow my dreams over the years. I've even got super personal and shared how this blog saved me once, when I had to make the horrifically painful decision of following my travel dreams or stay in a relationship.





This blog is everything to me. I've put my heart and my soul into it. I've taken huge risks with it. And I've somehow managed to turn it into my full-time job. Looking back, while I feel like I am not at my best right now in terms of happiness, positivity and creativity, I am going to reconcile with the fact that even now, at what feels like a low point, I am still leaps and bounds ahead of where I was when I was in university.

I used to cry all the time back then, sometimes for no reason. I had a mental breakdown every couple of months and once I was so sick and depressed I had to drop out a semester of college. But I got that degree, that's all that matters right?

Little did I know that when I opened a Blogspot account in the spring of 2010 that it would lead to this. I had absolutely no idea. I started this blog as a way to document my travels digitally and so my family would have something to read when I moved to Spain a few months later. I had no idea it would eventually become my work and main passion. I was just following a curiosity I had.

Little did I know blogging would become my creative outlet again.



We all need creativity in our lives, and only now looking back do I realize how much I suffered when I put it aside. And I am not being melodramatic when I say that



I truly believe blogging saved me, because it really did. I don't want to say that blogging is my passion. Story-telling is my passion, and right now, blogging has become my main channel for that. My travel blog has opened so many doors for me I could never even imagined existed! In fact, blogging taught me to be creative again.

Creativity is key to building a following and community; a fact I accidentally stumbled on with this blog. I was sick and tired of seeing people copy each other, repeating the same boring ass blog posts, the same stupid lists and watching the endless circle jerk that is social media.

Anyways, even when I announced that I was going to quit my job to travel I wasn't really encouraged beyond my social media friends. Good thing I am ridiculously stubborn and that kind of attitude only inspires me to prove everyone wrong so I can go "na na na look at me now," very mature, I know. But

seriously, why aren't we encouraged more to pursue creative ventures? Why aren't we encouraged to try blogging more?

Well, I am going to encourage you now.



I've written quite a few posts over the years about blogging and my

journey to becoming a full-time travel blogger, and Travel Blog Success has been integral to that. Through them I learned how to pitch trips, how to monetize my blog and how to find opportunities in this community. Their support networks helped me get to where I am today.

So while I might not be a writer in the traditional sense, I have 5 years worth of words and ideas scattered all over this website, that's got to count for something right. And I feel like I have been able to expand beyond writing into photography and even video.

Through Instagram I have had a whole heap of opportunities and work that I could have never imagined, and I have found a new great love for sharing stories through images as well as text. Who knew a blog could lead to all that?



*So how do you feel about creativity? Do you feel like you were encouraged to pursue creative things or pushed in another direction?*

**Source**

<http://youngadventuress.com/2015/10/creativity-blogging.html>

*Just a few of over 60 [unedited] responses to Liz' post which valued what she said*

**Taylor** October 23, 2015

I feel like our stories are pretty similar! I've always been more of a lost-in-my-own-imagination kind of person as well. Lately I've had the idea of starting a blog – to rediscover and explore my creativity and work through some issues of my own. You have an incredible voice here on the blog. I know you're feeling burnt out, and I hope you find the strength to push on. I always look forward to new posts from you. Thanks for your honesty – if you'll excuse me, I have to go start my own blog!



Taylor

**Rad** October 23 2015

This post is great and super inspirational. Sometimes it's hard to be creative because it feels like everything has been done before/is overdone. That may be true, but I guess the important thing to keep in mind that it hasn't been done in your perspective. It refreshing to get your perspectives on all these different places :).

**Jen@OurFrugalLife** October 24, 2015

I can relate to what you're going through! My lifestyle is a bit different than yours being a work from home mom, but the lack of creativity in what I do day to day (frequent flyer booking service) does leave me wanting something more and I try to use my blog to fulfill that. It's a different kind of creativity from what I'm used to, but it sustains me. Everybody has bumps along the road where you question what you're doing, but I for one love what you write and do find that it is unique. Thanks for sharing.

## Creativity: do we need public acclaim?

Liz's story did, in fact, give rise to a response on our course site, but it was delayed, possibly to allow its author, Graham Morgan, to gather his thoughts on the issues she raises before he provided his own example of creating through words as a song-writer. His inspiration comes from personal experiences, and he raises an important question: does our creativity need public recognition? If you would like to hear his band performing some of his songs, just visit: <http://www.freewoldband.uk>

*Readers of a certain age will recognise the song from Graham's childhood!*

For my exploration of creativity, as a self-claimed (not acclaimed!) amateur songwriter, I guess this arises in both moments of inspiration and over more sustained periods of time. As most of my songs start with a topic idea or phrase that later form into lyrics it is worthwhile to carry writing material around to record those fragments. Of course this could be more technological managed by other means such as features on a mobile phone ... but such thoughts provide yet further sources for musical endeavour ('Fings ain't what they used to be' sung by a young Max Bygraves comes to mind from my childhood recollection!)

What sparks those moments of inspiration for me is variable. It might just be the way I am feeling or a situation (or holiday), an observation or just thinking that it must be time to have a go at a new song and those approaches can bring about very different influences on me

One of my songs – Artisan - proposes a line 'Just be an artisan and think creative thoughts'. I suppose for me this is the embryology of creativity, but keeping creative thoughts to oneself brings no external recognition other than some self-criticism and self-fulfilment but absent from exposure to more objective scrutiny through public fora (although being a cynic I have never understood the concept of professional critics of art, music, cooking etc who may have precious little talent in such areas). But if beauty is in the 'various senses' of the beholder there lies a dilemma – who is the song intended for and does it need to be 'catchy'. I tend to prefer to try to keep a focus on having more meaningful words that of course can be generally lost amongst any public performance where the tune dominates.

As examples of my categories of 'creative moments' an observation of people climbing trees in Richmond Park – brought about a song called Climbing Trees – basically about recollection of childhood. With regards

to situations - while attending a management workshop on 'Motivation and Personality' while certainly enlightening – perhaps my more science background distracted my attention to penning a poem :

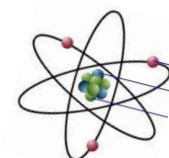
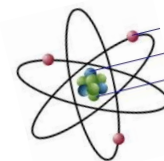
### Are we just a load of atoms

Are we just a load of atoms  
Or made of different flavours  
Or electronically controlled  
To show our strange behaviours

What shapes our personality  
Is certainly in question  
And if I act abnormally  
It's just my brain's suggestion

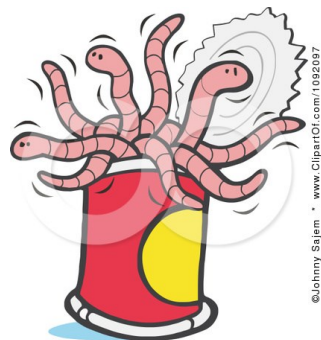
So many theories of the psyche  
It's difficult to chose  
Am I an intuitive extrovert  
Or just get on people's nerves

Some people may be quite reserved  
And others rather brash  
Who really knows the reason why  
Personalities tend to clash





The song 'Can of Worms' emerged from the world 'banking crisis' period (rather based around what might have been referred to as a protest song):



The world seems in a mess today...It's diagnosis in decay

Politicians lie and cheat...Bankers full of their deceit

Financially we're all up the spout...Our future's bleak without a doubt

You work to live ... you live to work...While others just prefer to shirk

We need to try and live and learn...Life's really just a can of worms.....

I do plan to put more songs out into social media (though fast becoming unsocial/antisocial media) but that's a new song in itself.

I have put a song (with me singing!) on Youtube – with some rather poor imaging – which might be my excuse for only having had 50 hits ( I suppose a hit song these days might refer to the number of internet hits?). So in mentioning this – 50 Hits might well become a new song ....

Reckon I've composed a hit song  
It's on Youtube for you to find  
Already had 50 hits  
Although most of them were mine!



Graham Morgan

Image: <http://www.hitmusic.art.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/hit-music-logo1.png>

## Gerald's story of personal creativity

*Zimbabwean architect Gerald Phiri shares his experience, sources of creativity and aspirations*

I have always been imaginative and creative. At just four years old, I made paper homes from old shoe and appliance boxes. As I grew older I also made water crafts from half cut drums and used them to sail the rainwater filled swimming pool in our back-yard. I marvelled at technology and loved the colour television set, the wireless cellular phone, and above all, the remote control. I imagined a future of absolute remote controlled appliances and robot servants.

I was inspired by my father, a Blacksmith who worked at the steam locomotive railway yard, where he created lots of inventions. I was also motivated by my mother, a teacher who always emphasized the importance of education. My intuition and love for Architecture has set me on the career path I am currently following.

My vision of creating a beautiful home with a lovely family has been partially fulfilled. I am blessed with a beautiful wife and daughter that highlight the depth of love and peace in my home.

I dream of being a registered architect so that I create beautiful structures for the rest of my life. I am inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright Quote on creativity. "An architect's most useful tools are an eraser at the drafting board and a wrecking bar at the site".



Listen to Gerald's story [http://cowbird.com/story/108259/My\\_Creative\\_Spirit\\_A\\_Personal\\_Life\\_Story\\_Gerald\\_Phiri/?uiid=widget-261531055-10825](http://cowbird.com/story/108259/My_Creative_Spirit_A_Personal_Life_Story_Gerald_Phiri/?uiid=widget-261531055-10825)

## Food for creativity, when necessity drives invention

*Creativity with food was a popular theme in both Our Creative Life and the Creativity MOOC. The appeal seems to be multisensorial: we can produce something that is pleasing to the eye, whilst providing gastronomic pleasure. Both creator and consumer share the pleasure. An additional dimension comes when the creation has been driven by necessity, in Michael Tomlinson's story, where the group of overseas students wanted to celebrate Diwali to make them feel less distanced from their home culture. Jenny Willis' response takes up the same theme, as some Tamil victims of the political diaspora resulting from ethnic violence learnt to re-create the food they had grown up with. Creation out of necessity is a theme that recurs later, also in the domain of food, when Grace Hall tells us her story.*

### Diwali curry for 23!

#### Michael Tomlinson

While I am not certain of the credentials of this tale as being a creative one, it is undoubtedly amusing so I shall share it with everyone in the hope that it provides at least a wry smile if not any wordy insights!

Having moved to Sofia to study, armed with a bag of clothes and one cooking pot, I started with the task of making some friends in this beautiful Balkan state. The people I study with come from more backgrounds than I can name, providing us with what we like to call the most racially inclusive family in the world!

This of course means that different people have their own festivities, and those of you who know about this kind of thing will know that this week is the Hindu festival of Diwali, a time of special importance to a number of our multinational clan. One of the harder things about being away from home (especially given the youth of some of our 'family') is missing loved ones at landmark occasions such as this, so the idea of holding our own Diwali party in Sofia was born.



"What a lovely idea!" I hear you all say, and certainly when the idea was first put forward it was great, lots of

discussion about the food to cook and the decorations to have, we were going to rival even the best Diwali parties that India had to offer.

And then we counted people.

At last count, we're at about 23 people for our Diwali party. Now, cooking in ordinary circumstances for 23 is tricky. It takes planning and organisation (something I'm not renowned for) and a pretty hefty arsenal of cooking

**Diwali** (Dīvali, Dīpāwali, or Deepavali) is a festival of lights observed on the 15th day of the month of Kartika in the Hindu calendar. Many people in the UK celebrate **Diwali** each year. **Diwali**, is referred as the "Festival of Lights".



utensils and skills. Unfortunately these are not items we have at our disposal. I have three pots in total, having purchased 2 additional pots since arriving, none of which are big enough for a curry for 23 people, and a stove with two hobs (which for some inscrutable reason is the norm here, and I must say probably the single most disappointing thing about Bulgaria!), and a rather limited range of cooking abilities, especially when it comes to specialty Diwali dishes...

As such (and I suppose if we're being generous this is where some element of creativity exists in my resourcefulness to try and bring this dish into existence) my curry for 23 people will be cooked in four batches, with the aid of those who understand a great deal more about Indian curries than myself, over a week

long period, with various kitchen utensils borrowed from across Sofia and exotic spices begged borrowed and sometimes paid for. A real 'hotch potch' would probably be an understatement in this instance.

Whether this epic tale of party planning for more people than will fit in the flat will have a happy ending I haven't a clue, however what it certainly has done is given me a raft of new skills in cobbling together relevant equipment from eclectic sources, and, although it would be wrong to suggest this was an entirely new life lesson, it has shown me again the value in pooling our resources, both physical and intellectual when undertaking significant tasks.

Thanks to the friendships I have developed in the last three weeks I am able to tap into a huge amount of knowledge and experiences in order to increase my own. An interesting part of this is that most of what I have learned from friends in this regard are things that their parents have taught them over years, which in turn their parents taught them. So maybe this makes the grandparents of my friends part of my own ongoing learning project!

*Jenny replied to Michael with her own story and analysis of such creativity*

Yes, indeed, Michael, your story rings lots of bells for me.

My husband and many of his friends (since they were aged 4 and now approaching 60) were victims of ethnic violence and have spread around the world in the Tamil diaspora from Sri Lanka. Coincidentally, a large group of his old classmates live within a small radius of our home in SW London.

When they arrived, it was before the availability of the ingredients that are now easily found in Asian shops or in take-aways. To eat what they were used to, they had to experiment and learn to cook (something they had never done in SL). Now, 30 years later, they are all



accomplished cooks and still meet at weekends and on special occasions to play bridge, badminton, cricket or just to enjoy each others' company, Food has been one means of sustaining their culture and friendship.

My husband does most of the cooking at home, and makes a variety of curries which he takes to my father each month. He serves them into single portions and stacks his freezer so that he has a ready supply of nutritious meals (shown in the image below). At nearly 90, my father just needs to heat these and add whatever accompaniments he chooses. Creativity is both a practical tool and an implicit means of demonstrating care for someone. My father adds his own bit of creativity in how he uses these meals.



Stocking up: creativity as an act of love

Whenever we travel abroad, we take an electronic cooking set that my husband has, so that he can rustle up a quick meal for us (see image below).



Creating abroad: an improvised kitchen

So, in short, creativity and ingenuity have been a source of much pleasure, retaining old bonds, sustaining cultural norms and demonstrating affection, combining practical needs and acts of kindness.



## Creative problem-solving

*Russ Law' offered two stories from the world of educational management to demonstrate the value of individual reflection and dialogue in putting problems in perspective and producing effective solutions for resolving them. He was encouraged by a response from Norman Jackson, to add further practice advice to his narrative.*

Ten years ago, in my work in educational leadership training, I discovered coaching. This is different from coaching where there is teaching, telling and drilling; the coaching I do nowadays involves working with people on their own agendas, and supporting their own ideas for achieving their aims. The medium for this is conversation.

I have come to recognise that the bits I enjoy most are the ones where the person being coached arrives at an unexpected solution through the creative dialogue that we have been having. Two examples illustrate this.

A very capable middle teacher in a secondary school—let's call her Xanda, was working so hard in her area of responsibility as well as in the Teaching Leaders intensive, developmental challenge, that she was becoming self-doubting and worked that her headteacher would see her as ineffective or lazy. The notion of tackling the problem head-on (no pun intended) with her boss was regarded with serious misgivings, in case it resulted in X emerging as incompetent or critical of the head for giving her too much to do. By talking about the factors, possibilities and objectives, we explored how to proceed without running the perceived risks.



We made three creative realisations: first, X needed a strategic plan to open a conversation. Then we played with different options, and realised that most people didn't take offence when asked for their advice. Finally, X identified this opportunity to ask for advice on time management e.g. prioritising responsibilities. We rehearsed the opening lines of the conversation.

When we met again, X reported that the head had been only too pleased to advise, had been shocked to hear how overloaded X was, and had reassigned some tasks to others and had provided two additional non-teaching periods to help.

A second example was Nick—acting head of a large department, with an increasing student roll and a decreasing availability of rooms, so there was nowhere for staff to work without distraction by colleagues. Tensions were rising and tempers were fraying.

Through reflective and probing conversation, we identified the actual problem: Nick didn't have the authority to change rooming or arrange emergency accommodation. What he did have was a sense of powerlessness, and a feeling of being cast not as the person trying hard to solve the problem, but as the person to blame for it! How could he make the current situation bearable for all concerned? When this clarity had been reached, Nick has the idea of asking his team how they could cooperate to create protocols and timings that would prevent people from disturbing or working against each other by completing for space. If they did this, they would share commitment to the solution. I won't know how it worked till our next conversation, but our satisfaction was instant.

(This reflection emerged during a gentle jogging session—always conducive to creative solutions!)

### Addendum

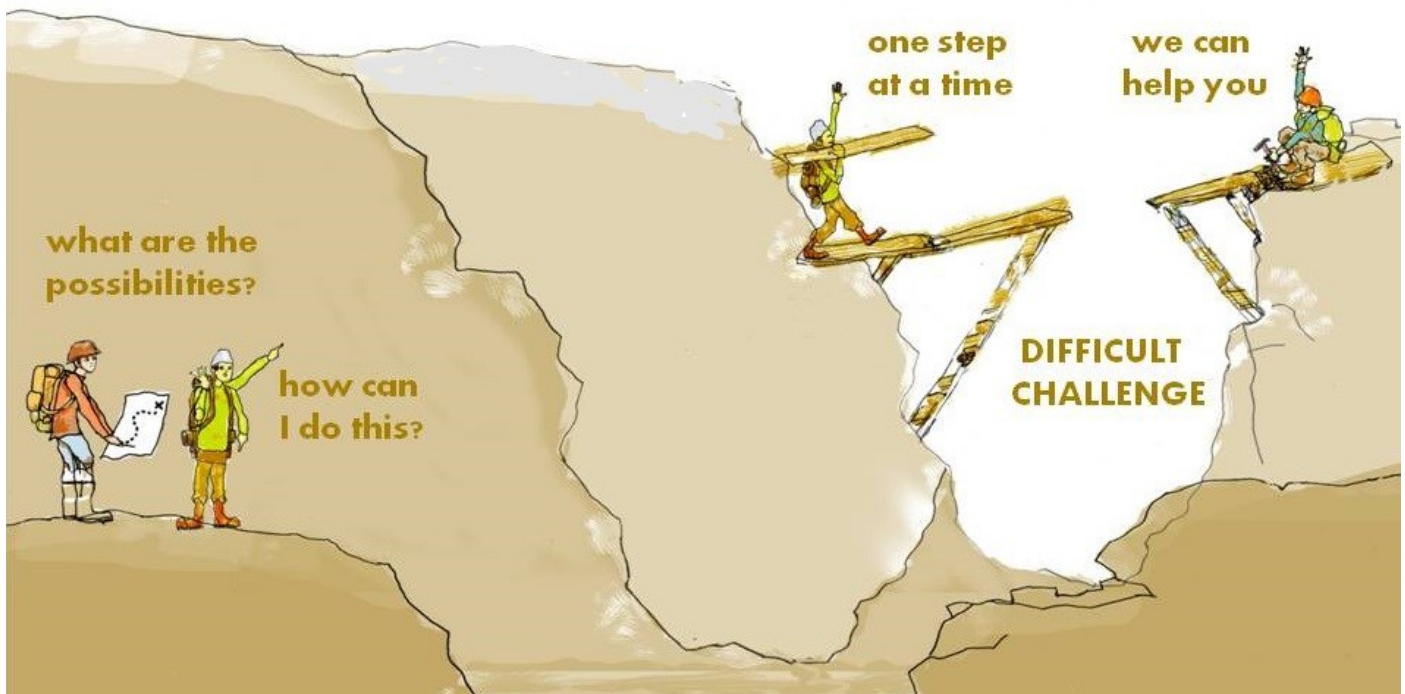
Loads of techniques out there for getting people to look differently at their "problem" - perceptual positions (try being the other party or a disinterested observer); the "Seven-Eyed Model" (look it up!); going on a walk along a timeline; imagining - "What would it look like if..?"; whole banks of ace questions!

As for making students go for a jog, there's a lot of positive publicity (and upbeat comments from pupils) at the moment about an initiative in a primary school where the head decided that everyone would run/jog/walk a mile every day. Apparently it's promoted all sorts of good things, including social interaction, attention span and physical fitness. I bet creativity's there as well.

Image: [s3.amazonaws.com](https://s3.amazonaws.com)

# Creative problem-solving

## Crossing the chasm



Kiboko Hachiyon's interpretation of Russ' story

## Creating relationships: a space for empathy and self-expression

*A final example of the conversations that took place in Our Creative Life demonstrates how the forum offered an opportunity for individuals to create an almost therapeutic relationship. The participants have developed fast empathy with each other, which enables them to exchange and explore very personal stories. To this extent, it recalls the problem solving evident in Russ' stories. However the conversation between Scott Johnson and Jenny Willis, in which they share their frustrations from being under-valued and at threat of job loss in education, to perceived failures in public services such as health, to wider political issues and then back to discussion of ageing, a totally different conversation from those we have seen previously. Here, it is a dialogue, no-one else intervenes. In a short space of time, Scott and Jenny have created a relationship and cover a wide range of both personal and social/political issues, implicitly driven by their mutual affective support.*

*Space does not permit reproduction of their entire discussion here, but if you want to read it in full, you can do so by going to #creative life.*

"It's important for me to be a part of this community. Lot of people are feeling change approaching and it's time to shed the automatic reaction of disbelief every time a possibility presents itself. My wife and I live in a place where the luxury of assuming things are going to get worse has become a certainty. And now change is appearing and oddly making us even more nervous.

Anyway, time has come to stop just reacting and start being again. It might sound strange to people living in a less strange place than we do but turmoil and what the local educational leadership terms "constant white-water", though often offered as a source of alternatives, is actually a toxic uncertainty. More later. "(SJ)

"I understand your fears of the unknown and the stress in your uncertainty, Scott.

Perhaps a word of encouragement: I was forced into early retirement at the age of 45. The breakdown was actually a breakthrough and I was able to do the PhD I had always wanted to do, and to teach in HE.

In (? 2012? can't even remember now!) I was made redundant, but another unforeseen and exciting opportunity arose as Norman set up the Lifewide Education community.

We never know what opportunities are around the corner. In retrospect, I think I must have been crazy to cling to the rat race for so long - out to work at 7 a.m. often not home till 11 p.m., working all weekend. I hope you and your wife will be as fortunate as I have been since 'retiring'." (JW)

*Scott responded with a painful description of what led him and his wife to emigrate to Canada 7 years previously. He concludes:*

"We have controlled our lives together against adversity since 1973 and now find ourselves ruled by small town rats and people we can't trust for a second and it makes us feel helpless for the first time. So if creativity was ever needed it's now."

*He expands this statement with a harrowing account of his wife's current employment situation in education, and the measures they are taking to defend her. Jenny replies again, empathising and offering support through a story of her own:*

"On your other point about rats, I couldn't help thinking about current NHS practice (at least in the Trust where my husband works). It seems everyone is being territorial and watching their backs; staff are leaving, managers don't know how to manage, and from the outside, it looks like chaos. His hospital was recently put on black alert because they were unable to admit any more patients as beds were taken by people who were well enough to be discharged, but who needed community care. And of course that is no longer available, etc etc."

*Scott's next response is an interesting mix of political criticism and personal revelations about himself and his wife, Leslie.*

"Seems to me we are hitting payoff time for years of Reagan / Thatcher every-person-for-themselves economic theory. Turns out it doesn't work but all we've



done is bring up a generation to follow neutered so they wouldn't challenge the imaginary world we built and now it's all hitting the fan. Leslie's managers are all frantically positioning to shove each other under the bus. They have gotten rid of so many people who can work in the real world of actual responsibility they are helpless and it's their own doing. (....)

The new government here in Alberta is sending cabinet ministers out to review the all the provincial departments at the field level. In education, the minister has visited staff and faculty reps but skipped meeting with the administrators. I find that really hopeful.

Will keep you posted. Both our families have "history" with mental health problems and that's a subject everyone runs from."

*Jenny replies with another story, again implicitly supporting Scott then questions whether her values are just outdated and she has failed to move with the times.*

"I also understand the demotion issue. A friend of mine has just retired from Social Services. A few years back, our local council decided that to make savings, it would require all social workers to reapply for a (reduced number of) job. That was bad enough, but she was re-employed at £7,000 p.a. less, for doing the same job. They took away car allowances and expected social workers to get to clients on public transport - until they realised this gave them about 5 minutes with a client!

I would like to think that it's not just a sign of aging that makes me cynical about these things! I do feel we have lost the meaning of 'professionalism' in the sense I held it dear. I just plod on with my own values."

*By this stage, the month allocated for narrative sourcing was coming to a close. Scott's last reply ends the conversation with a positive view of the future*

"Maybe investing in the future is foolish with both of us just over 65 but we aren't dead yet. Eventually, the threats stop meaning anything. I think it's exciting to be

part of change and to see old tattered and non-functional solutions no longer the only option."

### Editor's note

And so this wide-ranging and intimate exchange comes to an end. It has raised some interesting questions for me, among which:

- What is it that enables such on-line conversations to develop so quickly?
- Why are we willing to expose such intimate experiences?
- Why did no-one else join in the dialogue?
- What happens when the forum for such conversations comes to an end? Where to participants go for substitute outlets?

### Listening to others: John Cowan reflects

Long ago I was assembling a paper with a colleague for a conference on learning needs, I suggested as a model for what we were discussing a row of inter-connecting cages with hungry animals in them and moving about in search of food. My colleague, not un-naturally, found this repugnant. Searching for a different image, I muttered that we had to get an image of needs trying to move up and on to their resolution. And so I had the notion of fish ascending a fish-ladder and jumping up to where they wanted to go. We both liked this, the paper won a conference prize, and the image has been much used since.

Recently I was assembling a paper with a different colleague for a journal dealing with Communities of Inquiry. We were keen to argue that, in the area for community educational experience at the centre of the well-known diagram there should be some provision for places where private reflection and intramental thinking could happen, as distinct from the intermental thinking in the group experience. I suggested little beach huts round the edges the area. My colleague wrinkled her nose in distaste, and mumbled that we needed someplace private to which learners could retreat. And so there quickly emerged in my mind the image of retreats around the perimeter of the area, like rabbit holes. We are still working that into the draft.

In both examples, my very minor creativity came from listening to an adverse reaction from a colleague, and trying to find a different and better way of conveying what we both had in mind.

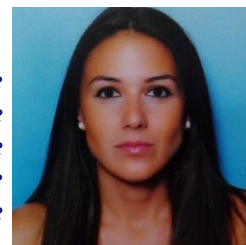
## Editor's commentary

*The most important challenge facing all human beings is fundamentally a developmental challenge focused on the question of how we learn to deal with and make the most of the situations and opportunities in our lives. When it comes to developing ourselves, the question of what we develop, why we develop it, when, how and where we develop it is entirely up to us and these decisions will emerge from and through the circumstances of our lives. Rafaela's story of working with autistic children is one example. In the second story, Nikos describes the creativity applied by a group of adolescents to address a topic of importance to them: bullying. In the third, wonderfully illustrated, story Roger Greenhalgh offers his insights on everyday creativity illustrated through what seems like a 'rite of passage' experience that grew out of the circumstances of his family and work life. It reveals the important truths that the demand for our creativity reflects the contexts we inhabit - necessity grows when we put ourselves into contexts that are unfamiliar and meet challenges that we have never dealt with before and have to invent solutions for problems we have never encountered before. His story also reveals the collaborative nature of our own creativity - two minds and pairs of hands are better than one!*

## Teaching Children With Autism - my everyday creative challenge

### Maria-Rafaela Tziouvara

*Maria-Rafaela Tziouvara was born in Thessaloniki, Greece. After completing her Bachelor studies in the Faculty of Primary Education at the University of Thessaly in Volos, she continued her studies in the Master Degree Programme "Didactics of Mathematics and Physics with the use of I.C.T." at the University of Western Macedonia in Florina. Currently she is attending her second Master Programme "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning" at the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, while at the same time working as a primary school teacher supporting students with special educational needs. Amongst her main interests are I.C.T. in the educational Setting, Lifelong Learning and Adult Learning, Teacher Training, Educational Psychology, Robotics in Primary and Higher Education, Research and Voluntarism.*



I am a primary school teacher and this story begins with me being employed to work 12 hours a week with each of two children with autism, aged 6 and 10.



Working with kids with autism is both very challenging and very rewarding at the same time. Autism causes these kids to have extreme mood swings even in a timeframe of 5 minutes. Their behavior is unpredictable and they have not developed the social rules that most children have. At the same time autism is often combined, as in the case of my students, with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), making the task of keeping up with school classes even more difficult. This is where my creativity comes in. Creativity in my context is not about

coming up with something new, never seen before. I need my creativity just to be able to communicate with them in ways that they find meaningful. I use my creativity to find new, interesting and funny ways to present already known things, in order to motivate them, gain their attention and keep them involved in whatever we are trying to do.

The first time I worked with a girl with autism and ADHD I have to say I was absolutely confused, baffled and had no idea how to handle the situation. I gained a lot of experience though that now helps me with my current working situation. A typical day begins with me leaving my house with a backpack full of all sorts of things. Coloring markers, highlighters, colorful pencils, funny erasers, loads of stickers, sketchbooks, bright and silly stamps, different kinds of little toys, multicolored post-its are just the tip of the iceberg (my bag could look like the picture overleaf).

[illegible]

My students' favorite heroes are Peppa Pig and Spiderman, so I always prepare stories where the rules of behavior come from a conversation or an incident involving these heroes. One of my students is obsessed with television and the companies that produce the TV programmes and I am currently discussing with a famous Greek TV channel to arrange a visit for him. In this way I am hoping to inspire and involve him in the things that he is passionate about. So perhaps some of my creativity as a teacher is about inspiring my students so that they can in turn discover and involve themselves creatively in things that they care deeply about. These are just a few examples of my everyday creative practices as a teacher. Creativity in my classroom is not optional: it is an absolute necessity!





## Editorial note.

*Teachers have a crucial role to play in enabling students to engage with the subjects they are studying in creative ways. In this article a trainee teacher describes how he learnt how to create conditions that enabled students to determine what they would learn and how they would learn it, and witnessed the creativity that emerged from giving students the freedom to choose.*

## Engaging Students' Creativity

Nikos Mouratoglou

*Nikos is a Greek Language Teacher. After completing his Bachelor studies "Philosophy and Education" at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, he continued his studies by entering the Master's Programme titled "I.C.T. in Education". This year he attends his second Master's Programme "Adult Education and Lifelong Learning" at the University of Macedonia of Thessaloniki, while at the same time he is a PhD candidate at Aristotle University. His main interests include I.C.T., Higher Education, Writing Research, Lifelong Learning and Intercultural Theory.*



### A Challenging Project

We all need challenges to push us into unfamiliar territory so that we can have new experiences and learn from them. It's also challenging new experiences that demand our creativity. My story is about an experience I had as part of a team during my postgraduate course. We had to develop a pilot project in a Greek High School with a topic in which students, aged between 15-16 years old, could be actively engaged to critically examine some basic concepts on a topic that interested them. After brainstorming ideas with the whole group the majority of students decided to study the topic of violence. Not everyone wanted this topic so it was a challenge to engage them too, by adopting a range of different activities, in order to raise student's motivation. Eventually this worked out and the less enthusiasts turned out being creative with an alternative way of thinking and expressing their thoughts.

In the second meeting we had with the students, we collectively decided to break the subject of violence into smaller thematic topics which included domestic violence, school violence (bullying), racist violence and cyber violence (cyber bullying), in order for the subject to be more easily approached. Each student had the option to choose his specific topic of interest and form groups with 4-5 members. Students pitched ideas and attracted other students to join them in a group where they discussed ideas, planned actions and activities to explore the topic they had chosen as part of the main 'whole group' project which they called "Violence: a homeless plague". The term homeless referred to the fact that violence can be seen almost everywhere and, like a disease, infect every aspect of our lives.



VERBAL ABUSE CAN BE JUST AS DAMAGING AS PHYSICAL ABUSE. BUT PHYSICAL ABUSE IS EASIER TO NOTICE. CALL THE ABUSE HELPLINE FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT. ABUSE CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE AND IS NOT JUST FOR WOMEN.

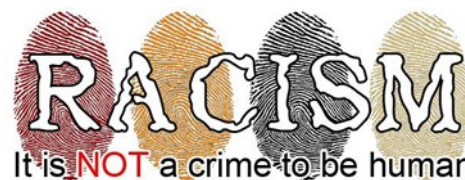
The first group, named "The Black House", chose to explore domestic violence. After searching for information on the Internet they started discussing the topic, sharing some experiences (personal and non personal) and tried to plan the journey of their team. The themes that they decided to work on, were violence between parents, violence between siblings and finally violence between parents and children. Having formed those three categories, students developed a research approach where they got in contact with local NGO's and the local police office. They identified problems and searched for possible solutions when a family member is

a victim and which actions an external person may take in order to mediate in the violent situation. At the end of the project, the “Black House” group produced a triptych informational leaflet with the corresponding actions that someone may take in order to overcome these kinds of difficulties: the drawings, text and design of the leaflet were all produced by the students.

The second group called themselves “School Prisons” and they chose to explore violence in schools. This group had the great idea to connect their topic with the history of their own school, which used to be a prison and therefore came up with a story for revealing this connection. They searched for information on the history of the school, collected information from teachers who used to be students at the school and tried to shape an image of how the school in the past. Apart from this task they also observed some incidents of violence in their school and especially from students of upper classes who were teasing or even hurting students of lower classes. They also tried to interview some students in order to have a deeper insight of those incidents. Having collected enough data from those two tasks they combined them in such a way that they implied that students are restricted like prisoners, without being able to help themselves. Because the school had been a prison it had high concrete walls. The group, in co-operation with the art teacher, wanted to alter the appearance of their school and therefore painted some walls, designed some drawings and wrote some lyrics they had composed.



The third group of students chose to call themselves, “V for Victims” and decided to explore racist behaviors, beliefs and stereotypes as a dimension of violence. They tried to trace situations where racism was the source of violence and understand why such beliefs can lead someone to annoy, tease or even hurt another person. They collected information from the internet and school library and collected data from the students of their school in order to map the situation in the context of their own school. The fact that the school had students with different cultural, linguistic and religious background allowed students to gain a holistic and local view of this kind of violence. The group wrote and performed a short theatrical play where they described the impact of racist behavior in a school context.



The fourth group called themselves, “Violent Games”. They wanted to explore the violence that occurs in digital environments on the internet. The group also wanted to explore video games that also contained elements of violence and how they impacted on the user’s behavior. First of all, they investigated the topic by searching for information in order to understand the extent of the problem. They also asked the rest of the students for their opinions, thoughts or experiences. The questions included topics such as playing video games, what kind of impact they may have and incidents from the internet. By combining all the data they had collected, students had the idea of developing an informational leaflet with some advices for a safe internet surfing.



To recognize the students’ hard work and creativity the project was given prominence in the whole school as the results were presented in an event that the school teachers and the headteacher had organized on the international day against violence.

## What I learnt about creativity from this experience

This is not a story about my own creativity, rather it's a story of how I learnt to encourage high school students to be creative. I think that a crucial characteristic of the education and therefore of teachers is to know how to encourage student's creativity. Even though, it is important for every teacher to know how creativity can be cultivated, however this is not something that can be learnt from a book. It can and should be learned from authentic situations, by interacting with real students in a real school environment.

This experience taught me several things about how to encourage students' creativity. In fact, my experience can be related to some of the principles proposed for an imaginative lifewide curriculum that recognises the important role of creativity (1 p114). First of all, students were able to choose the main subject of the project, something that could be perceived as a personally challenging situation as they could pick a subject that interested them. Furthermore, this freedom provided the creative ground that we wanted to attribute to the project, not only on the designing and thematic level, but also on the way in which students would express themselves through their work. As a result, some interesting decisions were taken for designing and implementing the activities that they carried out. The whole process was highly collaborative. I recognised that students immersed themselves in their topic because they chose subjects that they found emotionally as well as intellectually engaging. The topic they chose was not an academic subject but something they found relevant to their everyday lives ie they were creating their own lifewide curriculum.



Moreover, activities which enable learners to develop relationships that facilitate collaboration, learning and personal development can be connected with the sense of empowerment that should take place during the educational process. Another interesting element that I observed was the fact that students personalised the whole process, as each student had the opportunity to deal with situations and see situations as the focus of their personal and social development. Consequently, different opinions and views were expressed for the same topic, arguments and contradictions took place, dimensions in which students were actively involved and by which they were able to appreciate not only themselves, but also others. I think that the significance of expressing your opinion freely (communication skills), developing arguments about your point of view (argument skills), having to support your thesis (management skills) and eventually accept or rejecting it (reasoning skills) is definitely an empowering procedure. Finally, students participated in a project which required them to take on different roles, plan and implement and adapt various activities and synthesise what they had discovered. Thus, students had to develop a resilient attitude towards the whole learning process by adjusting their thoughts, needs and ideas in each specific topic.

However, I recognised that students needed to understand that they had performed such a behavior in order to raise awareness of the multidimensional nature of their capabilities and achievements. Teachers have an important role to play in helping students reflect on their learning process and recognise their own capabilities and creativity.

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**Image:** <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/522f7cdb4b056ca5e8127f6/t/5523bdfce4b0cefeaac2c28e/1428405767797/cyber-bullying-word-art>



*Editorial comment: Probably the greatest demand for our creativity is when we find ourselves in unfamiliar context with unfamiliar problems. This next story illustrates this well.*



## Finding the Creative Affordance in Life

**Roger Greenhalgh**

*Roger works for Jisc and helps educational leaders make strategic use of ICT in the operations and development of their organisations. He started messing with computers in the mid-'70s and was an early adopter of IT in the classrooms of the '80s. An entrepreneur in the '90s DotCom boom and subsequent Ed Tech enthusiast in universities and colleges,*

The year was 2006; my son and I were at the tail end of delivering the goods for a multi-university development project we'd been working on together (an online Knowledge Exchange platform). The website code development was done, the initial content was mostly in place, and it was now at the stage of just fixing the bugs.

There was no new project on the horizon. The summer was looming and gaining and it was becoming increasingly unlikely that we would be doing any more development work until the Autumn term. We were not good at doing nothing. If there isn't an obvious challenge, then we try and seek one out. Curiosity whispers constantly in the ear. As Richard Bach<sup>2</sup> once said, "Every problem comes with a gift in its hands – we seek problems because we need their gifts."

That same curiosity is also something that feeds innovators and networkers to sniff the merest whiff of opportunity: a possible technique; a different view; a better tool; an unexpected benefit. All are earmarked and linked into that back-catalogue of loose connections to resources and routes that "just might come in handy someday".



It might come in handy?

Our core project had been using web-based maps, with expensive licensing. Google Maps were a new thing, and suspiciously open about licensing. We also wanted to try using SMS texts to update a website or send automated alerts. So, we needed a low-risk guinea-pig to try these. Serendipity brought us into contact (outside of work) with some chaps who were trying to fundraise for Mercy Corps by organising cheap and cheerful rally teams from the UK to Mongolia. We offered to build online mapping into their website so that the position of teams on the overland drive to Mongolia could be updated regularly and automatically by SMS text messages. They were very grateful and accepted our offer. Thank you, serendipity, for the grateful guinea-pig.

When people are looking for creative affordance they walk around with their eyes and ears wide open – their radar ever alert for inspiration from what emerges through the circumstances of their life. I cannot pretend that the next steps came through any focused research. The maps and SMS updates had been a good idea hatched in a pub in Brick Lane one evening. From completely left-field came two other stimuli – firstly, Ewan McGregor and Charlie Borman's<sup>3</sup> TV programme "The Long Way Round" documented their motorcycle journey overland from the UK to Vladivostok, (recorded by a film crew), and secondly, a chance viewing of a YouTube video of an old cinema classic, the 40-minute London to Brighton train journey captured by sequential time-lapse photographs and replayed at high speed in just 4 minutes<sup>4</sup>. Connect both these concepts together and one has the next and obvious challenge – how could one also record the 3 week journey from London to Ulaanbaatar by road with a webcam, and condense it into just a few hours?

The curiosity seeds had been sown and were now germinating profusely. Within a matter of days, not only had we built the prototype map and SMS service, but we'd also decided to be a rally team, too, and record the journey. We bought a decrepit Fiat Panda 4x4 through Ebay for £300, and suddenly, this opened the floodgates to a whole new set of *off-piste* challenges, including the time-lapse video.

Everything so far was about technical challenge. We found ways to tackle the data capture; we found ways to re-engineer the vehicle to cope with challenging terrain, heat, dust, vibration, likely malfunctions, navigation, supplies and fundamentals of survival. The Mongol Rally is, after all, completely unsupported. The organisers help you to get the visas, throw a launch party and (if you make it), an arrival bash, and the initial camaraderie helps you to believe in the quest. The rest is up to you. The route, the risks, and whatever your chosen reality.

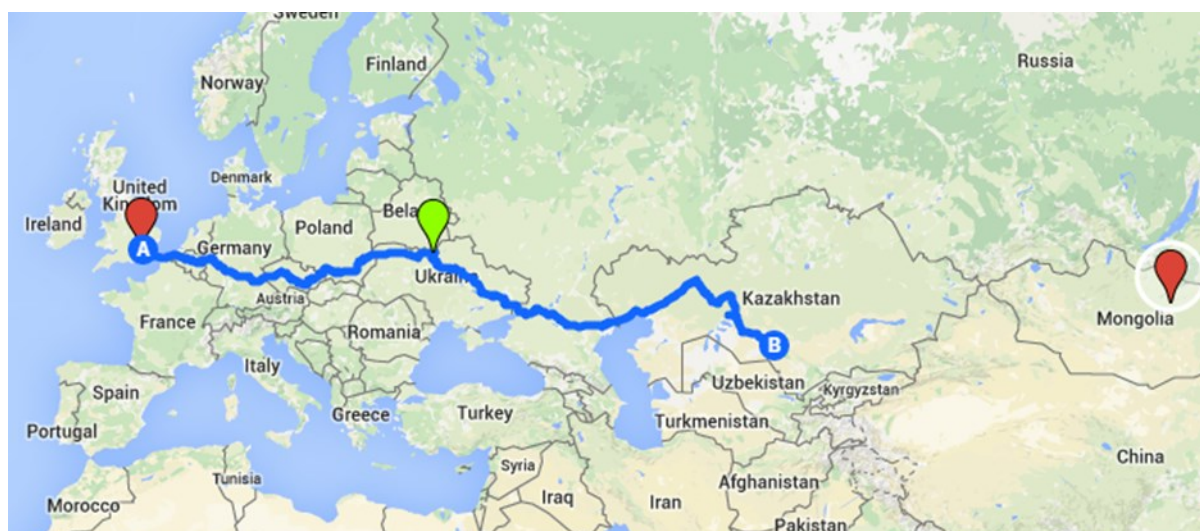


£300 from Ebay - needed a bit of re-inforcing before we took to the Eastern roads (or lack of them)

We talked with the previous year's participants, and from that learned which spares to carry. We learned a few basic phrases of Russian, the most useful of which proved to be "Just a little" (as a precursor to vodka) and "I'm sorry", as a reflection on almost any misunderstood or confusing situation. We also knew that at internal Eastern Block checkpoints, having a selection of "presents" available for distribution would come in handy – and thus had scoured the local charity shops to assemble a cache of small, light, inexpensive items which were either quintessentially Western European (for high kudos value), or else incredibly useful. Most of these saved our bacon in unpredictable and completely unexpected ways.



Our journey began in London in late July of 2006, and over the next four weeks we travelled over 4,000 miles across Western and Eastern Europe, through Poland, Ukraine and Russia and onward across the steppes of western Kazakhstan. Our sights were originally set on reaching Mongolia, but circumstances changed, and we changed tack, abandoning the vehicle and returning by rail through Russia, weary, weather-worn and wiser, and hugely fulfilled.





By the time we had reached Kiev we'd ditched 90% of our spares. The trailer hitch had sheared off through extreme vibration on the backroads of Lower Silesia, so we abandoned the trailer, along with many of our spares.



At the entrance to Chernobyl

We piled too much from the lost trailer onto the roof-rack, and as a result of the added weight, later broke a leaf-spring somewhere in mid-Ukraine. We had kept lots of duct tape and spare tyres, and I'm glad that we did. In Kazakhstan, the most useful of our diminishing tools proved to be a 4-pound lump hammer... we would occasionally stop and hammer the wheel-rims back into shape on them before their tyres came off on the punishingly rough desert roads. We had earlier bribed our way with "gifts" into the first and second Chernobyl "exclusion" zones, but one of the finest exchanges made was with a Russian border guard keen on extorting \$75 (yes, dollars, not roubles, he had insisted) from us for allegedly not stopping fast enough at his barrier. He settled for a second-hand copy of a Monty Python's *Life of Brian* DVD, which he was overjoyed with. (£3.00 from a Shropshire charity shop.)

Sometimes no amount of pounding with a hammer can keep the wheel rims in shape



Too busy looking at the scenery, we overshot the border control. The bribe almost cost us dearly.

We never got to Mongolia – we had lost the brakes and three out of five of the gears by the time we'd reached the arid shores of the diminishing Aral Sea. With the help of some Kazakh truckers, we had rebuilt the rear suspension using parts from an abandoned Russian Uaz – which kept us going for another thousand miles. We had fashioned replacement rubber suspension gaiters from scraps of truck inner-tube by the roadside. Yet eventually there comes the realisation that the destination wasn't important any more. Discretion is the better part of valour. We donated the remnants of the car to the fire-station mechanic in Zhasaly, and a few days later caught the stopping train on the long haul back through Almaty to Moscow, tired, grubby but fulfilled.





Rebuilding the suspension

We had started out as a father-and-son team, but this entire escapade was a complete leveller. We chose our own route, regularly re-adapted as conditions imposed, not really wishing to convoy with other teams – happier to meet up spontaneously and unexpectedly, exchanging experiences, plans and possibilities over a beer. It was easy enough to spot a fellow traveller in some of the townships en route, and the passing of other recent travellers was an easy snippet to pick up on the local roadside grapevine. I don't recall us arguing, though certainly there were some robust discussions about how best to tackle some issue. I particularly recall many, many formative moments, for each of us, coming to terms

with so many lifestyles and expectations and ghosts of the recent past, historical, political, and environmental, through the places and people and desolate or anachronistic places we encountered. The Majdanek<sup>7</sup> extermination camp, the forsaken streets of Pripiat<sup>8</sup> (the Chernobyl dormitory township), the abandoned ships of the Aral Sea<sup>9</sup>, the Bykonur<sup>10</sup> space launch pads, the Kazakh salt lagoons<sup>11</sup>. In



The best improvised shower ever! Heated by the sun and made from military aircraft bits. The shower head was made from a perforated yoghurt pot

each of these (and many other places) we kept encountering people who had somehow through necessity and circumstance absorbed these places into their everyday lives, their work, their environs. We stopped and talked (or at times drew figures, "rich pictures", on beer mats or in the dust and dirt), and many of those dialogues caused each of us much reflection and re-processing whilst bouncing along across the endless Steppes.



The long walk home

My last memory of leaving the abandoned car with its proud recipient in Zhasaly was his most favoured choice of scavengings.

We had relinquished socket sets and car jacks (all of which seemed useful to his trade) but his most prized gift was a knife, fork and spoon, which he proudly displayed in this shirt pocket, a symbol perhaps of globalisation of aspiration, turned so that its Swedish manufacturer's embossed name was visible outermost –IKEA.

Paradoxically, I've since used that same word in a different context... as an acronym for progression through a competency framework – *Introduced, Knowledgeable, Expert, Able*. On this bizarre physical journey, as with any learning journey, one steps through the same stages – and only when one has reached that point of being proficient at handling the unexpected, has one truly moved from *Expert*, perhaps, to *Able*.

The final great giveaway, in Zhasaly



## Reflections on Creativity

My son and I started out focused on a destination, with a rough idea of some waypoints. We were driven by a common desire to overcome a set of technical challenges, and a shared curiosity to explore new places.

We did our research, bought the maps, prepared tools and equipment, and learned the necessary vocabulary. Essentially, we used our initial creativity to apply structure to the unstructured, and at the outset, this gave us the comfort, confidence and purpose to proceed with the journey.

The epiphany, however, came from looking back at the journey, with 20:20 hindsight. At times, what could go wrong did go wrong. The greatest personal development for us both came through dealing with the unexpected. So much of that preparation proved superfluous, apart from the initial confidence build.

What saved the day was ditching the father-son, employer-employee, manager-gofer seniority paradigm, and subconsciously putting into practice the soft skills that team-role theory is all about. That sort of hierarchy could well have stifled our creativity to problem-solve in the novel situations we encountered.



There is no escape from the ubiquitous IKEA



МОЛОКО

We each learned which role to adopt, and when, and this has since served us both well in our home and professional lives. We learned how best to support, respect and encourage the timely application of one another's creativity.

And lastly, on the long rail journey home, I learned to love молоко (sweetened condensed milk) in my tea, and had a much better understanding of the origin of the jargon words used in A Clockwork Orange. The truth is we never stop learning even if the stuff we learn seems incidental to the rest of our life it might come in handy one day and even if it doesn't it has in some small way enriched the meaning that is my life by triggering memories of things that are significant to me.

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- 4 BBC Interlude – London to Brighton in 4 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7GxWuTwkF8>
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## Editorial comment: Necessity is the mother of invention

*Necessity is the mother of invention is a well known saying meaning that difficult situations inspire and require us to give birth to new ideas. The author of this proverbial saying isn't known but it is sometimes ascribed to Plato as it appears in translations of Plato's Republic. However, these translations weren't made until after the phrase was in common use in English so are more likely to be the work of the translator than being a literal version of Plato's words.*

*We only have to go back to my father's generation to witness a whole society that fixed things that were broken, tinkered with things to make them work better and generally managed to make things out of bits and pieces that were hoarded just in case they came in handy. Sadly, very few people of my generation carried this tradition forward and society is poorer. I recently came across the story told below which seems to provide an excellent perspective on necessity driving invention.*

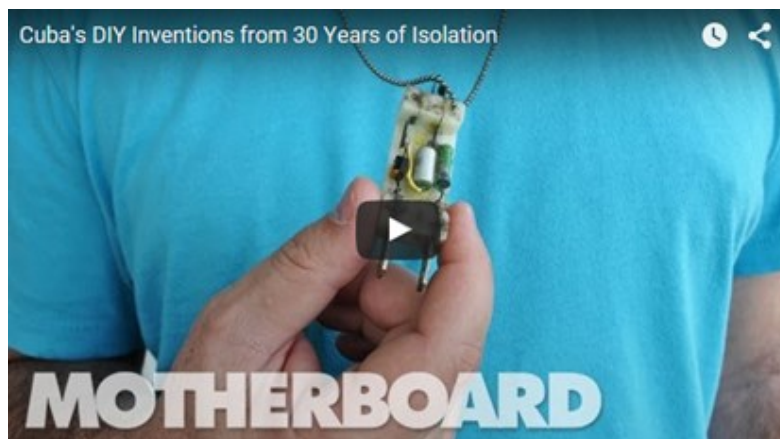


## Cuba's DIY Inventions from 30 Years of Isolation

### *The Technological Disobedience of Ernesto Oroza*

In 1991, Cuba's economy began to implode. "The Special Period in the Time of Peace" was the government's euphemism for what was a culmination of 30 years worth of isolation. It began in the 60s, with engineers leaving Cuba for America. Ernesto Oroza, a designer and artist, studied the innovations created during this period. He found that the general population had created homespun, Frankenstein-like machines for their survival, made from everyday objects. Oroza began to collect these machines, and would later contextualize it as "art" in a movement he dubbed "Technological Disobedience." This amazing video tells the story.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-XS4aueDUg>





## A Creative & Resourceful Mum



*All mums are creative and resourceful - that goes without saying, but Grace Hall has found a particular way to express her creativity.*

*Her six-year-old son turned his nose up at the sandwiches she made and the sticks of carrot she put in his lunch box. So she transformed them into aliens, elephants and super heroes. This simple creative act of finding a solution to a problem that lots of mums will recognise by combining healthy food with her son's interests and passions, transformed his eating habits.*

*Her ideas and actions grew out of necessity to make sure her son ate a proper meal but seeing the difference it made to her son's eating habits, also transformed Grace's life. She looked forward with pleasure to what had been a daily routine and experimented with lots of ideas: gradually it became a hobby. She set up a blog and started writing about and photographing her playful adventures with food and she soon had thousands of followers. She began to see the business potential in the idea*

*and eventually opened her own shop.*

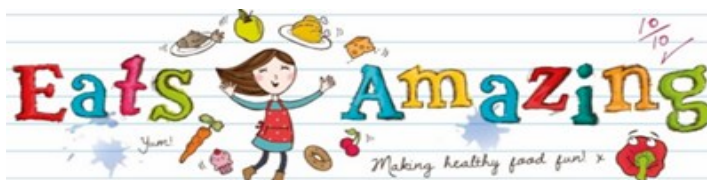
"I first created the Eats Amazing blog in 2012,

<http://www.eatsamazing.co.uk/>

and never dreamt it would grow like it has. I was a finalist in the 2014 MAD Blog Awards and in the same year I experienced a slightly crazy burst of publicity with my bento lunches being featured in newspapers and TV shows all over the world! My blog has gone from being a fun hobby to my job, and these days my love of blogging and social media is second only to my love of beautiful food and photography'

I could see years of endless lunch-packing stretching ahead of me. But I soon found they were a great outlet for my own creativity - as a full-time mum I get very little time for myself. So making lunches is a way for me to turn an everyday chore into an opportunity to get creative."

Inspired by the 'bento-style' lunch boxes she had seen in Japan, which are traditionally created from sushi rice, meat and fish and sometimes turned into fun characters and cartoons, Grace felt she could use this idea to transform her son's packed lunches and eating habits. With the help of her imagination and insider knowledge of her son's likes and dislikes, and a few simple tools - cutters, moulds and colourful containers, Grace turns sandwiches into Spiderman, hard-boiled eggs into sheep and melons into Easter chicks...while making hundreds



of healthy lunches. Grace says she never buys specialist ingredients and just uses what's left around the house. She fashions snails from a bread roll decorated with cheese for eyes, carrots carved into flowers and a cheese and ham toastie that looks like a pig. Other characters creations include Elmer the Elephant, the Gruffalo, Thomas the Tank Engine, Goldilocks and the Funny Bones skeletons. She also prepares themed lunches for special days like St George's Day or Comic Relief.



"I make the lunches while my son is eating his breakfast and he is always peering over my shoulder, interested in what I am making for him that day. I know I've made a good one if he says it's cool."



It is interesting where ideas come from, the idea of putting faces on the food came to Grace naturally as she remembers her own mother using fruit to make faces in homemade bread when she was a child. She

has now produced and published hundreds of designs for packed lunches and here are just a few of the amazing works of culinary art Grace has produced for her son's school packed lunches.



Grace involves her son in shaping her creations by encouraging him to make special requests to give her inspiration. In this way he feels a sense of ownership with what his mum produces. She also gets inspiration from her son's story books - the one below has a knight's theme, complete with sandwich cut to look like a castle and cucumber and carrot 'shields'. His current favourite lunches feature Angry Birds, dinosaurs, cats and pirates and he will now happily polish off veg, including striped beetroot and purple carrots.



Grace says that her lunches have also helped other mums who have had trouble getting their kids to eat their lunches.



"The best comments on my blog come from mums who say their children have started eating foods they wouldn't touch before. To think that I am inspiring others and helping them to get their children eating healthy food makes me very happy."

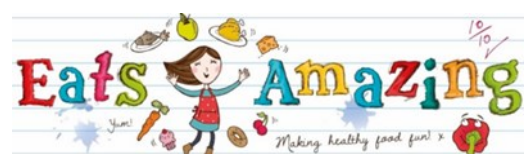
This is another story where individuals connect ideas and applying their imaginations and talents to

challenges that are encountered in the everyday circumstances of their life but because of the novelty of their idea and the way they have executed it - its influence extends well beyond their own life into the lives of others. In this way one person's creativity inspires another's.

Sources:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/food/article-2610244/Packed-lunches-look-good-eat-Creative-mother-turns-picky-sons-lunchboxes-works-art.html#ixzz3smJFQU8G>

<http://www.eatsamazing.co.uk/>





## Random thoughts

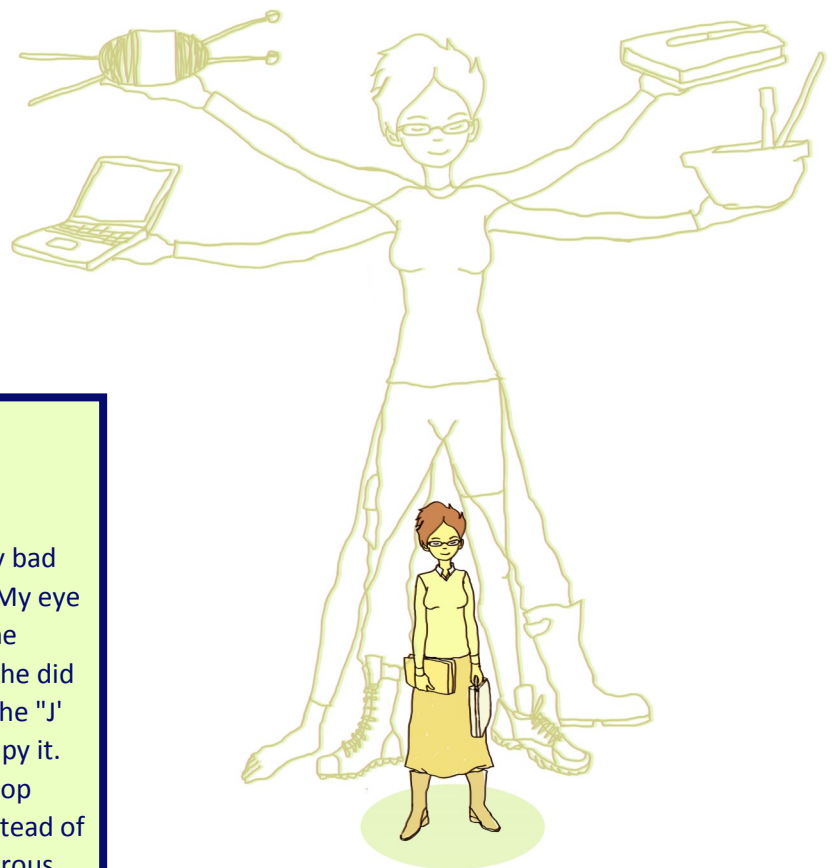
### Plasticity of creativity

Jenny wrote:

I have long been interested in the plasticity of creativity. For example, when my eyesight became less refined and later arthritis set in, I found I could no longer create through embroidery and knitting. So, I compensated by finding alternative outlets for me need to create. I spent more time writing, research and analysis.

Do you have any examples of how you or someone you know has re-channelled their creativity?

Kiboko responded with the image she inspired in him



### Earliest memory of creativity

John Cowan recalls

Earliest memory of creativity? I had very bad eyesight, even before I went to school. My eye specialist was a delightful lady. When she signed my prescription, I liked the way she did the double-back loop at the tail end of the 'J' which began her first name. I tried to copy it. Hurrying to do so, I found the reverse loop going more and more upwards, until instead of being the tail of my J it formed the generous top of my J. I liked it. It's been part of my signature from childhood days, and even features on the signet ring I was given when Audrey and I got engaged.

*Editorial comment - Some ideas are dependent on gaining buy in to be successful. In this story Brian Jackson describes an example of involving his large family which is spread all over the world to contribute towards creating a book for his mum.*

## Team Effort

### Brian Jackson

Several years ago I was wondering what I could give to my mother for her 80th birthday. She's the type of mum who will be happy and enthusiastic with anything given to her, but I wanted it to be something special. I'm from a "largish" family (5 brothers & sisters each with children (17 in all not to mention grandchildren) and we are scattered all over the world, so my brothers and sisters were a little surprised when I suggested taking a "snapshot" of all of our lives on a particular day (my parents' wedding anniversary) and pulling it together in the form of a book for a present. I have to say I was as pessimistic as my brothers and sisters about everyone joining in when I first suggested the idea, because if it wasn't a full family activity it wouldn't really have worked. Amazingly though it DID work...and with all of my brothers and sisters pushing their own families to each write a story about their activities that day and provide a photo it took shape. Over the next few weeks it took shape and grew to around 80 pages and as the stories and pictures came in I was so proud of my whole family for humouring me initially but then really getting the whole concept. I put the book on-line as a 'turn the page' e-book so that everyone could see the fruits of their work.

It's definitely not a masterpiece but it's US. I enjoyed my family's stories immensely and each one made their story personal. While I'm fairly sure every one would have thought their own story dull and unexciting, I didn't and I know that mum didn't. Their own creativity came through in what they'd written (and how) and the photo(s) that had been shared. Anyway, as expected mum was very happy with it when she received it in glorious technicolour, but dad later told me that mum was "over the moon" about getting something that every family member had contributed to and she read and re-read it many times. I also remember my older brother telling me that this was the first time he actually knew what all of his children were doing :-)

I guess the moral of my little story is that sometimes even a zany little idea can flourish when other people are willing to give it a go.



ps - there has been a "baby explosion" over the last few years in my broader family....so it might be time to do another one :-)

**Editor's comment** - in this final contribution to this collection of personal stories of creativity Mike Wride and Philip Franses explain how they created the conditions for transformative learning by encouraging learners in a developmental process to think holistically and ecologically in ways that enabled new meanings to be co-created. To achieve this the teachers themselves must be co-learners in the process.

## Creative Development of Meaning in Matter:

### Reflections on a Silent Pilgrimage

*Mike Wride, School of Natural Sciences, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland*

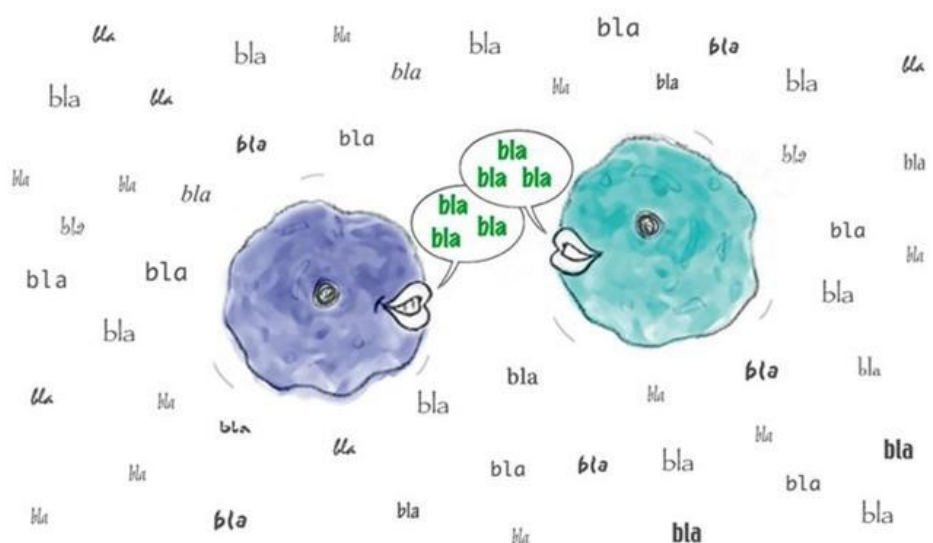
*Philip Franses, Schumacher College, Totnes, Devon, UK*

Former Schumacher College lecturer, developmental biologist and complexity scientist Brian Goodwin had coined the term *“Maximum freedom to the parts, maximum coherence to the whole”*. This was our mantra as we began our teaching with the MSc Holistic Science students on the Chaos and Complexity module at Schumacher College in October of this year.

We were nearing the end of the first week. It had already been magical in the becoming! We were discovering that the soul is present during the creation of new meaning and that meaning also ‘matters’. A soul of meaning in matter, a seed in the soil, waiting to be nourished by us, through our creative, developmental potential for action.

We were exploring embryonic development and cell-cell communication. The teaching was to be less about ‘facts’ and more about transformation in the process of learning. At the same time, Philip was bringing in concepts relating to chaos and complexity in physics. How were we going to blend these together in a creative and emergent way to literally make something meaningful?

We needed to trust in the freedom of our own skills, knowledge and experience in cohering with the material and each other, as well as the students. It would be easy for the two subject areas to be taught in a fragmented, disconnected and distant way. The path to coherence was through the development of new meaning in the teaching, through the freedom to explore the spaces in between!



I had started off asking the students to think and feel themselves as cells differentiating during the development of this organism of their class. Their task was to experience themselves evolving in understanding, in finding new meaning.



So far, we had managed to bring the physics together with the biology, including the idea that the Universe is itself a developing organism! The fertilized egg, the zygote, its own cosmos with pure potential within – not ‘nothing’, maybe a ‘no-thing’, possibly a ‘know-thing’! Just like the students there was an immanence of unformed expression. But how to express this, just like genes are expressed, to coordinate the dance of development?

We had delved into the complexity of communication using group ball juggling, and we had explored the emergence of meaning in conversations between cells. A card game, as a creative problem solving exercise, had been successful– the students had brought their individual parts together, parts which had their own freedom, into the coherence of a whole new meaning in the story that unfolded.

One student summed it up:

*“I feel like we've been in this classroom for weeks talking about making meaning and, in a way, this activity was putting our ability as a group to work on matter to make meaning out of it. Because, we haven't worked together on an actual material riddle and this was just that!”*

And so, it's Friday of the first week. The morning session is nearing its end and suddenly a Tortoiseshell butterfly appears, flutters towards the open window and flies out into the Autumn air. And we were talking about communication! So, the butterfly appears synchronistically to communicate that we should go outside - Yes!



Hugely symbolic. Had she been there waiting until just that moment to appear to us, reflecting our transformation?

We gather in a circle outside the College, linking arms. One rule from now on – silence. How will we find freedom and coherence in the silence? Is ‘science’ to be found within this ‘silence’? The potential of the silence for a study of self-metamorphosis, like the butterfly, and the emergence of us from the chrysalis into the light of new meaning at the end? We would see....

We lead the way through the North Woods with a string of students behind us each walking in their own time, some barefoot, but all silent. We move mindfully, listening to the wind rustling the trees. There is this freedom now coming to us within the silence. We continue on, reflecting on the week in the classroom, past the rooster and his hens (more meaning; there was a rooster depicted in the card game). We move on to the church – St Mary's. I circle the church three times, some students follow, others climbing and communing with trees, but we eventually all enter the silence of this sacred space, epitomising meaning in matter. Wholeness, health, holiness – everything encapsulated in this place, linking to the meaning of the teaching. We leave one by one and form a long chain back to the College. Once there, we again form a circle, linking arms.

We need to close this experience off with something meaningful, spontaneous, creative. The idea came through me as I left the church. I enter the circle, acknowledging each member of the ring, each cell in this organism. I leave the circle and walk around the outside. The human circle now became a sacred space, a human church. I then re-join the circle. Each student entering one at a time, looking each other in the eye, into the depths of each soul, deep into the sacred presence of the other, each gaze imbued with meaning, each one still developing, still growing, still relating, still communicating even in the silence....



Later that afternoon the two of us walk together in to Totnes – I have to get the train. There is silence, but also excitement - reflecting on what has happened during this week. How we had gone from ‘nothing’ to ‘no-thing’ to ‘know things’ along with the students! Difficult to put into words. We knew that we were the same, Mike and Philip, but we were also different - differentiated. The same, but different. The week of teaching was incredibly profound. We had trust in the freedom of the parts and the coherence of the whole, just as Brian had suggested, and we had emerged transformed by the experience.

This was a pilgrimage to true transformational teaching and learning through creative development.

### ***Notes and references***

See [journeyschool.org](http://journeyschool.org) for more on Matter and Meaning!

Illustration by MSc Holistic Science student Lea Klöppel: “Conversation Partner”

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Image on page 48

[http://www.laboratorytalk.com/pictures/633xAny/3/0/4/3304\\_Capture.PNG](http://www.laboratorytalk.com/pictures/633xAny/3/0/4/3304_Capture.PNG)

- 1 Our everyday creativity can be applied to almost anything - we are very good at finding the affordances in life for our creativity - it's a fundamental characteristic of being a person.
- 2 The source of creativity - our imagination that gives rise to new ideas, feelings and actions, can be provoked by almost anything. We are the ones that find interest, meaning and inspiration in our own experience. being open to our feelings enables us to be inspired by almost anything (Graham p 24). Our imagination encourages and enables us to connect ideas that are not normally connected because they are ideas we care about and the product of connecting has personal meaning and significance to us (Norman p3, Graham p24 and most of the stories).

3      *Necessity is the first mother of our creativity:* for example when we are faced with a challenge or problem that requires us to be imaginative and resourceful (Michael p26; Roger 37; Grace p43) or to experience and experiment in order to learn (Rafaela p32 ; Nikos p34 ).

4      *The second mother helps us cope with adversity or physical/emotional disruption in our life.* It helps us cope with dissonance and conflict in our life drawing on the emotional turbulence that emerges from the circumstances of our life (Shelley p13, Merinke p11). Our creativity can also be an expression of care and love (Amrutha p16).



5     *The third mother fulfils our desire to achieve more of our potential as a human being. We want to develop and improve ourselves and our lives so we explore and experiment to enrich ourselves and our circumstances. We search for affordance across and through our life. We try to refresh our routines and replace boredom with interest and excitement (Barbara p18).*

6 Some contexts and situations provide us with a lot of affordance for creative self-expression and deep satisfaction. In these contexts we develop our skills, knowledge and talents and discover particular mediums that we enjoy. In these environments we involve and immerse ourselves in the things that we care about and aspects of our creativity flourish (Kiboko p5; Steve p7; Shelley p14, Jenny p15; Graham p24; Grace p43).



- 7 Perhaps the greatest demand for our creativity is found in contexts that are unfamiliar dealing with problems that we have never encountered before (Roger p37).
- 8 By sharing our creations and our thoughts and feelings around these creations we can inspire others (Merinke p11; Liz p20). In the Social Age blogs have become important vehicles for sharing our creations and inspiring others (Merinke p11; Liz p20; Grace p43).
- 9 Talking about our problems and challenges with sympathetic and engaged listeners can open new ways of thinking and opportunities for creative solutions and actions (Russ p28; John p31).
- 10 We do not require an audience for our creativity to be exhibited, but we do derive enjoyment from witnessing the enjoyment, approval or admiration of others in response to our creations (Graham p24; Amrutha p.16).
- 11 Creativity can be re-channelled, reflecting the plasticity of the brain. If we are unable to continue one form of output e.g. due to an injury or illness, our creativity can find an alternative form (Jenny p46).
- 12 All sorts of factors can influence our creativity. Our parents and our upbringing can influence and inspire us to live a life of creative possibility (Gerald p25), while for some people particular conditions like having time, being relaxed, exercising or drinking coffee in a favourite cafe, help them access their unconscious mind to liberate their ideas (David p9; Russ p28).
- 13 Creative moments can be remembered throughout our lives and they may have a lifelong impact upon us (John p46).
- 14 Finally, if we are to create a more creative society: a society in which every person's creativity is nurtured, encouraged and valued, then teachers have an important role to play in ensuring that the right sort of conditions, relationships, affordances and recognitions are available (Rafaela p32; Nikos p34). Creativity is often a process of connecting, combining and synthesising ideas. Teachers have a role to play in encouraging students to think holistically and ecologically about their subjects. The students' task is 'to experience themselves evolving in understanding, in finding new meaning' (Mike and Philip p 48)

**Please email us your own reflective thoughts:**

Executive Editor [jjenny@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jjenny@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Images:**

<http://www.bigwritingclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/be-creative.jpg>

<http://cdn.kidscreen.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/creativity.jpg?be18c6>

**Creativity is  
contagious,  
pass it on**  
Albert Einstein

## Lifewide Education News

Lifewide Education welcomes the opportunity to participate in conferences, seminars and workshops that are relevant to our mission and visit educational initiatives from which we can learn. In the last 6 months members of the team visited Iran, Mexico and Spain.

### Lifewide Education in Iran

Once in a while we come across an educational project that is really inspiring. On a recent visit to Iran, Lifewide Education Director, Professor Norman Jackson was invited to visit the **Omid-e-Mehr Centre** in Tehran by the Director of the Centre, Farhad Behrami (left).



The Centre takes in some of the most vulnerable, abused and neglected girls including destitute Afghani refugees. With the help of private donors worldwide, the Centre has built a community within which these young women are able to develop the tools, self-awareness, confidence and personal agency they need to lead independent, productive and fulfilled lives.



In a society where being a victim of domestic, violent and/or sexual abuse can bring shame to the victim and their family there is nowhere for girls or young women to turn to. The Omid Foundation was created in 2004 by Marjaneh Halati, a London-based social psychologist and psychotherapist, the foundation now supports nearly 200 girls in two centres. The educational social enterprise is driven by her vision, energy and passion.

Every 6 months the Centre offers places for 30 girls between 15-25. Each girl is interviewed by a psychologist, social worker and psychiatrist and their level of educational attainment is assessed. Those who are offered places are welcomed into a warm, secure, and non-judgemental community in which the women immediately begin to experience what it feels like to

have the value of their lives affirmed, and to be treated with respect, dignity, and kindness. Therapeutic intervention ranges from straightforward counselling to more innovative therapeutic approaches which help the girls 'find their own voice', discover their creative talents and

develop self-confidence through drama, painting and photography workshops, as well as music, singing and dancing. There is a strong emphasis on personal and creative self-expression and the walls are covered with the artistic expressions of the students.

The Centre's educational programmes address three key areas: self-empowerment, education and training. Empowerment is achieved through counselling and a series of workshops that aim to change attitudes through awareness and knowledge. The workshops focus on fostering personal empowerment; the development of a conceptual understanding of individual/human rights; gender identity; a citizen's role in society; as well as legal issues that pertain to women, the family and the work environment. They further aim to foster the ability to bring about stable and equitable marital relationships.

Education focuses on developing literary and numeracy skills, with a special emphasis on IT, English language, and creative writing. During our visit we sat in on an English class with four Afghan refugees and were able to ask them questions about their experiences at the Centre. What came across was their appreciation for the opportunity they had and the recognition that it had enabled them to rebuild their lives and build confidence in their own abilities to lead an independent life.

The Centre also seeks to develop cultural awareness and understanding, through visits to places and institutions of cultural merit and 'character' through physical challenges such as climbing significant mountains in the Alborz mountain range north of Tehran.

Assessments are made to either guide the young women towards a university education or advanced professional vocational training in fields such as IT, accounting, secretarial, architectural drafting, or tourism management. Students who opt for the vocational route are placed either in an appropriate job with an Iranian organization or given assistance and mentored to start her own business enterprise. The development of enterprise skills and attitudes is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the programme.

The Centre is keen to provide internships to high school or university students with an Iranian heritage, from America and Europe to contribute to the educational and social process. Those who participate are known as Omid Angels and they teach English or IT, or run yoga classes, drama workshops, fashion design or any other talent they can share.

While giving to charities which support poor people is well established in Iran, supporting social educational enterprises like OMID is not part of the culture. It costs around \$400 per month to support a student and all funding is raised through donations and private sponsors. Lifewide Education made a small donation to the important work of the Omid-e-Mehr Centre.

To find out more about the work of the Centre or make a donation you can visit the foundation's website. You might also like to watch 'The Glass House', a documentary film which follows the lives of four Iranian women who were members of the first cohort of students.

**Visit the Omid-e-Mehr website**

<http://omid-e-mehr.org/>

## Lifewide Education in Mexico



Regular readers will know that Lifewide Education has an interest in mental health, wellbeing and destigmatisation of mental illness thanks to the personal interests and involvement of Executive Editor Jenny Willis and her husband, a Consultant Psychiatrist. They take part in national and international conferences as often as possible and in this way raise awareness of the work of Lifewide Education. Jenny writes:

In November 2015, our venue was Puerto Vallarta, in south-west Mexico. We have now linked our independent efforts (no2stigma) with those of another voluntary organisation, Careif, so were part of a small team of clinicians and academics from the UK contributing to the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry's (WACP) 4<sup>th</sup> congress, on the Global Challenges & Cultural Psychiatry.

My own topic of discussion was Wellbeing, an issue which Lifewide has been addressing for some years,

and which has been the focus of my ongoing research and of the sixth edition of Lifewide Magazine, in Spring 2013. However, the congress threw up many other parallels between the work of these professionals and lifewide learning. The very titles of some sessions could have been on our own Lifewide agenda: 'A Sense of Belonging in a Globalised World', 'The Place of Culture in Global Mental Health', 'Teaching Cultural Psychiatry to Medical Students', 'The informal Koranic schools and their students: between religious education and manipulation' ... So many of the discussions revolved around personal identity, making sense of our lives, dealing with change

And it was not only the themes which chimed with Lifewide: approaches recognised the centrality of storytelling, narrative, as a tool for giving meaning to our individual and collective lives. Education was a common means of approaching stigma and prejudice. Most importantly, the conference drew on professionals from



a wide range of disciplines, as promised by the President of the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry, Professor Kamaldeep Bhui: "The congress will include high quality plenary lectures from international experts, and bring together diverse disciplines in shared learning."

This was reinforced by past President, Professor Goffredo Bartocci, who expanded "this congress, with its wide epistemological approach, will face broad topics such as human responses to natural and manmade disasters, conflicts, insecurity and the lay and theological meaning of spirituality."

Just like Lifewide Education, the WACP has embraced the potential of multi-disciplinary co-operation in order to address issues which face us all, as individuals and as members of wider social groups, and is seeking means of optimising the wellbeing of all. If you are interested in

reading the abstracts for all contributions to the conference, they have been compiled into the following publication:

World Cultural Psychiatry  
Research Review

Volume 7 - Supplement 1  
October 2015

S1-S152. © 2015 WACP

ISSN: 1932-6270



For more details, visit the WACP website

<http://www.wcprr.org/>

## Field Trip to Barcelona

In November, Lifewide Education Director, Professor Norman Jackson participated in a seminar organised by the e-Learning Centre of the Open University of Catalonia (OuC) at the invitation of the Centre's Director Professor Albert Sangra (above) who is also leading the Centre's Eco4Learn research project. The seminar aimed to share perspectives on the idea of learning ecologies and the ways in which learning ecologies provided a framework for understanding self-determined professional development. The researchers at OuC were particularly interested in the role that ICT can play in expanding the affordances for learning within an individual's learning ecology. Norman was one of four invited international scholars who were working on the idea of learning ecologies and networked scholars.



educational programmes. The e-Learning Centre was formed in 2010 to provide pedagogic support for teachers designing on-line courses. An important reason for the visit was to enable the Centre's Eco4Learn research project team to share the results of their project into the ICT-enabled professional learning ecologies of school teachers to be shared and discussed with the four international scholars.

The seminar attracted nearly 50 researchers from different parts of Spain who shared the results of their work.

The seminar enabled Lifewide Education to share our perspectives on learning ecologies a subject we have explored in our magazines and currently in a book. But it also enabled many informal conversations to take place, new friendships to form and create new opportunities for collaboration.



The Open University of Catalonia is the only fully-online University in Europe and in

1994 when it started it was the first university in the world to adopt on-line delivery methods for all of its

## EduLabTIC Eco4Learn

Project "Ecologies of learning throughout life: contributions of ICT to the professional development of teachers" (Eco4Learn) was approved by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness within the call 2012 of the National R & D Program (EDU2012-37,334). The implementation period is from 2013 to 2015.



The project aims to analyse and understand the contributions of learning ecologies to facilitate the development and professional improvement of teachers of primary education (6-12 years). The underlying assumption is that ICT can expand and enrich individuals' learning ecologies for professional development. The three year project has:

- 1) Analysed how primary school teachers set up and use learning ecologies for their professional development and the role of ICT in them.
- 2) Surveyed the perception of teachers in primary education around the contributions ICT has made to their ecologies for learning and professional development aimed at improving their teaching.
- 3) Established guidelines to facilitate the development and professional improvement of teachers through the implementation of learning ecologies.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in a five stage research process.

**The first stage** involved conceptualising learning ecologies for teacher training: understanding what they are and how they are configured, what are the main components, in particular those related to ICT, etc. The first stage involved creating the theoretical

underpinning through searches of the literature, in combination with the Delphi method with the participation of national and international experts in the field of teacher training and educational use of ICT.

**The second phase** of the project involved selecting and analysing case studies of teachers aimed at understanding their learning ecologies through semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. This strategy led to the identification of success factors and strategies for exemplary use of ICT in teachers' professional development of school teachers.

The actions associated with phases 1 and 2 resulted in the **development of a questionnaire** that was administered to a representative sample of the population of primary school teachers in Catalonia. Using the responses the research team were then able to compare the prevailing situation in a representative population of primary school teachers with the profiles of exemplary practice in the case study teachers.

The research team are now in the **fifth and final stage** which is concerned with dissemination and the public discussion of findings. The Lifelong Learning Ecologies seminar was an important part of this strategy. The research team will be publishing the results of their work in the next few months.

## Future events



 @melsiguk  
#MELSIG-NTU

### Digital Narratives

(re)storying learning experiences for a digital age

A diverse one day programme  
Sharing practice, developing skills and networking

Explore the role of digital narratives in learning, teaching and practice. For example,

- Digital Storytelling
- Storify
- Social media for learning
- Creating flexible and diverse learning experiences
- The digital-social learning space

Nottingham Trent University, 8th January 2016

**Free event**

**Find out more and register here:** [http://melsig.shu.ac.uk/?page\\_id=981](http://melsig.shu.ac.uk/?page_id=981)




MELSIG site

## WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION WEEK

2016

See final page for details of  
Lifewide Education's contribution



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY LIFEWIDE MAGAZINE

The Magazine is three years old. We began in Winter 2012. The magazine website has now been accessed over 6000 times. Over 500 people have joined our community of interest and our members and readers are from all over the world. Thank you to everyone who supports us.

Lifewide Magazine is published twice a year under a Creative Commons license.

Each issue examines a different aspect of lifewide learning, education, personal development & achievement.



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Based on a work at <http://www.lifewidemagazine.co.uk/>.

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## LIFEWIDE MAGAZINE #16

March 2016

### Ecologies for Professional Development

We invite contributions from people who are willing to share a story of an ecology they created through which they learnt, developed and achieved in the context of their work.

Commissioning editor's introduction

<http://www.lifewidemagazine.co.uk/>

Submission deadline: 28 February 2016

It takes all my creativity to  
cope with BLACK FRIDAY &  
CYBER MONDAY



Wishing all lifewiders & creative academics  
a very happy Christmas & New Year



## WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION WEEK APRIL 15–21 2016

<http://wciw.org/> Twitter @WorldCreativity #WCIW

Founded in 2001, WCIW is a time to encourage people to use their creativity to make the world a better and more interesting place and to make their place in the world better and more interesting too.

WCIW is a time to inspire new action, create novel ideas, make new decisions.

WCIW is a time to educate, engage, celebrate and open doors that help people experience freedom from suffering and open up to new worlds of what's possible.

WCIW is a do-it-yourself event - it happens where ever you are and in whatever way you want it to be



### **Creative Academic & Lifewide Education are participating in this global event**

Our contributions will include:

- 1) Google+ Community throughout April to share individuals' stories of their contributions to WCIW and encouragement for universities to organise their own events.
- 2) An issue of Creative Academic Magazine on the theme of Creativity in Development building on the December 2015 Issue of Lifewide Magazine on the theme of 'Our Creative Life'.
- 3) Publication of a 'Guide to Encouraging Creativity in Higher Education Teaching and Learning'.