



The Romance of **CREATIVITY**

by Mitchell Ditkoff

One of the most important qualities of a creative problem solver is the ability to see new relationships between seemingly unrelated things. This person sees patterns and connections where others see only confusion and separateness. To the innovator, everything is related – and the discovery of that relatedness is what fuels their creative process. In fact, the creative process is very much like a relationship. And like most relationships, it often begins with *fascination* – that curious state of mind (and heart) that keeps us spellbound, charmed and aroused.

Simply put, whenever a person gets a new idea, **A KIND OF ROMANCE BEGINS**. We become absorbed. Intoxicated. Smitten. Indeed, for many people, just *thinking* about a new idea is an aphrodisiac. It turns us on, psyches us up, and otherwise makes it very hard to eat, sleep, or obsess about cash flow.



While some people involved in a new relationship are able to *sustain* the accompanying excitement for months, most of us are less fortunate. It's the rare person, indeed, who knows how to savor and expand upon this feeling for years.

Ditto with the creative process.

After the intoxication of the initial encounter wears off, a less-than-incredible reality sets in. Where once we saw only beauty and pure possibility, now we see only blemishes on our high ideal. To make matters worse, some folks at this stage of the process begin to experience a crippling kind of performance anxiety. "Will I be good enough to achieve

my goal?" we ask. "Do I have enough time?" "Do I have enough money?" "Can I really pull it off?" Call it "doubt" if you like, but any way you slice it, the honeymoon is over.

What routinely follows (as it does in most romances) is a painful period of re-evaluation. "Is this really what I want to be doing with my time?" we ask ourselves on the way to the refrigerator. **"IS THIS WORTH ALL THE EFFORT?"** Long-buried fears of being consumed by "the other" surface, driving us into withdrawal and self-analysis. Instead of enjoying the outpouring of creative energy that accompanies a new idea, we study it. We talk about it. We control it. Anything but let go to it.

Before you know it, the ever popular approach/avoidance stage is upon us. On Monday we're totally absorbed in our new venture. On Friday, we're sure it's a waste of time.

"Life shrinks or
expands
according to
one's courage."

ANAIS NIN

But that's not all. The plot, like unattended bowls of oatmeal, soon thickens. Instead of maintaining our commitment to our new idea, we begin having flings. We flirt with other ideas, other possibilities, and other "new loves." We get into everything and anything – whatever it takes not to sustain our ongoing relationship with our original inspiration.



Is there any hope? Is there any possibility for all the thousands of creative thinkers on planet Earth to actually *manifest* their vision?

You bet there's hope. And something a lot more powerful – awareness. Simply by paying attention to the games you play to protect yourself (from failure or success) will go a long way towards ensuring their extinction.

To begin with, understand that all romances, no matter how inspiring, are temporary. The trivial ones simply end. The good ones mature, often growing into committed

relationships – even marriages. If you are really serious about your current hot idea, be willing to get closer to it. Be willing to go from the romance stage to an intimate relationship. Understand what the creative process is – an impossible-to-deny encounter with yourself – your fears, your power, your vision, and what drives you to play the game of life. Be willing to see your new venture as it is – with all its blemishes, quirks, and vagary. Know that you will have your falling out periods and your disagreements. Know that you will sometimes feel like a fraud. Know also that the fuel for many creative breakthroughs has not *only* been passion, purpose, and power, but also confusion, conflict, and collapse. It's normal. It's human. It's part of the process.

So please, be gentle with yourself. Be patient. Breathe deep. And above all, do whatever you can – day or night, rich or poor, male or female, manager or managee – to put the *elation* back into your *relationship* to creativity.

*This article is excerpted from **BANKING ON INNOVATION**, a 172-page workbook that accompanies Idea Champions' nationally acclaimed creative thinking training. Log onto www.ideachampions.com/banking_on_innovation.shtml for more info.*

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