Productive Thinking Fundamentals
Participant Workbook

Your name

thinkX
raising intellectual capital
“The unexpected connection is more powerful than one that is obvious.”

Heraclitus, 6th century B.C.E.
Respecting our sources

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Welcome!

Welcome to ThinkX Productive Thinking. We at ThinkX believe that your most important intellectual resource is your capacity for productive thinking. Whether in your business or personal life, the better you can think, evaluate, and apply your ideas, the more successful you will be. By developing your productive thinking skills, you will exponentially increase your personal and professional effectiveness.

We believe that everyone has the capacity to increase their productive thinking skills. No matter what your starting point, you can learn how to generate better ideas, evaluate them more rigorously, and put them into practice more effectively. Most of the people who have attended this program have been amazed at the wealth of their own untapped thinking resources.

Productive thinking is as much a mindset as it is a set of skills. In a very real sense, your attitude about productive thinking will be self-fulfilling. As Henry Ford once said, “Whether you think you can, or think you can’t, you are right.” The productive thinking attitude is that there is always a way out, always a way through, that nothing is fixed or fore-ordained. It’s an attitude of limitless possibility. But it’s not just wishful thinking. The productive thinking mindset is also one of personal responsibility. As powerful as productive thinking is, it's also hard work. The more skillful you become at it, the more natural it becomes, but learning and developing that skill takes time. As with any skill, you need to practice it in order to perfect it. That’s true in every realm of human endeavor — whether sports, the arts, the sciences, or the ability to think productively. To truly embed your skills, we encourage you to use the Productive Thinking Process in both your personal and professional life as much as possible. You will get better at it every time you do so. We’ll also be offering you additional ways of developing and sharpening your new skills in the weeks and months following this program.

So welcome to the ThinkX Productive Thinking Fundamentals workshop. We know you will benefit from the concepts and tools you will learn today, and we hope you will continue to share you progress with the thousands of people whose work and lives have been transformed by this new way of thinking.
Creative and Critical Thinking

Research has shown that in trying to solve problems or create new approaches, human beings use two distinct modes of thinking: creative thinking, which generates many possibilities and tends to jump quickly from idea to idea, and critical thinking, which assesses ideas and seeks to focus on those that may provide value.

Productive thinking combines and balances these two distinct thinking modes — creative thinking, aimed at producing as many new ideas as possible, and critical thinking, aimed at selecting and developing ideas with the most promise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative thinking</th>
<th>Critical thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking makes lists. It is a process in which we think in many different directions — about a problem, its possible causes, possible futures, and so on. Children are expert creative thinkers, moving rapidly from one subject to another, often more quickly than adults find comfortable or even comprehensible.</td>
<td>Critical thinking makes choices. It is an evaluative process in which we focus our thoughts and narrow the scope of what we are looking at — we assess quality, compare alternatives, sift out the irrelevant, and make judgments. Whenever we deliberately choose one thing over another we are using critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking is:</td>
<td>Critical thinking is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Declarative</td>
<td>• Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-judgmental</td>
<td>• Judgmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expansive</td>
<td>• Focusing</td>
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</table>

Creative thinking is about making lists.

One of the best examples of generative thinking in adults is when we daydream, or in those twilight moments just before we drift off to sleep, when the mind is relaxed and flits from thought to thought, often without landing on any single one. If you’re like most people, you’ve probably had some of your most brilliant thoughts during these times. You’ve probably also forgotten just about every one of them.

Critical thinking is about making choices.

In critical thinking we often match our ideas against a set of criteria, against our values, or simply against our sense of what feels right in order to evaluate how appropriate an idea or an action might be. In our roles as parents and managers we often exercise our critical thinking skills.
The Overarching Productive Thinking Principle

Both creative and critical thinking are essential to thinking productively. Creative thinking allows us to expand on options; critical thinking allows us to focus on decisions. Without awareness and training, most people tend to do their creative and critical thinking at the same time. And that's a problem. It's like trying to drive a car with one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake. You don’t get anywhere, and you'll burn something out in the process.

Think of all the times in your personal or business life when someone has come up with an idea and others have said “Oh, no, that’ll cost too much,” or “The boss won’t go for it,” or “If it’s such a good idea, why hasn’t anyone thought of it before?” or “What we’ve got works just fine,” or “That’s not our job.” Think of the times in your life when both the person thinking the new thought and the person judging it were one and the same — maybe even you!

Separate Your Thinking

The overarching principle for productive thinking is to separate these two modes of thinking. First, think creatively in order to generate as many options as possible. Then think critically to evaluate and select the best options to pursue. It sounds simple, but it can be very difficult to do.

You’ll see in the material that follows, that each step of the ThinkX Productive Thinking Model uses both creative and critical phases and that each step makes a clear distinction between the two phases.

Both creative thinking and critical thinking have guidelines that can help you stay on track. The better you become at applying these principles, the more productive your thinking will be.

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**Creative thinking guidelines**

*Use these guidelines as you make your lists*

- **Defer judgment.** This doesn’t mean eliminating judgment, just waiting until the appropriate time. Give ideas a chance.

- **Build on ideas.** Create more ideas by adding slight twists and variations.

- **Seek wild ideas.** It’s easier to tame a wild idea than to invigorate a dull one.

- **Go for quantity.** Stretch: set a target of 30 itches, criteria, questions, ideas — whatever you’re working on. Then go for more.

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**Critical thinking guidelines**

*Use these guidelines as you make your choices*

- **Define success.** Establish the criteria against which to measure your ideas.

- **Unpack ideas.** Analyze them to understand their principles, themes, and implications.

- **Evaluate.** Measure your ideas against the success criteria you have chosen.

- **Judge generatively.** Avoid binary (yes/no) evaluations. Look for ways to improve your ideas as you evaluate them.
“The problem is never how to get new, innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get old ones out. Every mind is a building full of archaic furniture. Clean out a corner of your mind and creativity will instantly fill it.”

Dee Hock, Founder, VISA
“The best way to have good ideas is to have lots of ideas — and throw away the bad ones.”

Linus Pauling, Nobel Prize winner, Chemistry (1954) and Peace (1962)
The ThinkX Productive Thinking Model

What's Going On?

Align Resources

Forge the Solution

Generate Answers

What's Success?

What's the Question?

Context for Thinking

Platform for Action

Future Pull

Catalytic Question

Solution Alternatives

Powered-up Solution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Going On? Establish context for action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Lists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate a list of itches and impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore Knows and Wonders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate a list of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate a list of target futures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Success? Create future pull</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Lists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Imagine desired future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate success criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the Question? Reveal the Catalytic Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Lists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate problem questions that restate Target Future, Success Criteria, and other lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate questions that restate barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate additional compelling problem questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generate Answers Explore solution alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Lists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate rational and irrational answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate combinations of answers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forge the Solution Stress test ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Lists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate objections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore what else might be useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remedy objections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Align Resources Prepare for action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make Lists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate a list of actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generate a list of resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Generate a list of responsibilities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
High Five

High Five is an idea tool to use in *What’s Going On?*. You can’t generate effective solutions to problems you don’t see clearly. Like a baseball batter with great power, but not a great eye, the strongest swing won’t do much good, unless you connect your bat with the ball. The High Five tool prompts you to answer five essential questions you need to know about your issue to get a good handle on what’s really going on.

**Timing: 60-120 minutes**

Hold your hand up as though you were giving someone the high five. Imagine each of your fingers as a letter “i”, and the shape created by your thumb and forefinger as the letter “v”. These four “i”s and a “v” stand for the key questions you need to ask:

- What’s the **Itch**?
- What’s the **Impact**?
- What’s the **Information**?
- Who’s **Involved**?
- What’s your **Vision**? This is your Target Future.

For each question, first use creative thinking to generate a long list of answers, then use critical thinking to select those that are most significant. Answering these questions will give you a better chance of truly understanding your challenge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the Itch?</th>
<th>What’s the Impact?</th>
<th>What’s the Information?</th>
<th>Who’s Involved?</th>
<th>What’s the Vision?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What’s wrong?</td>
<td>• How does your itch affect you?</td>
<td>• How does the itch manifest?</td>
<td>• Who influences or causes the itch?</td>
<td>• It would be great if...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What needs fixing?</td>
<td>• How does it make you feel?</td>
<td>• What causes it?</td>
<td>• Who is affected by it (positively or negatively)?</td>
<td>• I wish...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What could be better?</td>
<td>• What concerns you about it?</td>
<td>• What does it cost?</td>
<td>• Who is advantaged or disadvantaged if things stay the same (and how)?</td>
<td>• If only...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What’s out of balance?</td>
<td>• Why is it important to you?</td>
<td>• Who else suffers from it; what did they do?</td>
<td>• Who is advantaged or disadvantaged if things change (and how)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What else?</td>
<td>• Why did you choose it?</td>
<td>• What do you wonder about the itch?</td>
<td>• What else?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would things be different if it were resolved?</td>
<td>• What do you need to confirm, find out?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What else?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*High Five was developed by Tim Hurson, Think Better, McGraw Hill 2008.*
Productive Thinking Tools

KnoWonder

KnoWonder is a simple tool for analyzing issues, concepts, or conditions. The intent is to ask what is known and yet to be known about the thing being examined. It lets you quickly and easily generate useful perspectives on any issue you might want to explore. It can be used in any step of the Productive Thinking Process, and it can be a great stand-alone tool whenever you need to increase the scope of your understanding of an issue.

KnoWonder is particularly useful for examining Itch statements in What’s Going On?. It is also an outstanding way to cap off any step in the Productive Thinking Process, allowing you to evaluate how you are doing before moving on to the next step.

**Timing: 15-45 minutes**

Take a large sheet of paper, the bigger the better. Flip chart paper is ideal. Draw a vertical line down the center, dividing the sheet in half. At the top, label the left half “Know” and the right half “Wonder”.

Start with the left half, and list all the things you know about your Itch. If you run out of ideas, cue yourself by asking specific questions:
- What resources are involved?
- What might be causing the situation?
- Why does it exist at all?
- What might be perpetuating it?
- Do other people or organizations experience similar itches? Who? Why? How have they responded to it?
- Are there people or organizations who don’t experience similar itches? Why might that be?
- Have you ever attempted to resolve the itch before? What have you tried? What have others tried? What happened? What worked? What didn’t? What obstacles got in the way of resolution?

When you run out of steam listing what you know, move to the Wonder side of the sheet. What do you wonder about the itch and the situation surrounding it? List all the things you don’t know, but would like to. Be as exhaustive as you can. Don’t judge any wonders out of existence.

KnoWonder makes your thinking visible. Not only can you see your output, but you can compare it with the thinking and perspectives of others. A powerful application of KnoWonder in groups is to reveal where people in work teams agree and differ on the “facts” around an issue.

*Developed by Tim Hurson, Think Better, McGraw Hill 2008.*
Productive Thinking Tools

\( \text{I}^3 \)

\( \text{I}^3 \) stands for Influence, Importance, and Imagination. It is an excellent critical thinking tool for helping evaluate whether a problem or opportunity is appropriate for you or your group to address. Use it in What’s Going On?

**Timing: 15-30 minutes**

\( \text{I}^3 \) consists of three simple questions:

- Do you (or your group) have Influence over the challenge? If the challenge is something completely out of your control or authority, you may not want to spin your wheels on it.
- Is the challenge of Importance to you (or your group)? Are you motivated to address it, and will you have the energy to carry your solution through?
- Does the challenge require Imagination? Will it be served by new thinking or an innovative solution? If the challenge is effectively addressed with an off-the-shelf solution, you may simply want to go to the shelf. But if you can improve on an existing solution, by all means go for it.

If you can answer “yes” to all three of these questions, you will probably benefit by applying the ThinkX Productive Thinking Model. If your answer to any of these questions is “no”, you may want to think about

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Imagination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

either redefining your challenge in a way that does meet the \( \text{I}^3 \) criteria, or perhaps working on a different challenge.
Productive Thinking Tools

C-4

C-4 stands for Cull, Combine/Cluster, Clarify, and Choose. C-4 is an excellent convergence tool for narrowing down many options into a manageable number.

Timing: 30-120 minutes

Cull

• Select two or three people to cull the list of wild ideas that you might be tempted to dismiss. Any idea you think may be too far out to make your final cut should go into this “What were we thinking?” cluster.
• Everyone else should move on to the next section, Cluster and Combine.
• While everyone else is clustering, those working on the wild ideas conduct a What’s UP? analysis on them — this is done by looking at each idea and asking, “What is the Underlying Principle behind this idea?” Once the UP has been identified and labeled, the wild ideas can move into the general cluster exercise.

Combine/Cluster

• Create groups or categories of similar ideas with no more than 4-6 ideas per cluster.
• Eliminate duplicates.
• Combine similar ideas to form single ideas.
• You may find a single idea fits into more than one cluster. If so, duplicate the post-it and place the idea in each appropriate cluster.
• You may find that a single idea cannot be clustered with any others because it is unique. If the idea seems useful, put it alone in its own cluster.
• Label each cluster with a name that summarizes its essence, but which is specific enough to be useful. For example, a cluster called “Communication” may be too broad to be useful. You may want to have separate clusters for “Internal Communication” and “External Communication.”

Clarify

• Restate the essence of each cluster as a single idea.
• If a cluster is too broad, break it up so that each represents a single idea.

Choose

• Evaluate each of your restated ideas against your success criteria. Which ideas resonate most? Which are most interesting or compelling? Which seem most worth pursuing?
• Select three to five of these ideas for further analysis and development.

C-4 is inspired by the work of Roger Firestein and Don Treffinger (Journal of Creative Behavior vol 17, no 1, 1983); Revised and updated by ThinkX Intellectual Capital Inc., 2006.
Productive Thinking Tools

DRIVE

DRIVE is a powerful tool for determining success criteria in What’s Success?

Timing: 30-60 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| DO (Desired Outcomes):
  List the outcomes you want your solution to achieve | Risk:
  List the outcomes you don’t want your solution to bring about | Investment:
  List your not-to-exceeds for all your resources | Values:
  List the values your solution must represent | Essential Outcomes:
  List the measurables or functional specs your solution must meet |

Make a table with five columns labeled D - R - I - V - E. List as many statements as possible for each row.

In creating your lists, incorporate not only your own perspectives, but also those of your key stakeholders. Once you have filled the table, choose the success criteria that are most important to you.

**Desired Outcomes**
- What do you want to do?
- What outcomes do you want to achieve?
- What must be accomplished?
- What do you want to happen?

**Risks**
- What must your outcome not do?
- What changes or impacts must you avoid?

**Investment**
- What resources are you prepared to allocate (time, money, energy, human)?
- What are your not-to-exceeds?

**Values**
- What values will you live by as you tackle this challenge?

**Essential Outcomes**
- What are the non-negotiable elements of success?
- What must be accomplished in order for you to consider the result a success?
- What specific targets absolutely must be achieved?

*DRIVE was developed by Tim Hurson, Think Better, McGraw Hill 2008.*
Excursions

Excursions are a way to help people see the challenge from a variety of different points of view. As the name implies, Excursions are actually trips outside the conventional way of looking at an issue. These trips can be real (as in a visit to a museum) or imaginary (as in a visualization or guided imagery exercise). Excursions can be useful for imagining the future in What’s Success?, generating questions in What’s the Question?, listing ideas in Generating Answers, and defining action steps in Aligning Resources.

Timing: 45 minutes to all day!

Focus on the challenge at hand, then try one or more of the following:

• Imagine yourself as a part of the challenge or process you are dealing with. For example, Jonas Salk used to picture himself as a virus or a cancer cell to get a better sense of the problems he was trying to solve. Depending on the challenge you are exploring, you might imagine yourself as a package on a store shelf, as a part in an automobile engine, as an email moving through the Internet, as a child’s toy.

• Imagine the environment in which the challenge exists. For example, if you are dealing with a labor/management communication problem, imagine yourself on the shop floor. Hear the noise of the machines, smell the smells, feel the temperature. Then imagine yourself in the executive suite. How might the differences affect your challenge? How might they influence ideas for solution or action? If you are exploring a new product, imagine the environment in which it will be used — a kitchen, a bathroom, a child’s bedroom, the inside of a car.

• Take actual excursions. Go to a museum, a factory, a playground, an airport, a construction site, a supermarket, a bicycle store. Take a walk in the park, a ride on public transportation, a trip to the mall. The place you go need not be related to your challenge. In fact, often the further removed from your challenge the better. Almost anything can stimulate your thinking about the problem at hand. How might children climbing monkey bars stimulate your thinking? How might a box of Jell-O pudding? A checkout counter? A hard hat? A painting by Monet? The sound of the closing doors on a bus?

To get the most out of excursions, take the time to write your observations, thoughts, feelings, and questions in a journal (see the Journaling tool).

Excursions is based on the work of W.J.J. Gordon (Synectics) and Horst Geschka (Methods and Organization of Idea Finding in Industry).
Forced Connections

Forced Connections is a useful tool to list unusual and unexpected ideas in Generate Answers.

**Timing: 15-30 minutes**

Choose a random object (an orange, a train, a table cloth). There are several related approaches you can use to generate ideas:

- Ask, “When you look at (or think of) _________, what ideas come up for addressing this challenge?”

- Ask, “In what ways is the challenge like a _________?” After you come up with some relationships, generate ideas these relationships stimulate. For example, the challenge is like an orange because it has a number of inter-connected sections. This might stimulate ideas like: discover what holds the sections together, look at each of the sections individually, squeeze all the sections together to make a blend, remove the barriers and create a seamless whole.

- Brainstorm the characteristics of the random object. For example, a table cloth may be smooth, white, foldable, soft, stain-resistant, woven (the more characteristics you can generate, the better). Then think about how the challenge (or a possible solution to the challenge) is like each of the characteristics. For example:
  - How is it foldable?
  - How is it smooth?
  - How is it woven?

Then ask yourself what additional ideas these connections stimulate.
POWER

POWER evaluates and strengthens ideas. It works best in Forge the Solution, but can also be used in any step of the process. One can power up Target Futures, Catalytic Questions, and steps in action plans. POWER is based on the principle of generative judgment, that is, judging for the purpose of improving, rather than eliminating.

**Timing: 30-120 minutes**

Make a table with five sections labeled P - O - W - E - R as shown. Fill out the segments with statements about the idea you are powering up. Filling out the table, list as many statements as possible for each area.

Once you have filled out the chart, review the statements, choose the ones that add the most value to the idea, and rewrite your idea in powered-up form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Objections</th>
<th>What Else?</th>
<th>Enhancements</th>
<th>Remedies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List what’s good about your solution</td>
<td>List the flaws in your solution</td>
<td>Looking at all the Positives you listed:</td>
<td>List how you can improve each Positive</td>
<td>How might you overcome the Objections?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List how you can overcome each Objection</td>
<td>Why else?</td>
<td>How much does it remind you of?</td>
<td>How might you enhance them?</td>
<td>How might you rethink the idea to eliminate or reduce its weaknesses and give it a greater chance to succeed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Positives**
- What’s good about the idea?
- What are its strengths?
- Why will it succeed?

**Objections**
- What’s bad about the idea?
- What are its flaws or weaknesses?
- Why will it fail?

**Enhancements**
- How much does it remind you of?
- What other elements may be in the idea that you haven’t yet articulated?
- Why else?
- Where else?
- When else?
- How else?

**Remedies**
- How might you overcome the Objections?
- How might you rethink the idea to eliminate or reduce its weaknesses and give it a greater chance to succeed?

**What Else?**

Be ruthless. Fight for failure. Stress test the idea to uncover all possible objections. Far better to have your idea fail at this stage than when you try to put it into practice.

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POWER was developed by Tim Hurson, Think Better, McGraw Hill 2008; inspired by the work of many outstanding researchers in the field of productive thinking, including Diane Foucar-Szocki, Bill Shephard, Roger Firestein, and Edward de Bono.
Productive Thinking Tools

Journaling

Journaling is simply keeping track of your ideas on paper. A Chinese proverb states: “Even the weakest ink is better than the strongest memory.” How many times have you had a great idea, only to lose it hours (or even minutes) later, because you can’t remember it? The solution: write it down.

Timing: variable

• Get a small notebook, one you can easily carry in a pocket or purse. Find a small pen that can attach to the notebook in some way, so you can always have them with you, and can pull them out at a moment’s notice.
• Make a habit of jotting down ideas, observations, plans, what worked, what didn’t, things you see and hear that intrigue you, other people’s ideas, inspiring quotes, whatever captures your interest. One of the basic rules of psychology is that we get more of what is reinforced. One of the interesting things about journaling is that the more you observe and write down your ideas, thoughts, and observations, the more ideas, thoughts, and observations you will begin having. So not only will you capture what you used to forget, you’ll actually generate more ideas to begin with.
• Remember that journaling need not be confined to writing. You can draw or sketch your ideas, or even jot musical notations. Whatever it takes. The key is to do it.

Example

One of the most powerful things you can do with your journal is to discover meaning in the various experiences you have in your ordinary life. We all go to meetings or have conversations or see beautiful sites. And after only a short time, we forget what happened at the meeting, what was said in the conversation, or the beauty of what we saw.

A simple way to capture these is to use the What — So What — Now What method in your journal. After a meeting, for example, take a moment to jot down the following in your journal:

• What? What happened? What did you actually observe? Try to be as objective as possible.

• So What? What are the implications of what happened? What do the things that happened mean to you, to your colleagues, to your friends?

• Now What? How might you adapt or adopt what happened? How might you use it in your home or work life? How might it change you?

Taking just a few moments to answer these three simple questions in your journal can enrich your experiences, improve your memory, and enhance your ability to think productively.
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