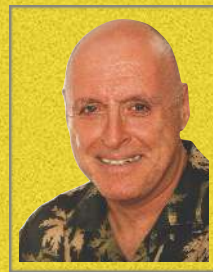


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



618 Creativity When You're on Auto-Pilot

It's question time. When do your good ideas come to you and what are you doing when they come? Second question. How good are you at doing basically little or nothing? And when you do basically little or nothing, have you ever actually ended up doing something valuable? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, let's talk about how to generate more good ideas, next on The Extra Point.

Have you ever been involved in some mundane and repetitive task, something you could do in your sleep, as they say, and all of a sudden a burst of creativity comes your way?

Have you ever struggled with a problem and as much as you tried, you just couldn't figure out the solution; but you performed something you'd done a hundred or thousand times before, something that didn't require much focus to accomplish — and the answer popped into your head?

If your experience is like mine you weren't trying to generate an idea or solution, but your mind wandered while you were involved with that repetitive task, operation, or movement. Then, the creative flow began.

Chris Bailey, author of the book *Hyperfocus: How to Manage Your Attention in a World of Distraction*, says we should think back to when our most brilliant insight struck us and chances are we weren't focused on anything." Bailey coined the term "scatterfocus" to describe the act of purposefully letting the mind wander, which makes us more creative and more productive.

I've tackled a sink overflowing with dishes after a gathering and within a few minutes I hit this zone, for lack of a better term. Thoughts begin to come. Sometimes it's random stuff and other times it's focused on issues I'm working with. It might be an idea for something new I can offer in my business. It might be one

of those "what if" scenarios I tend to love. I've heard authors and script writers talk about ideas for books and movies. Inventors saw visions of new products.

I also get it in the shower. The water could be slightly cool or slightly warm, but not to a temperature that would cause me to pay attention to it. I can stand there and have the water carom off my chest and be lost in thought. Sometimes a simple shower might last 20 to 30 minutes, instead of the normal 5 to 10 minutes.

Again, I'm not focusing any conscious attention on what I'm doing. Those dishes I mentioned get clean but my mind is not occupied with the soap, the scrubber, or rinsing. All that is on auto-pilot.

One incident I can relate is when I was in Seattle years ago, helping my then 90 year-old father. After dropping someone off at the airport very early on a Sunday morning, I wanted to stop at a certain bakery on the way back to my dad's place.

It was a 45-minute drive and as soon as I got on the freeway I was caught up in a foggy gray mist that seemed to put an envelope around the car. Visibility was limited but it wasn't a scary feeling. I put on a classical radio station and the experience was one of almost complete isolation, though I knew I obviously wasn't alone on the freeway.

In that 45 minutes, in that misty envelope of sorts, with the classical music playing, all kinds of ideas came forth. Somebody tried to explain it to me once. They said when we override certain senses or disengage our active focus, our mind takes over and delivers information it knows we need. I'm sure that's as simplistic as it gets, but I've seen it happen for me.

(Con't.)

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I've had people tell me they get a flow of thoughts and ideas when bushcutting, paddling in a boat, running, walking, knitting and crocheting. This works when the body just seems to move on its own.

Bailey cites studies that suggest whenever our mind is wandering, we think about the future about half the time. He also referenced the benefits of the shower, saying many of us plan our entire day, week, month, and even year there, while getting clean.

We also like to think about our goals 14 times as often and become much more intentional.

So what is it for you? What do you do to get into this creative zone? What activity is it that gets your inventive or problem solving juices flowing?

Do you need to do some bushcutting? Or knitting? Or wash a bunch of dishes? Whatever it is, the fact that you may be able to program yourself to generate ideas on demand is pretty exciting.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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