

Learning



Amazing Musing Becomes Amusing

Is That Confusing?

By: Charlotte Palmer

Welcome back to the home of S.M.A.R.T. Thinking where we explore liberating habits of mind. We began this series by offering you a self-assessment of 16 success-producing thinking strategies. Next we introduced you to your "sensitivity to senses" inviting you to give your full attention to the stimulating world we share. Now for our S.M.A.R.T. Thinking "M" for "Musing".

When you muse, you ponder. Your body may just take on a thoughtful stance with one hand on your tail bone and the other idly tapping the area beneath your nose as you conjecture, you imagine. Just play out some mental scenarios from different points of view. You are in your frontal lobe "staging area" remembering a random thought that often becomes the solution to a quandary about any number of things. The next thing you know that random thought is not irrelevant; it's a hippopotamus that is delightfully entertaining you as you congratulate yourself on your cleverness. There is so much more to thought than memory. With memory you just go to your mental Rolodex, file cabinet, My Documents, flash drive, time capsule, scrolls, microfiche, stacks or whatever other form of storage you can reference "within" your head or "through" your head and start rummaging around until something pops up that might be useful again in a new setting. Whenever I retrieve a former connection, reflection, or conjecture, it becomes a serendipitous quest to see if that thought will be a valuable solution to whatever dilemma prompted the memory search in the first place.



One of my favorite "save the day" memories happened years ago while I was teaching at a school for children with learning disabilities. One of the students had brought in a large horseshoe-shaped magnet so we tested different metal objects around the school to see how magnetic they were.

The day of the "brilliant solution" was a student holiday with the staff on duty for planning while working around some building renovations. A former inside doorway was being walled up. The workman had inset plywood to about waist height over the door frame. He was pulling out bent nails from the top of the door frame with his shiny new claw hammer when it slipped out of his hand and landed on the floor of the half boarded up doorway. He had no idea how he could retrieve it except to rip out the panel he had spent the last hour installing. He was not a happy camper fussing and fuming enough so everyone in the area knew of his trauma drama. Should he go buy a new hammer or tear out the plywood to get it then start all over again? I walked back to my nearby room after finding out what the commotion was. There on a bookcase lay the magnet. Strong enough to lift his hammer? It was worth a try. I found a length of jump rope, tied it to the magnet and presented it to the workman who was dismally taking a lunch break before removing the plywood. "Try this", I suggested encouragingly. "It's a really strong magnet."

He looked dubious but shuffled off to lower it into the narrow door space to "fish" for his hammer. After several tries he heard a "click" as the magnet connected to the hammer head. Carefully, he pulled the rope up keeping it in the center of the open space. The magnet held. Out came the hammer! Up went a cheer. His morning's work was saved. What a rush... a Mac Iver moment! Usually using past experiences in new settings is not that dramatic, but never doubt your capacity to make connections even when you least expect them.



Musing includes invoking wonderment and curiosity, too. It's the big "what if" of hypothesizing. If you don't experiment with your random ideas, you will never know how useful they are. Think of all the product designs, energy sources, and interpersonal relationships among other things that are just floating around in our minds waiting for expression.

The other day I met a refreshingly inventive actress who designs tools for small handed people as a hobby. Another unique woman taking care of business ... and more! Our imaginations are only limited by our resistance to the unknown. Daydreaming is a legitimate pastime. Creative writing

is a limitless vacation when you don't have the immediate circumstances for going places and doing things. Start by reading others' novel ideas and experiences. It will be the yeast to add zest to your brewed up adventures.

We are amused by humor - that off-handed, unanticipated turn of events that delights us with new connections. From "Knock, knock" - "Who's there?" and elephant jokes as kids to the "shaggy dog" set-ups like "There was this panda who walks into a bar" we love to groan over as adults, we love puns and word play.

It is unfortunate that in their bid to find broad demographic appeal, many movies and television shows depend upon profanity and bathroom humor to get an adolescent guffaw. Humor does not need to be at anyone's expense. From slapstick to satire it can be about unexpected, clever insights. Whether you are inspired to take up clowning, story writing or adventuring, there are many ways to muse and amuse with that clever brain of yours.

Enjoy!

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Kinesiology. In addition to tutoring and teaching at the primary and college levels in the Tampa Bay area, Charlotte presents programs on integrated brain-based learning and successful thinking skills.