

# *Simply Hard Work*

USING OUR  
CREATIVE ENERGY

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Simply Hard Work: Using Our Creative Energy  
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# Content

<i>Preface</i>	1
<i>Read Me</i>	5
<i>Work = Force x Distance</i>	7
<i>Open-Explore-Close</i>	10
<i>Creative Energy</i>	13
<i>"We literally have to..."</i>	16
<i>"It's all hard work..."</i>	19
<i>"It's very, very simple..."</i>	22
<i>"On my business card..."</i>	25
<i>Mindfulness</i>	28
<i>Active Listening</i>	31
<i>If you reached this point...</i>	34



# Preface

This e-book is mostly about diligently putting in hard work to use our creativity. You know: **HARD** work. The kind of work that conjures up various “do or do not” questions in our heads. Is there enough time? Do I have the energy? Is it worth it? Still, creative hard work is good for our souls, & forges intellectual fitness & readiness. It builds resilience & optimism, often promising exciting wonderment. The best part is how hard work on creative projects oftentimes gets easier & makes us feel good.



I worked on this e-book while on vacation in SE Asia. It's been *hard work* to write about *hard work*. I have to truthfully say that I have been hardly working when it comes to getting into a writing flow for this. There have been a lot of distractions wherever I traveled...mostly involving the delicious local foods. Yet, I stayed determined to finish the project before the trip ended. I allocated time & effort. I had a mind to get it done. And I did. Finally. Here it is. The result of hard work.



*Read Me*

## *Read Me*

Many of the creativity skills coached in the YCISL program are new concepts for most students, and involves hard work to engrain in the skillset & strengthen. This e-book identifies these skills & offers a quick creative exercise to provide a simple sample experience to tickle the senses. After each exercise, think about how the skill could improve your creative output & performance. Keep in mind that it takes hard work & practice.

*Work = Force x Distance*

***The Fundamental Physics of Work.*** One of the first expressions that we encounter when learning Mechanics in an introductory Physics course is that:

$$\textit{Work} = \textit{Force} \times \textit{Distance}$$

Think of the *force* as the effort we make, and the *distance* as the change of position. Then we can view *work* as the specific achievement. In YCISL, the work effort grows & improves our creativity and leadership skills.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Using objects around you, move the objects some distance. For example, you could move your chair a little to the left. Or you could open or close a window. Try to think of & do a variety of actions that involve different distances & force. Feel a sense of the amount of work involved. Now also think about the creative effort needed to ideate each action. What did it feel like to you?

*Open-Explore-Close*

The “*distance*” in YCISL creative practice can be represented by the Open-Explore-Close model of the Gamestorming concept (Gray, Brown & Macanuso, 2010). This 3-phase approach is set up as a creative challenge within the bounds of Point A (open) and Point B (close). The mid-phase (explore) wiggle & waggle takes hard work to navigate with our creativity. And at some point, we need to think about conclusive finality & push our exploration to the exit edge.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's prototype design a simple game. Pick one or more objects around you to use as game pieces. Decide on one or two rules, and a game objective. Start playing your game. Modify the rules & objective to keep it interesting. End the game when the objective is reached. Reflect on your game. What do you want to call your game? Did this rapid prototyping effort involve much force & distance? Keep fun in mind.



# *Creative Energy*

In YCISL, we name “*creative energy*” as a resource at our disposal for innovative design thinking & leadership. The suggestion of feeling energized to engage in creative work is intentional, and internalizes the empowerment necessary to produce & share creative ideas & perspectives for a culture of creative mindset & well-being. This creative energy supplies our emotional intelligence framework with awareness & actionable connection. How much do you have?

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's check on our creative energy gauge using the *30 circles exercise*. On a sheet of paper, draw a grid of 30 circles (eg, 5 columns, 6 rows). In 2 minutes, draw in or around the circles to convert as many as you can into objects. After time has lapsed, reflect on the creative energy felt during the effort. Did the creative energy flow fluctuate or feel stable? Did it disappear even for a moment?

*"We literally have to work  
harder to see the upside of  
things."*

Alison Ledgerwood.

TEDxUCDavis. 2013.

**Positivity.** Creative productivity rises when we have positive thoughts & emotions. Prof. Ledgerwood's TEDx talk alerts us to the sticky trap of negativity & how we need to bypass it. This is hard work. And more, this work requires emotional intelligence to apply the appropriate change. In addition to ensuring that our self is in a positive state, we may need to be aware of and act upon the positivity of others so that interpersonal dynamics yields productive results.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's practice putting our minds in a positive state by using a few YCISL no-cost methods as our quick start. First, think of a favorite person, place or thing. Then smile. Second, get up & dance a little...turn on some music if it helps. Third, say some positive remarks to yourself. Are you feeling a sense of positivity? How long is it lasting? What do you need to sustain your positivity? Was this hard work?

*"It's all hard work.  
Nothing comes easily."*

Richard St. John.

TED. 2005.

**Success.** Work is one of the eight things that Richard St John, in his TED Talk, found that leads to success. Success is a part of our set goals, and in order to reach that destination, we must put in the effort to start and continue the journey. To make any creative success sweeter, we should remind ourselves to have fun and have a playful mind. Our pursuit of creative success needs to be aligned with our pursuit of happiness to make our hard work sustainable.



## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's try a paper airplane exercise with an element of quantifiable success. The goal is to land the airplane on a target (eg, chair or table). Build a paper airplane. Launch the paper airplane & try to land it on the target from a set distance. What was your success rate? What did you do to try to increase your success rate? Compete with a friend. Was this success-oriented work effort fun?

*"It's very, very simple to get  
what you want.  
But it's not easy."*

Mel Robbins  
TEDxSF. 2011.

***Simple & Easy.*** The relationship between Simple & Easy is very interesting. Like precise & accurate, they have different meanings, but should often be thought of together. In Mel Robbins' 2011 TEDx talk, we are given a relative sense that awareness is simple whereas action may or may not be easy. The state of uncertainty inherent to being in a creative mode requires that we be prepared to put in hard work should it turn out to not be an easy endeavor.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's practice having a creative idea & acting on them within seconds. On a sheet of paper, draw five stick figures. Under the first, write an occupation. Then within 5 seconds, detail the stick figure for that occupation. Continue with all the others using different occupations. How did you feel getting started? Imagine these creations are characters for a comic strip. Name them.

*"On my business card..."*

Satoru Iwata (1959-2015)

GDC 2005

***Personal Identity.*** I like reflecting on Satoru Iwata's thoughtful layers of heart, mind & his business card (or work title) as a holistic yet creative way of being self-aware. It's a personal identity exercise that takes hard work, & becomes a rewarding effort to know ourselves & manage how we connect with others. It's hard work to keep the layers updated, aligned & relevant. The layers can & do change. And since it is very much a "now" effort, there is a constant demand.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's do a career imagination exercise using the elements of title, mind & heart. Choose a career of someone you know. Think about the qualifications & skills needed for that career. Then think about the behaviors, motivations & mindsets that fit this career.

Lastly, think about how creativity would be useful for the career. Repeat for various careers.

# *Mindfulness*



Getting our minds into an un-biased neutral state to begin exploring creative brainstorming is hard work. The mindful blank slate is the best starting point for ideas to flow & starting with one means letting go of anything that would interfere with our moment of contemplative mindfulness. We need to push, pull & center our mind into this condition which at least for a brief period of time, allows us to move freely in our creative thinking universe.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Let's try some quiet meditation to push, pull & center our mind for the mindful contemplation of the answer to the question "Who am I?" First, sit comfortably & still. Close the eyes & notice visual stimuli vanishing. Now notice the sounds in the air. Next, mentally check anything sensed on skin or body. Then listen for breathing & feel the air move in & out. Feel relaxed. Then pop the question.

# *Active Listening*

Active listening involves hearing, listening & understanding plus giving indications that all three are synced. In YCISL, we also learn to sense & manage listening filters which can on one hand beneficially filter noise, or on the other lead to disconnect if the noise is too much. To practice effective active listening in creative activities, our brains need to be hard at work filtering, managing filters, & processing information to stay afloat in the creative flow.

## ***A Simple Creativity Exercise:***

Set up a skit with a friend. Ask your friend to pretend to be a customer telling you about an issue. Exercise your active listening & filter management. Listen carefully to the words, mannerisms & emotions...and also remember to change your listening filter from friend to customer. What is the issue? Did you have empathy for the customer? Was it hard work getting to an understanding & filtering?

*If you  
reached this  
point...*

## *If you reached this point...*

The common thread in this e-book has been about concentrated effort. We sometimes will call it hard work, but understanding the strategies in the creativity realm helps us discover passion, skills & rewards that are otherwise rarely noticed. With this sensory recognition of hard work, may you push, pull & center your ideas with more creative agility.

*"This is a part of my  
design thinking journey.  
Join me."*

Colin Ong  
Self-quote. 2021.



## *Simply Hard Work: Using Our Creative Energy*

*Look inside for spotlights on a series of YCISL creativity-boosting skills. There is an ask that students understand that hard work is involved in grasping & applying the skills. There is a promise that students will gain productive & rewarding design thinking creativity. Altogether, we hope to share EQ-based life lessons on creative energy to uncover meaningful passion & purpose so our creativity can blossom into something beautiful & amazing.*