



FROM EXPERIENCE TO CREATIVITY

The experiential educator's *INCOMPLETE* guide to creativity

DANIEL CAPE

Forward by Dr. Jasper Hunt and Contributions by Dr. Amy Climer

Preface

I felt compelled to write this book to begin a conversation on the role of creativity in experiential education and to provide practitioners with a foundation for understanding creativity. I *love* creativity, and I *love* experiential education—a field I’ve been working in for around 15 years and in which I have a Master’s Degree from Minnesota State University-Mankato. I’ve been a creative person for as long as I can remember. While I have always tried to develop creative and engaging programs, I never intentionally taught participants how to be creative or included creativity-enhancing components in any of my programs. In hindsight, I never really understood how to teach creativity until I began my PhD work. Since learning about it and understanding the psychology of creativity, I’ve become more creative and see creativity in all aspects of life, along with reflecting on past experiences about where I could have shared it with others.

As you’ll discover in this book, you’ve likely been attracted to experiential education because of some creative passion to do things your way or possibly to do things differently from how you may have been taught. Experiential educators are problem solvers. We’re the rabble-rousers of the education world. We’ve challenged the traditional ways of learning and have found that experiences lead to passion and knowledge. We take participants out of their comfort zones and show them new realms of their inner lives they never dreamed possible. We empower them to be the leaders of their lives so they can carry on our passion to transform the world. Guess what? It’s as much a creative endeavor as it is an educational one. It’s time to begin teaching and promoting creative thinking in an intentional way that will help optimize these experiences that will lead to lasting personal and global transformations.

From Experience to Creativity has three parts: “Foundations of Creativity,” “Promoting Creativity,” and “The Bigger Picture.” Part 1 looks at different levels of creativity and the four Ps of creativity (person, product, process, and press). Readers will learn how all people are creative and what creativity looks like at various levels from the novice to the expert. The four Ps of creativity offer a more in-depth perspective of creative personalities and traits, inspiring examples of creative products, an explanation of the creative process (which has several similarities to the experiential learning process), and finally an explanation of how one’s environment both hinders and supports creative thinking.

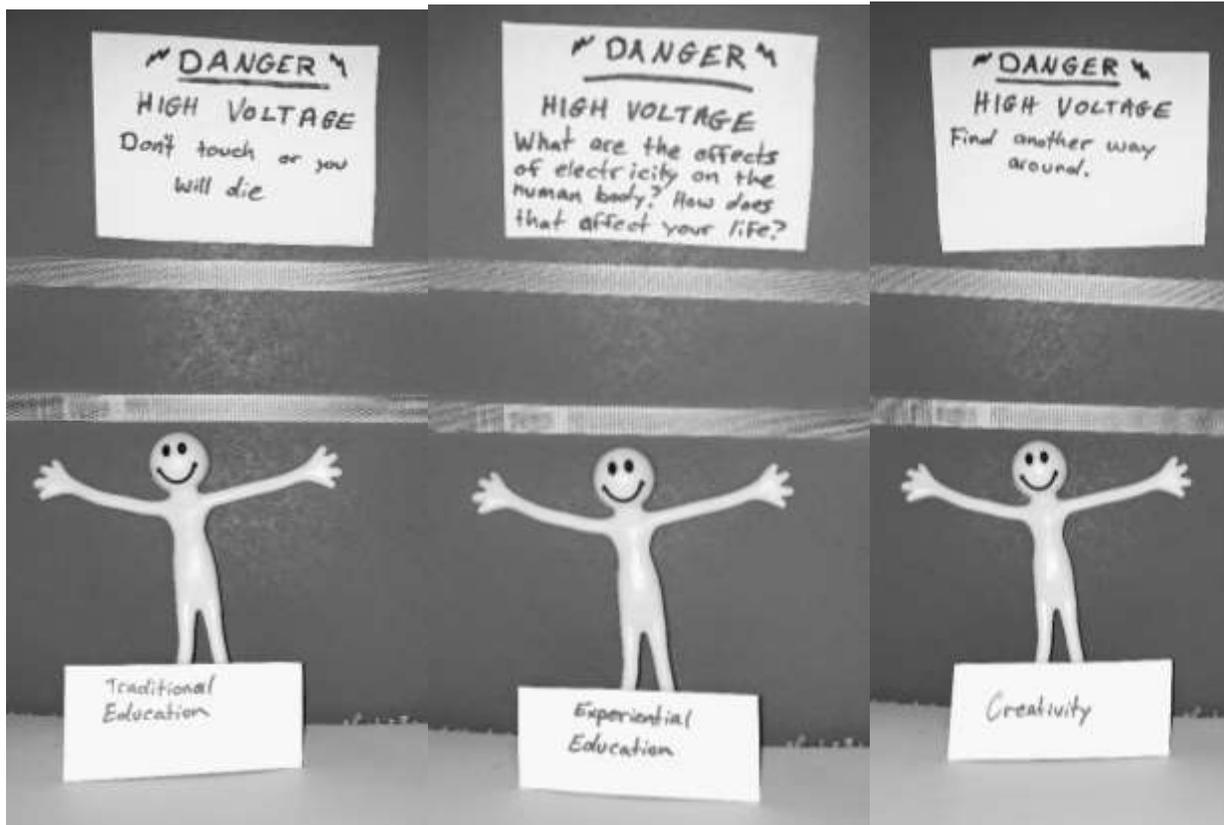
Part 2 offers several techniques and concepts for promoting creative thinking for readers and their clients. This section contains methods of *intentionally* incorporating creativity into programs, classes, and everyday thinking. I invite you to use my EPIC Cards (www.experiencetocreativity.com) that provide questions, topics, and prompts that can be used in any program to spark creative thinking and understanding.

Part 3 gives examples of how to promote a creative environment and how to facilitate a creative process. Generativity Theory and Creative Problem Solving were added to demonstrate how the many concepts presented in Parts 1 and 2 can be used to generate novel behavior and effectively facilitate group and individual creativity.

Finally, the Appendix contains a case study of Kurt Hahn, a well-known experiential educator and an eminent creator. Hahn serves as a prime example of how creative thinking can be used to develop life-enhancing programs for clients.

Before you begin, write down your definition of *creativity*. After you have read the book, go back and look at your definition. What is the same about your initial definition? What has changed? Rewrite your definition of creativity as you perceive it, or as it pertains to your life, and think about your own creative process. Where do your ideas and inspiration come from? How do you collect information and test it out? How do you react to setbacks and feedback?

Introduction



Everyone Is Creative

I want to begin by saying these three words: *everyone is creative*. If you take nothing else from this book, that is what I want you to understand and believe.

Let's take it one step further. I want you to start looking at creativity differently. Let's say someone you knew, or even a complete stranger, said to you, "I'm stupid. I have no intelligence at all." Would you accept that? Probably not! You would most likely provide some explanation about how each of us has our own sort of intelligence. It's not just a nice thing to say, it's true. We *need* to start looking at creativity the same way. *Everyone is creative*.

I'll give you an example. I've been drawing caricatures for about 14 years and one thing I always hear people say is, "I wish I could draw. I can only draw stick figures." My response to them is, "Well guess what? There is someone out there who *only draws stick figures* and draws them of people's families. Then, those people put them on the backs of their cars. I bet the person who only draws stick figures is making pretty good money *only drawing stick figures*." The point isn't about art or drawing ability. The point is that so many people have self-limiting beliefs about what is and isn't creative and what they can and can't do. They limit their own potential and impede their abilities to live fulfilled lives. It's the truth: *Everyone is creative*.

An Incomplete Guide



The title of the book implies that there is more to know about creativity than what you will find within its pages, and there are several reasons for that. For starters, a complete guide to creativity would be nearly impossible. Creativity itself is such a broad and diverse field that even the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Creativity* doesn't cover every aspect. Creativity is unique to different fields and different within unique cultures. There are different levels of creativity that apply to distinct situations. There are so many unknowns in creativity! This book is an appetizer. You might say this book is like getting to first base with a new crush. It's like the samples you get at Costco that make you want to ask more questions about the product and eventually buy a year's supply. This book is like a dinner roll at an all-you-can eat buffet. It's incomplete, but it's a start.

I also wanted to make it clear that the goal of this book is to introduce readers to the field of creativity, especially in relation to experiential education. I don't want readers to believe that this book is *the source* or anywhere near being a complete guide to understanding how creativity affects their lives, the world, and the field of experiential education. I believe that researching and understanding the connections between the two fields are in their infancy. I sincerely hope readers will become excited and inspired to explore these connections and then share their insights with others.

I want to shake up your assumptions and show you a whole new realm of experiential education that I believe has been overlooked for far too long. Before I began to study the field of creativity, I assumed I had a pretty good grasp on what it was—it's just thinking outside the box or thinking differently, right? Not really. There was so much more to know about the field than I first realized, and it has been absolutely amazing learning about it. If anything, I hope this book inspires practitioners and researchers to further investigate this beautiful relationship that is right in front of us.

With all that being said, you'll find numerous resources throughout this book that I've used to learn about creativity over the years. Another scholar on creativity might rely on a completely separate list of books and authors. Like I said, it's a big field, but you've got to start somewhere, and I encourage you to follow your own interests.

One concept I will discuss in this book is how learning about creativity helps people become more creative. I've found this to be true for myself, and I've seen it in others. You'll expand your understanding. You'll learn how to think differently. You won't settle for the norm. You'll push past the first right answer. You'll change the way you see the world and discover a whole new way of learning! And most importantly, you'll be able to share all of this with others and make their lives better (big group hug).

Before I get into what creativity is, what it looks like, and how it relates to experiential learning, I want to share with you my evolution of understanding it. To do this, I'm going to use analogies. Analogies are excellent for demonstrating a point in a simple and concise way. Analogies are frequently used in experiential education, and they are a very creative method of communicating. There's a whole section on analogies in *The Encyclopedia of Creativity*, and there's literature on the use of analogies in experiential education. Coincidence? I think not.

At first, I thought the two were like icing on a cake. Experiential education was the cake, and creativity was the icing. Using creativity makes experiential education that much sweeter. I was wrong. That analogy implied that they are distinct entities and can be separated, and that just can't be done. Then, I thought the two were like Kool-Aid (Oh, yeah!). You take the Kool-Aid (creativity) and mix it with water (experiential education), and now you have a delicious fruit beverage that can't be separated. Voilà! Nope, that wasn't right either, as it still suggested that, while they are inseparable in the end, they started off as two separate entities that required intentional mixing. Next, I thought about experiential education as the body, and creativity as the DNA. This analogy made much more sense to me, but I still didn't think it was right and I didn't know why. There was something missing. About a year later, I looked at the two concepts through a systems perspective and came to my current *assumption* that they are, in fact, the opposite. Creativity is like the body, and experiential education is the DNA. I believe that creativity is the bigger picture here, and experiential education is a vehicle to help us get there.

So why then, if creativity is such a big part of experiential education, or rather experiential education is such a big part of creativity, has their connection been overlooked? The answer is that it hasn't entirely, but it certainly hasn't been appreciated for its full potential. For example, Rachel Collin's dissertationⁱ found that young adult students who participated in extended wilderness programs were more capable of solving ill-structured problems than those who had experienced a traditional college semester. Perhaps a more accurate statement is that there is a lack of understanding of how to intentionally facilitate and promote creativity in the field of ExEd. That's one of the goals of this book. I want to help experiential educators comprehend and capitalize on what is right in front of us. So often we focus on teaching concepts like self-discovery, teambuilding, communication, leadership, and problem solving (which is a part of creativity), yet we don't emphasize the importance of teaching participants how to be creative or how creativity can benefit their lives. Do we even know how to be creative or what creativity is? Dr. Amy Climer pointed out in a workshop I attended that we tell people to "Go off and be creative; have fun!" The

problem is that we don't necessarily know what that looks like or how to do it, so how can we expect it from participants?

You will most likely recognize many similar concepts and ideas from ExEd in creativity literature. Take, for example, Ferrari, Caccia, and Punie'sⁱⁱ description of *creative learning*:

“Creative learning is therefore any learning which involves understanding and new awareness, which allows the learner to go beyond notional acquisition, and focuses on thinking skills. It is based on learner empowerment and centeredness. The creative experience is seen as opposite to the reproductive experience.”

The two fields share an abundance of similarities that can make it difficult to differentiate their goals and characteristics. Below are some possible similarities and differences between ExEd and creativity, which are debatable as each may appear different depending on the situation. I present them not as facts but as food for thought.

Similarities:

- Dialectic processes are involved in both.
- Both are forms of adaptation.
- Their environments are similar.
- The concept that there is not a right answer—there is surprise involved in outcomes.
- Risk is inherent in both pursuits.
- Both rely heavily on experience, and experiences build on one another.
- Experiential learning and creativity are both natural process available to all.
- Nonlinear processes are used in both.
- Reflection plays a vital role.
- Ah-ha moments/illumination are part of the process.

Differences:

- Goals:
 - Goal of ExEd is lifelong learning and construction of knowledge.
 - Goal of creativity is to create something new and useful.
 - This is a gray area since ExEd creates new and meaningful experiences and knowledge for participants.
- Creativity is domain specific, but ExEd is universal.
 - This, too, is debatable since not all creativity is domain specific. Is experiential education's inquiry process the same for all domains?
- Creativity requires foundational knowledge, whereas ExEd does not. This is from the view of the participant and the facilitator. I would argue that the facilitator's expertise in both would impact participant outcomes.
- ExEd has a longer history of research and understanding, whereas creativity is still somewhat new. We have a much better understanding of ExEd than we do of creativity.
- Their processes differ.

- Education is more universally appreciated, understood, and expected than creativity.
 - This statement may be incomplete or inaccurate because *experiential education* is not necessarily understood and appreciated.

You may have seen Sir Ken Robinson’s TED Talk “Do Schools Kill Creativity?”ⁱⁱⁱ and have an idea about how some of it works. Yes, school *does* kill creativity, and so does society. But this book isn’t about school reform or solely creative schools. If you’d like to find out more about those topics, there are plenty of options, like Robinson’s *Creative Schools*,^{iv} Beghetto and Kaufman’s *Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom*,^v Kridel and Bullough’s *Stories of the Eight-Year Study*,^{vi} or the American Psychological Association’s video “Creativity in the Classroom.”

The goal of this book is to inform those working in experiential education about what creativity is, what it looks like, and how to incorporate it and be more creative, as well as to hopefully inspire practitioners to further explore the relationship between experiential education and creativity. This book is for the guide leading trips in the mountains, the therapist working with students in the desert, the teacher working on a boat in the ocean, the ropes course facilitator working with a corporate group, the mentor at a project-based learning school, the teacher in a classroom, and all other experiential educators around the world.

Why Creativity?

The battle with the gods thus hinges on our own mortality!
Creativity is a yearning for immortality.
—Rollo May, *The Courage to Create*

Here's a thought:

“Give a man a fish, and you can feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.”
*Provide a fisherman with sufficient resources
and an environment that empowers him to innovate,
and you create an entrepreneur who can feed a village
and adapt to an ever-changing world.*

As mentioned earlier, creativity is not a superpower or gift from the gods. It's not reserved solely for the arts or even for a select few. Before I actually define creativity, I want to discuss some of its benefits and why I feel like establishing a connection between creativity and experiential education is so important. Creativity is not only fascinating, it is an essential element to life and adaptation. As you'll find in this book, experiential education is so full of potential for creativity that it may be a little overwhelming. I keep finding more and more connections as I explore the nature of creativity.

Netzer and Rowe^{vii} stated that emphasizing the creative process in education “often awakens the student's personal voice, ethical awareness, and inspiration for social action.” Tapping into and understanding our own creativity makes us more whole. Carl Rogers^{viii} observed that motivation for creativity might be “man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities.” Maslow^{ix} found a free and uninhibited “childlike sense” in those who had self-actualized creativity. Cropley^x cited several reasons that creativity benefits individuals and society. Because understanding and knowledge are rapidly changing, individuals need the ability to adapt old information to new environments. Individuals need “flexibility, openness, interest in the new, and courage to face the unexpected.” Plus, creativity makes learning more effective and enjoyable. As for society, “Creativity is thus seen as capable of contributing to raising the quality of life, easing the burden of manual labor, improving health care, and promoting peace and security.”

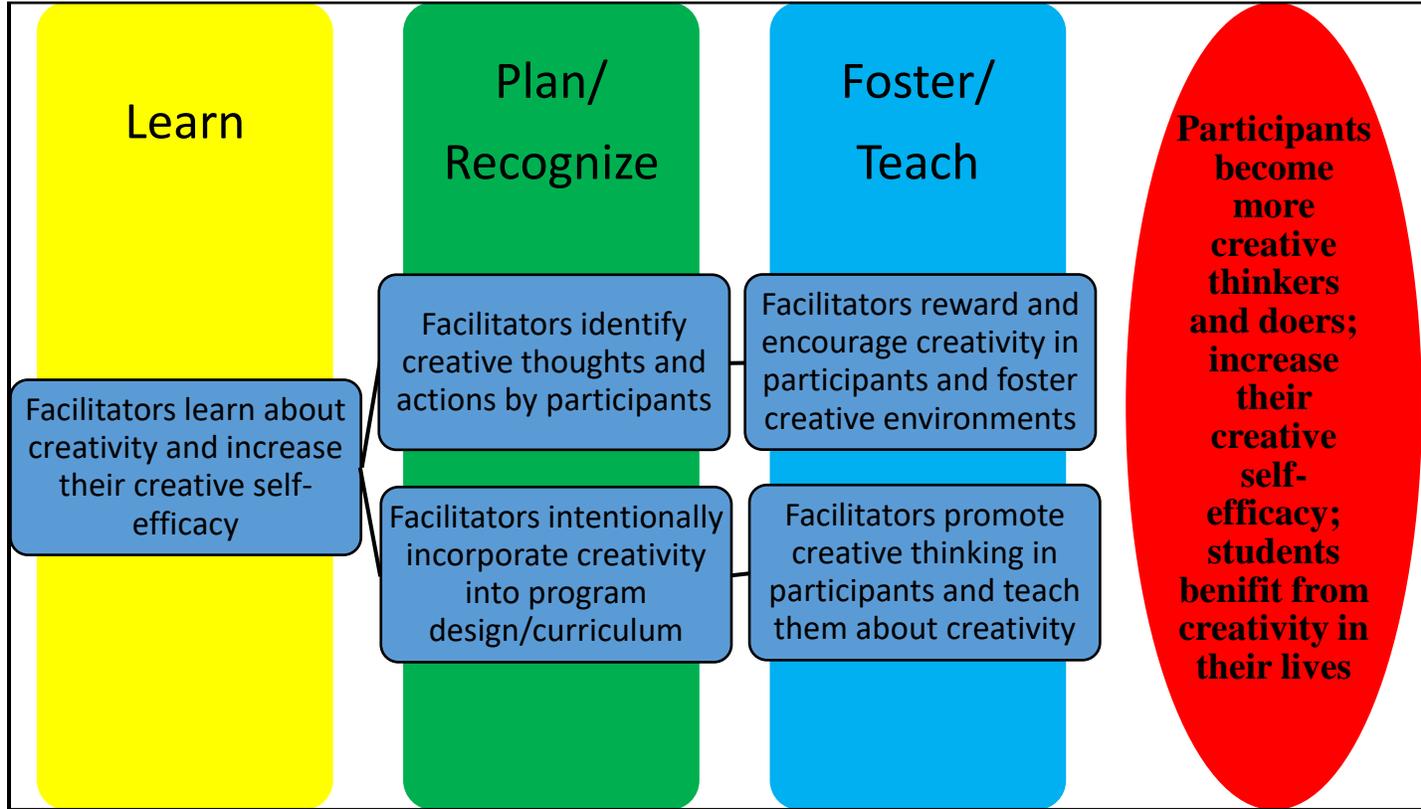
Richards^{xi} provided 12 benefits for living more creatively:

1. One can think more *dynamically*, seeing more options for life's situations.
2. Creativity raises *conscious* awareness of one's environment, thoughts, and feelings.
3. Creativity allows for *healthier* living both physically and psychologically and helps when dealing with adversity.
4. One becomes *non-defensive* towards new ideas and concepts that may hinder awareness.
5. One becomes more *open* to new experiences.
6. Thinking more creatively helps *integrate* multiple perspectives and modalities.
7. One becomes a more *active observer* of surroundings, events, and information.
8. One becomes more *caring*, as one finds more universal connections and unity.
9. *Collaboration* becomes more important to work towards unified goals and conflict resolution.

10. One acquires more *androgynous* thinking to avoid “false dichotomies” and remain open to more possibilities.
11. Creativity helps the individual *develop* into a more successful and adaptable person.
12. Because creativity involves risk, one becomes *braver* in one’s endeavors.

Figure 1 shows my argument for greater understanding and inclusion of creativity in the field of experiential learning. When facilitators understand what creativity looks like and realize they are creative, they are more apt to recognize creative thoughts and actions by participants and intentionally incorporate methods that promote and teach creativity in their programs. As a result, participants also realize that they are creative while being provided with opportunities to practice and enhance their own creativity. Without the initial step of facilitators’ understanding, these factors become secondary or happenstance, and valuable opportunities are lost.

Figure 1: The Path for Intentional Creativity



If concepts like knowledge, empowerment, community, compassion, and truth are gold, then experiential educators have the most advanced tools to mine that gold. But there is another mine that has yet to be fully explored, and it is right in front of us. That mine is creativity. Experiential education has pulled out some shiny golden creativity nuggets, but there is a whole lot more out there. I would like to finish this section with an excerpt from Plucker, Waitman, and Hartley^{xii} that addressed the importance of encouraging creative self-efficacy among students. The term *student* can be replaced with any type of person:

Our recommendations concerning the best ways to enhance creativity in the educational system revolve around the initial step of addressing the misconceptions people harbor about creativity: these misconceptions could be focused on their own selves, other people, and creativity itself as a construct. We believe one of the most important steps to take involves encouraging students' sense of self-efficacy concerning creativity. By fostering creative self-confidence in students, they will be more amenable and willing to engage in the risk taking necessary to be innovative.

-
- ⁱ Collins, R. H. (2014). *The Effect of an Extended Wilderness Education Experience on Ill-Structured Problem-Solving Skill Development in Emerging Adult Students*. (Order No. 3614860). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1518731764).
- ⁱⁱ **Ferrari, A., Cachia, R., Punie, Y. (2009).** *Innovation and Creativity in Education and Training in the EU Member States: Fostering Creative Learning and Supporting Innovative Teaching*. (EUR No. JRC52373). Retrieved from **The Institute for Prospective Technology Studies website: <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=2700>**. (p. iii)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Robinson, K. (2007, January 6). *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* [Video File]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY>.
- ^{iv} Robinson, K. (2015). *Creative Schools*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House LLC.
- ^v Beghetto, Rd. & Kaufman, J. C. (Ed.). (2010). *Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom*. New York, NY: Cambridge Press.
- ^{vi} Kridel, C. & Bullough, R. V. (2007). *Stories of the Eight-Year Study*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- ^{vii} Netzer, D. & Rowe, N. M. (2010). Inquiry into creative and innovative processes: An experiential whole-person approach to teaching creativity. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 8(2). (p. 131)
- ^{viii} Rogers, C. (1961). *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. (p. 351)
- ^{ix} Maslow, A. (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- ^x Cromptley, A. J. (2011). Teaching creativity. In M. Runco & S. Pritzker (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Creativity* (2nd ed. p. 435-445). San Diego, CA: Academic Press. (pp. 435-436)
- ^{xi} Richards, R. (2009). Twelve potential benefits of living more creatively. R. Richards (Ed.). *Everyday Creativity*. (p. 289-320). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- ^{xii} Plucker, A. J., Waitman, G. R., & Hartley, K. A. (2011). Education and Creativity. In M. Runco & S. Pritzker (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Creativity* (2nd ed. p. 435-440). San Diego, CA: Academic Press. (pp. 438-439)