

Hi friends, Happy December!

We're fully immersed in the holidays here at our house.... Especially since we celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas, as well as both of our children's birthdays It makes for quite a month of celebration!

Given covid, like so many of you, we've been engaging in some new activities as a family, including at least one that some family members might have otherwise skipped.

This past weekend we tackled gingerbread house decorating.... all four of us. Each of us had our own house, along with a huge bag of candy. Everyone got exactly the same mix of candy. Along with two big plastic bags of icing.

There was initial grumbling by some family members -- who will remain nameless -- about this activity, but it was really fun. And, it was also illuminating. It was especially interesting to see how our individual personalities came out in our designs. As we each took a blank canvas -- in the form of an unadorned house -- and used our various materials. It also inspired some healthy

competition which you can follow on my instagram if you are interested.

My point in telling you all of this isn't to bore you with the details of my life, but to talk about a couple of things that are often overlooked but potentially powerful elements of problem solving through embracing creative pursuits . Stay with me here, I promise to tie this all together.

So, what do I mean by that? If covid has shown us anything, it's that the world continues to grow more and more complex with every passing day. The more complexity, the less certainty and more volatility we'll likely face... in our lives, vocations and careers.

But how can we prepare for those critical shifts And how can we help our children develop this agility?

One important element of this requires learning to see challenges and opportunities from more vantage points in order to see potential solutions. Essentially, broadening our perspective.

You need creativity whether your job or vocation is inherently considered "creative" or not. I would argue

creativity is required no matter what you do or where you spend your time.

Our weekend craft project reminded me of this and how even the simplest and silliest of activities can spark ideas and powerful inspiration.

It's not just the activity itself, but rather what happens when you allow your brain to take a conscious break from the day-to-day to do something different, creative, and fun... I think it can be especially helpful if it's something new or something that you don't normally do. And then really let yourself get into it and see what happens.

Most creativity experts would tell you that while one off activities can be helpful and have the potential to unlock an idea or to inspire you, the real value comes when you develop and maintain a regular practice of engaging in such activities.

This idea has resonated with me for several years now. I ran across the idea somewhat by accident and then realized what impact it could have even in less traditionally "creative" work.

At the time, I was working in Washington and running public policy strategy for a global accounting and professional services firm. The type of job that you don't necessarily think of as being inherently "creative." What I realized was that roles like mine need this capacity as much as even the more traditionally creative fields. And, developing this capacity could be a real differentiator.

I'm reminded of a conversation I had back in episode 60 with BETH COMSTOCK [I've included a link to that episode in the show notes]. Beth is the former vice chair of business and innovation at GE. So, she knows quite a bit about problem solving and creativity. In our conversation we talked a lot about the inevitability of change and the tools you need to help you pivot when the world shifts under your feet.....Sound familiar? That's certainly been the case for most people over the past few months. While Beth likely did not consider a global pandemic when she wrote her book entitled ["Imagine It Forward: Courage, Creativity and the power of change."](#), she talks about some of the tools she used at GE to inspire her team to think more creatively and why that mattered. One element of her approach was to allow her team to really stretch creatively and to allow them permission to fail. Even to some degree to encourage it.

To give her team and herself the space to experiment and try new things and to think outside the box. Doing so led to several important innovations. Again you can listen to that conversation via the link I've provided in the show notes.

Another process that has informed and inspired the way I think about this is in Julie Cameron's book *The Artist's Way*. The book and approach are well known and have been around for many years.... I've probably mentioned it to you in the newsletter or in the context of one of our conversations on *She Said/She Said* Podcast.

Julia recommends a core practice of something called morning pages, which is essentially a braindump/head clearing exercise first thing in the morning. But then she also recommends taking yourself on what she calls "artist dates." Where you set aside time on your schedule every week or so for a potential artistic or creative adventure.

The goal is to take you out of the day-to-day and move you into a setting that allows for discovery and that ultimately helps spark your creativity and maybe inspires you. These adventures can be anything from

visiting a beautiful space or museum or park to engaging in a craft or creative project.

These activities don't need to be anything complicated or super long but rather things that we might not otherwise engage in or try.

The goal isn't to pick up a paintbrush in the hopes you'll be the next Picasso or reveal some untapped artistic genius. Rather, it's to help open a creative portal that allows you to pause and to see things from a potentially different vantage point.

This technique works pretty consistently for me. Often it's to get me over a speedbump or some writer's block. And I'm pretty liberal in my definition of what an "artist date" might entail. To me the more important part is to really immerse yourself in something that allows your brain to shift gears.

Having children and engaging with them offers endless opportunities for this type of exploration and creative practice. But you don't need kids for this.... Just make a list of fun things you'd like to try ...maybe its learning to knit via you tube videos... or coloring ... or a more conscious and regular exploration of the nature around you ...or photography ...

While gingerbread house decorating did it for me this week, try a few things and see what works for you. What enables you to open new portals to help you see things differently? And if you are already committed to a regular creative practice, how's it working for you? I'd love to know what you've tried, and what works for you. Send me note.

I've include a few additional resources in the show notes for this episode 130.

And, I have a favor, if you have a minute, and are listening to the podcast on Itunes, please be sure to leave us a review. It's a huge help to keep us growing and to help others find us. Another great way to help others find us is for you to share us with them!

I'm so grateful you're here! And hope you have an awesome and inspired start to your week! See you next time. Take care.