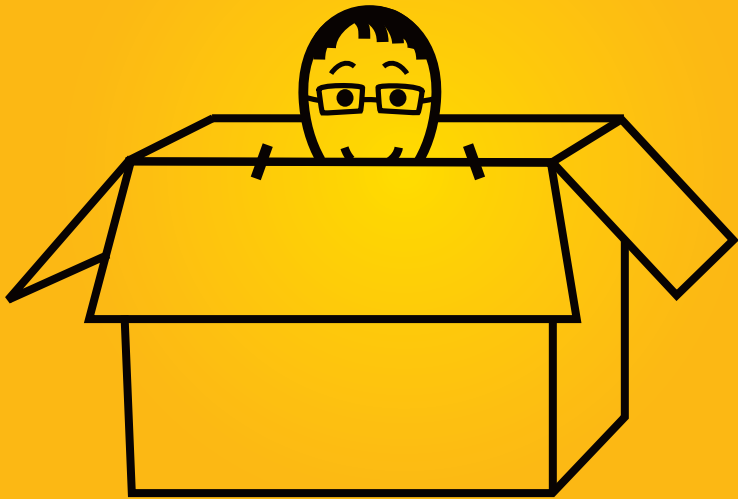


KNOWLEDGE that STICKS!

the skinny on™

creativity

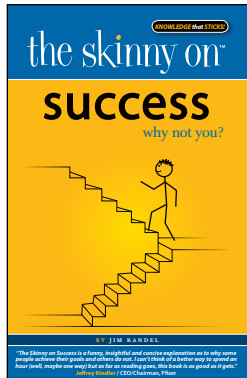
thinking outside
the box



BY JIM RANDEL

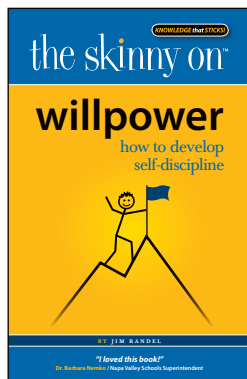
"The highest level of creativity unfolds through play."

Albert Einstein



"The Skinny on Success is a funny, insightful and concise explanation as to why some people achieve their goals and others do not. I can't think of a better way to spend an hour with, maybe one hour for the evening past, 'the book is an essential read'."

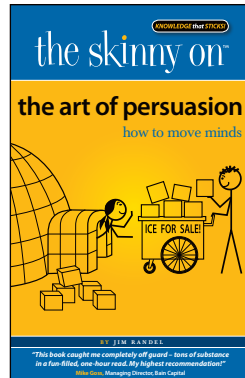
Jeffrey Kindler, CEO/Chmn, Pfizer



"Don't let the stick figures fool you ... Jim Randel will have you laughing and thinking at the same time. A very enjoyable read!"

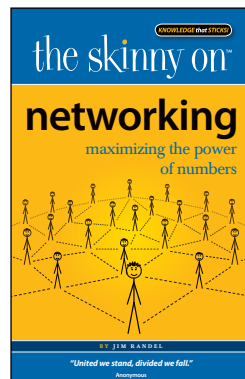
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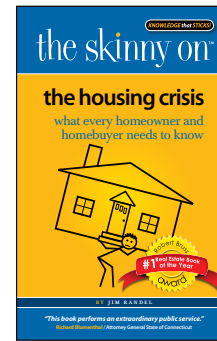
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www.bookpleasures.com

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Richard Blumenthal,
Attorney General State
of Connecticut



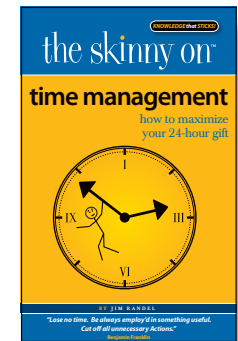
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CB Richard Ellis



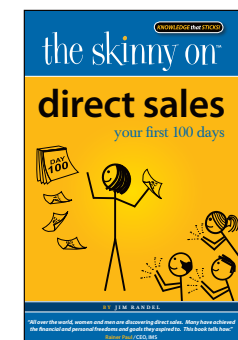
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"I loved it. Substantive, fun and funny. I give it my highest recommendation."

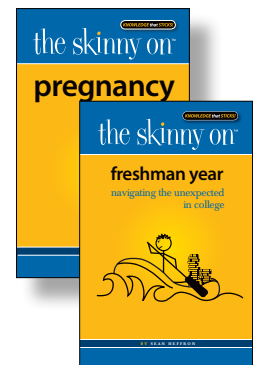
Steve Pagliuca, Managing
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"A motivational quick read and a great little primer for a more detailed consideration of the topics covered."

Aaron White, VP,
Touchstone Crystal

COMING SOON!



The Skinny on Creativity

the skinny on™
creativity

thinking outside
the box

Jim Randel

the skinny on™

Welcome to a new series of publications entitled **The Skinny On™**, a progression of drawings, dialogue and text intended to convey information in a concise and entertaining fashion.

In our time-starved and information-overloaded culture, most of us have far too little time to read. As a result, our understanding of important subjects often tends to float on the surface – without the insights of writings from thinkers and teachers who have spent years studying these subjects.

Our series is intended to address this situation. Our team of readers and researchers has done a ton of homework preparing our books for you. We read everything we could find on the topic at hand and spoke with the experts. Then we mixed in our own experiences and distilled what we have learned into this “skinny” book for your benefit.

Our goal is to do the reading for you, identify what is important, distill the key points, and present them in a book that is both instructive and enjoyable to read.

Although minimalist in design, we do take our message very seriously. Please do not confuse format with content. The time you invest reading this book will be paid back to you many, many times over.

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INTRODUCTION

Creativity ... WOW, what a big topic!

And such an important one, too, because no matter what you do, or where you are in your life, the ability to think creatively is crucial for your survival and your success. In short, the more you develop your skills at creative thinking, the better you will be able to master your environment – whatever it might be.

Creative thinkers are all around you. People who are juggling responsibilities and obligations. People who are finding ways to get a lot done with a minimum of resources. People who are using their talents to maximum effect. Creative thinking is the skill you need to overcome whatever stands between you and what you want to accomplish.

Creative thinkers will have an edge in the years ahead. Whereas once analytical thinking was paramount, today machines can perform analysis better than most humans. But machines can't imagine; machines cannot think creatively. And so, to compete and prosper you need to develop your ability to think creatively.

So, give us an hour of your time. That's about how long it will take for you to read this book. By the end of this book you will have a better understanding of the rules of creativity, and an enhanced facility for thinking "outside the box."

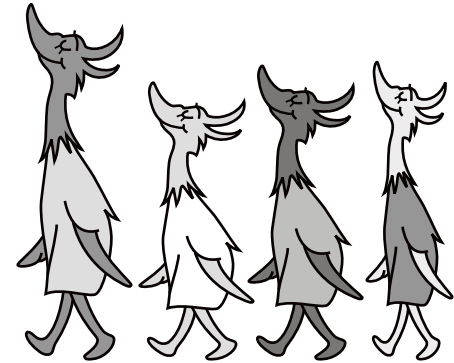
Jim Randel



"The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind – computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBA's who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind – creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people – artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers – will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys."

A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers will Rule the Future

Daniel Pink (Riverhead, 2005)



***“Think left and think right,
think low and think high.***

***Oh, the thinks you can think if
only you try!”***

Oh, the Thinks you can Think!
Dr. Seuss (1975)

“Creativity: the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships ... in favor of meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations.”

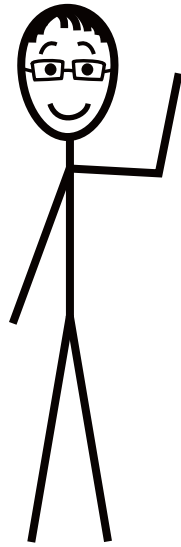
www.dictionary.com

Hi. I'm Jim Randel.

In the next hour or so, I'm going to teach you everything I've learned about the subject of creativity.

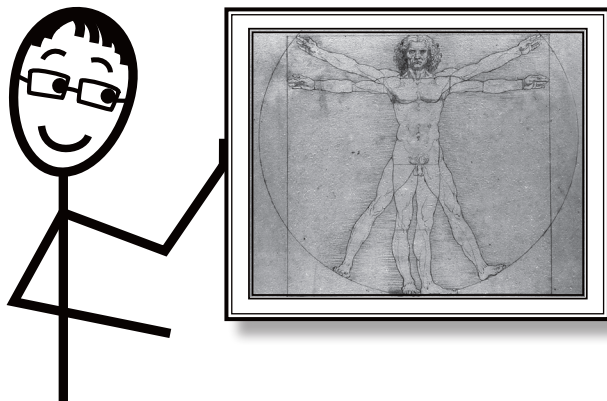
And let me give you my most important finding right up front:

Creative thinking is a skill that you can develop – in other words, you can teach yourself to be more creative.



1

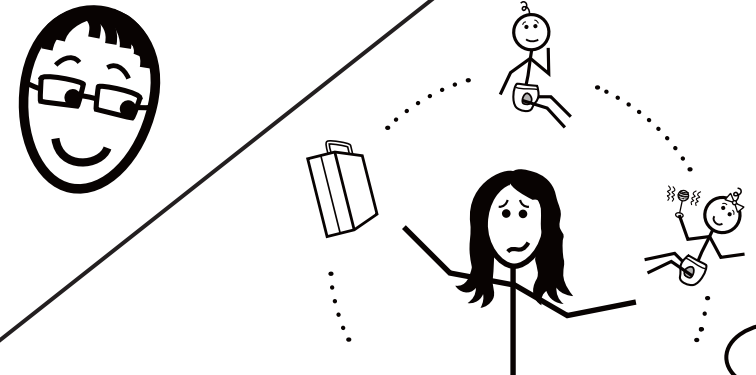
As part of our review, we are going to analyze some of the world's best known creators – people like Leonardo daVinci.



2

But, we are also going to speak about ordinary people.

People who utilize creative thinking to balance the competing demands and stresses of their lives – like parents for example.



3

Creative thinking is not just for inventors and artists.

“One woman, uneducated, poor, and a full-time housewife and mother ... was a marvelous cook, mother, wife ... She was in these areas original, novel, ingenious, unexpected, inventive ... I learned from her and others like her that a first-rate soup is more creative than a second-rate painting.”

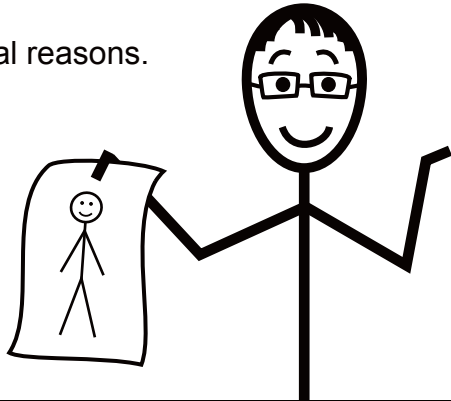
Toward a Psychology of Being,
Abraham Maslow (Wiley, 1968)
(Emphasis added.)

4

Just before we get started, I'd like to answer a question that may be in your head.

"What's with the stick people? Why tackle such an important topic in a format that looks like something a second grader might do?"

There are several reasons.



5

One, I believe in simplicity – hence the stick people drawings. Less can be more. Studies have shown that people retain more information when a message is delivered in a concise, illustrated format than in just text alone.

Two, like it or not, your brain is changing. The Internet has caused all of us to process and retain information in new ways. When people use the Internet to learn, the experience is staccato – very quick, bottom-line focused, discrete bites of information. That is the exact format of this book.

6

Finally, clutter is the enemy of creativity.

Your mind is constantly being bombarded with stuff and noise. All this tumult hampers creative thinking. I don't want to add to the problem – I want to help you build your talents for creative thinking.

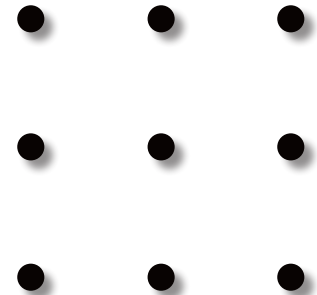
Every word and image in this book has been scrubbed for excess. I believe that if I can get your undivided attention for just an hour, I can jump start your creative impulses.

7

OK, in just a moment I'm going to start outlining for you 20 key points to understand about creative thinking.

But before we do, I would like you to try a little brain teaser.

As you can see, we have drawn a 9-dot square. The challenge is for you to connect all the dots by drawing just four straight lines **without your pen leaving the paper.**



8

Give up?

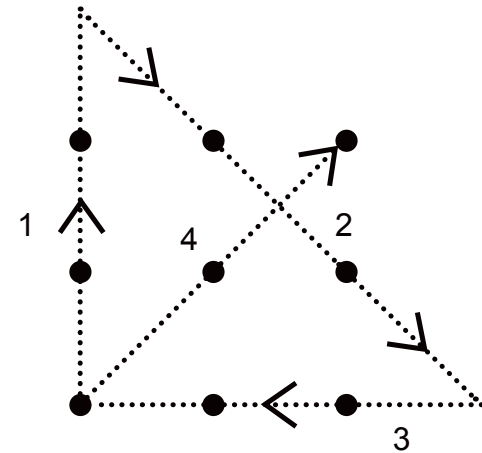
No worries. You see, the riddle is impossible unless you think **outside the box** – my first point about creative thinking.

9

**1. TO IMPROVE YOUR CREATIVITY,
FORCE YOURSELF TO THINK
OUTSIDE THE BOX ... TO
IGNORE ARBITRARY LIMITS.**

10

SOLUTION



11

As you can see, the only way to solve our riddle is to draw your lines **outside the perimeter** of the square.

By looking at a challenge as if there are **no limits to your solution**, you sometimes see things in a different light and spur new and creative ideas.

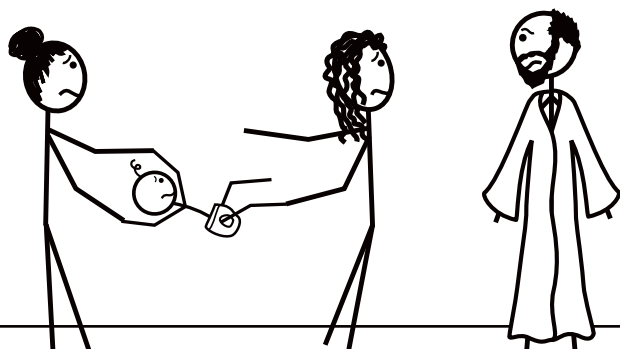
History is replete with stories of great ideas that were the result of someone thinking outside the box.

One of my favorites is the story of Solomon.

12

Solomon was a biblical king. One day, two women came to him – clutching a little baby boy. Each claimed that the baby was hers, and that the other woman had stolen him.

They asked Solomon to hear their stories – and award the baby to the true mother.



13

“NO, NO! Please, your Honor! Give her the baby.”

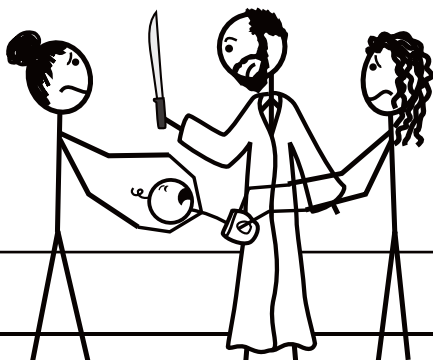


And Solomon knew immediately who the real mother was.

15

But Solomon was not interested in the usual approach. He did not have the patience to listen to each woman's story. He decided to try something a little bit creative ... to think outside the box.

“Sorry, ladies, I don't have time for this. Give me the baby and I will cut him in half – seems like a fair compromise.”



14

By thinking outside the box, Solomon came to a very quick (and very accurate) resolution. Solomon “cut to the chase.”

When you are confronted with a challenge, you should step back and think. Think about unconventional approaches. Think far outside the box; you can always pull yourself back in.

And that leads to the second of my points about creativity.

16

2. WHEN COMING UP WITH IDEAS, COME UP WITH LOTS OF IDEAS.

17

Most of our educational institutions teach us that there is **one** right answer. But that is not always the case.

When faced with a problem or opportunity, resist the impulse to come up with **the** right answer or approach. Instead, produce **lots** of ideas.

You can evaluate your ideas later – but first you need to have them!

18

“Nothing is more dangerous than an idea ... when it’s the only one we have.”

Emile Chartier, French philosopher

19

Author Roger Oech writes about a creativity workshop he gave to a large computer company.

The president of the company was concerned with his employees’ lack of innovation. Oech asked the assembled employees a lot of questions. But he told them what he wanted was not **the** right answer. What he was seeking was the **second** right answer!

In other words, Oech was pushing the attendees to ignore the first answer that came to mind, and to find an **alternative** right answer.

20

“One way to work around our assumptions is to ignore or ‘forget’ the initial right answers that come to mind when we’re faced with a problem we’ve seen before.”

*A Whack on the Side of the Head:
How You Can Be More Creative*, Roger Oech
(Hachette Book Group, 1983)

21

LEARN TO SUSPEND YOUR JUDGMENT

Some people judge their creative ideas **too quickly**.

By instinct, we all tend to practice what is called **convergent thinking**.

Convergent thinking is what helps us survive. It’s the process by which we assess situations (some of which could be dangerous), and then make judgments as to how to deal with them.

22

DIVERGENT THINKING

The opposite of **convergent thinking** is **divergent thinking**.

Divergent thinking is when you let your mind flow – giving it a license to explore all the nooks and crannies of your imagination.

Creative thinking requires divergent thinking **before** convergent thinking.

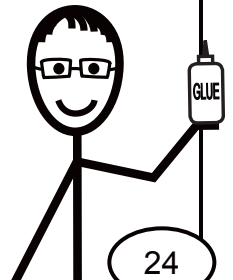
In other words, before you start judging, let your mind go in all directions – wherever it feels like. Don’t worry that your ideas seem nutty, silly or absurd. Your powers of convergent thinking will eventually throw out what is useless.

23

As creative thinkers we have to be careful not to reject ideas too quickly. We get a thought and then may think to ourself: “Oh, that will never work.” And we never let the idea see the light of day.

One of the great stories in creativity lore is the invention of Post-It notes.

In 1965 the 3M Corporation was experimenting with different adhesives. It wanted to develop an ultra-powerful glue like the one I’m holding.

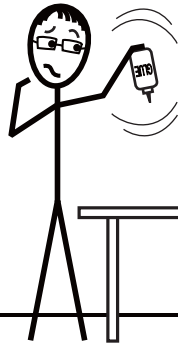
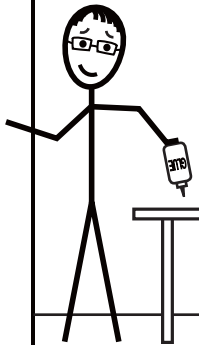


24

While trying to find a gooier glue, 3M had some “flops” – some glues that just weren’t that sticky.

One of the glues was so crummy that 3M let one of its employees have the formula.

That individual, Art Fry, did not know what to do with the substandard glue. Then one day a friend of his was complaining about having to scotch tape notes to himself all over his house.



25

The next thing you know, Art Fry invented Post-It notes.

In other words, what may, on first glance, appear to be silly, not useful, or “far out,” may actually have real sticking power.



26

EVERYONE IS A CRITIC

Because most people are convergent thinkers – and tend to shoot down new ideas (often just because they’re new) – you should be wary about bouncing your ideas off other people.

At some point, you do want to solicit others’ input. But if you do that too early in your creative process, you may be discouraged from pursuing what could be a terrific innovation or idea.

27

“Creative thinkers – authors, inventors and artists, for example – seldom talk about a work in progress.”

The Art of Creative Thinking: How to Be Creative and Develop Great Ideas,
John Adair (KoganPage, 1990)

28

GO WITH YOUR GUT

Seeing around curves is hard. Most people cannot see change until it is well past them. If you gauge the value of your creative ideas by just what other people think, you may be disappointed. Sometimes you just need to trust your own instincts, your gut.



29

“In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they came back to us with a certain alienated majesty ... teach us to abide by our own spontaneous impressions with good-humored inflexibility when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

30

As Emerson suggests, there may be times when you have an idea you're unsure about and therefore don't pursue. Next thing you know, someone else has the same idea and runs with it.

“Hey,” you say to yourself, “I had that idea months ago.”

The point is not to reject your ideas too quickly. The key is to find a balance between imagination and practicality.

And that is not always easy because at times, **new = disruptive**.



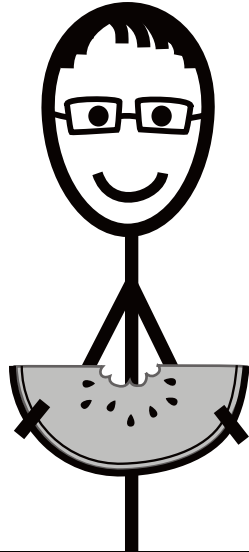
31

3. CREATIVITY IS OFTEN DISRUPTIVE.

32

Sometimes creativity requires that you have a strong stomach.

99% of the world is comfortable with the status quo and resists new ideas. Creative geniuses throughout history have often been perceived as wacky – until their ideas were accepted or proven. Then, of course, everyone copied the creative's ideas.



33

“At every crossing on the road that leads to the future, each progressive spirit is opposed by a thousand men appointed to guard the past.”

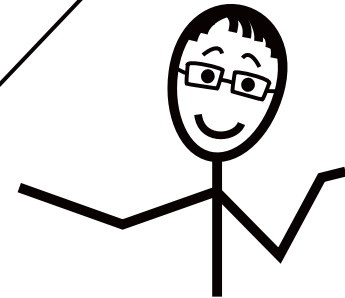
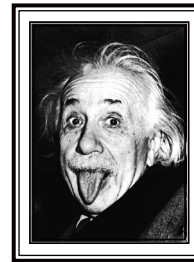
Maurice Maeterlinck,
Belgian Nobel Prize Winner

34

Many people are frightened by change. They see anything new as threatening.

Often creativity is an act of rebellion that requires a person to fight against the 1,000 men guarding the ways of the past.

35



Recognize this guy? Yes, Albert Einstein, of course – one of the most creative minds of the twentieth century.

I just finished reading a 550-page biography about him.

And you know what I learned?

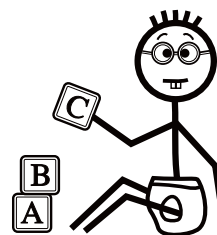
36

I learned that Einstein was a rebel – he hated being told how to do things.

Einstein stuck his tongue out at accepted scientific “truths.” He conceived new and different ideas, reduced his thoughts to equations, and at times dealt with tremendous skepticism.

37

SOMETIMES CREATIVITY AND GENIUS TAKE TIME TO SURFACE.



Einstein was not a precocious child. In fact, he did not utter a word until he was well past the age of two. He was such a slow learner, that the family maid labeled him “*der Depperte*” – German for “*the dopey one.*”

Einstein’s inability (or reluctance) to speak reminds me of a joke.

39

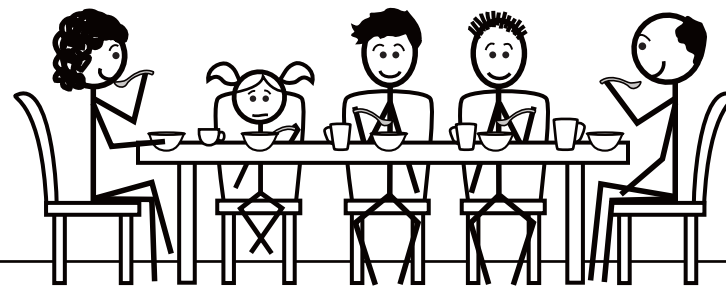
“Einstein’s life and work reflected the disruption of societal certainties and moral absolutes in the modernist atmosphere of the early twentieth century. Imaginative nonconformity was in the air: Picasso, Joyce, Freud, Stravinsky ... and others were breaking conventional bonds.”

Einstein: His Life and Universe, Walter Isaacson
(Simon & Schuster, 2008)

38

There once was a little girl who, during the first five years of her life, never said a word.

Then one morning, to the surprise of her entire family, she spoke.



40

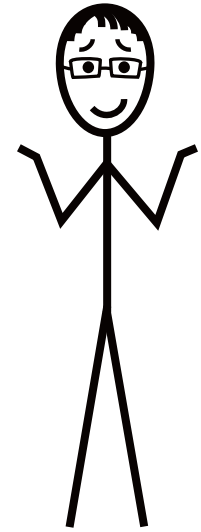
"This oatmeal is too hot."



41

OK, not the funniest joke in the world but it makes a point.

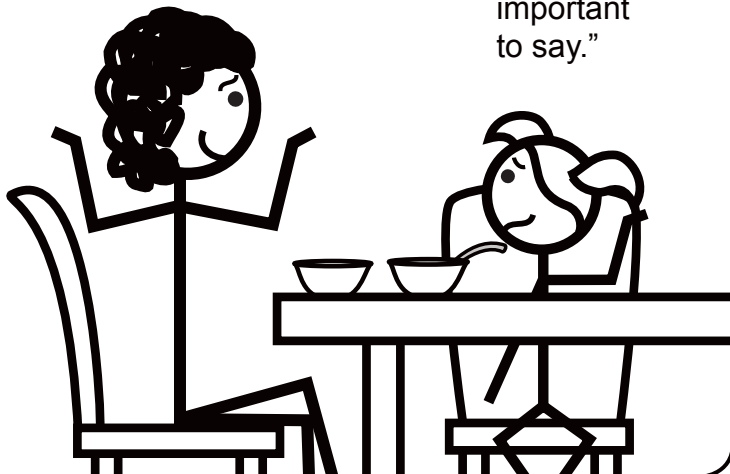
Different people reach their strides at different times. Sometimes people, who by traditional measures don't appear destined for greatness, turn out to be world-beaters.



43

"Oh my gosh, you can speak. But why did you wait until now to say something?"

"I had nothing important to say."



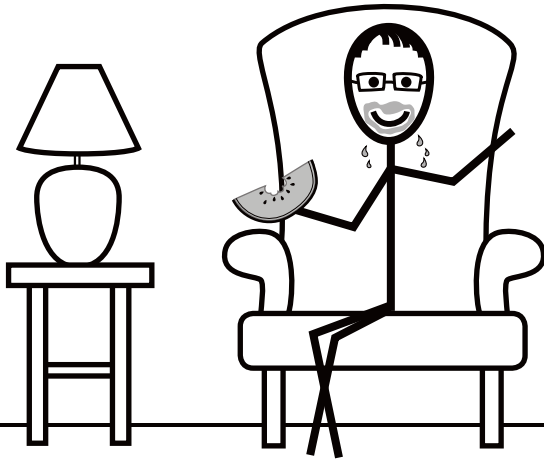
42

"Einstein's slow development was combined with a cheeky rebelliousness toward authority, which led one schoolmaster to send him packing and another to amuse history by declaring that he would never amount to much. These traits made Einstein the patron saint of distracted school kids everywhere."

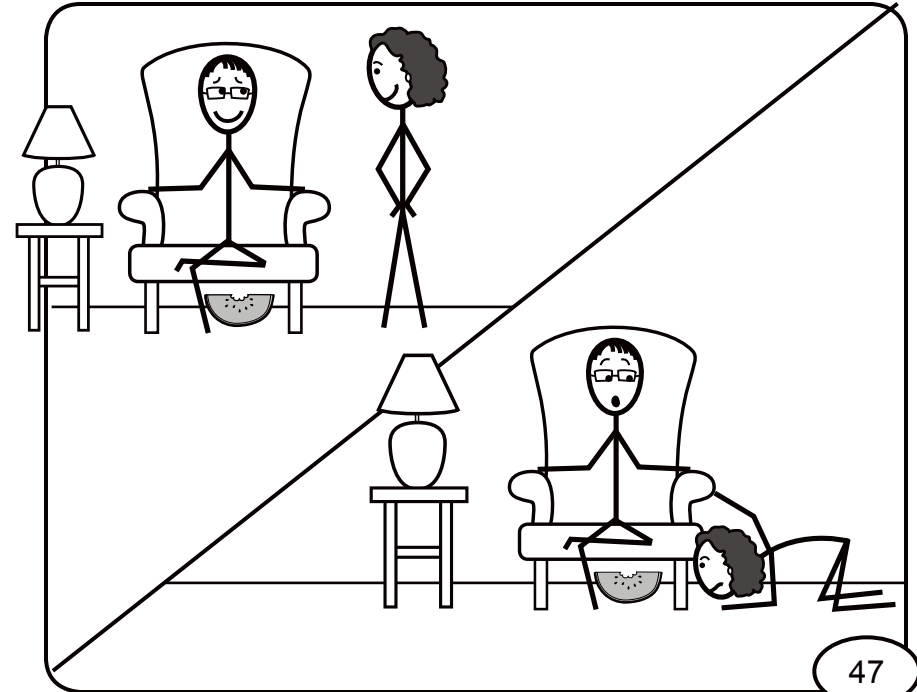
Einstein: His Life and Universe
(Emphasis added.)

44

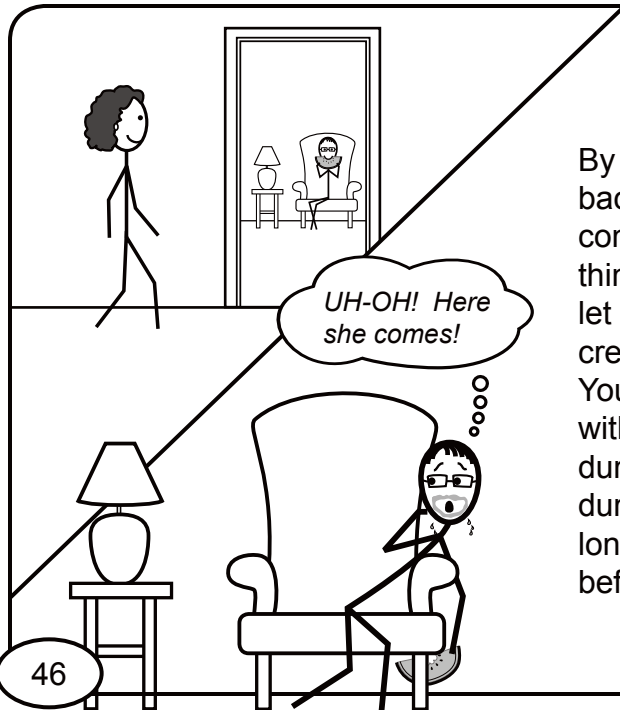
My wife wouldn't be happy with me eating watermelon in the living room. She thinks I can be a bit of a slob. But thinking about Einstein has inspired me. I need to be a little more rebellious.



45



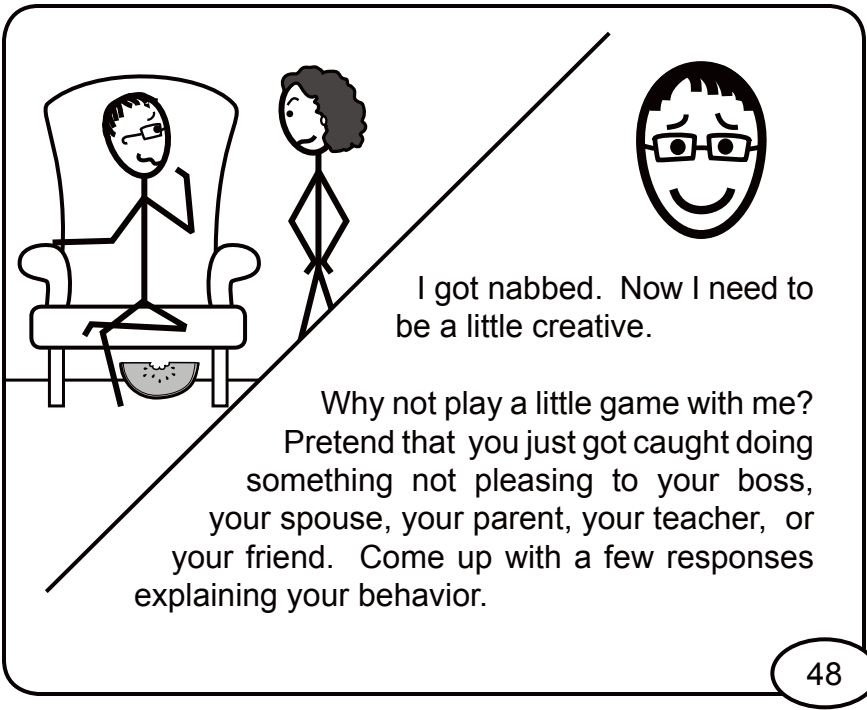
47



UH-OH! Here she comes!

By pushing back against conventional thinking, you let loose your creative energies. You may come up with some really dumb ideas, but dumb is OK – so long as you reflect before you act.

46



I got nabbed. Now I need to be a little creative.

Why not play a little game with me? Pretend that you just got caught doing something not pleasing to your boss, your spouse, your parent, your teacher, or your friend. Come up with a few responses explaining your behavior.

48

Here is what I came up with when my wife confronted me:

"It's just water."

"I thought you said no 'felons' in the living room."

"I'm trying to be like Einstein."

"This is the pits."



49

4. THE CREATIVE PROCESS WORKS BEST WHEN DISTRACTIONS ARE AT A MINIMUM.

51

No worries. My wife was very understanding. She just suggested that instead of playing golf with my buddies today, I spend my time cleaning the chair. Seems reasonable.



ONE HOUR LATER

Actually, I miss my buddies. I have trouble with solitude. This is all a set-up of course for my next point.



50

Another enemy of creative thinking is distraction.

We live today in a 24/7, always-connected existence not necessarily conducive to the creative process.

I have read many books and articles about the mind. Here is the upshot of what I learned:

The mind can only process so much at once.



52

The majority of us are most creative when freed from distractions.

Inspiration and creativity are funny things. You never know exactly when good ideas are going to pop into your head. But if your head is filled with all sorts of mishmash, your cool ideas may never float to the surface.

That is why creative types tend to work in environments where they can control or eliminate distractions.

53

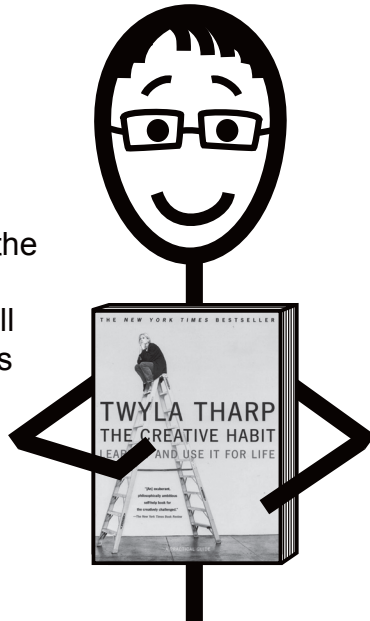


“I know there are people who can assimilate a lot of incoming data from all angles ... They thrive on a multitude of stimuli, the more complicated the better. I’m not hard-wired that way. When I commit to a project, I don’t expand my contact with the world; I try to cut it off. I want to place myself in a bubble of monomaniacal absorption where I’m fully invested in the task at hand.

I list the biggest distractions in my life and make a pact with myself to do without them for a week.”

55

This is one of my favorite books on the subject of creativity. It is written by the American choreographer, Twyla Tharp. I’d like to tell you how Ms. Tharp boosts her creative juices.



54

Here is what Ms. Tharp gives up in her effort to create a distraction-free environment:

1. Movies – one of her favorite forms of relaxation.
2. Multitasking – whatever she is doing, she does only that.
3. Numbers – she stops looking at clocks, bills, the bathroom scale.
4. Background music – she feels it “nibbles away at her awareness.”

56

Although different people thrive in different routines, one way to jump start your creativity may be to build some solitude into your life.

When your mind is freed from the “noise,” it is better able to roam, to imagine, and innovate.

57

Although Ms. Tharp’s routine sounds a bit extreme, she is nowhere near as monastic as one of American’s best-known novelists, Philip Roth. Roth is the author of several great books including *Portnoy’s Complaint* and *American Pastoral*.

59

“When I look back on my best work, it was inevitably created in what I call ‘The Bubble.’ I eliminated every distraction, sacrificed almost everything that gave me pleasure, placed myself in a single-minded isolation chamber, and structured my life so that everything was not only feeding the work but subordinate to it. It is not a particularly sociable way to operate. It’s actively anti-social. On the other hand, it is pro-creative.”

The Creative Habit, Twyla Tharp
(Simon & Schuster, 2003)

58

“I live alone, there’s no one else to be responsible for or to spend time with. My schedule is absolutely my own. Usually, I write all day, but if I want to go back to the studio in the evening after dinner, I don’t have to sit in the living room because someone else has been alone all day. I don’t have to sit there and be entertaining or amusing.”

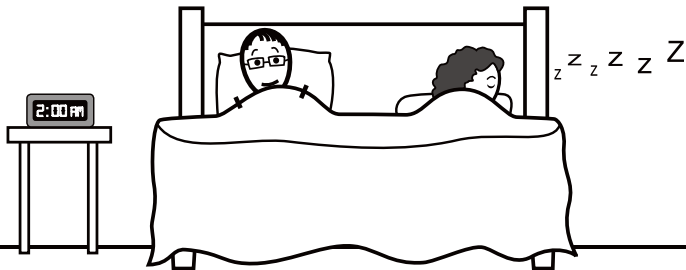
Philip Roth
The New Yorker (May, 2000)

60

Mr. Roth's routine is a tad grim for my tastes.
But it works for him.

Lately I've developed a procedure
that seems to be helping my
writing, and my
creativity.

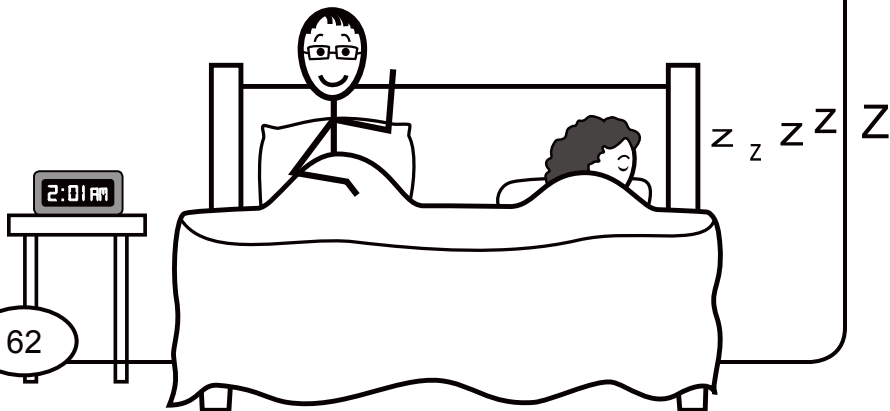
I rarely sleep
through the night.
In fact, I'm almost
always awake at 2 AM. Up
until recently I would get out of
bed, read e-mails, and play around
online. Then one day, I made a pact with
myself.



61

I decided that for at least 30 minutes I wouldn't leave
my bed. Instead, I would stay put and reflect on projects
I was working on. Obviously there were no distractions,
and I found that in this quiet time, my mind would flow
freely and ideas would follow.

If you want to promote your creativity, you need to give
your mind room to breathe.



62

***“When I am completely
myself, entirely alone or
during the night when I
cannot sleep, it is on these
occasions that my ideas flow
best and most abundantly.”***

Mozart

63

NOISE

There is a lot of noise in your head. But as teachers
like Eckhart Tolle explain, you can control the tumult
in your mind.

When you need to think, shut off the noise. Give
your creative talents a chance to flourish.

64

It may not be a coincidence that some great creators had hearing problems.

Did you know that Beethoven lost his hearing when he was in his twenties?

And that Thomas Edison was partially deaf from birth?

65

“Edison claimed that the deafness was actually an advantage, freeing him from time-wasting small talk and giving him undisturbed time to ‘think out my problems.’ Late in life he would say that he was fortunate to have been spared ‘all the foolish conversation and other meaningless sounds that normal people hear.’”

***The Wizard of Menlo Park:
How Thomas Edison Invented the Modern World,
Randall Stross (Crown Publishers, 2007)***

66

In the digital age it's particularly hard to disconnect from all the tumult. A recent study indicates that about 1/3 of us are "hyper-connected" – totally engaged with all sorts of electronic devices. In this condition, it's hard to find the time to think ... let alone to create.



• • • • •

“The best human creativity happens only when we have the time and mental space to take a new thought and follow it wherever it leads ... using screens as we do, constantly jumping around, we’re ensuring that all of us have fewer ingenious moments and bring less associative creativity to whatever kind of work we do.”

***Hamlet’s BlackBerry,
William Powers (Harper Collins, 2010)***

67

Want to improve your creativity?
Want to boost your innovative powers? Here's one tip: disconnect for a period of time. Shut the world off. It will be there when you return.



Now on to my next suggestion – I need you to forget how old you are. I want you to behave like a child.

68

**5. ONE WAY TO JUMP START
YOUR CREATIVE JUICES IS TO
BRING A PLAYFULNESS TO
WHATEVER ENDEAVOR
ABSORBS YOU.**

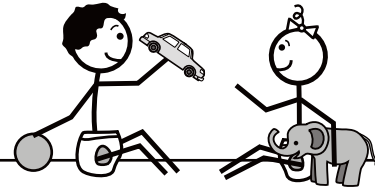
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An important factor in one's creativity is a willingness to discard accepted "truths."

A person who believes that everything is "open to review," is more inclined to look for new ideas – in other words, to think creatively.



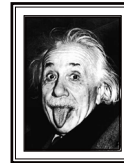
70



And you know who has no regard for accepted "truths?" Yes ... children!

Children have no long history to fall back on. They are not set in their ways. They do not think in terms of practicality. They do not worry about consequences.

71



Remember the photo of Einstein sticking out his tongue? At the time of that photo, he was about 70 years old. But he had not lost his playfulness. In fact, it was that childlike approach to life that enhanced his creativity right up to the day he died.

OK, please indulge me for a moment. Think about something or someone that irritates you on a regular basis. Now stick out your tongue at that thing or person. Way out there! Make a loud noise, too!

How did that make you feel? Maybe just a little bit silly?

72

I hope so... because silly is part of playfulness and imagination.

Silly is liberating. It encourages irreverence ... and unconventional thinking ... and yes, creativity.



73

***“He who
laughs ... lasts.”***

Anonymous

74

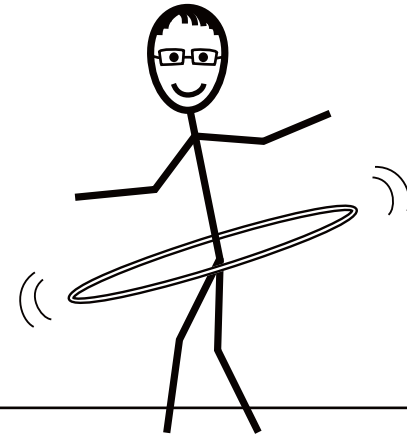


Hopefully you are enjoying our “skinny book.”

When I decided to start a publishing company, I did not want to do the “same old, same old.” I wanted to try something different.

Did I tap into my childhood when I started drawing stick people? Not deliberately, but once I disconnected from the “same old,” I opened my mind to new ways to communicate.

75



People who produce a lot of ideas may not be conscious of what they are doing, but at some point they act childlike. They let thoughts flow without worries about practicality, penalty or expense.

76

“The greatest invention in the world is the mind of a child.”

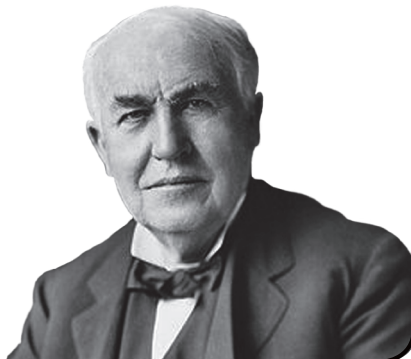
Thomas Edison

77

Hey, I think I have a great idea for a way to light up a room!



Speaking of Thomas Edison, does this picture make any sense? Since Edison invented the light bulb, how could there be a light bulb going off over his head when he had the idea to invent the light bulb?



78

One of my favorite books on the subject of creativity is ***How to Get Ideas*** written by Jack Foster. Here is what he had to say about creativity:

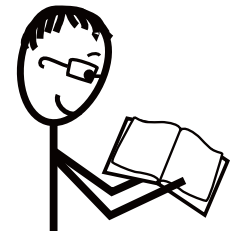
“Let the child in you come out. Don’t be afraid.

One of the ways to come up with new ideas is to be more like a child.

Loosen up. Run down the hall someday at work. Take everything out of your desk drawers and put it on the floor for a couple of days. Rearrange your furniture. Write notes with crayons.

Forget what was done before. Break the rules. Be illogical. Be silly. Be free.

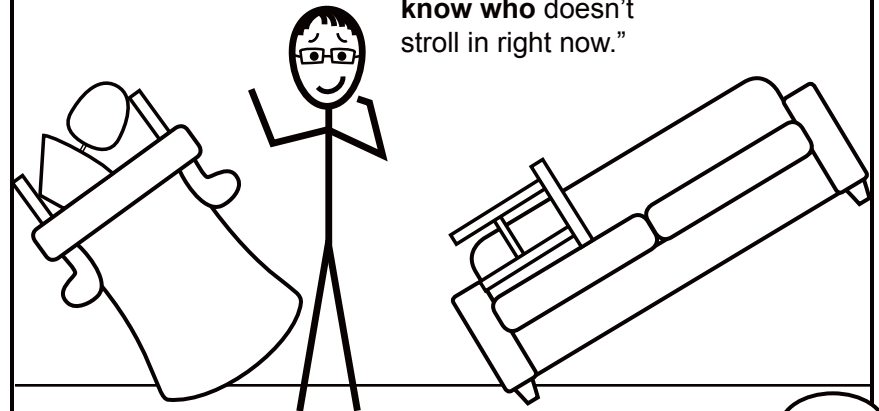
Be a child.”



79

One of Foster’s ideas for inducing creativity is to rearrange the furniture in your bedroom or office. I decided to try it in our living room.

“I sure hope you know who doesn’t stroll in right now.”



80

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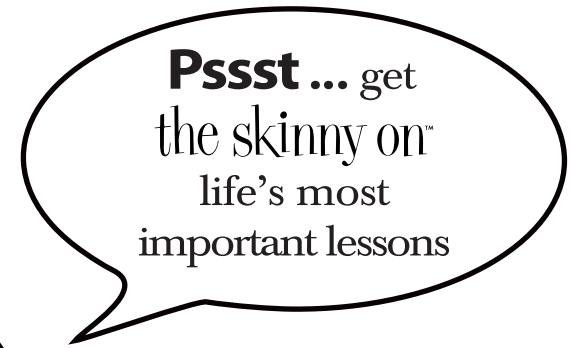
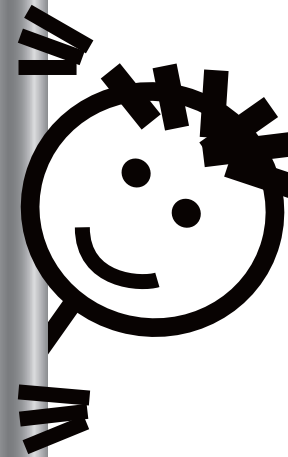
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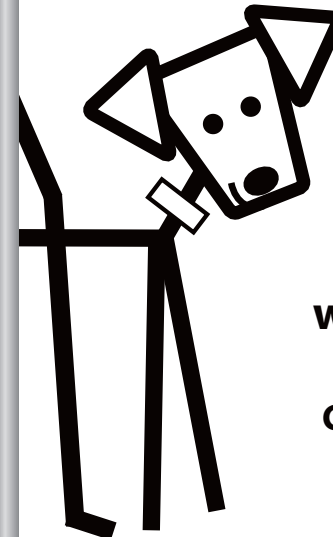
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about the author: Jim Randel is an attorney and entrepreneur who has studied topics of financial literacy and personal achievement for thirty years.

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