

Physical Creativity



Using physical movement
to increase creativity



Toolkits of ideas for working teams

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Physical Creativity

Why is physical movement important to creativity?

God is Creator. We all have the capacity to be creative because we are made in His image. God has designed us so that our minds and bodies are beautifully interconnected.

Acts 17:28 says, “In Him we live and move and have our being”. Jesus said to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Luke 10:27).

This set of tools will help groups of people to use physical activity to think more clearly and generate ideas.



Anyone will benefit, but especially people who are active in their approach to life: the ‘body smart’ people. Sports people, dancers and action sports lovers often like to process ideas as they move. The tools in this kit will help a group stretch muscles, recharge energy and contribute ideas actively.

The facilitator needs to discern the energy levels of the group and choose the most appropriate tool for a task.


The basics

In what situations do we have our best and most innovative ideas? In the shower, on a walk, swimming, while gardening, or while jogging!

We are not just brains that have bodies to transport us around. Our bodies help us think. Curiously, sitting still and trying to come up with good ideas can be the least effective way to do it.

A lot of research has been done in this field with thousands of papers written in the last 15 years. Here are some basic reasons why movement and exercise help with creative processes.





In 2014, a study at Stanford University found that a person's creative thinking output increased by 60% when walking.

Some people are wired to move as they think. They are body smart people. (*Howard Gardner Harvard University– Multiple Intelligences*)

A person who has been in the same place and in the same type of activity for too long will become bored and their brains will start to become inactive. So, movement will help everyone to wake and refocus the brain.

There has been recent research about how our movements and gestures can change our minds. Intentionally putting our bodies into certain positive situations will affect our thinking, attitudes and creativity. (*Psychology Today*)

All of us think well after we exercise. There is a lot of peer reviewed research showing that movement and thinking are closely related. Clarity in thinking after movement is partly because of renewed blood flow. Also, the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory, the hippocampus, is very active in physical exercise. (*Scientific American*)



1. Sport-based energizers

Use these tools when you need to bring energy to the team and increase oxygen and blood flow to the brain.



Think of any sports drills that could be adapted for indoors. Arrange some space in or around the work area with some simple equipment so that the whole team or small groups can punctuate the day with short periods of physical activity and challenge.

Equipment could include balls, jump-ropes and cones. Simple drills in throwing, catching, heading, kicking, and team coordination will help energize the group.

Option: Repetitive activities can be used alongside brainstorming or discussion.



2. Walk and talk

Use this tool to generate ideas or discuss issues in an active way.

Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, was famous for 'walking meetings'. In Luke 24 the two men had a deep discussion with Jesus while walking along the road to Emmaus.



Ask pairs to go for a walk and talk about a certain topic on which the team wants to make progress. Each pair can walk and talk for 15-30 minutes. Ideas can be written on a note pad or recorded on a mobile phone.

When everyone gathers after the walk, share the ideas with each other.

Option: *The team could also have a brainstorm or discussion in the gym while riding exercise bikes, running or stretching.*



3. Brainstorm relay

Use this tool to bring a new active way to gathering ideas.

Divide the group into two or more teams. Each group stands 10-20 metres away from a flip-chart.

One at a time, in a relay, each person runs to the flipchart to add one idea and then runs back and 'tags' the next person to run.

The teams can add their ideas to the flipchart by building on an existing idea or adding a new idea.

Continue for 5 minutes. See which team managed to add the most ideas.



4. Idea building relay

Use this tool to brainstorm ideas and then build on these ideas in an active way.



Each person is given sticky notes and a marker pen.



Stage 1: Each person writes one idea about a topic on one sticky note and then runs to place it on a flip chart on the other side of the room. Continue this process running backwards and forwards for about 3 minutes.

Stage 2: Each person briefly explains their idea at the flip chart to at least 3 others.

Stage 3: Stand on the opposite side of the room from the flipchart. Each person must run to the flip chart, remove a sticky note with an idea, and run back to the start. They then take a blank sticky note, add new ideas that build on the idea taken off the flipchart, run back to the flipchart and place these ideas together. Continue the process.

5. Ideas rotation

Use this tool to build ideas onto the ideas of others and develop depth and variety or perspective.

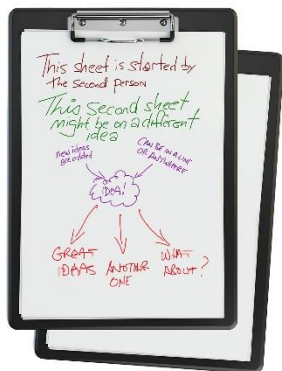
The team is given a topic on which to generate new ideas. Each person sits apart and writes an idea onto a piece of paper.

After 1-2 minutes, each person leaves their paper and moves to the paper on the right. At the new paper, they add an idea that builds on the first idea.



This process continues as people keep moving and adding ideas until each person returns to their paper.

Afterwards, sit in pairs or threes and review each sheet of paper. Find the ideas that have the most potential and develop them.



6. Ideas café

Use this tool when the group wants to work on many ideas at the same time and crowd source ideas from everyone quickly and actively.

A different topic is written at the top of 4 flip charts. The flip charts are placed in different parts of the room.

People can move around to each flip chart at their own pace and add ideas as well as talk about the ideas already there.

Allow at least 10 minutes or more for people to wander.

When this is finished allow people to choose a flip chart to work on. Each group will then categorize the ideas and begin to work on those with the most potential.



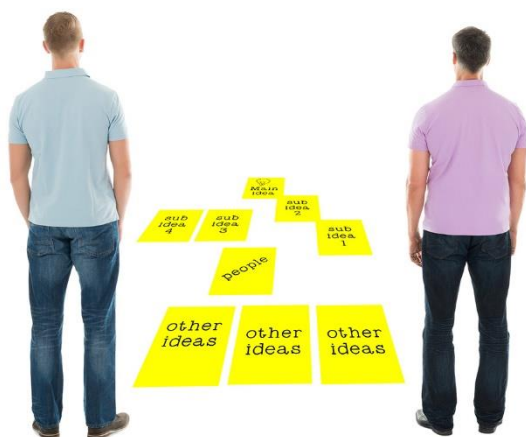
7. Floor mind map

Use this tool to explore how a structure, strategy or idea fits together.

Draw the main elements of the structure or strategy you are discussing onto separate pieces of paper. These could be words or symbols or pictures. Make sure each idea is understandable to your group.

As the group is asked to explain the structure or strategy, the facilitator or someone from the group gradually lays the papers on the floor to create a mind-map.

Parts can be connected with ropes or string and papers can be moved. The group can walk around the parts and gather to discuss different elements or connections.





8. Speed conversation

Use this tool when you want each person to be able to express their ideas a number of times.

Work in pairs and spread out around the room. Each person has 1 minute to give their opinion about a certain topic to someone else.

After 2 minutes, each person moves on to another person and tells them about the topic.

After 3 rounds, ask the group which opinions left an impression on them. Did others think this too?



9. Test an idea physically

Use this tool to see if an idea works or to learn more about an idea by acting it out.

If you have designed a game, find some space, then give instructions and play it together.

Evaluate it and see if it can be improved. Questions could include: 'What worked well? Where was there confusion? Did the message come clearly through the activity? What changes could make it clearer?'



If you developed a model, then role play or simulate the idea together.

If you have written a script or storyboard, practice it and dramatize it. This will help everyone understand it better.

You could also act out a Bible passage or create a photo still or statue to represent the scriptural concept. Photograph or video your ideas to help others use them.

10. Change location

Use this tool to easily re-energize the group.

Go outside and work in a new location: under a tree, on the grass, or at a table in the sun.

Option 1: Run a brainstorm or discussion in a new location while throwing a ball or a Frisbee.



Option 2: Experiment with how the team can use children's playground equipment. Use the resources and space creatively. Notice what happens with the ideas and energy in the team.



Going further

Here are some things you can do to develop your skills in using movement and activity to help a team think more creatively.

Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit and read about Jesus' creative ways of teaching and discipling in the Gospels.

Use these tools regularly with different groups of people.

Experiment with ideas. Combine different methods and see how they work.

Collect new and creative ideas. Start a notebook.

Find a mentor or peer who can help guide you and give feedback.



More reading

Search the Internet to find other reading on this area:

1. **Science of Creativity Moves Into the Body** by Jeffery Davis
2. **Walking Improves Creativity** (Stanford University News)
3. **Why do I Think Better after I Exercise?** (Scientific American)
4. **Teaching with the Brain in Mind - Movement and Learning** by Eric Jensen
5. **Learn How to Use the Best Ideation Methods:** Brainstorming, Braindumping, Brainwriting, and Brainwalking



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Creative Process
Team Writing
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