



CREATIVITY

“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while.” —[Steve Jobs](#)

WHAT IS IT?

Creativity is the practice of blending old ideas in new ways to address a challenge. Creative people would agree with the maxim that there are no new ideas, only rediscoveries – adding that there are certainly new ways to apply old ideas to today’s challenges. But in order to do that, you need to generate a high volume of new ideas while connecting the dots between seemingly unrelated concepts. People who hone these skills can apply their creativity to practically any situation.

WHY TEACH IT?

Creativity is an inherently human trait, but many lose confidence in their ability to use it as they grow older. This activity explores creativity through the practice of reframing, applied towards a medium that will be familiar to 21CM readers: music! The goal is to help musicians get back in touch with their creative confidence.

LESSON PLAN: “FIRST IS THE WORST, SECOND IS THE BEST” (Duration: 15-20 minutes)

BACKGROUND: One way to use our creativity is by framing and reframing. A “reframe” involves a conscious shift in your frame of mind so that you see the same situation from a different perspective.

In this exercise, you’ll get a chance to apply the concept of reframing to music. This exercise works best in a group, but you can also try it on your own.

MATERIALS:

- Musical instrument(s)
- Voice recorder (handheld or voice memo on phone)
- Staff paper (optional)
- Pencil/pen (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS:

For groups:

- Split into groups of no more than three people.
- Using your instrument or voice, create the WORST tune you can possibly think of. You can either write the tune down or memorize it, but keep it short enough to teach to another group by ear. (5 min.)
- Pass your tune along to another group. If there are more than two groups, rotate. Either pass the tune along verbally or write it down on staff paper.

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- Take your new tune and REFRAME! The tune's creator thought it was the worst imaginable, but your task is to turn it into the BEST tune you've ever heard. (10 min.)
- Regroup and share your tunes with the room! Have the original group present the worst version and the final group present the best version. Compare! (5 min.)

For individuals:

- Get ready to wear multiple hats!
- Using your instrument or your voice, create the WORST tune you can possibly think of. (5 min.)
- Pause. Refresh. Take a look at your tune again. Your task is to reframe the original and turn it into the BEST tune you've ever heard. (10 min.)
- Record your first (worst) tune and your second (best) tune. Play them back to yourself. What happened?

REFLECTION

What similarities did you notice between the best and worst tunes you created? What made the two different? How did your frame of mind (looking for the best versus the worst in a tune) change the way you heard the music? How did it change your approach when improving the tune?

Are there currently challenges in your musical life you could improve by reframing them?

APPLICATION

During this exercise, you applied your creativity not only to the creation of the first tune, but also to the reframing of a "bad" tune into a "good" one. Perhaps you noticed that some of the characteristics that made the first tune bad could actually become positive elements of the final creation. Hopefully, you also felt how different mindsets affected the way that you approached the creative process.

On the business side of things, how can creativity help your entrepreneurship? Look at the example of [Meow Wolf](#), an arts production company that builds immersive, multimedia experiences. They have grown their business by applying creativity to the business side of their venture. Turning the traditional art gallery model on its head, Meow Wolf combines the work of over 140 artists into a veritable funhouse, where visitors can climb, crawl or walk into different rooms inside the sprawling Victorian style home. Meow Wolf has seen over 500,000 visitors since 2016 and is looking to open up new exhibition spaces in the future.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Bob Sutton: What is creativity?](#)

[OpenIDEO: Defining Creative Confidence](#)

[HBR: Creativity and the Role of the Leader](#)

[Tina Seelig: A Crash Course on Creativity](#)