

Want to increase creativity to solve challenges during the pandemic? Skip the Doritos and try meditation

By Cindy Kremer Moen

These are unusual, highly stressful times. Across every industry, jobs have been reduced or eliminated. Movements have been limited to those deemed essential. Parents are working from home while their children are getting educated from home. News headlines are grim with reports of financial losses, illness, and death.

The only places to find stress relief seem to be in a long walk outside, a glass (or two!) of wine, or the bottom of a Doritos bag.

But does it have to be that way? What if you could spend ten minutes every day not just reducing stress and anxiety, but also improving creativity so you can solve your most pressing business challenges?

Move over, Cool Ranch. Meditation is here.

Numerous academic studies have shown that meditation increases cognitive flexibility, which leads to greater creativity. Subjects of these studies have displayed an increase in the key components of creativity: problem-solving skills, originality, insight, sustained attention, and mental flexibility.

These are potent skills for business owners and their employees to develop right now, especially during a time when organizations are looking for new ways to do business, increase or preserve sales, support staff, and maintain client satisfaction. Staying relevant these days requires creativity.

Research on creativity suggests that it is unlearned as we age. Children are born with more creativity and tend to unlearn it as they progress through traditional education systems. Other research indicates that we produce our greatest insights and biggest breakthroughs when we are in a more meditative and relaxed state of mind. This is likely because meditation develops the key components of creativity. Adults can use meditation to relearn creativity.

In a recent unscientific study of one, I leaned across the desk I currently share with my husband and asked if he felt meditation increases his creativity. Several years ago, he started meditating to manage symptoms of stress and depression. "Meditation leaves space in my head for more and better things," he replied. Creativity is not the only benefit of meditation. It can also improve attention, reduce stress, decrease anxiety, and bolster moods.

How much should you meditate? Research varies, but somewhere between ten and twenty minutes per day on most days seems to provide sufficient benefit.

How do you get started? Don't bother googling how to meditate, or you will get overwhelmed by the "rules". In my experience, getting started really isn't difficult. Here is what has worked for me:

1. Find a place where you will not be disturbed.
2. Sit in a comfortable position. It can be on the floor, on a pillow, on the couch – wherever you are comfortable and can sit up, with your spine straight and your chest open.
3. Set a timer. This way, you won't have to think about how long you've been going, which you're going to do anyway.
4. Close your eyes.
5. Breathe – whatever way you can. It doesn't have to be in through the nose and out through the mouth. I suffer from allergies so, this time of year, I can only breathe through my mouth.
6. Pay attention to your breathing. Notice how air moves into your body and back out.
7. Bring your focus back to your breathing. Inevitably, your mind is going to start wandering. When you notice that happening, you're not doing anything "wrong"; just refocus back to breathing.
8. Repeat steps 5 to 7 until your timer goes off.

This practice might not work for you, and that's okay. If it doesn't, there are really great apps that can guide you through any number of different ways to meditate, and thousands upon thousands of articles on the internet that can offer up other ideas.

In addition to the benefits of increased creativity, reduced stress, and improved mood, meditation has also shown to increase feelings of compassion and unconditional love toward all living things. In these stressful and uncertain times, we all could use a little more of that.



About the Author

Cindy Kremer Moen is working on practicing unconditional love for her two adult/teenage sons and husband, who are all observing stay-at-home orders and working/schooling from home ... all the time. In addition to working with several Edge clients, she currently is also cleaning the kitchen – constantly – and reigniting her love for Doritos.

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