

EEE EXERCISE PROTOCOL

This exercise has been applied in the creativity program at Stanford University* as a way of helping individuals to recognize their own strengths, and to see themselves and their preferred operating style in a new way: through the lens of the things that they most like to do. Research at by Teresa Amabile** at Harvard University has shown that people are more creative when they are *intrinsically* motivated – doing what’s personally satisfying and rewarding – rather than working for external incentives. So it follows that understanding what’s naturally pleasing and satisfying for you will help you find a more creative way of working.

Instructions

1. Make a list of the activities that you already find *easy, effortless, and enjoyable* (EEE). Don’t worry about sorting these activities into three categories, since the overlap will be high. Approach the task from the vantage point of someone else who knows you very well: How would they describe the things you like the most?
2. Go for quantity. Include the very small things (for example, savoring a cup of tea on a cold day or a walk on the lake) as well as big things (for example, planning a new project at work, giving a conference presentation). You should have at least several dozen items on your list. Sometimes it helps if you set the list aside for a day or so and come back to it and add some more things.
3. Now step back from your list and objectively answer the following questions:
 - a) What does the list tell you about the kinds of situations you are MOST comfortable in?
 - b) What does the list tell you about the kinds of situations you are LEAST comfortable in?
 - c) Research into the psychology of creativity shows that people are most creative when motivated by their own intrinsic desire to do something (as opposed to working for external rewards). What does your list tell you about the kinds of things you are to be most likely creative in doing?
 - d) Based upon the EEE List, what kinds of things are you most likely to look for, recognize, or notice in a situation?
 - e) Based upon the EEE List, what kinds of things are you most likely to screen out, miss, or overlook in a situation?

* Adapted from Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers, *Creativity in Business*, Doubleday, New York, 1989.

** How to kill creativity. Teresa Amabile, *Harvard Business Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1998, pp. 76-87. (Reprint #98501)