

UK Extension's  
**Universe of  
Possibilities™**

**SKILLS FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND BLESSING OTHERS**

## *Unleashing Your Creativity*

**W**ithout question, you are an enormously creative person! That creativity is always within you, and you must express it in order to experience the satisfaction and joy that is your birthright. To be creative means to be playful and to have fun and, in so doing, to successfully meet the often daunting challenges that life throws our way.

Terrorism, widespread public scandals, economic uncertainties, international conflicts, and a host of other problems have launched us into a turbulent, yet potential-filled 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our technological strides are mind-boggling, as are our planet-wide humanitarian and environmental dilemmas. No matter where we turn, we find ample challenges and opportunities—a world crying out for healing, unselfishness, and innovation. Collectively and individually, we all can make a difference. Has the full measure of our creativity ever been more needed?

A life brimming with creativity is no longer the luxury of a few; it's the duty and privilege of all of us. Fortunately, creativity is like the human heart. It lives in each of us and can pump new vitality into all that we do. The creative spirit sees what is good and what needs to be preserved; it notes what has potential and can be built upon and modified; and it knows when it's best to make a totally fresh start.

## 7 Core Principles

- 1** Though we express it in different ways and to varying degrees, creativity is a gift that has been given in abundance to each of us.
- 2** Continually remind yourself of this truth: You are a marvelously resourceful individual with unique perspectives and talents that are needed to create the best world possible for yourself and others.
- 3** Creativity thrives in an atmosphere of freedom, playfulness, trust, spontaneity, and enthusiasm.
- 4** When an innovative idea pops into your mind—and this happens much more often than you might realize—jot it down right away; give it your respectful attention, and instead of judging the idea, honor it and have fun with it.
- 5** Develop an eagle's eye for spotting and encouraging the creative tendencies of family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and community leaders.
- 6** When you are part of a relationship, organization, or community that confronts a significant difficulty, get together and enjoy an all-out brainstorming session, building on each other's ideas and generating as many imaginative solutions as possible.
- 7** Remember, the more centered you are on the Target of Life, the greater your well-being, the wiser your choices, and the more effective you are in everything you do.

**P**ut yourself in the center of the heart of the Target of Life. **Notice that the heart of the Target is clear, unobstructed, full of light.** From there, you see clearly and make choices that are good for you and those around you. You are attuned to your inner guidance and best judgment. You feel at peace, strong, compassionate, joyful, energetic, and creative. Your reflexes are sharp, your immune system strong. You stumble and fall less often, and you handle life's inevitable challenges with more confidence and skill. Your ability to endure prolonged hardship increases. You are naturally more sensitive to others—more patient, generous, and understanding. You more easily express the richness of your authentic self. The more deeply centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more love you feel and share. **You are at your best—physically, mentally, and spiritually.**



*Target of Life*

**Although you undoubtedly have experienced being relatively centered, often little and big things happen that go against your desires and expectations, and you are likely to find yourself thrown off center and pulled out of your heart's wisdom into the surrounding web of minor frustrations and energy-drainers.** Your vitality, peace, and sensitivity begin to fade, and little tensions, doubts, and fears start to emerge. Stress creeps in and things bother you more easily. You are more critical of yourself and edgier with the people in your life. Your effectiveness, spiritual attunement, and physical health start to slip.

**All of this can pull you even further away from the center of the Target of Life into the area of increased darkness and sharp edges.** When you are in this portion of the Target, you have strayed still further away from your center—your heart of hearts, your home of love, wisdom, and joy. Stress levels are high, and it's much more difficult to sense your inner guidance. You're far more likely to become irritable with co-workers and friends, to yell at family members, and to make poor decisions in every area of life. Tension, disharmony, and fatigue take their toll on your creativity and physical well-being. You and everyone around you are affected negatively.

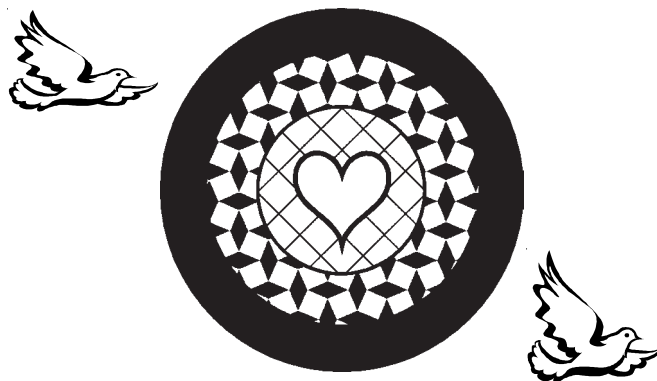
**Beyond this portion of the Target of Life is the outer darkness. Here you can't see well at all; it's a terrible place to be. Insecurity, doubt, confusion, and selfishness are rampant.** Stress soars to dangerous levels, and good judgment plummets to an all-time low. You feel heavy and burdened and make decisions that hurt yourself and others. You are driven by fear, blindness, and anger. In this outer darkness your health suffers tremendously, and all kinds of abuse, destruction, and violence flourish. Despite your inherent goodness, you may find yourself saying and doing horrendous things. Truly, it's a living hell.

**Every individual has a Target of Life as does every relationship, organization, city, and nation.** Even the world as a whole has a Target of Life, and when the world moves too far from its center of love, an array of major problems erupt, including disease, poverty, environmental disasters, international strife, and war.

It is our individual and collective choices that move us away from our intuitive wisdom at the center of the Target of Life into varying degrees of stress, confusion, frustration, and conflict. **Fortunately, by making wise choices at any time, we can move back toward the center of the Target into greater levels of peace, vitality, kindness, and opportunity.**

In the gift of choice lies our greatest power—a power that can be used to uplift or destroy. The Target of Life is a helpful way to understand our individual and collective well-being. **With awareness and practice, we can become highly skilled at detecting and creatively responding to the early signs of harmful stress.** We can gradually learn to stay more deeply centered with increasing frequency, saving ourselves all kinds of trouble and our society billions of dollars in unnecessary health care costs.

**If you have a strong spiritual orientation, you may find it helpful to think of being centered as being in the heart of the Divine Presence**—the source of all goodness, harmony, abundance, and creativity. As temptations confront you and you allow yourself to be lured into making less than optimal decisions, you stray from the center of Divine Love into varying degrees of fear, pain, and self-defeating behaviors. To move toward the center of Divine Presence or toward a self-created hell of outer darkness, to go more deeply into love and joy or to separate yourself from the Divine and become lost in fear and confusion—these are decisions that you face each day. By staying centered and honoring your intuitive guidance, by remaining alert and choosing wisely, you can be at your best more frequently and help to create a world of marvelous possibilities.



**Y**ou were born with great potential, and now you've grown into a wonderfully gifted adult! Don't let anyone convince you otherwise, including yourself. Regardless of age, circumstances, or mistakes that you've made, you have important talents to offer our world, which sorely needs your creativity.

While enormous good takes place every day, our well-being and progress are, at the same time, seriously threatened by one major crisis after another. In Chinese, the written character for crisis means both danger *and* opportunity. The dangers we face, and the seemingly endless problems associated with them, are very real. Nevertheless, if we choose to remain positive and keenly alert amid the dangers, life-changing possibilities will emerge.

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*The two terrors that discourage originality and creative living are fear of public opinion and undue reverence for one's own consistency.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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On the international scene and in our family and personal affairs, the same principle holds: ***Powerful possibilities abound during times of difficulty and change.*** An essential aspect of creativity is learning to see well-disguised opportunities and then to pursue them intelligently. Difficulties prod us to explore new options that often bear fruit for ourselves and others. Of course, abundant options for innovation also exist when life moves along more smoothly.

Without question, we have within us the creativity to transform our personal and global worlds. As the great apostle of peace Mahatma Gandhi put it, "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

***Creativity is the power to bring something new and useful into existence.*** As human beings, we are made to solve problems and embrace fresh opportunities. Not only can we become good at creating, we also will experience great satisfaction and joy while learning and improving our lives.

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*Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun.*

Mary Lou Cook

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## ROADBLOCKS TO CREATIVITY

When you are centered in the heart of the Target of Life, you are far less likely to experience internal roadblocks to your creativity and you are much better able to triumph over external obstacles that may arise. These, briefly, are some roadblocks that typically prevent capable people from expressing their creativity more fully:

***Thinking "I'm not very creative." Fear of criticism from others. "That's not my job." Stress. Laziness. "There's only one right way." Wasting time on nonessentials. "You have to follow the rules." Too much talk, too little doing. Self-criticism. Fear of failure. Too much seriousness. Unsupportive people and environments. Resistance to change. Limiting beliefs. Worrying about who gets the credit. Lack of faith.***



## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

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**O**ne good question can be worth a shelf full of books. ***Think about the broad topic of unleashing our creativity on the world, then write down several related questions.*** Ponder your questions and discuss your responses with a friend or with a small group. Here are a few starter items:

- ✧ Of the "Roadblocks to Creativity" noted above, which ones limit us most in addressing the world's problems, and how might we overcome them? Can you name other substantial roadblocks?
- ✧ What promotes your personal creativity?
- ✧ What could you do to encourage more creativity among your family, friends, and co-workers?
- ✧ Is there a particular creative person whom you admire? Who and why? What aspects of his or her example might you apply in your own life?

## ◆ *Awakening the Spirit of Creativity* ◆

*The spirit of creativity resides in abundance within each of us. While you may have unique and favorite ways of tapping into it, you might also find it helpful to draw from the following 24 tips for awakening your creative genius.*

◆ **Watch and honor the creative process.**

Your every thought—for better or worse—is a powerful creative act. Each relationship is a creative dance. Tune into the fact that you are creating all the time and let this awareness guide you to make inspired choices.

◆ **Follow your life-affirming passions.** Pay close attention to your positive passions both in the small details of life and in major decisions. In your heart of hearts, what pulls you the most? What needs to be changed? What do you love to do? Follow the path of satisfaction and joy.

◆ **Walk on the wild side.** Be daring; take risks; break the rules; be unpredictable. Let the “wild woman” or “wild man” within you come out and romp. Feel the raw energy and aliveness, and let it take you where it will. Of course, as you walk on the wild side, be true to your deepest self and kind to all those around you.

◆ **Seek inspiration from nature.** Whether you are searching for a solution to a particular problem or seeking a fresh outlook on life, try spending time quietly and receptively in the natural world. Watch closely and learn: The spirit of creativity frequently displays its secrets in the marvels of nature. If you truly are open, invaluable seeds of inspiration will enter your consciousness.

◆ **Take time for silence and solitude.** We block imagination and innovation when our lives are too busy, too noisy, too filled with planning and analytic thinking. Make space in your life for peace, quiet, and solitude, and then listen receptively to the creative promptings within and around you.

◆ **Sleep on it.** Before falling asleep at night, think of some challenge in your life and ask for assistance. Upon waking up, see if any fresh

feelings or new perspectives on the situation have emerged. Also, be open to your dreams and their symbolic messages.

◆ **Go with the flow.** Instead of resisting change, embrace it with curiosity and see where its currents take you. Open-mindedly take stock of all the possible options.

◆ **Give up the need to look good.** Ask dumb questions. Say what you really think and feel. Do what brings you peace and helps others, even if it's unpopular. Forget about looking good and instead focus on being true to yourself and your heartfelt inner guidance.

◆ **Step out from the crowd.** Respect and learn from other viewpoints, but be your own person. Think originally, trust yourself, and let your brilliance shine. As psychologist Abraham Maslow advised, “Be independent of the good opinion of other people.”

◆ **Call a virtual council meeting.** In your mind, call together some wise individuals whom you are familiar with and admire—perhaps your grandmother, a favorite teacher, or an insightful leader, such as Mother Teresa or Abraham Lincoln. Then ask for advice, and take notes as you imagine the discussion among your council members and their words of wisdom.

◆ **Adopt a creative genius.** Select a historical figure or modern-day hero and adopt his or her spirit into the family of your beliefs, thoughts, and actions. Choose someone you deeply admire. It might be an expert in your given field who can serve as a mentor or someone such as Leonardo da Vinci, Mahatma Gandhi, Helen Keller, or Jesus Christ. Study your chosen genius and strive to make his or her best qualities your own. You can, of course, learn from more than one creative genius!

## *Awakening the Spirit of Creativity—continued*

- ◆ **Let your pen do the talking.** Jot down your bright ideas as soon as you think of them, before they fly away. Doodle with a creative eye or draw out your dreams and questions with color markers. Write a “Dear Creativity” letter, and inwardly listen for helpful responses with pen in hand. Start a Creativity Journal, listing past successes and your many creative traits that made them possible.
- ◆ **Make friends with ambiguity.** It’s okay to feel uncomfortable and confused; it may be a sign that the spirit of creativity is reorganizing your life. Be appropriately patient during uncertainty and chaos, and remain on the lookout for opportunities! Temporary periods of difficulty are often a prelude to healthy change and new discoveries.
- ◆ **Brainstorm.** Pose a question to a small group and invite a flood of spontaneous and briefly stated creative responses. Encourage participants to build playfully upon one another’s ideas. Don’t evaluate the responses until all ideas are expressed.
- ◆ **Brainstorm negatively.** Let’s say your goal is to position your organization to thrive and to continue benefiting society in today’s fast-changing world. Think five years into the future, and envision the total demise of your group because of its failure to creatively adapt to change. Brainstorm all the reasons why the organization failed to prosper. Then shift gears and focus on creative ways to protect your organization against the factors that could contribute to a “failure to thrive” syndrome.
- ◆ **Create a wisdom circle.** Pull together a circle of people representing various ages and perspectives. Begin with a few minutes of silence. Next, post a single thought-provoking question on a flipchart or wall poster and place a “talking stick” in the center of the group circle. Only the person holding the “talking stick” may speak; all others listen respectfully. Throughout this powerful process, silence is honored as a valuable component of creativity.
- ◆ **Be playful.** A vital part of creativity, playing around and having a good time can be serious business. A playful, imaginative mind and a receptive, loving heart give birth to all kinds of marvelous possibilities. Laugh and be silly. Imbue your work with inspired playfulness.
- ◆ **Make weird connections.** Place seemingly unrelated concepts together—for example, earthworms and the energy crisis—and see what kinds of innovative ideas can be sparked.
- ◆ **Think in reverse.** Imagine the best possible solution to a personal or societal challenge, and then work backwards, step by step, to discover how the ideal solution was implemented.
- ◆ **Expose yourself to what’s new and different.** Travel to unique and stimulating places. Interact with people of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. If you are a research chemist, go to a meeting of poets. Seek out and listen with openness to those who disagree with you. Browse through books that are totally out of your area of expertise.
- ◆ **Take good care of yourself.** If you engage in enjoyable exercise, eat wisely, and receive adequate rest, your creative juices will flow far more abundantly.
- ◆ **Associate with unusually creative people.** Spend time with others who display a type of creativity that inspires you. When you can’t do this in person, well-selected books, audiotapes, and videos are a great alternative.
- ◆ **Tune in with the Divine.** If it is compatible with your spiritual beliefs, attune to “The Creator” through prayer and meditation. Invite a constant flow of divine guidance and inspiration into the temple of your creativity. Become a faith-filled instrument for the expression of Omnipresent Good in its myriad forms.
- ◆ **Sit at the feet of young children and wise elders.** The very young and very old see life from unique and fascinating vantage points. Seek the precious insight of young children and the wisdom-bestowing experience of elders.



## SKILL BUILDERS

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**S**kill builders help you exercise your creative muscles to give you the strength you need for success. *In addition to the sample skill builder below, create some imaginative ones of your own on the topic of unleashing your creativity.* As with physical fitness workouts, benefits come from actually *doing* the exercises.

- ◆ As president of the United States, you've decided to launch a war on world hunger. Your goal is to eliminate hunger in three years, and you have received full congressional support and \$700 billion to accomplish the task. Outline your plan in detail.

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*When the artist is alive in any person, whatever the type of work, he or she becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature.*

Robert Henri

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## A NEW POSSIBILITY

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**B**ringing a dream to life is a journey. It begins and continues one step at a time. Think about all that you have learned from this publication and how you might put it into practice. Then choose one small goal that you want to accomplish in the next few days. Move toward a new possibility that is really important to you—one about which you are enthusiastic and confident.

*Take a card or a piece of paper and, at the top, write "A New Possibility." Under this heading, briefly state what you will do and by when. Sign this action plan and put it where you will see it often.* Tell a supportive friend or family member about your goal, and frequently visualize yourself

following through. Be prepared just in case doubts or roadblocks crop up. Know that you can always draw upon faith, firm resolve, and creativity to overcome any obstacles that may arise.

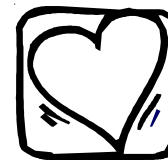


## POSITIVE THOUGHTS

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**Y**ou may find the following brief thoughts (or similar ones that you create) to be simple yet powerful inspirational tools. You might, for example, memorize and, with deep feeling and concentration, mentally repeat one of these seed thoughts or write it on a card and place it where you'll see it often.

- ♥ Inspiring ideas easily pop into my mind, and the wisdom of my heart guides each step of my adventure-filled life. Anything is possible, for the unlimited spirit of creativity dwells within and around me.
- ♥ Every problem I face is a challenge—an opportunity for learning, creating, and growing. I skillfully handle each difficulty with wisdom, playfulness, and confidence.
- ♥ The infinite power of creativity lives in each of us. When we unite behind a common purpose, no obstacle is insurmountable. We can meet every challenge and bring to life our finest dreams.



## LOVE MADE VISIBLE

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*Together, let us envision and build a world where all people enjoy optimal well-being. Let us strive to awaken fresh thinking, new enthusiasm, and abundant love. Let us create a world of unimagined possibilities. It can be done!*

## 10 Educational Modules

*UK Extension's Universe of Possibilities™: Skills for Creating Happiness and Blessing Others* is an educational series containing 10 modules. Each module is accompanied by a Macromedia Flash® movie, a PowerPoint® presentation, and other teaching tools. All these resources, along with a Facilitator's Guide, are available free-of-charge in camera-ready format at the following website: [www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities](http://www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities).

1. **Your Vision Map**

2. **Making the Growth Choice**

3. **The Way of Peace**

4. **Heart Intelligence**

5. **The Freedom of Self-Discipline**



6. **Embracing This Present Moment**

7. **Accepting and Loving Your Body**

8. **Healthy Relationships**

9. **Unleashing Your Creativity**

10. **Gifts of Gratitude and Blessing**

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