

Ep #016: How to Turn Your Brain Into a Creative Idea Machine

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With Your Host

Aaron J. Jacobs

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What if you could write your own life story? How would you spend your time? What would your career or business look like? What kind of parent or partner would you be? Welcome to *Storied Life Coaching*, the only podcast that will show you how to stop living life by default, and teach you how to build a thriving business that fuels an amazing life on your terms. I'm Aaron J. Jacobs, and as a master coach and CEO of OMH Creative and Storied Coaching, I've had the privilege and opportunity to learn what it takes first hand to rewrite your own life story. It's never too late for a rewrite.

Well, hello, my friends.

Welcome to another episode of The Storied Life Coaching Podcast and this week, I want to give you something that is, it's my secret. It's my secret for how to generate ideas. Some of you may think that there are creative people and they are just creative, and then there's people like you who have struggles to come up with ideas for stories or an idea of how to approach a project at work or an idea of how to solve a problem. And I'm going to show you exactly how I constantly generate new ideas and think of new ways for my business to tell stories as well as how to let my brain—the supercomputer that we all have sitting on top of our shoulders—off its leash, if you will, for creating space. Intentional space: that's what I'm talking about right now, where it can go to work, not doing the work, but it can go to the work of doing what it's really, really amazing at which is finding seemingly unrelated things and making a new idea out of combining them.

Now, I'm going to show you exactly how to do this and it's way easier than you think but there are some reasons why you want to be able to do this. When I'm talking with clients and we are writing a script for them, for, let's say it's an explainer video for a new product that they're offering in technology or something. Maybe it's one of our clients like Microsoft or one of their partners and they have a new cool thing that does a certain thing, and they want to be able to tell that story. And I will hear them say things like, “We don't even have any ideas,” or “Creativity is not my department,” or “We

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don't know how to come up with the story that we want to tell," and it makes me smile a little bit because of the fact that yes, I love that you're coming to us to help you tell you this story, because that's how I pay my bills and how I'm able to pay my crew. But at the same time, I've taught so many of my continuing clients, especially, how to do this thing so that they come up with great ideas. And now they start coming to me already with wonderful pitches and ideas of how they might want to creatively tell a story.

Now, when you're creatively telling stories, forcing yourself, forcing your brain into the position where you need to come up with something creative, need to do it right now, almost always, without exception, results in your brain freezing up and not being able to think of something. It's too much pressure and it's not the way to get your brain into a creative state. A lot of times people will refer to this as "shower moments." And some of you might know what I'm talking about. It can seem like you're working on a problem, you've been thinking about something for a while, you can't think of the solution and you walk away. Or maybe you're in the shower, literally, the next day getting ready for work or going somewhere and it just occurs to you out of nowhere. All of a sudden, you've come up with a great idea or a way of thinking about the problem that hadn't occurred to you before and you're like, "That's it. I've had a light bulb moment," and it was when your brain had time and space to think about things kind of in the background, to go to work crunching on the different ways and free associated with different ways things might happen. It's just happening in the background. I've often even had this happen to me when I'm thinking about something and I go to sleep and the next morning an easy thought comes in, kind of in that in between place between when you're not quite asleep anymore and you're still waking up, and you're able to come up with some ideas there.

Now, you want to be able to do this for a couple of different reasons. Obviously, in our business lives, we need to be able to think of ideas, especially for entrepreneurs, like many of you are, come up with ideas for our business and ways to tell the story of how our products or services, the things we do, can help our customers new and interesting ways to tell them

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about that about how it's going to help them. That's part of what we teach people to do in our Storied Teams courses. But when people are coming up with the initial ideas of something, sometimes I hear things like, "Oh, I can't think of good ideas," or, "I don't know any stories to tell." And you've already listened to me. If you've listened to me at all, at this point, you know that there's, that's not true. We're all natural storytellers. But sometimes our brains need the space to be able to figure out what we want to do and how to do it.

So this is also really important to create intentional, clutter free space for your brain to be able to free associate just for your own mental health. So we talked about the business benefits of it, coming up with great ideas, or working on a problem that's going to help you, your customer, or your business to be able to do something. But what about the mental benefits for your personal life and just for you? Creating intentional free space is so important, just for your own mental health. It is amazing how when you do this, for instance, if you meditate at all, or you've ever just sat with your eyes closed, a lot of times people report feeling a lot better, even if it's just 15 or 20 minutes, feeling better afterwards. And their brain is not at that same frenzied pace that it was before because you're working on lots of different problems. You're going from meeting to meeting. It's always tasked with doing something, with producing a result. What I'm saying is, your brain needs space to be quote, unquote, bored. You need time for your brain to be able to just take a walk, to be able to go in whatever direction it sees, whatever thing by looking down at the sidewalk, or looking at a cloud, or free-associating ideas and things like that. Giving your brain time to do that can be how you come up with that great new slogan for your business or how you come up with that idea of how to tell your customers about your product or how to think about if you're parenting, how to talk to your kids in a different way about a problem you're trying to solve together.

Your brain needs the breathing space. It's a lot like I've had it described to me in the past as well as it's like breathing. You can only exhale for a certain amount of time until there's no more breath left. You need time to inhale to

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bring things in and creating intentional free space is how your brain takes a breath back and brings things in and then looks at them in interesting combinations in different ways that can come up with ideas that you never would have thought of. And this helps your mental health as well. It's, it helps in both areas and it's a wonderful thing to be able to do. Part of the problem of why we don't do this is because, especially in corporate culture, we schedule every single moment to be as productive, quote, unquote, as possible. We do this all the time. We try to fill up our schedules. And I did this for years. Our calendars, your Outlook calendar, your Google Calendar, whatever you're using, you try to fill up the different parts of it so that you're productive. Your brain is on a task doing something and when you're moving from meeting to meeting or thing to thing to thing to thing, we're not specifically carving out time and space for those moments for our brains to breathe and to create intentional space where we can be creative and solve problems by not having it trying to do a specific thing at a specific time and forcing it into that mode.

So here's some different ways to doing this. In fact, it's a really easy. It's two steps. It's only two steps and I've helped so many clients do this as well to becoming a creative idea supercomputer for your brain. Because that's what your brain is. We all are walking around with supercomputers on our shoulders and we're not using them in the most effective way possible. So this is a really effective way to start doing that. It will help you in your personal life, to feel better, to get to help with anxiety, to help with anything you're worried about. It will also help your brain to actually solve more problems for you on a regular basis. It's like magic and coming up with creative ideas. So here's how you do it. Two steps, and I'll go through the little sub steps that go with it.

Number one, calendar it. If you're the kind of person that's an entrepreneur or business leader, and you are scheduling your week out—a lot of times the beginning of the week, like I do on a Monday—I want you to commit to doing at least two times per week. Personally, I really enjoy Mondays and Wednesdays. At least 30 minutes of free space for your brain to be able to

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take a walk. It's not tasked with producing anything. It's simply allowed to free associate and to go wherever it wants. 30 minutes works pretty well. If you can give yourself an hour, please do that. But for those of you that are like "There's no way I can spare that much time," at least 30 minutes. So if we're working with 30 minutes, I'm talking about five minutes to walk away from your desk, walk away from the kids, head out the front door. So five minutes to, like, get settled, then at least 20 minutes of time to do something where your brain is going for a walk and then at the end five minutes to transition back into go into your desk, helping your kid get a snack, doing whatever you're going to do get into your next meeting. So the two ways to do this. I already mentioned one of them but the two ways to do this: the first one is just go for a walk. It's all you have to do, go for a walk, open the door, walk outside. Do not under any circumstances put in earphones or call a friend and have a phone call while you're doing it because that's you going ahead and letting your brain have something to do, again, to listen to, consume, and we don't want your brain to do that. This is specifically free space where your brain is not doing anything. It's bordering on board. You just walk out the front door, go for a walk outside your office, whatever you want to do, but go for a walk for at least 20 minutes and just let your brain go where it wants to go. It's amazing and how all of a sudden, when you're done with that walk, you'll come back and you'll have ideas about all kinds of different things that hadn't occurred to you before. You'll create those shower moments like I was talking about before. So no podcasts, no calls, nothing in your ears, nothing where you're going, interacting with other people, just go. It's amazing how it will help you to refresh yourself mentally as well as you'll come up with all kinds of ideas about different things that you might have been stuck on.

The other thing that you can do, number two, if going for a walk isn't possible, is close your eyes and either meditate, or if meditation isn't your thing and you don't want to structure, just allow yourself to free associate. It's okay if you get a little drowsy. But let your brain close your eyes and just let your brain go wherever it wants to go. If it starts to gravitate towards solving something, you can let it and you can gently lead it back if you want to. A

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place of stillness. But just allow it to free associate, to come up with different ideas, to look at things from a different angle. Sometimes I cheat a little bit while I'm doing this and I will have a small notepad or something like that near me if I'm doing the second option where I'm closing my eyes or meditating, where if a specific my brain all of a sudden comes out with a new idea that I hadn't thought of before or that solve something, I will write down a couple of key words that will help me remember what that thing was, that brilliant idea that my brain came up with on its own while it was having free time, while it was playing on the playground.

So have that available to you. Don't, once you have the idea, start to execute on it. That's key. Just allow your brain to continue to work on things and come up with ways to look at things from different angles and to come up with new and interesting ideas for you. This is the way that I generate stories for clients, that I come up with new ideas for coaching, that I come up with ways to serve my audience, that I come up with ideas for podcasts, that I come up with ideas for content for my clients, video ideas, scripting, all kinds of things. Just by going for a walk. Going for a walk or closing your eyes for a few minutes are my go-to's. It's so, it sounds so simple, right? I swear this works like magic. Give it a try.

So my challenge to you this next week would be to, on your calendar, be brave enough to actually put on your calendar going for a walk or closing your eyes for at least 30 minutes to an hour. If you can do it, do that for two weeks, I think you're really going to like the results that you get. And that'll start to be something that always makes its way onto your calendar because it actually secretly makes you way more creative and more productive.

All right, my friends. So that's it for this week. Try it out—those two easy steps. Turn your brain into a supercomputer. You will never be out of ideas for stories or ways to be able to solve a problem creatively again. You will create those shower moments for you if you allow your brain specific, intentional time for free space, allow it to climb around on the jungle gym. It's amazing the results you'll get. All right. Talk to you next week. Bye for now.

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