

Transform Creative Blocks To Building Blocks

by Rosanne Bane

Every human being is creative; it's a part of human nature. There is an infinite variety of ways we can express and experience our creativity. As a Creativity Coach, I've noticed that one popular use of our creative nature is to invent ways to avoid exploring the depths of our creativity. There seems to be an infinite variety of creative blocks, but as an enneagram practitioner, I see this infinite variety falling into three basic types with nine variations.

We can use the insight the enneagram gives us into the types of creative blocks to transform them into building blocks. When we apply an enneagram understanding to our creative blocks, we see clearly (sometimes so clearly, it's a trifle uncomfortable) what we need to do.

The Shadow Connection

It is my experience that at the root of every creative block and unrealized creative dream is an unresolved shadow issue. If you aren't sure what "shadow" means, the simplest explanation Carl Jung ever offered is that shadow is the person we have no wish to be. It is the denied and repressed parts of ourselves. Our ego-self is all the aspects of human nature that we acknowledge, "Oh yes, that's me," and our shadow-self is all the remaining aspects we deny, "Oh, I would never..."

The upshot of George Bernard Shaw's observation "Nothing human is alien to me," is that whatever you don't acknowledge as part of your ego-self is waiting for you in your shadow. Happily, that applies to your creativity as well; whatever creative expression you haven't openly embraced yet waits in your shadow. It is our fear of and resistance to this

unacknowledged self that keeps a good deal of our creativity blocked away.

Like creative blocks, shadow comes in an infinite variety of forms that can be fruitfully divided into three basic types. These three kinds of shadow formation can be best understood by examining the idea of the Repressed Center developed by Kathy Hurley and Ted Dobson (authors of *What's My Type* and *My Best Self* who

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credit Patrick O'Leary and Maria Beising as sources of inspiration). The concept of the Repressed Center is a major contribution to contemporary understanding of the enneagram and adds depth to the enneagram's usefulness as a tool when following a spiritual path of consciously working with the shadow.

According to Hurley and Dobson, although each of us has all three Centers of Intelligence – Intellectual, Action and Relational – we prefer one center, which we overuse, and repress another, which we under use. Hurley and Dobson explain, "To prefer a center means that the issues of the center become the issues of the person, who sees life through the values of this center. . . To repress a center means that

generally only its lowest expressions are readily available to the person. This is the Center you don't like to use and often can't use creatively."

Obviously, the Repressed Center is the home of the shadow, which will lead you to the resolution of your creative blocks and unrealized dreams.

The combination of Preferred Center and Repressed Center form the unique patterns of the nine personality types. The Preferred Center is the same center that is commonly associated with the types; Eights, Nines and Ones prefer the Action Center (sometimes called the Doing or Gut Center); Twos, Threes and Fours prefer the Relational Center (sometimes called the Feeling or Heart Center); Fives, Sixes and Sevens prefer the Intellectual Center (sometimes called the Thinking or Head Center).

What is unique to Hurley and Dobson's theory is the recognition that Threes, Sixes and Nines, called the Balance Point Numbers, simultaneously repress the center they prefer, while the other numbers Ones, Twos, Fours, Fives, Sevens and Eights, called the Wing Numbers repress the center opposite their preferred center. Hence, Ones, Twos and Sixes all repress the Intellectual Center; Fours, Fives and Nines repress the Action Center; and Sevens, Eights and Threes repress the Relational Center.

Identifying which center you repress clarifies what shadow issues you need to focus on in your life in general and your creativity in particular.

Impacts of Repressing the Intellectual Center

If you are a One, Two or Six, you repress the Intellectual Center. This doesn't mean that you lack intelligence

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or don't think. In fact, one of the results of repressing the Intellectual Center is over-thinking; obsessively thinking in circles without coming to resolution. Every issue is connected to and affected by every other issue, so it's hard to separate issues and come to a conclusion. You lose touch with your ability to see the big picture and to think and plan for yourself. You become dependent on what other people think and let them set the agenda, which creates tension with your standards and can lead to resentment. You tend to substitute opinions for thinking.

If you are a One, Two or Six, you need to develop your ability to think objectively and linearly. You can learn to listen to and accommodate the opinions of others and still come to your own decisions. Broaden your focus beyond the immediate situation and plan for the future. When you embrace the highest purposes of the Intellectual Center vision – discovery, discernment and true knowledge – you will be able to break through creative blocks and begin to live your creative dreams.

If you are a One, beware of your tendency to overwork and over-focus on the project with the most immediate deadline. Plan your creativity beyond just today or this week. Schedule time for yourself to play, relax and feed your soul with inspiring images. Enlist the help of a Seven who can lead you in having fun and in developing long-range strategies. Also, remember that mistakes are essential in the creative process. Loosen up. Surrender your desire to be perfect. Learn to ignore the inner critical voice when you're in the early stages of developing a project.

If you are a Two, beware of your tendency to take care of everyone else at the expense of your own self development and expression. Get to know your own needs and feelings so you have a self to express. Schedule time to

be alone so you won't be distracted by the needs of others. Learn to give yourself approval and love as you wean yourself from manipulating others to appreciate you. Trust yourself. Enlist the help of a Five, who will help you focus on the facts, rather than exclusively on the feelings.

If you are a Six, beware of your tendency to let fear rule your life. Stop obsessing about the scary possibilities. Yes, creativity is a risk, but you'll survive, even thrive, as you learn to trust yourself and others. Discover

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your own vision and purpose and then make long-range plans to accommodate your discoveries. Stop dismissing all change as bad; learn to trust your own powers of discernment. Observe how Sevens rely on future possibilities to dispel anxiety and enlist the help of a Nine in broadening your perspective, freeing your energy and going with the flow.

Impacts of Repressing the Relational Center

If you are a Three, Seven or Eight, you repress the Relational Center. This doesn't mean you don't have feelings and relationships. In fact, one of the results of repressing the Relational Center is that you have many feelings you don't express directly. You may secretly fear that your emotions would overwhelm you and others, so you repress your

awareness of these feelings. You may have many relationships, but you tend to be personable on the surface and not deeply personal. You have a great deal of energy and value making changes and getting things done. Because you repress your awareness of your own needs and emotions, you inevitably disregard the needs and emotions of others as you drive yourself and them to make the changes you believe are necessary.

If you are a Three, Seven or Eight, you need to develop your sensitivity to yourself and others. You can learn to feel and face your own fears while maintaining your optimistic approach to change. You will discover that your willingness to explore and express deep feelings decreases your need to defend yourself and brings meaning to your life. When you embrace the highest purposes of the Relational Center – spiritual love, true intimacy with self others and the Divine, and moral awareness to guide your actions – you will be able to break through creative blocks and begin to live your creative dreams.

If you are a Three, beware of your tendency to make your image of success more important than achieving what your heart truly yearns for. Stop working so hard. Creativity doesn't happen just because you've scheduled 30 minutes for it in your DateBook and it can't happen if you never leave time open. Stop censoring your deep passions. You may want to narrow your social connections so you can develop a few solid friendships where you can express whatever you feel without worrying about how that will look to others. Look to a Six for an example of defying authority and staying connected to the people who really matter.

If you are a Seven, beware of your tendency to abandon a project when it stops being fun and your self-imposed demand to be the life of the party. Your fear that others will abandon or reject you if you express "negative" emotion keeps you from expressing the deep

