



31 tips for tackling CREATIVE BLOCKS

Deborah Henry-Pollard

I am a coach and work with creative people at all stages of their careers helping them to find clarity on single projects or the shape of their future development. This work is about helping people to find their own solutions.

My clients are creative professionals. My aim is to help you "light the blue touchpaper" which sends your fireworks into orbit. I also have the desire that you discover that the skills and imagination which feed your creative work can also be used to be successful in other areas of your professional lives. I support you in creating clarity for yourself, fulfilling your potential, overcoming your fears and frustrations, helping you to develop your vision into a viable plan, and enhancing your creative freedom.



We've all had those moments when we've looked at a literal or metaphorical blank canvas and haven't known how to start. Or had that moment halfway through a project when it just isn't working but you don't know where to go next. Or, better in some ways but just as paralysing, had too many ideas and haven't known which to start first.

The tips in this booklet come from my monthly Take Five guest bloggers when asked how they deal with creative blocks. In addition, I also include tips from clients and from my own practice.

Hopefully, one or two of the ideas might help you next time you hit a creative brick wall. Some of the suggestions seem to contradict each other, but that is half the fun - you can try them all and find out which ones work best for you.

There is one tip a day for a 31 day month. The photos don't necessarily illustrate the tip, but give you something to look at. If the tip doesn't inspire you, feel free to write, draw, dance, sing or otherwise create a response to any of the photos to kickstart your creative juices.

Have fun trying them out and break that block!

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Catching Fireworks®

Make yourself do something and
don't worry about the result.
Could be rubbish or the start
of the next great idea.



End the session/day with a boring job to come back to. Halfway through the boring job your mind could be back on track.



Change your situation.
Go for a walk or wander around
your favourite shop.



Remind yourself that creative
blocks are a natural part of
creative life and are temporary.



If you are blocked,
it might be time for a change.
Experiment!



Check your working hours.
Are you working too long
or at the wrong time of day?



Talk it through.

Get inspired by listening to
the experiences and perspective
of other creative people.



Take a break.

Close your eyes and spend 5
minutes in your favourite place.

Imagine it all in great detail.

Then come back refreshed.



Look at something you have
created successfully before.

Let it inspire new ideas
and remind you of your talent.



Do the housework!
Use the rhythms of cleaning
as a gentle meditation
to clear and ease your mind.



Switch off entirely
from email and Twitter
and to-do lists
so you can actually think.



Some days you fly, others are
hard. Don't let the latter
blind you into thinking
it's always going to be like that.



Meet a friend for coffee
and talk about rubbish!
Have fun and don't talk
about the block.



Keep going and don't
be too precious.
You can always
edit/revise later.



If you can't do what you usually
do, what can you do?
You might find a new skill
or way of thinking.



Can you see a
monkey?
a tree?

Work on the project for 20 minutes. You can then leave it knowing you've given it a go or if inspired, carry on working.



Play with an idea in a way that at first can seem arbitrary - out of this a new spark can occur.



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Get energised.

Do something physical like dance
or run to switch your mind off
or over to a totally different
channel.



See other people's work.
Look at what they have done
and think how you would work
with the same themes.



Go to sleep!

Creativity can hit just before
going to sleep.

Have a pen & paper handy.



Is it the ideas that are blocked
or the way you fulfil them?
Check that your tools
work for you.



Look at the things and people
you find creative and
spend some time
enjoying them again.



Blocked by too many ideas?
Capture the essence of each
for future reference
and then prioritise.



Remember you are not alone.
This is a common issue
and there is nothing
wrong with you.



Free up your thinking by
writing down 12 ways you could
get through your creative block
- be outrageous!



Take the pressure off.
Do something without worrying
how it turns out as you are
going to throw it away anyway.



Get a new viewpoint.
Get a respected colleague to give
a constructive analysis of the
sticking point in a piece of work.



Cosy up with tea & a good book.
This takes you away from the
block and into a different space
where ideas can creep in!



Sometimes “blocks” are the
story/article/drawing/lecture
needing time to simmer for a
while - be patient.



Put together a file of favourite
cuttings, postcards, old
photographs, etc.

Flick through them as a
distraction technique.



Being an artist is being on a journey; productive periods & creative blocks are all part of a bigger process of discovery.



For more coaching ideas:
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