

Self-Help Tools: The Creative Block Diagnostic

Curated by Simon De Los Rios

Source: *SDLR*

Not being able to create when creativity is central to your work is one of the most frustrating places to be. Creative blocks have specific causes, and different causes need different responses.

Type 1: Empty Tank

You have ideas but no energy to execute them. This is a rest problem, not a creativity problem. Stop trying to produce. Rest without guilt for a fixed period.

Type 2: Fear of the Result

You have ideas but you are not starting, or you are starting and abandoning. This is a fear problem. Lower the stakes. Make something you will never show anyone. Set a timer for 20 minutes and produce something intentionally bad.

Type 3: No Raw Material

You feel blank. Nothing is coming in, so nothing is going out. This is an input problem. Read something outside your field. Walk somewhere new. Have a conversation with someone whose life looks nothing like yours.

Type 4: Wrong Environment

You have energy and ideas but the conditions are working against you. This is a context problem. Change one thing about where or when you work.

A graphic designer has a client deadline in four days and has not produced anything usable in two weeks. Her tank is not empty. She has raw material. Her environment is familiar. But when she reaches Type 2, she stops. She is terrified of disappointing the most prestigious client she has landed. She sets a timer for 25 minutes and makes three versions she would never show the client. By the third one something loosens, and the fourth becomes the foundation of what she submits.