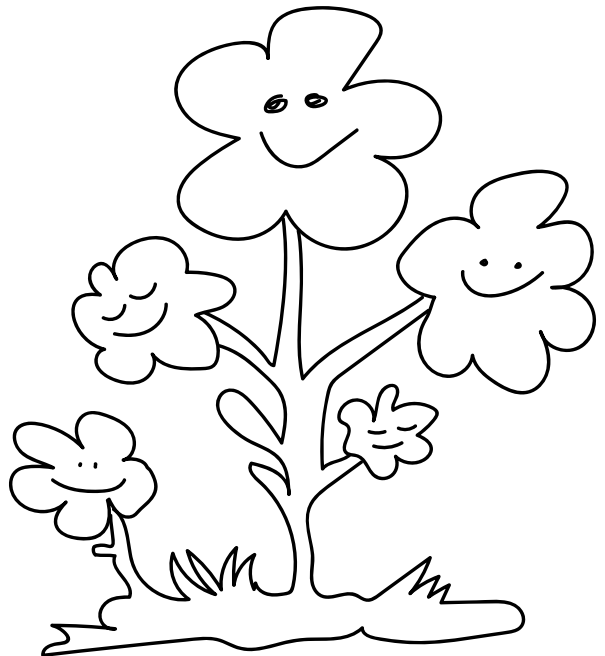


Garden of Doing

Playful Ways to Make Your Ideas Grow



Alessia Wiss

Titel:

Garden of Doing – Playful ways to make your ideas grow

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Abstract

Garden of Doing helps you conquer your creative blocks with playful tools you can buy in an online shop.

It aims to inspire you to go on a journey and get to know yourself and your blocks, inner voices, and perfectionism that holds you back. It helps you put a seed in your head  on your own and let the mindset of becoming a harmonic doer  grow and flourish.

Instead of beating your inner critic and nipping it in the bud, it is about becoming friends with your inner critic.

The most powerful tool to make ideas grow is you.

Acknowledgements

This project would not be where it is today without the support of many people. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentors, Dr. Roman Kirschner and Mona Neubauer, for their insightful comments and inspirational and harmonic mentorship during every project stage. Thanks for sharing your knowledge, thoughts, and experiences.

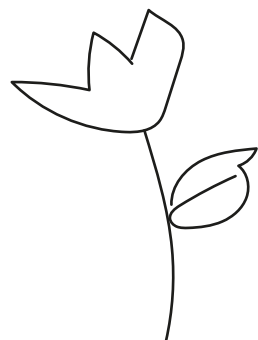
Furthermore, I would like to thank the entire Interaction Design team at the Zurich University of the Arts for the last six semesters full of learning and constant growth. Not to forget, I thank my study colleagues for cherished time spent together in the atelier and social settings.

Additionally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the experts Emily Bremner, Stephan Kardos, and Paolo Bianchi, who gifted me some of their time for an interview and exchange.

I would like to express my special gratitude to Otto Wanders, who was an additional mentor to me. Thanks for endless talks, idea ping-pong, for being an inspirational human, and for unwavering support and belief in me.

Lastly, my appreciation also goes out to numerous friends and my brother, Dimitri Wiss, who endured this long process with me, always offering support and love.

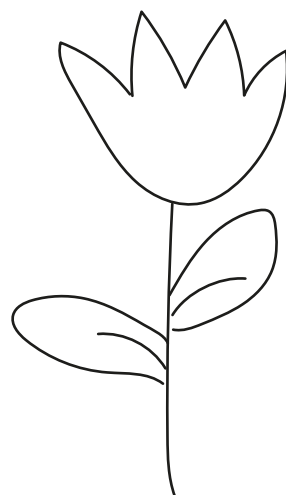
Remarks of the Author



This thesis and project aim to nudge you toward a free creative mindset and transform your thumb, not into a green one but a creative one.

The work is dedicated to all those who feel blocked, call themselves perfectionists, say they don't have time for their ideas, those who have wanted to start a business for a long time and haven't done it yet, to everyone who has an untouched hobby at home and to all those who practice procrastination as a competitive sport.

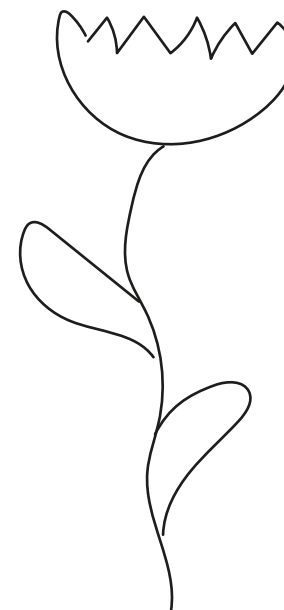
I grew up surrounded by people who suffered from



blockages and became sad. It was a setting where it seemed impossible to overcome blockages and inner criticism. It shaped a way of thinking where I appreciate constant progress, however small and intangible it may be. Progress and growth should feel natural in my world.

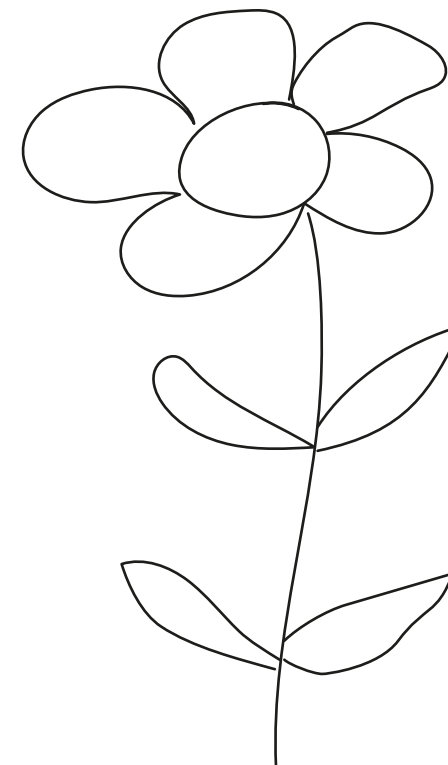
Giving your blocks this power to determine your life feels deconstructive and unnatural to me and like a decision against personal progress. It truly cheers me to see people becoming aware of their blocks and starting to grow their seeds.

If we look closer at successful and pro-



ductive creative people, entrepreneurs, and business people, it is not enough to simply "have an idea". The idea as such is a small percentage of the whole journey. It is like a tiny seed, but it is far from being a tree.

For people like you, who are reading this thesis and perhaps already consider themselves creative, it may not be challenging to come up with new ideas. On the contrary, you may already have a whole bag of seeds. But what stands in your way of making these ideas grow into a garden, forest, or field of colorful flowers? So it's not about gener-



ating new ideas but more about learning how to implement and grow the ideas we already have.

I want to say that when I talk about ideas and projects in the following pages, they can take on any scale, from small ideas on how to arrange your

cutlery properly to a groundbreaking business ideas.

Read this thesis with an open mindset in which you can fearlessly allow yourself to travel to your patterns and challenge yourself by diving into your own blocks and critical voices.

Let's flourish our gardens together.



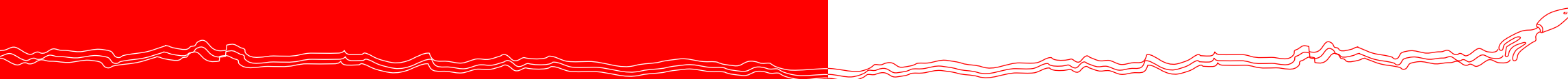
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1

Research





1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Creativity is the key to innovation and problem solving, but in many conversations I have, with people I meet, they tell me they are not creative. This is sad because everyone is creative by nature. Any problem at any level of intelligence with no apparent solution requires a creative mindset and thinking. There are many myths and misconceptions about creativity and innovative behavior. For example, one myth is that creative people are different from ordinary people. Creativity is a unique trait or something in their genetic code that attracts them to be more creative. Or that creativity is a set measure, and it is not much you can do to change or increase it (Burkus, 2013).

Creativity has been a topic in business for many years, many books have been written, and various workshops and methods exist. Yet, creativity is often misunderstood as artistic, and ironically many people, especially in the creative field, suffer from creative blocks.

In many cases, people have great ideas but do not know how to nurture and grow the seed of that idea. So ideas end up rotting in a bag of seeds and never see the light of day. We often unlearn to connect with our creativity and break outdated thought patterns through our socialization and growing up.

In the book “Make Ideas Happen” (Belsky, 2012), the author writes about the *Project Plateau*, where the implementation of our ideas stutters, the phase after the honeymoon, where the energy and excitement levels drop. We realize the amount of work that the execution of the idea requires. The easiest and most pleasing way to escape from this plateau is the most dangerous of all: a new idea. The result is “a plateau filled with the skeletons of abandoned ideas.” (Belsky, 2012) The key to execution is constant movement and, therefore, progress.

*it to that point?
or didn't even make
died on that project plateau
your ideas
Which of*

In school, which is one of the main breeding grounds of our blockades, we rarely learn how to deal with these blockades during or after our school career. According to my research, no module in the regular bachelor's course of studies at the Zurich University of the Arts gives us tangible tools, coaches us, and helps us deal with blockades. There are countless books on how to become an imperfectionist, deal with creative blocks, or other self-help books, but we are on our own when it comes to this realization and coping with it. Although, as I said, much of this arises and is reinforced in school, it removes itself from the responsibility of solving it.

During my research, I noticed that schools that offer a Creative Leadership course have explicit mandatory modules in this subject area almost exclusively. Examples of this are the schools like Hyper Island or KAOSPILOT. I hypothesize that there is a greater focus in leadership courses because they are about learning how to lead a team through a process. I'm convinced that we should start doing that much earlier.

So it's no wonder that you could probably come up with several ideas in the question I asked above and that you're having a hard time doing so. Often we just don't learn any other way.

In the following research passages, I deal with the definition of creativity and its measurement, and before moving to what stands in our way of realizing this potential, focusing on resistance and inner criticism.

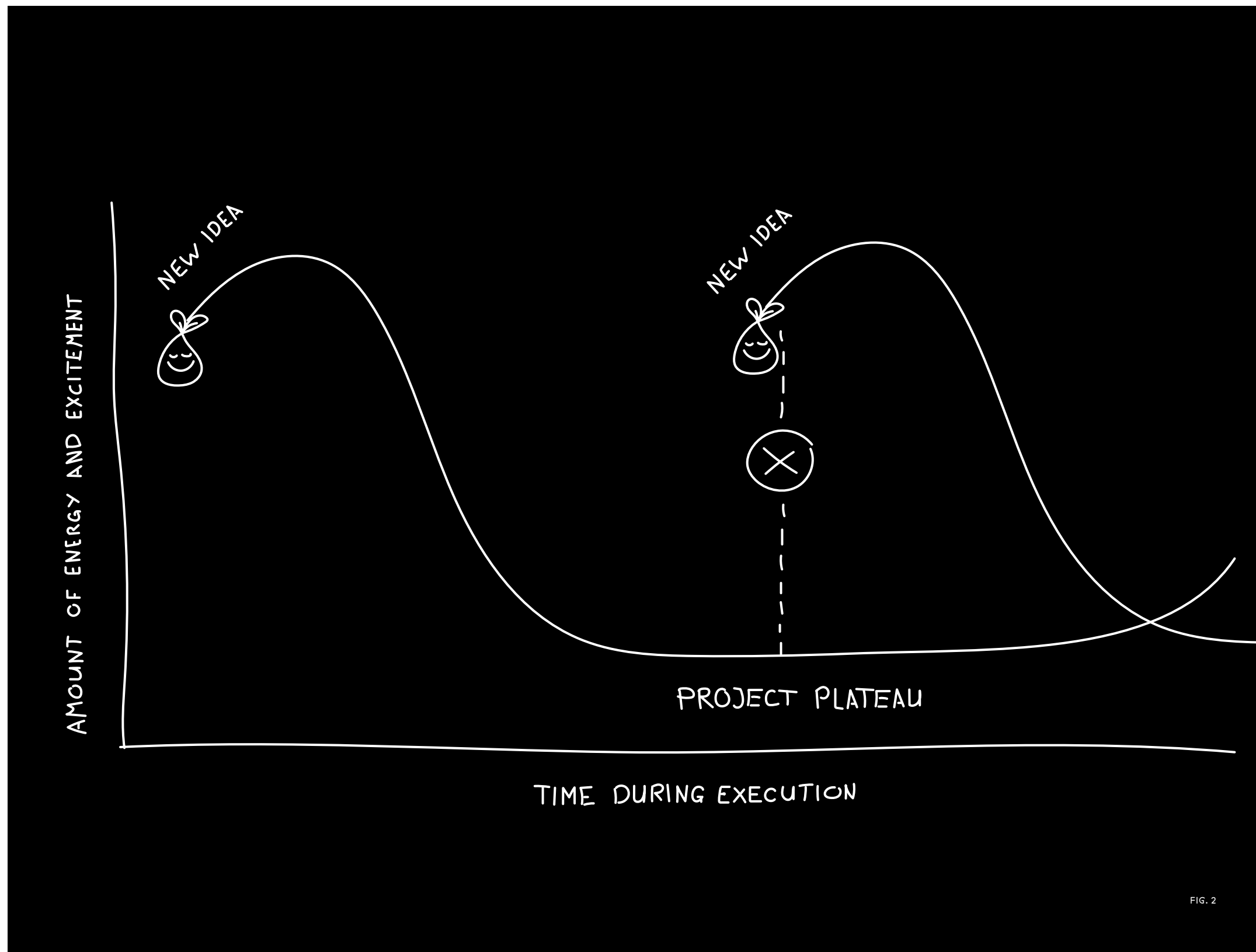


FIG. 2

1.1.1 DEFINING CREATIVITY

Creativity is one of the most misunderstood things. That might rely on the fact that creativity is hard to grasp, and it's hardly possible to put it into one box. I got into conversations where it was concluded that creative equals “artistically talented” and that everyone who can think creatively must also draw and paint well. It may be that seemingly more creative person tend to express their ideas through artistic means more often. That doesn't mean that art and creativity should be used as synonyms interchangeably.

Creativity can be defined as a tendency to recognize or generate ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in problem-solving, communication or the entertainment of ourselves and others. It encourages you to see things from new perspectives. With curiosity in our luggage, we find new ways of exploring and understanding, and we keep looking outside the box. Therefore, being creative does not directly mean outputting artistic things; instead, it is a way of thinking and seeing things from another viewpoint.

But yet, the topic, in general, is controversial. For around 130 Years, scientists have been working on a standardized definition of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). The interdisciplinarity nature of creativity causes many variations of the reports. The study of creativity is not limited to one subject; instead, it is a subject of research in economics, psychology, neuroscience, and education (Puryear & Lamb, 2020). Conflicting views and results are therefore inevitable.

Gradually, creativity is recognized as an essential skill in business. In a 2010 IBM survey, for example, more than 1,500 CEOs surveyed around the world believed that navigating an increasingly complex world requires creativity. (Naiman, 2021)

The longer the research goes on, the more I conclude that it is extremely helpful to look at the concept of creativity on a higher philosophical level and enjoy and live it out much more as a lifestyle than a discipline. In almost all attempts to define the term, words like novelty, new perspectives, rethinking things, innovation, etc., come up. But who determines what is new or what perspective is rethought? If a child draws a house and the drawing looks exactly the same as the other children's drawings, this can still be a new perspective for the individual child. For them, it is new to hold a pencil, use colors, draw, add the sun, and express with hands their thoughts and ideas. So the new perspective depends on the current state, the environment, the cosmos and the culture in which the child is moving. And I think that's exactly how we could handle creativity.

2.1.2 DIVERGENT AND CONVERGENT THINKING

When we talk about creativity, we quickly come to the topic of convergent and divergent thinking.

But what are these two mindsets? They are like two sides of a coin. They contrast each other, yet both are enormously important in our everyday lives. While there is only one possible solution in convergent thinking, divergent thinking strives to look at the problem differently and find multiple solutions for the same problem. Divergent thinking is free and can be perceived as “dreamy.” Ones that think more in a convergently way are analytical, precise, and look for one solution. Divergent thinking is what we often attribute to creative thinking.

Whatever the problem at hand, we depend on both divergent and convergent thinking to solve it. We think divergent when looking for different approaches, and we need a convergent way of thinking to acknowledge the technical and cultural rules and apply the appropriate solutions.

«We cannot

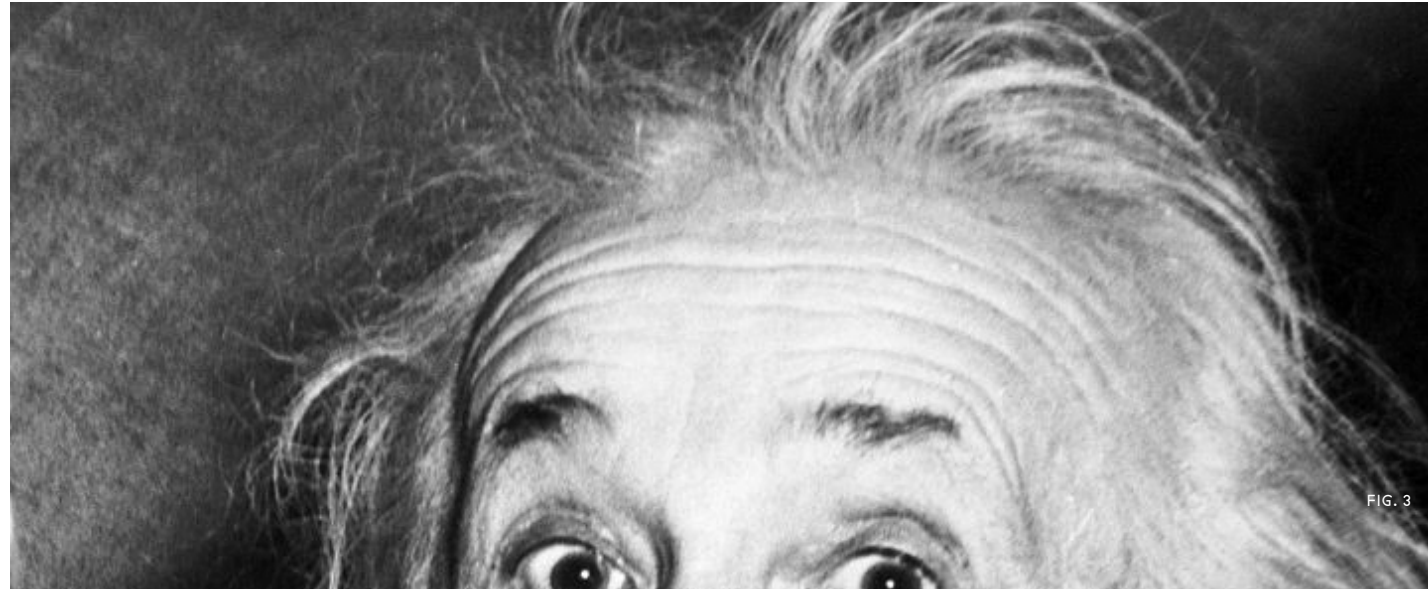


FIG. 3

the

solve problems using

same



them.»

mindset that created

— ALBERT EINSTEIN



1.1.3 MEASURING CREATIVITY

Measurement permeates every aspect of human life. We live in an age where we have the urge to measure everything. From the liter of water, the temperature of the fridge, the speed of cars, the time, and even more abstract things like intelligence in terms of IQ are measured. We've even gone so far as to develop and build various technologies to measure sleep, heart rate, steps, calories burned, and everything about our bodies. It is nowadays normal to use these technologies for self-improvement.

Creativity is a phenomenon and concept that is difficult to grasp and therefore even more complicated to measure. We still don't know for sure what happens in our brains when we are creative. But we can already localize where something is happening in the brain on the screen. (Boon, 2014) When we have a "flash idea" or insight (often referred to as an AHA- or Eureka!- moment), the anterior superior temporal gyrus in the right hemisphere, above our ear, lights up on a brain scan.

We have two of them. However, because the right hemisphere of our brain is more branched, more straightforward data can be created and missing information linked and captured. This is also one of the reasons why people keep saying that the right side of the brain is responsible for creativity.

Furthermore, the AHA-Moment leads to an increased release of the mood-lifting substance dopamine. This

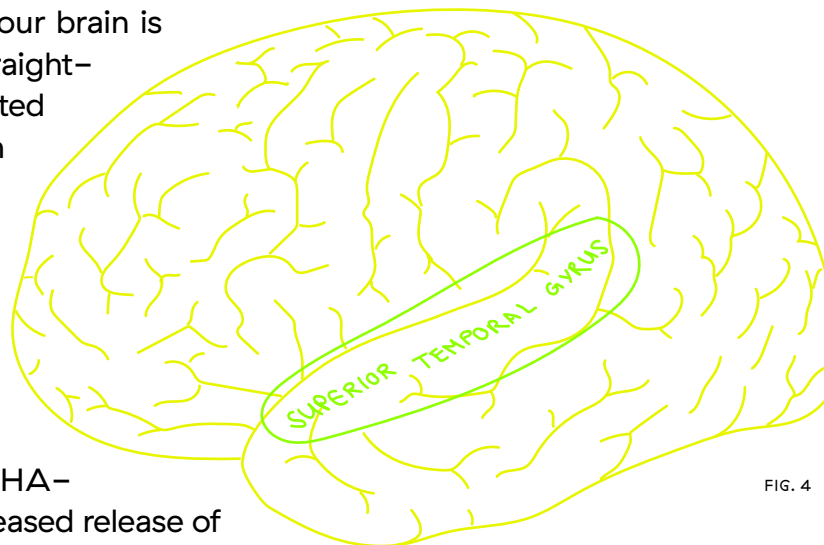


FIG. 4

activates a deep-seated part of the brain, the so-called nucleus accumbens, a core structure in the lower forebrain. The nucleus accumbens is part of a dopamine-responsive network that is activated in response to pleasure or reward. Dopamine, in return, is responsible for the communication between this network and other brain regions related to essential functions such as emotions, memory, processes, or attention. (Forscher lüften Geheimnis um "Aha-Effekt", 2018)

At this point, it is essential to mention that the AHA-Moment is composed of far more moments than this one flash of insight. You can think of it more like a domino game. The AHA-Moment does not come just like that without influences and preparatory work but is a result of various concatenations.

During my research, I came across some approaches to measure "creativity." But still, almost every paper and method claimed that it is hard to pinpoint the creativity score since it is still a "mysterious" topic.

In a study by NASA (Land, 2012), which "measured" that we supposedly have less than 4% creativity left as adults on average compared to childhood, creativity is measured in part by the ability to form metaphors.

Furthermore, multiple-choice question forms, such as the Big Five Personality Test (The Big Five Personality Test, 2021), give you insights into your personal traits and your creativity score. The one that is primarily used in literature is "The Remote Associates Test". It is a test that measures creativity according to the ability to make associations. The test is systematically structured and is used to examine verbal associative processes and their correlation to creativity. So far, it has been used mainly in English.

The test consists of word puzzles with three unrelated stimulus words each, for which a fourth that can be associated with the others is to be found. This evaluates

1.1.4 THE LACK OF CREATIVE CONFIDENCE

In short, creative confidence arises when people realize that they are allowed to engage in creative processes without always having to get everything right — with the confidence that something valuable will emerge over time. (Kelly & Kelly, 2013) Through convergent thinking, it gets harder and harder to stay confident when it comes to our creative ability.

I divide the problem of lack of creative confidence into three levels.

The *first level*, the internal problem, is that the individual does not believe in creativity and themselves as creative beings and thus gets in their own way. This builds up ever-increasing walls that mature into giant blocks and are more challenging to overcome.

The *second level*, the extrinsic problem, is the environment, which gives little opportunity to discover and live out creativity and even suppresses it. People lose the joy of creative expression and do not realize that they are controlled by criticism.

Lastly, *in the third level*, the philosophical point of view, the problem arises: with less creativity, we cannot efficiently make our world a better and more pleasant place. As the world moves faster and faster, with new advances and problems to overcome, it becomes increasingly important to know how to cultivate ideas and create an environment that provides the means for growth. However, ideas alone do not bring much progress; it is much more vital that we have the diligence to put our ideas into practice.

To showcase a possible result, I explain by an example:

We have a meeting situation with an empty whiteboard and pens.

On one side, we have Rob, an industrial designer who has sophisticated drawing skills. And on the other side, we have Lisa, a business designer with an MBA. She has a brilliant analytical mind and would not consider herself creative or artistic.

They are discussing a problem that they have to solve. They just sat there and kept talking. Lisa didn't want to look silly trying to express an idea on a whiteboard visually.

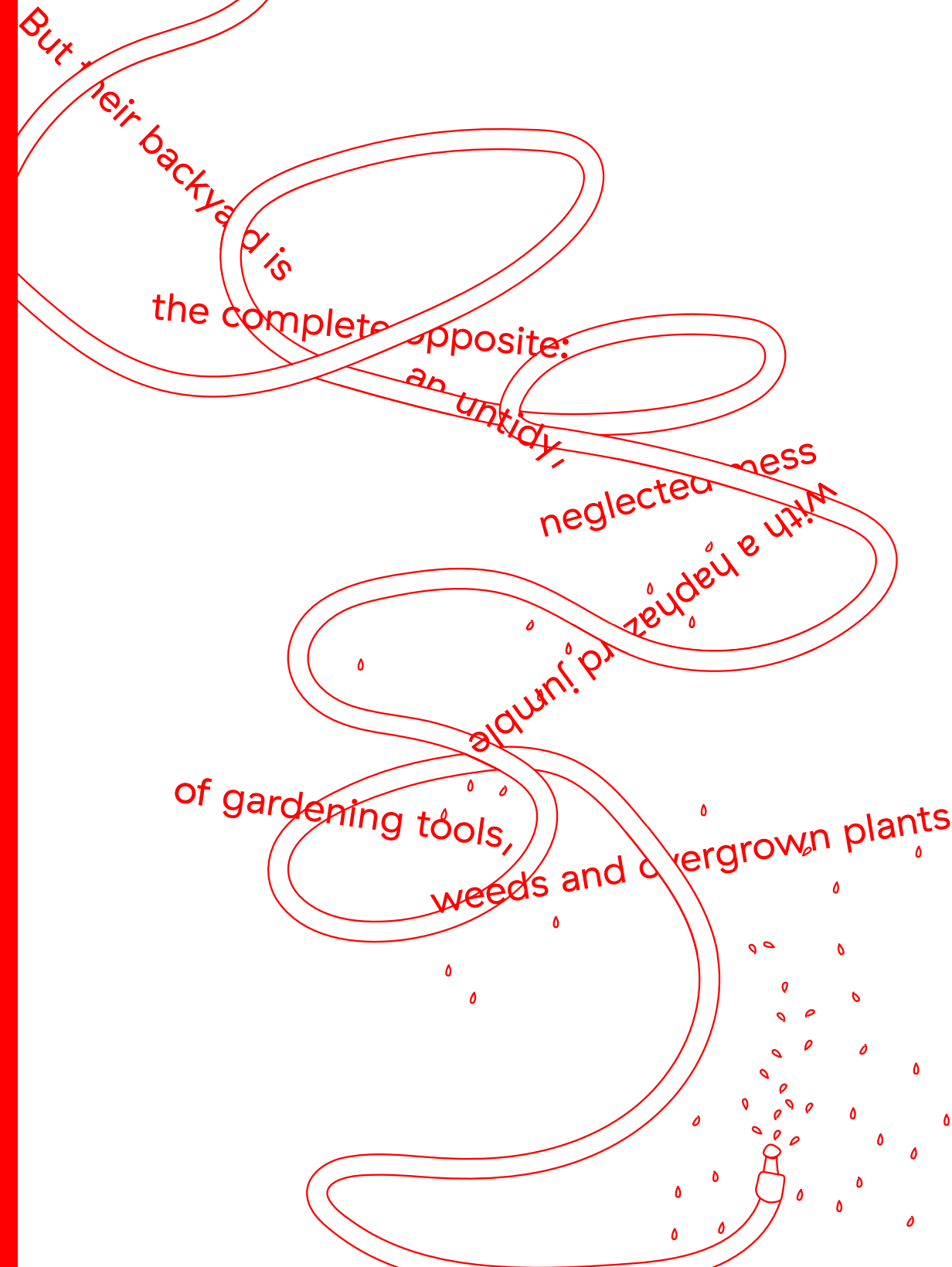
And Rob didn't want to be judged by the kind of drawing he could create in thirty seconds in front of an impatient audience.

Everyone has a friend with a perfectly manicured front yard – flowers in bright, neat rows, neatly clipped hedges and artfully positioned pots.



FIG. 5

But their backyard is the complete opposite: an untidy, neglected mess with a jumble of gardening tools, weeds and overgrown plants



So, what happened? One was constrained by timidity, the other by perfectionism. As a result, the whiteboard is still blank.

Both preferred to sit in their chair rather than risk being criticized by their colleagues. That might lead to that good idea going unexpressed, talent going untrapped, and solutions undiscovered. Therefore, I think we can all benefit from a nudge towards more creative confidence.

The exciting thing about creative confidence is that it actually influences our thought structure and actions. Our belief system, which includes how we think about ourselves, influences our actions, goals, and perceptions. It is a positive or negative affirmation. People who are convinced they can change things are more likely to achieve what they set out to do. (Kelly & Kelly, 2013) With self-limiting thinking, we directly harm ourselves and interfere with our growth. A growth mindset is a passport to new adventures and creativity. So if you think you are not creative, you will not be.

We always have both sides of the coin then we have both mindsets. No one is safe from the inner critic and the inner resistance, which I will discuss in more depth in the next part.

What is essential when it comes to this self-confidence about our creativity is seeing it as a learning process. In the book *Creative Confidence*, they write that most of us accept that when we learn a new sport, such as skiing, we will fall down and not slide down the hill perfectly the first time. (Kelly & Kelly, 2013) After all, it takes practice. However, as soon as it comes to creative processes and self-confidence, we seem to forget this and directly expect peak performance from ourselves.

The Author of “Failed It!” named Erik Kessels, brings the settings of a creative process so good and motivating on the point I want to quote it here:

“Everyone has a friend with a perfectly manicured front yard – flowers in bright, neat rows, neatly clipped hedges and artfully positioned pots.

But their backyard is the complete opposite: an untidy, neglected mess, with a haphazard jumble of gardening tools, weeds and overgrown plants.

It's a great metaphor for the creative process.

The front yard is the finished work. But it's in the backyard where the real work happens, where you get to wander around in your underwear, muttering to yourself, taking chances, running risks. And without the hard work in the back, the front yard wouldn't even exist.

We all need a place where we can test and develop our ideas before we present them to the world.

It's here you'll begin nurturing the seeds that will one day grow into something ready to put on display for the neighbours.

Failing that, there's always the compost.”

(KESSLS, 2016: 157)



1.1.5 ARISING RESISTANCE

*Where we lack creative confidence,
there is more space for resistance.*

Creativity is like a thread that runs through all of life; it is not an encapsulated device that only works in one specific area or discipline. Creativity is omnipresent. And just as ubiquitous is that small whispering — sometimes shouting — voice, telling us we are not enough, not talented, and deadly embarrassing, so why even start? The one we hear and know from the heart. This voice feels and sounds as if it were our own, but it can also take the form of another shape and change. It has made it its business to remind us that we are not good enough and that we are not capable of ever becoming good enough. The voice is waiting to tell us, *“I told you so.”*

Steve Chapman said in his TEDx Talk the Inner Critic, or as Freud called it, the “super-ego,” is our idealized sense of self. An unattainable, imagined, perfect version of ourselves that never fails and receives adoration from other people for being. It is literally master of everything, manifesting in our present sojourn as self-doubt that makes us distrust our intuition and instincts. (Steve Chapman [TEDx Talks], 2017)

In our school years, and indeed, as adults, we are exposed to these very influences, which increasingly lead to a stronger expression of convergent thinking

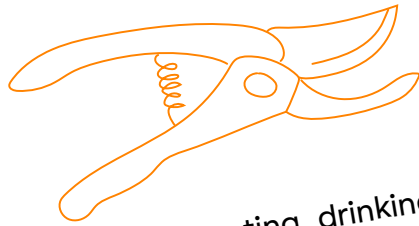
and feed our inner critic and resistance. We will not succeed in preventing these voices and blockages from arising in the first place, and quite certainly, we will not succeed in destroying those that exist. Instead, it is about becoming friends with them. Nurturing this friendship and being mindful of it, knowing that friendships can transform and resistances can appear in all forms. Sometimes, they hide and camouflage themselves behind something seemingly “good.” Resistance also occurs in various kinds; Steven Pressfield wrote in his book “The War of Art” that resistance also could be fear. He claims that the more *scared we are, the more we can be sure we are on the right path.* (Pressfield, Steven & Coyne, 2012) Coming closer in the research to the pain point of people struggling with their inner resistance and destructive behavior pattern, I start to ask if most unfinished and not started projects are victims of the inner critics?

There are different types of these inner saboteurs, and they disguise themselves behind another dress of resistance. For example, based on a study, they can be divided into seven characters. (Earley & Weiss, 2022)

In which of these do you most recognize yourself?

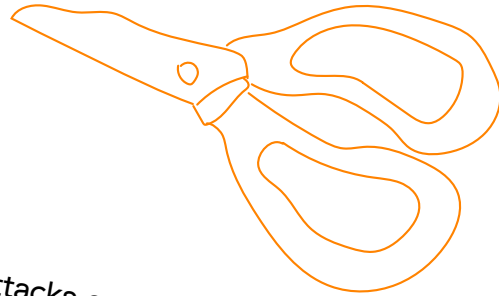
PERFECTIONIST

- Demands perfection in your work and your being!
- Sets high standards for your work, but it can always be better.
- Makes sure to belong and not be judged or rejected.
- Your expectations are often symbolic of the opinions of people who have been important to you in the past.



INNER CONTROLLER

- Controls impulses: eating, drinking, sexual activity, etc.
- Fear that you will spiral out of control at any moment, polarized with pleasure-seeking.
- Tends to be harsh and shameful as protection.
- Be a good person to be accepted and appreciated in society.



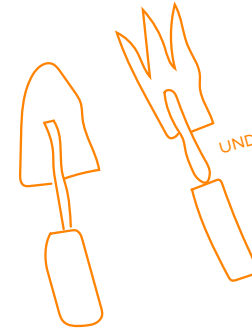
DESTROYER

- Makes deep attacks on your basic self-esteem.
- It Shames you and makes you feel inherently flawed and not entitled to basic understanding or respect.
- This very debilitating criticism comes from early deprivation or trauma.
- Guided by the belief that it is safer not to exist.



TASKMASTER

- Work hard in order to be successful.
- Keep going. Otherwise, you are labelled as mediocre or even lazy!
- It often activates a procrastinator and rebel who rebels and fights hard against this pressure.



UNDERMINER

- Undermines self-esteem, so you don't take risks
- Keeps you small so you don't take risks that could hurt or reject you.
- Is afraid of being too much of the centre of attention and not being able to handle criticism and mistakes.



GUILT-TRIPPER

- Stuck in the past.
- Struggles to forgive own mistakes or those of others.
- Holds on to norms of behaviour set by your community, culture, and family.
- Makes sure you never forget past mistakes,
- Try to protect yourself from repeating past mistakes.

CONFORMIST

- Presses yourself into the mould based on the norms of society, your culture, or even your family.
- Wants to be liked, admired and appreciated, protecting you from being abandoned, shamed or rejected.
- Keeps you from expressing your true nature because they fear it may not be accepted by society.

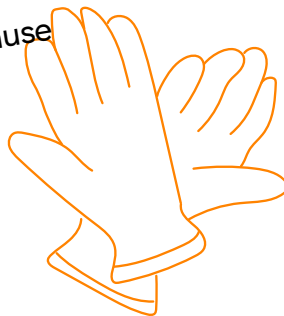




FIG. 6

1.1.6 EGO-STATE THERAPY AND SCHEMA THERAPY

In the following part, I will provide an overview of ego-state therapy and schema therapy, which are similar and related. I think these methods are interesting ways to connect with the inner world and are worth looking at in the field of inner critics and conquering creative blocks.

Ego-state therapy is a psychotherapeutic approach that works with personality parts, i.e., the ego states. These parts are states and energies of the ego. Every person has, for example, the inner parent, divided into a nurturing and controlling one, the inner child divided into the free and the adapted one, and most importantly, the adult.

This therapeutic approach was developed from 1980 onwards by the US-Americans John and Helen Watkins out of trauma therapy. (Was ist Ego-State-Therapie?, n.d.) This approach has gained a lot of importance in recent years and is no longer only used for trauma therapy but also for strengthening, activating resources, and optimizing performance.

The therapy aims to bring these different ego states into harmonious balance to exist together. This is achieved by recognizing the various parts and resolving conflicts between them, improving communication and cooperation between them.

But again, what are these ego-states? They are creative creations of the personality that arise in the course of life. Each

ego-state has its own effects, bodily sensations, memories and behaviors, wishes, dreams, and needs. At their best, they exchange information and communicate with each other. These are the inner voices we hear. Often the different ego-states disagree, are not recognized, and cannot speak and cooperate sufficiently. This leads to internal psychological tensions, which can lead to blockages.

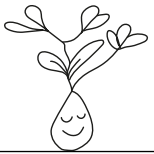
The schema therapy moves around the same field of recognizing the inner dialog. A characteristic of schema therapy is that it combines different therapeutic techniques. For example, schema therapy uses methods from cognitive behavioral therapy. It also tries to implement the newly learned strategies directly. For this purpose, therapists often use homework to incorporate new findings into everyday life. Also, role-plays have a significant function. The patients symbolically take on the roles of the different inner parts and are supposed to put themselves into the role of the inner child.

Once one has arrived at the inner adapted child and feeling it, it is also a matter of caring for the “hurt child” from the adult perspective and giving it what it needs. However, the position of the “happy child” can also be taken, who approaches things playfully, and feels joy and fun. This promotes the ability to be open and spontaneous – an important skill to better deal with stress and take problems in life more lightly. (Methods of Schema Therapy, n.d.) You can also place other characters on your inner map. The little star who strives for

special recognition, the unicorn that moves nimbly and curiously, the performance-driven being, and so on. There are no limits. It is helpful to define whether these beings are of a childlike or adult nature. The next time a conflict comes to a boil, you can take a deep breath and ask yourself which of these beings has the upper hand. This helps to better understand and reflect on oneself and one's behavioral structures and take a step back if necessary.

In particular, I see this ability as an essential pillar to deal with critical voices that can have different origins and block us in creative work, recognize them, and enter into a dialogue with them.

Schema and ego-state therapy are about empathizing with these voices and feelings and gaining a certain distance, which makes it easier to reflect without judgment. We are looking for patterns, and by recognizing them, they start to break through, and new ways of thinking are established.



1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

Coming from the vision of a world in which creativity is seen holistically and has a higher value, in which people can live out and develop themselves more towards the direction they want. Almost everyone, even those who would already describe themselves as creative, suffers from blocks that suppress their potential. Every person I have spoken to in the last few months has been affected and has been able to talk to me about it. We have many ideas, but they are often not implemented because we let resistance, blockages, and critical (inner) voices prevent us from realizing and creating. Therefore, I see a strong coherence between creativity and the inner critic. That is why my research question is:

How might I
provide a simple and
playful way
to externalize
inner critics
to encourage
people to
complete their
ideas instead
of nipping them in
the bud?

1.2.1 STATEMENT OF INTENTION

I intend to create a tool that helps people conquer their blocks, beating perfectionism with progress and unleashing the creative potential for a future by strengthening creative confidence. Greater creative confidence can be a missing piece toward a balanced and healthy life.

It's about working in harmonious interaction with the inner critic and considering him a friend. We can't get rid of those voices and resistances anyway. I aim to find an approach that helps one become aware of these dynamics, be constantly mindful of their existence, and work with them in friendship.

1.3 RELATED PROJECTS

In this section, I cover related projects. The palette of projects is as broad as the topic of creativity and creative blocks themselves. Therefore I focus on those that sparked my process.

1.3.1 LEGO SERIOUS PLAY

LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is a facilitation method developed by the Lego Group for meetings and brainstorming phases. (LEGO Group, 2021)

The developers followed the approach that we can use our hands to visualize thoughts playfully, construct models of knowledge, and vividly convey them. The aim is to improve creative thinking and communication. During meetings, the participants continuously build three-dimensional models of their ideas and create a story around them. It opens up a new way for free, creative, and expressive thinking (Gauntlett, 2007).

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) argued



FIG. 7

that intelligence comes from the interaction of the mind with the world. Therefore, LEGO SERIOUS PLAY is based on the use of hands. Our brain is in an ongoing interactive relationship with our hands; they aren't just here, as funny extensions of our arms and to help us grab our water bottles in everyday life. Instead, we can also look at the hands as a catalyst and an externalization of our thoughts.

1.3.2 THE ARTIST'S WAY

The book *The Artist's Way* covers two exciting parts that interest me. The author encourages you to regularly arrange a date with yourself and your inner artist, like going on a date with someone else. For example, on this date, you can go for a walk and perceive your surroundings in a sensible, conscious, childlike, and unbiased manner. (Cameron, 2005)

She also writes about "Morning Pages," a daily ritual of sitting down and writing three pages every morning. It doesn't matter what is written — the main thing is that it has to be three pages. A framework that is clear and simple to accomplish. Even if you do not know what you should write, just write, "I don't know what to write!"

It aims to eject the inner critic and enable you to start the day with a better feeling and less self-criticism. The fun

thing about that concept is that after a few sentences, the inner critic occurs, and you suddenly are writing ugly and awful stuff. It is an excellent way to connect with the underlying thoughts of our critical selves. She writes a lot about how to conquer creative blocks with a routine such as the morning pages.

1.3.3 SEVENCLOCKS.ORG

Sevenclicks.org is a creative brainstorming tool in the form of a website that guides you through a path of Wikipedia's vast knowledge, building on the fact that research has shown that broader thinking leads to more successful ideas. The idea is that creativity is based on connecting different concepts distant from each other. (Gehlen, 2019b) Broad thinking and creativity are stimulated in sevenclicks.org by leading the user from an original topic to unexpected but related subjects. The project questions how surfing the internet can stimulate creative thinking. (Gehlen, 2019a)

1.3.4 CREATIVITY GYM AUSTRIA

Founder Stephan Kardos started the Creativity Gym because he is convinced of the importance of creativity as an individual and in society. He sees that there are misunderstandings around the topic. These are only a few of many reasons which coincide with many of my views and motivations.

They write, “ We design stuff* that helps people to understand, grow and express their creativity.

Our vision is to unleash the probably most underrated human capacity*

* stuff: digital & physical tools, concepts, events, learning formats and experiences, one-off projects, ... and a community. “

(CREATIVITY GYM, 2017)

The Creativity Gym is a community project that aims to promote the understanding and appreciation of creativity. Since the 2020 pandemic, the project has been dormant, and the founder has taken on a different focus.

The project is an array covering various topics around creativity.

Apart from the great name and appearance, I like this project because it offers a digital and, above all, a physical platform to exchange ideas about creativity and be inspired.

I met Stephan Kardos for an interview; read more in Chapter 2.2.3.

“gar nüt” CHF 1.–

“nöd emal öpis” CHF 5.–

“nüteli nüt” CHF 15.–

“eifach nüt” CHF 100.–

“nüt” CHF 1'000.–

“s'goldige nüt”
CHF 20'000.–

1.3.5 NÜT.CH

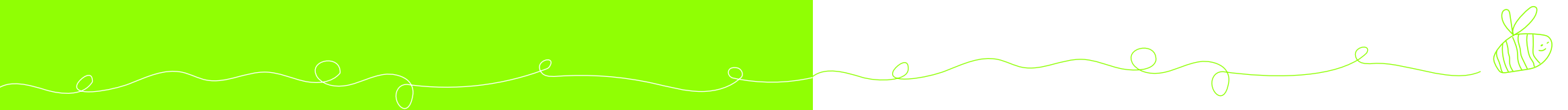
nüt.ch is a non-commercial project that emerged from a reflection on the theme of renunciation, consumption, and minimalism. nüt.ch is an online shop where you can buy different forms of “nothing” at different prices.

You don't actually get anything for the money you pay; it is meant to make you think about your consumption. What do you need to be happy? The project was developed during an internal project week at Lucid, a design office in Zurich. (Lucid, n.d.)

I like this project because it deals with the topic of consumption and brings it to the point humorously and therefore relates to my concept you will read about in a bit in various ways.

2

Concept



In the previous research chapter, some findings significantly influenced the work process, which I will refer to in the further course.

What particularly stood out was the release of dopamine when we have an AHA-moment and the general search for dopamine that accompanies us every day.

In my thesis and the following chapter, I want to take proven methods and knowledge from psychology and put them in the context of externalizing creative blocks and rethinking them.

Furthermore, the research has also shown that dealing with blockages and inner voices is very individual, and therefore no one-fits-all solution

will be possible. Personal confrontation is a journey and can sometimes be exhausting. That journey works best for you when it is customized to your own preferences.

Making ideas grow will never happen without effort but we can train it. The book “The Artist’s Way,” which I write about in chapter 1.3.2, proposes routines and habits like morning pages are essential on this journey to experience transformation.

2.1 TARGET GROUP AND AUDIENCE

The leading target group uses the tool and the method to “manage” everyday life. I focus on creative people, mainly in a more unrestrained time model, i.e., not permanently employed, who often feel blocked and have the feeling that they are not using their full potential. The person that is annoyed not to have a portfolio yet, thinking they don’t have any projects worth showing. People who find it hard to be proud of projects and, when presenting them, unconsciously play down their own achievements make themselves small, and take cover. People who hold themselves back by the urge to be a perfectionist. People who hide behind phrases like “I could do that too!” but have nothing to show for it themselves. People who hide behind excuses in order not to have to generate output. People with 100 unfinished projects on their schedule.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, creativity is an omnipresent substance in a person’s life, and we all have our baggage to carry with our inner critic and resistance. Therefore, I would define the secondary target group so broadly that I invite every person who feels ready to go on a journey of discovery to their own resistance and creativity. I include anyone who knows they have a seed (or many) within them but doesn’t exactly know how to get it to grow and bloom. The secondary group needs the tool and the method as a “balance” from everyday life.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 SURVEY “HAST DU EINE GUTE SELBSTEINSCHÄTZUNG?”

The aim of the survey was, on the one hand, to test my hypotheses and consolidate the knowledge I had already gained, but also to gain new insights.

The survey contained the following questions:

- How old are you?
- What is your main occupation? (profession)
- Do you have one or more secondary occupations? If yes, what? (Can also be a primary hobby)
- Are you employed or self-employed/freelance?
- Would you describe yourself as a creative person?
- Do you describe yourself as a perfectionist?
- Would others describe you as wiseacres?
- How do you rate your skills compared to those around you?
- What five projects have you implemented and completed in the last 365 days that you are proud of? (1–2 explanatory words per project are helpful)
- In which context did you implement these projects?
- Remember a project that you did not complete. What keeps you from completing it?
- How do unfinished projects feel to you?
- How often do you take on things/projects you then do not realize?
- Can you implement ideas even if you are not motivated at the moment and don’t feel the flow?
- Would you say that you are using your potential to the full?
- How much effort does it cost you to put ideas into action?
- Does the time spend to match the time you have planned for a task?
- How often do you consume media for more than 40 minutes at a time? (Watching movies/series, scrolling social media, etc.)

I deliberately chose the questions to draw some conclusions and contrast answers. For example, the combination of perfectionism and finished projects, consumption of media and finished projects, perfectionism and time spent, and many more.

For the questions with answers on the scale, I deliberately chose 1 to 4, so there was no middle. I didn’t want people to be able to place themselves comfortably in the middle, so they had to decide on a tendency. I also

deliberately didn't give any examples of projects because I wondered who called a project and whether they were more likely to have been created in their free time or at work. Interestingly, some people took some tiny things like gardening on the balcony, which I like, since it is playful, and in my intent, seeing such things as projects/ideas. Others only proposed time investing and big projects but often had less than five things to tell.

I created the survey on Google Forms and then distributed it in different ways. I posted it on social media like Instagram and LinkedIn, sent it out in private chats, and in addition, I created one hundred flyers which I distributed in the Toni Areal. To reach a larger audience, I started a competition to win a voucher of 30 Swiss francs for everyone who contacted me via email or Telegram with a screenshot of the confirmation after completing the survey. This way, I could still guarantee anonymity. Sixty-two people took part in the survey.

The most prominent finding was that we genuinely have a problem with perfectionism. 32.2 percent rated themselves as absolute perfectionists, 48.4 percent at the second-highest level, 16.1 percent at the second-lowest, and only two people do not see themselves as perfectionists.

Many expressed that they lack time when asked what prevents them from completing the project. Excitingly, however, it can be seen in connection with the rest of the

survey that a lack of time is often used as a protective shield. Because if you don't start or finish something, it can't go wrong, and if it's not "perfect," you can blame the lack of time on it. Lack of resources was also sometimes mentioned. This raised the question of whether this is connected with too high demands or perfectionism. Another question that arose was why we think we do not have time for creativity? Why is time the "practical" shield of excuse? While at the same time, social media and streaming platforms have recording usage. On social media, it is worldwide an average time spent from 2h 27m (Chaffey, 2022), and on streaming platforms, 27,2% of the users are streaming more than 10 hours per week. (Statista, 2022)

Time was an exciting component in the survey overall, as many also stated they needed more time than they initially set out to do. Again, this is related to perfectionist approaches and the inability to finish things even when they are "good".

I also find it praiseworthy that 48.4% intend to finish projects they have not yet completed; I wonder if that will happen — but I certainly hope that my work will help them do so.

In retrospect, I would ask about gender to clarify whether gender has an effect on being affected by perfectionism or not. For some questions, it would also be exciting to follow up by asking deeper questions to get to the bottom of the reasons for the sentiment.

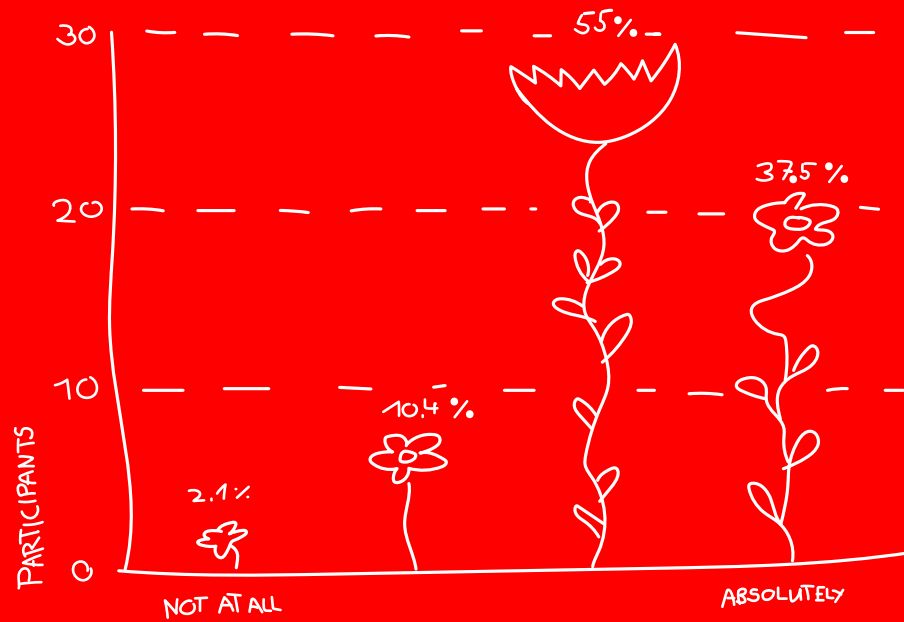
“Fear and the feeling of being overwhelmed with it.”

“The quality at the end was not what I wanted, or the concept no longer made sense in the course.”

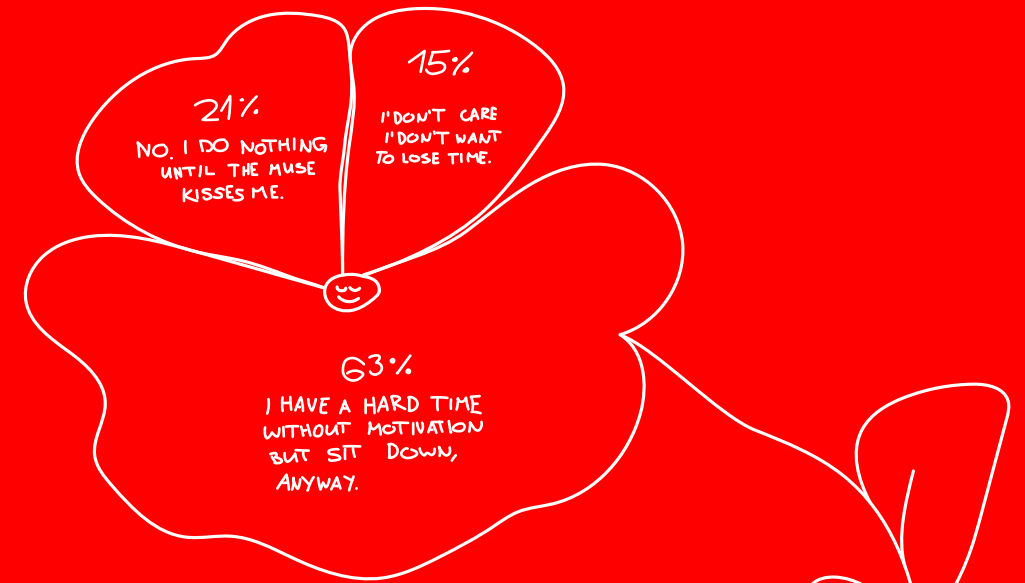
“Unclear benefit, or is this a waste of time or does it also serve a purpose? What if the end result is totally unsatisfactory? What if it turns out that I'm not as good at this as I thought? Aren't there better things I should be doing with my time? Isn't such a project a little naive or childish?” “

“I have realized that I don't have the possibilities & skills to complete the project successfully.”

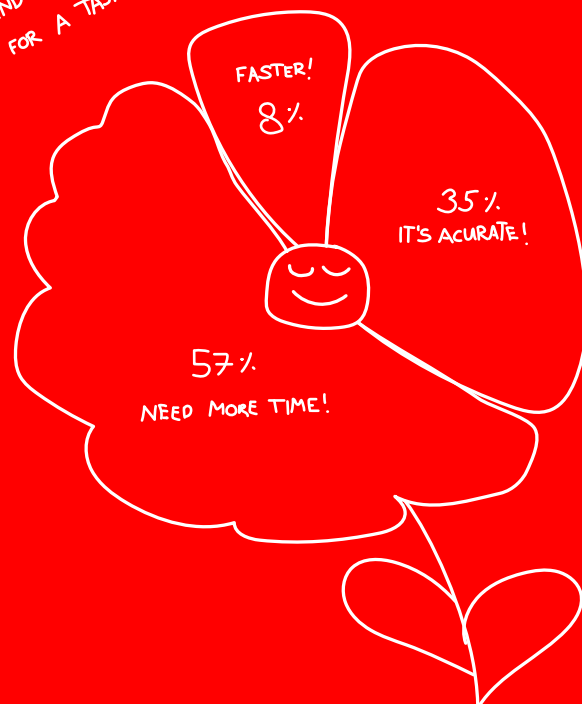
WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS A CREATIVE PERSON?



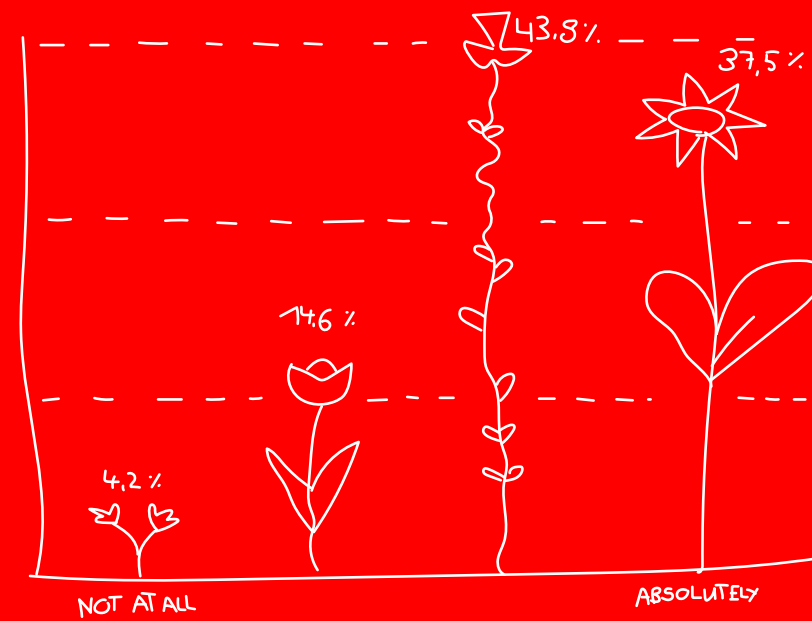
CAN YOU ALSO WORK ON IDEAS IF YOU ARE NOT MOTIVATED AT THE MOMENT AND DON'T FEEL ANY FLOW?



DOES THE TIME SPEND MATCH THE TIME YOU PLANNED FOR A TASK?



DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AS PERFECTIONIST?





2.2.2 INTERVIEW WITH PAOLO BIANCHI

At the beginning of my project, I pursued an exchange with Paolo Bianchi, the head of the CAS Creationship at the ZHdK. We met for a coffee and casual conversation.

The CAS Creationship lasts two semesters and aims at people who want to realize a particular project: a book project, a journey, a start-up, a film project, or who want to make a decisive change in their own life. This leads to diverse participants with different backgrounds and values, providing a fertile ground for exchange. The CAS offers practical and project-oriented training that complements existing professional qualifications. Participants acquire well-founded creativity know-how and various strategies from art and design during the course.

In our conversation, the focus was mainly on convergent and divergent thinking patterns. Paolo said it takes a few attempts to break through existing patterns. He reported that students, instead of bringing their ideas in a brainstorming form, often come to mentoring with a list or nothing despite the brainstorming methods he had taught. Many are afraid to manifest their thoughts on paper.

In a follow-up email conversation about too high expectations, he wrote to me that there are almost no niches left today that allow us to pause, set boundaries, and say: enough is enough. He also notes that nei-

ther too much nor too little performance, neither over-demanding nor under-demanding, is good for us. We should live as if we always had a weighing scale with us, with which we can measure what we need to achieve and to which extent and what we would instead relinquish. We internalize the balance that is good for us through self-cultivation, debate, and practice, and thus slowly become the scale that finds the right balance. The middle of this scale is different for everyone because it depends on each person's abilities and characteristics. It points to the fact that it is vital to go into ourselves and be conscious in the creative process.

2.2.3 INTERVIEW WITH STEPHAN KARDOS

Stephan Kardos is the founder of the Creativity Gym; for more information, see chapter 1.3.3 Creativity Gym.

I met him for a virtual interview on 22 March. He told me about his career and that when he started the Creativity Gym back in 2015, he was at a similar point as I am now.

He founded the gym intending to make people more creative. He asked himself why there is no place where you can exercise your creative muscle just like you exercise your legs. Since the pandemic, he has no longer been able to actively run the gym; hence the project has been dormant. On his journey, he spent a long time searching for a perfect and correct definition of creativity, read a considerable number of books

on the subject, and invited people to talk about their definition and their creative work. Today he sees creativity more like a lifestyle, more like many people see yoga as a way of living. He has stopped looking for one definition and is satisfied with philosophical and more holistic approaches.

Our exchange led us down the path of the question of novelty and innovation over to the philosophical question of what an idea is. Creativity is often equated with having new ideas and innovating in the business setting. But the definition of what is new is influenced by many factors. For whom is what new? New to whom? A purely formal way of looking at it.

We also talked about how important it is to get thoughts and ideas out of your head, make them tangible for yourself, and externalize them. He reports that he solved this for himself with journaling. This brings him to his personal tip: Be ready for creative writing. Always pack a small booklet and a pen to capture thoughts at any time.

I also showed him the current status of my prototypes (up to the 2nd Progress Session, see more in chapter 2.3.5). His feedback motivated me; he liked the approach of externalizing and visualizing these patterns, blocks, fears, and critics — making something intangible tangible. He especially liked the choice of clay as he is convinced that it is intrinsic in us to shape and model things in this way with our hands.

2.2.4 INTERVIEW WITH EMILY BREMNER

Emily studied Creative Leadership at the school KAOSPILOT in Denmark and graduated in 2020. I wrote to her because I read one of her blog articles on the school's website. In this article, "The Art Of Imperfect Action" (Bremner, 2021), she quotes the Parkinson's Law: "Things take the time you give them. Maybe the biggest problem standing in the way of our making moves is the modern luxury of having too much time to think." (Parkinson, 1986)

This quote echoes the findings of my survey. People say they don't have time to implement their ideas, call themselves perfectionists, and usually take longer than planned (see chapter 2.2.1).

I invited her to a virtual exchange on 22 March. In our talk, one of her first statements was that she is convinced that getting in touch with your critic makes you move more towards creativity.

She told me about a very shaping course with Stephen Rappaport, who is an actor, director, singer-songwriter, solo theatre performer, and playwright. In this course, for the five days prior, they had the task of sitting down in front of a white sheet of paper and drawing without intention. They took these drawings to the course and had to describe them in short sentences. From there, they created so-called fictional "edge characters". These "edge characters" are fictional characters that are unconsciously built on the foundation of our inner critics and insecurities. The deeper we dive into them, the more we experience their abysses. They had to narrate them precisely and perform a conversation with them as a solo performance. Up to this point, the participants were not yet aware of the theme of the inner critic. It had not been communicated before. The workshop took place in small groups of twelve people who already knew each other. Stephen managed

to create a space where the participants could vulnerably and open-heartedly engage with the experience and not be afraid.

Emily raved about the experience and talked about how shocked she was to hear these phrases spoken out to her. This brutality and meanness that was in this edge character surprised her. She felt that this form of role-playing was a good way to access her critic and start her journey toward them. She says that no one can be forced to make this effort and deal with the issue. Not everyone feels ready simultaneously, and some will never feel ready, and that's okay.



Another phrase that stayed with me from her was: *"You cannot give the people a tool to make them more creative; the most powerful tool are they by themselves."* This brings me to the conclusion that we need something to empower them to realize it.

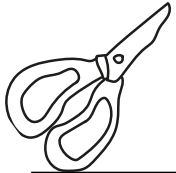
It will not be possible to make the person, for example, go jogging, but for those who choose to do so, we can create opportunities that will make their execution easier. In this example, this is the right shoe, a good wind and rain jacket, a headlamp, etc. Something that makes the process glide, like the broom for wiping in curling.

She told me that although she was aware of this critic, she had a new experience when she started co-writing a book after graduation. This inner critical voice took on an entirely new shape and size that she had never known before. It felt like the critic had hidden and camouflaged itself in another corner. During this time, she told me that she built herself, without thinking much about it, a small figure with found pieces from a stroll at the beach, which she then kept on her work table as a reminder of this critical voice. One day the object slipped into a pile of paper and fell unintentionally to the floor and shattered. A small moment that somehow meant a lot to her; seeing the critic metaphorically crashing on the floor. For her, this

incident felt liberating; it took away its weight from the critical voices, still knowing that they would still be around. She felt empowered, aware and skilled in managing them.

I think it will take more moments like this during our life, which will help us handle the resistance. That's why I consider externalizing the inner world very important.

She says that she uses it as a compass, as a way to know if she is heading in the right direction. Whenever she hears the critic's voice now, she tries to stay focused on what she's doing and does the opposite of what the voice is telling her.



2.3 PROTOTYPES

2.3.1 HARMONY BOARD

The first examination of the question of how to ensure that people do not have their ideas nipped in the bud led to the first prototype, the Harmony Board.

Based on the collaborative creativity technique developed by Walt Disney, I created The Harmony Board, which contains three roles: *Dreamer, Critic, and Realist*. Each of these roles looks at the idea from a different perspective. (Walt Disney Method, n.d.)

There are different strategies in different areas based on this division of personalities or characteristics. For example, the ones of E-Myth (Gerber, 1995) "The Technician", "The Manager" and "The Entrepreneur", can be well compared with the three characters at Disney.

In the Disney method, the state of mind, respectively the different roles, is divided into separate rooms, and the whole group is in the same role simultaneously. A successful creative process needs all three, but if they take place at the same time, barriers and blockages arise.

First, one takes on the role of the dreamer. *The dreamer* is a visionary and develops ideas. He answers the question of "*what*" and has the ability to dream big and think outside the box. He is not interested in possible limitations.

After that, they switch to the pragmatic role of *the realist*, which addresses the question of "*how*". How can the idea be implemented? What resources are needed? How can we approach testing? Without the realist, the dreamer's thoughts and ideas would never leave their heads.



FIG. 9

One takes on *the critic's role* to close the cycle, which will probably not be difficult for many since we train it from early on. The critic is the safeguard and asks "*why*". However, the critic should remain constructive and concern himself with the outcome of the realist. Without him, the ideas remain unpolished. What can be improved in this idea? What are the risks and opportunities? What has been overlooked?

After finishing the round, it goes back to the dreamer, who uses the findings to initiate a new round. This cycle is then repeated until the critic is satisfied and sees no more possibilities for optimization.

I have already noticed how slowing down it can be in various design processes when not all participants are in the same mode and are not aware of it. That's why I wanted to implement the method on a physical board. With that, you remain aware of the role you are currently speaking and acting, regardless of whether you are alone or in a meeting with others. I deliberately did not overlap the circles so that I could prevent participants from placing themselves on the border zones and choosing a position instead.

In addition, the game board also includes tokens with animals on them, which serve as avatars. The participants are encouraged to choose a figure and place themselves on the board according to their current state of mind. If the state changes in a meeting, the person themselves or the person opposite can move the token. This ensures that the participants remain aware of their words and can see from which state of mind the other person is currently arguing. This approach also helps each participant to question their own state of mind continually.

I tested the prototype myself in various meetings and gave it to OnSaPa™GmbH, a strategy, and business development company, to try it in meetings with clients.

In these meetings, the people involved were much more aware of what they said but did not feel blocked. Pushing the other tokens around also gave the whole process an active and playful component. A remark was that the critic's role was wrongly understood and instead used as that of "the basher." It is essential to say that the critic is necessary and does not argue on a personal level.

2.3.2 HARMONY BOARD 2.0

After the feedback and testing of the first version, I developed the second version. The Harmony Board 2.0 comes with the addition of the "Basher" and the "Competitor". I deliberately placed these two roles next to the circles as a square. They are the ones who disrupt the process, do not help to improve the quality, and interrupt the creative flow.

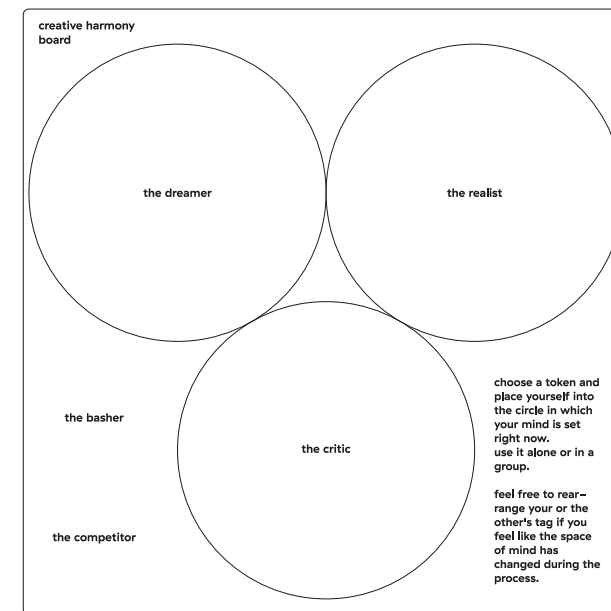


FIG. 10

The basher is the one who takes out his bad day or the opinion of a person on the project or idea and does not stay objective. It is crucial to building up the trust of objectivity in a successful process with different people.

The competitor who sees the competition and a challenge behind everything is also not profitable for a collaborative process.

With this adjustment, the critic can take on his important role, and his criticism is not misinterpreted anymore. Furthermore, it gives the chance to reflect on a competitive mindset.

2.3.2.1 CONCLUSION HARMONY BOARD

These two prototypes were a good introduction to the topic. However, I decided to focus even more on the thinking structure and the blockages of a person. I am convinced that if we deal more with our personal blockages and inner critics (or bashers), we will be able to act more flexibly in a group and use our potential better.

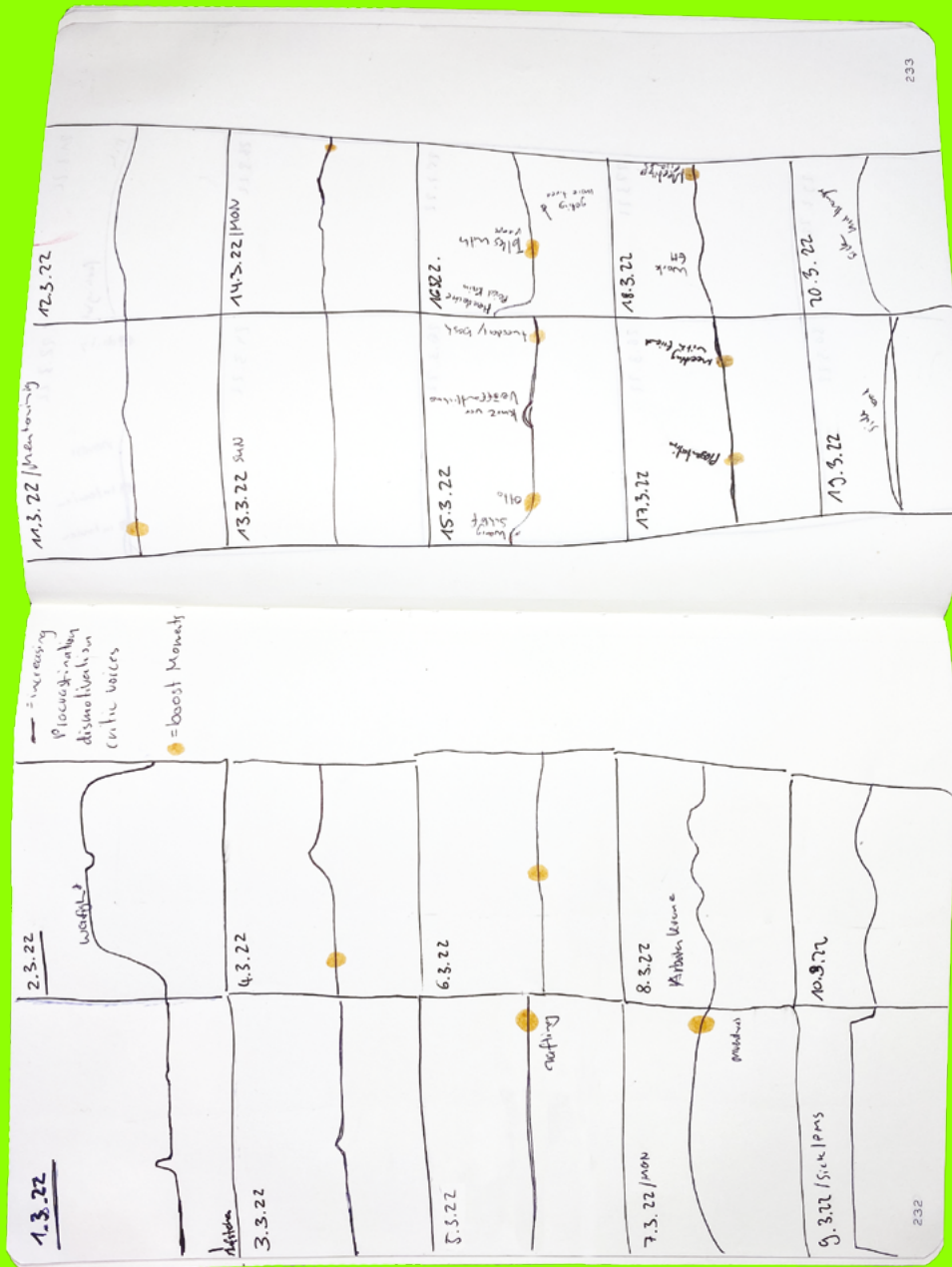


FIG. 11

2.3.3 MY CRITICS' ROLLERCOASTER

I started documenting my own critics' rollercoaster ride on paper, which was very interesting. But I also captured booster moments in the process. The documentation helped me to reflect on myself again during the day. One observation was that critical thoughts often came together with increased procrastination. It was also noticeable that external influences in my private life, illness, and the hormonal cycle were evident and influenced the situation or even the whole day. The critic level influenced the amount of time spent on social media and procrastinating. I also recognized that when starting the day with high usage of social media and getting some dopamine from there, it was harder to start a productive day, which then led to louder critics.

The level of internal criticism affected the amount of time I spent on social media and procrastination. And that, in turn, influenced the volume of them and the blocked feeling. I also realized that it was harder to start a productive day if I started the day with high social media use, which already gave me a lot of dopamine, which lowered the excitement for the work that followed and led to louder critics.

But it also shows me that we cannot get completely free ourselves from the fact that such thoughts inevitably find a way to creep into our heads. That is why I consider it all the more important to gain awareness of it. Since I recognized my patterns, it was easier not to blame myself for them and still get things done. It felt like taking a step back and going into an observation mode.

2.3.4 CRITIC'S OBJECTS

*How do the blockages feel? What shape do they have?
What is their appearance? How do we interact with them?*

With these questions in mind, I created the Critic's Objects. The objects serve as reminders and should help us remember in everyday life that we can, for example, lower our expectations or turn down the critical voice inside us.

During my studies and also on the outside of them, it was not uncommon for me to hear sentences like "My expectations are too high!", "I can't get started", and "Actually, I just need to give myself a push and start" and so on. Inspired by these phrases, the objects externalized visualizations of our blocks that keep stopping us in our tracks. I realized that many see their blocks and critical thoughts as a part of their DNA. In Buddhism, they say, "You are not your thoughts!". Consequently, we are also not our blocks and critical voices.

In school, both in previous education and in studies, we are not shown in a tangible and applicable way how to deal with these false expectations and the resulting blockages.

What is influential about the objects is that they visualize the blockage on the one side but are also used interactively and tangible on the other. Through the use of our hands, they serve as a receptacle for information. In this way, we interactively externalize the thoughts in our heads into the outside world through our bodies. LEGO Serious Play is based on the same idea. Lowering the hurdle bar embodies, for example, the lowering of our expectations, aiming that this is internalized again.



While creating these prototypes, some conversations arose with students who did not realize at first that they were conducting these inner dialogues with themselves. Through various confrontations with the topic, I think it is important that we become aware that we are not "one" with these thoughts and that we can also observe them and are not forced to act based on them. The objects raise awareness naturally and playfully and serve as a daily reminder that we should confront them.

It was also exciting to observe that over time, in conversations at school, lowering the expectation or turning down the critical voice was imitated pantomimically. It means that examining the topic is slow, and thought that greater awareness emerges. The examination, therefore, takes place in everyday life and conversations even without having the object on site. It shows that we can use externalization as a tool to break our thinking patterns.



I have given the Volume Turner and the Lower-Your-Expectations-Bar to people I knew were often dealing with blockages.

One person told me that the tool had already helped her in daily life, especially as a reminder to calm down. It also helped to start a task and to procrastinate less. The other person told me that the object worked as a mascot. In particular, looking at and using the tool brought our conversation about blockages back to mind, which led to many motivational phrases from outside manifesting in the object.



“You are good enough”
 “It doesn’t have to be perfect”
 “80% performance is enough”
 “You are good at what you do”
 “I am proud of you”
 “I’m impressed by what you do”

2.3.4.1 CONCLUSION OF THE CRITIC’S OBJECTS

It impressed me that the objects found a pantomime place in conversations without their presence. The people I told about them had to smile, and seeing themselves in them made me feel confident. It showed how helpful it could be to externalize our patterns and interact with them to internalize them again. Nevertheless, I gave the visualizations and the form of the objects, and I created and provided them based on my interpretation of blockages. This conclusion led to the idea of a workshop where people could explore and develop their objects on their own. The idea is also that the thing stores even more meaning with that.

2.3.5 WORKSHOP WITH CLAY

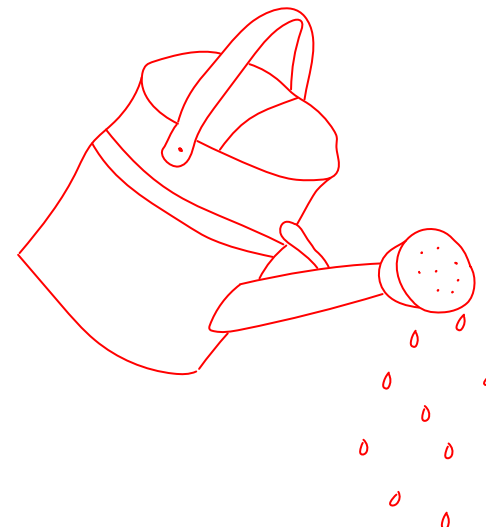
The workshop with the concrete modeling clay serves as a meet and greet with one’s feelings towards the critic and the blockage. A journey of discovery to the hidden places of oneself. The setting is a one-to-one conversation.

I created a short interview sheet that helped me through the conversation. It serves as a support but not as a strict line. Questions on the sheet are mainly focused on feelings and are to stimulate a visual way of explaining. *Do you set high standards for yourself, and how does it feel when you don’t meet them? What is the wording of your inner critic’s voice? What is the shape of that voice?*

The conversation should still feel as natural as possible for the participants to feel comfortable. There was also a square drawn on the paper as a “stage” where participants could place their object afterward.

During the conversation, my focus was on metaphors they used to explain their feelings when they felt the criticism. While speaking, the participants were already allowed to play with their hands and sound.

The aim was for them to externalize the feeling through the metaphors. I tried to guide them through this process, referencing things I picked up during the conversation.



PERSON 1.A: As if both my hands were rooted in the ground like trees. Oh well, looks less like a tree and more like a mushroom now.

PERSON B: Who is that statement coming from?

PERSON 1.A: haha, okay, okay. *grin* Actually, the trees can grow up to the sky.

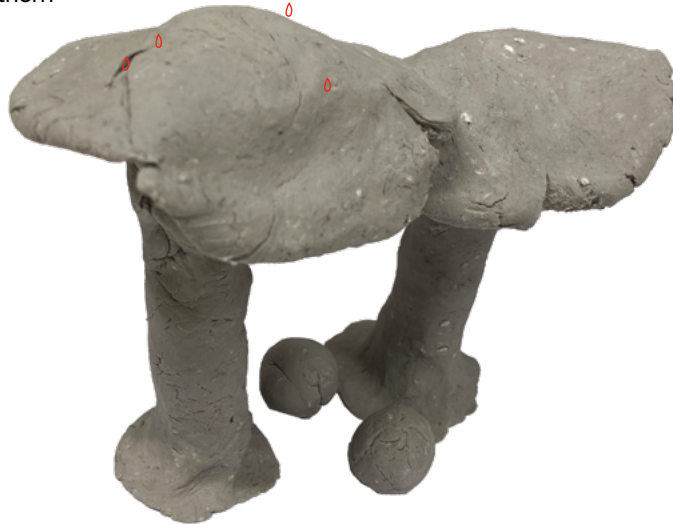
PERSON B: Or you can cut them down before that.

PERSON 1.A: hmm, right. But then they die.

PERSON B: Or new shoots grow. And wood can be used to make paper and new pens → new ideas.

What are the balls for?

PERSON 11.A: hmm, I can use them to position myself. At the top of the tree or the bottom, or throw them at the tree.



Person 2 also formed balls during the conversation. Nine of them and lined up on a grid.

PERSON 2.A: Things sometimes feel like a big sheer mountain that is hard to climb.

PERSON B: (later in the conversation) Do you have to climb the mountain in one go?

PERSON 2.A: Yes, and somehow it has a lot more on the mountain, though. Such obstacles. Boulders, bears, snow... etc. I find it hard to take time for things that are for me. I do projects for others faster."

PERSON B: (to the balls on the table) Now, is this the boulder you mentioned earlier?

PERSON 2.A: *laughs* Yes. Or the mountain?
— starts stacking the balls —
hmm, somehow it looks too round and sweet. It needs to be more pointy
— squeezes concrete together and forms a pointy mountain

PERSON B: So is that what the mountain looks like?

PERSON 2.A: Yes.

PERSON 2.A: — makes stairs all around. So you see the climb from all sides, and it's more efficient.

PERSON B: And how would you shape it if you walked it in different stages?



I cut the conversation short with person three and got to the shape question quicker. Within eight minutes, we reached the point where we had an object.

PERSON 3.A: Critical voices feel like being on top of the pyramid and not coming down — kind of lonely.

PERSON B: And how can you symbolically help yourself get off that top?

PERSON 3.A: A rope with which I can rope myself down.



FIG.18

2.3.5.1 CONCLUSION WORKSHOP WITH CLAY

I personally really enjoyed having the conversations. It was also interesting to go into the points that the participants said unconsciously and show them a pattern.

After the workshops, however, I had to deal with where I saw my position in this project. In this discussion, I have now taken on a significant role, which I was happy to do, but I still don't see the project's future in that way. It would be nice if the project could flourish without me. The problem we are facing is much bigger than I am. Something autonomous and community-based that grows on its own is much more scalable and can reach more people. If you compare it to the Creativity Gym, it's sad that the project doesn't continue to grow because Stephan doesn't invest time in it. The project and therefore the resource is dependent on one person. I want to trust the power of the community.

It was also a pity that the discussions were now individual, and only the person involved could benefit from them. This triggered questions about a different setting and some kind of exhibition or gallery of the objects, but in such a way that participants could still take the things home. The idea of an online shop, which could serve as a kind of gallery, came up for the first time.

2.3.6 BUILD YOUR OWN AT VIDEOSHOOT

During the video shoot for the final video, I provided the protagonists in the interview setting with various craft materials. With these materials, they were asked to build themselves an object inspired by the Critic's Objects, which they could put on their desk. You can see the result on the following page. It was exciting to observe the reactions to the task since fears and doubts immediately arose and the thought of not being talented in tinkering.

Nonetheless, one noticed while observing that it triggered joy, and during the tinkering, an examination of their own behaviour took place.

Each of the results was amazing, creative and individual.

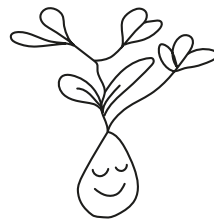




The seed of my idea keeps growing, and the last chapter with all the talks and prototypes was the perfect nutrient for this growth.

What has become even more apparent is that there is no one-fits-all solution that I can provide. The realization of my own positioning in the project was the perfect fertilizer that stimulated further growth.

Increasingly, I am noticing a focus on the connection between consumption and dopamine seeking in correlation with creative output, so this chapter starts with another research part on this topic.



3.1 RESEARCH ON CREATIVITY AND CONSUMER CULTURE

Modern culture flourishes on consumption. But is our passion for consumption at the expense of our creativity?

In the book “The War of Art”, author Steven Pressfield writes that the difficulty is “that we live in a consumer culture that’s well aware of this dissatisfaction and has pulled together its entire profit-making artillery to exploit it. “By selling us a product, a drug, a distraction.” (Pressfield, Steven & Coyne, 2012)

He also writes about how we have to “stage our own inner revolution, a private uprising in our own skulls as artists and professionals.” He also talks about how we cannot cure our restlessness and hunger by paying our disposable income into the coffers of some conservancy but only by doing our work.

Consumption is another kind of distraction and procrastination. The need to spend hours researching new equipment and the sense of achievement when we have found “the best”. We use the instincts of wanting, hunting, and getting while searching for consumption. (Glei, 2019) Neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp refers to this as the addictive emotional state of “seeking”. (Panksepp, 2004)

By the time we get the piece we bought, the initial spark may have faded, and we have to admit that grappling with the best equipment was a distraction before actual making and doing. Annie Leonard from The Story of Stuff also says that our primary identity has become that of the consumer, and we like that role. (Story Of Stuff, 2022) We buy, buy, buy, and buy. And even more than getting the goods, we love seeking and finding them. Our consumption impulse stimulates the same part of the brain that activates when we experience an AHA-moment, which I wrote more about in chapter 1.1.3 Measuring creativity. As Panksepp writes, the dopamine circuits “promote states of

eagerness and purpose”. (Panksepp, 2004) It is the state we like to be in because it feels good. It’s, therefore, no wonder that we seek out activities, substances, or even objects that keep the system aroused — a life of dopamine overdose and addiction.

We suddenly project into the new equipment, the new camera, the new pens, the new computer, that they are the solution that will help us be more creative and enable us to do our work better. This is a false promise, and a means of procrastination baked into our consumer culture. New objects can trigger extrinsic motivation, but as the Harvard Business Review report “How to Kill Creativity” states, intrinsic motivation stimulates creativity much more. (Amabile, 2014) Intrinsically motivated people engage in challenges and enjoy their work more. They are also willing to go the extra mile for a good solution instead of choosing the path with the least resistance. So does excessive consumption shift the source of motivation away from intrinsic nature?

Increased consumption also leads to Decision Fatigue, which is tiredness after making decisions. (Nicolson, 2018) Every article clicked, swiped, or liked is essentially a decision, thousands and thousands of which we make every day. Our brain functions like a muscle whose performance decreases over the day, from one decision to the next.

Consumption, especially social media, which provides a short-term dopamine boost, also leads to a reduced attention span. It does affect not only our working day but also limits our ability to be creative each day. (Nicolson, 2018) Sitting down with a damaged attention span is hard since most creative works require more attention and more patience. It might increase the fear of the white paper which leads to a downward spiral into blocks and inner critic.

To conclude this section, I would state that consumption does not have to be all bad. We live in a culture that

encourages us to consume much more than we actually produce. But with the right measure, consumption can stimulate and inspire. Consumption can also have a networking function with other people and express our identity. Just as procrastination can promote and encourage creativity.

I find it exciting that consumption triggers the exact mechanisms as the creative act or the aha moment. Therefore, I see consumption not fully as demonized but also as a form of inspiration, of stimulating input. As explained in this part, it is essential to achieve a healthy balance of input and output. One thing is sure: the more we consume, the less we create. We then also lack time. And the less we create, the more we consume.



3.2 Concept Garden of Doing

Playful ways to make your ideas grow.

Garden of Doing helps you conquer your creative blocks with playful tools you can buy in an online shop

If you want to order a product, you end up in an ordering process that never ends: an endless loop and the pinnacle of procrastination. The endless ordering process is bristled with several calls to action to inspire the customer to create the object they intended to buy by themselves.

What looks like an online shop is a subliminal criticism of consumer society and the idea of buying the solution with just a few clicks.

As shown in the previous section, excessive consumption may impact creativity and boost the dopamine circuit in the short term. The online store serves an already existing need and can thus reach more people. The goal is to trigger an AHA-moment with the resolution of the ordering process, which then also leads to a dopamine kick.

Garden Of Doing aims to inspire you to go on a journey and get to know yourself and your blocks, inner voices, and perfectionism that holds you back. It helps you put your seed in your head on your own and let the mindset of becoming a harmonic doer grow and flourish.

Instead of beating your inner critic and nipping it in the bud, it is about becoming friends with your inner critic. The most powerful tool to make ideas grow is you.

There is no one fits all solution. The path of finding solutions for oneself is highly individual since we have all different requirements and backgrounds. Yet some things are constant and are occurring as a pattern. Therefore, the shop GardenOfDoing.com does not provide the one solution that should fit all. It's much more about getting the person involved, interacting with blocks, and showing that it is a journey to get a well cultivated, flourishing, healthy garden. And sometimes, there are vermin, and the plants get sick, but still, the proper treatment gets the plant to grow again.

It is not uncommon for many to find it challenging to stick with something more extended, especially if it does not immediately meet expectations. Referring to the "Projects Plateau" I mentioned in Chapter 2.1, it is then much easier to simply dedicate oneself to a new seed instead of properly nurturing the already seeded one and allowing it to grow until it becomes a small plant or tree. Instead, the seed dies. Having lots of dead and rotten seeds in the drab garden, let's face it, causes frustration.

The shop also serves as a critique of consumer society, in which we tend to solve our problems with a purchased product that is practically delivered to our home and then simply does the work for us.

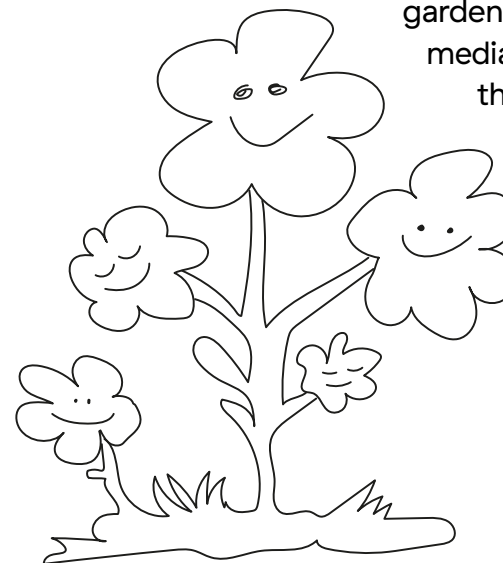
As I mentioned earlier, there are two categories in which the target group splits: The leading audience is designers, employees, entrepreneurs, freelancers, etc. In general, people with a free working model. Since many entrepreneurs often fail because they start new ideas but don't finish them and start new things repeatedly. 9 of 10 Startups fail, according to a report from Start Up-Genome. (StartUp Genome, 2019) Many fail at the point where the "Projects Plateau" is situated.

That's the group that finds the Onlineshop as a solution to survive their daily lives.

The secondary target group contains people who see the shop as an inspiration for their private life and compensation for their daily lives.

People that want to flourish their idea in their free time.

Essential to say here is that both influence each other. Doers and inspired people with a vivid garden are at higher ease in their free time, immediately influencing their work life. And people that finish what they start in their creative career are in a better balance in their private life.



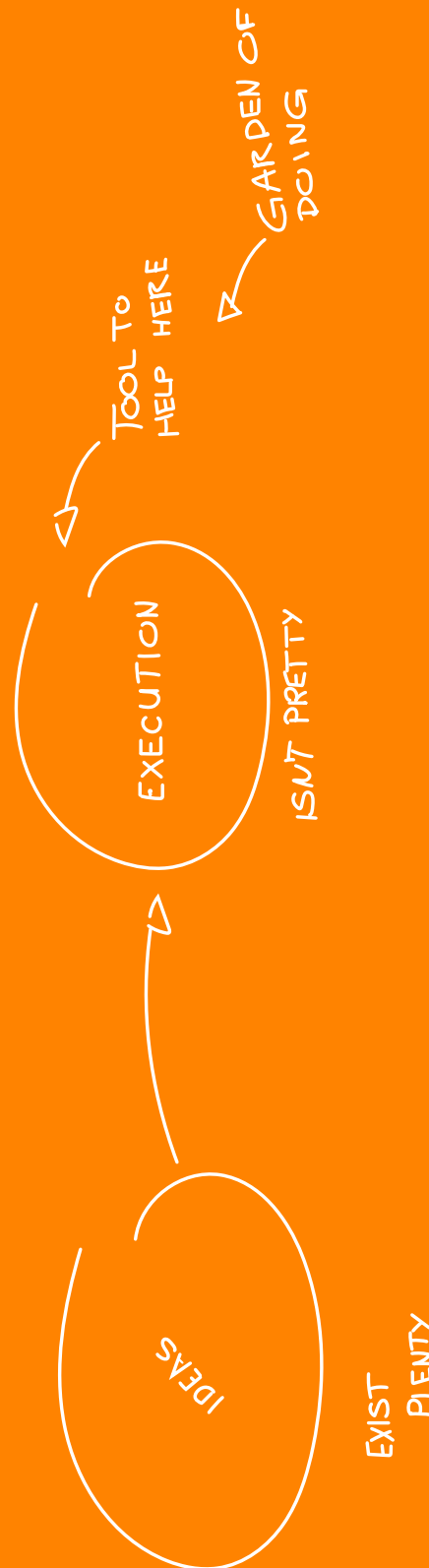


FIG. 23

3.2.1 MAPPING THE CONCEPT

For mapping down the concept, I have used the prototype of a tool on which I am currently working in my spare time. It consists of various maps and should help conceive business ideas. It includes the drawing of the Golden Circle, a SWOT analysis, a Brand map, and much more.

Also, the name finding has taken place in the context of this game. After 98 different names, it was clear that the online store should be called GardenofDoing.com. The metaphor of the plant world and its growth has accompanied me from the beginning of the process. The metaphorical setting should make it easier for users to find a “happy” approach to the topic. It also reflects the idea of natural progress.

The core values of GoD are *harmony, openness, and inspiration*. Besides that, there are secondary values such as *progress/growth, cooperative mindset, playfulness, and reflectiveness*. The brand of GoD is at the upper level of expressive and modern. Relatable with the design language of brands like Headspace, Notion, Airbnb, and BIG Zurich. The visual language of the site should feel playful, yet serious and expressive. The shop is visually inspiring and metaphor with the garden runs through the whole page.

3.2.2 PRODUCTS IN THE STORE

The products available in the store consist of my prototypes from the process and other smaller objects in this style. Each product represents a blockage or behaviour ironically and thus aims to make you smile when you recognize yourself in them. Looking into the shop’s future, it should be possible to insert as many tools as you want so that the project can grow and extend to an inspirational source such as Behance. The goal is that the tools offered in the store can be reproduced very simply at home. For

example, you can build the “Lower your Expectation Bar” with two empty toilet rolls, a scissor, and a pen. Products such as the Harmony Board can quickly be sketched on paper, and objects from the environment serve as tokens.

The products are produced from transparent fluorescent acrylic glass in green, orange and red. Their appearance should be eye-catching on a desk. Each of them has a sentence on it which is engraved and filled with white colour. They should not be highly polished but still of high quality, and the look and feel, such as the whole shop, should inspire you to do it yourself. The prices are stated between 60\$ and 100\$. Each product has a short explanation on the webshop, which serves as a place to communicate learnings from the past research.

Visitors should also have the opportunity to buy “super booster” sets consisting of several tools.

For the diploma show, I plan to offer vouchers, with which you can get a special offer and buy the items for free or for a minimal symbolic price.



FIG. 24

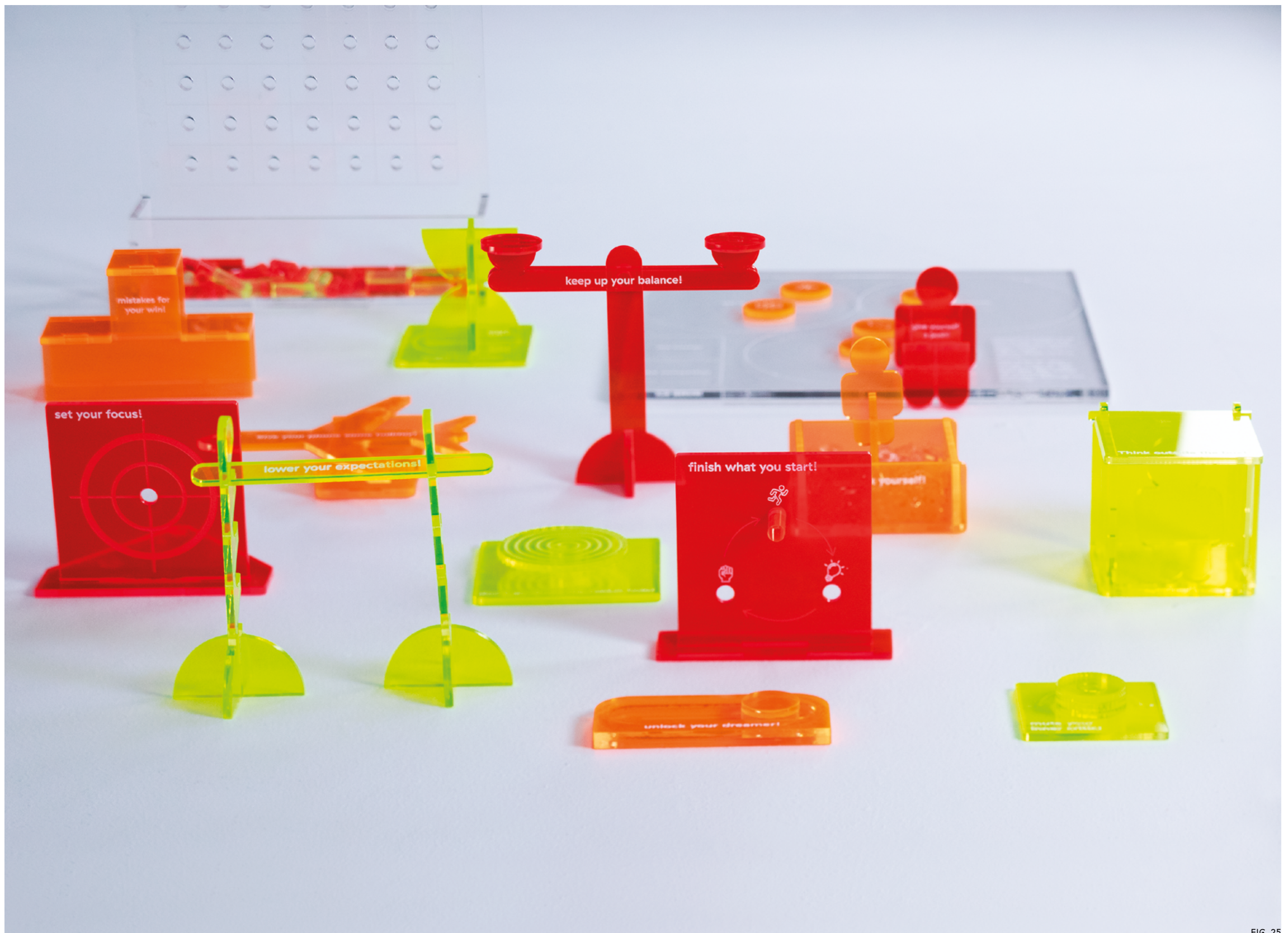


FIG. 25

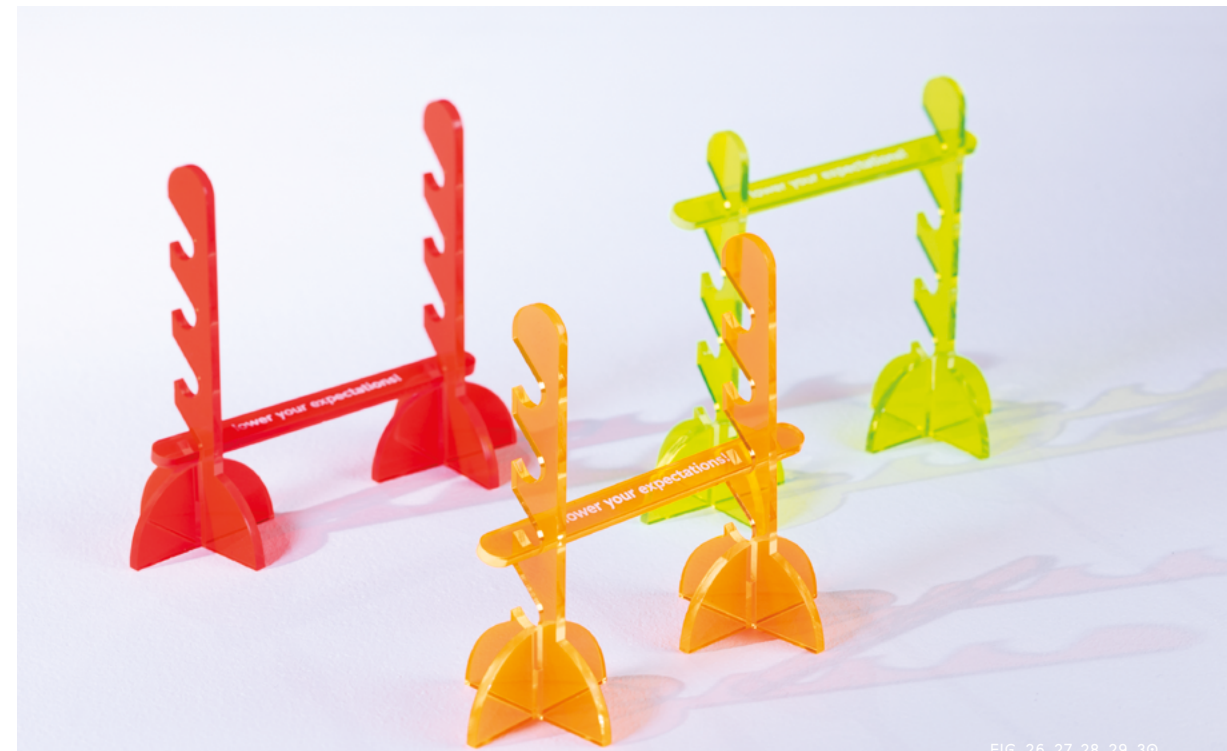
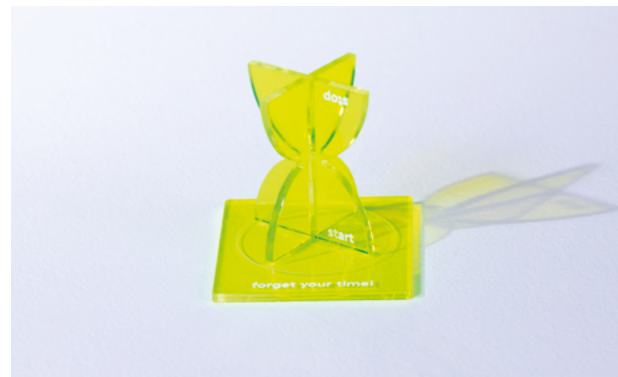
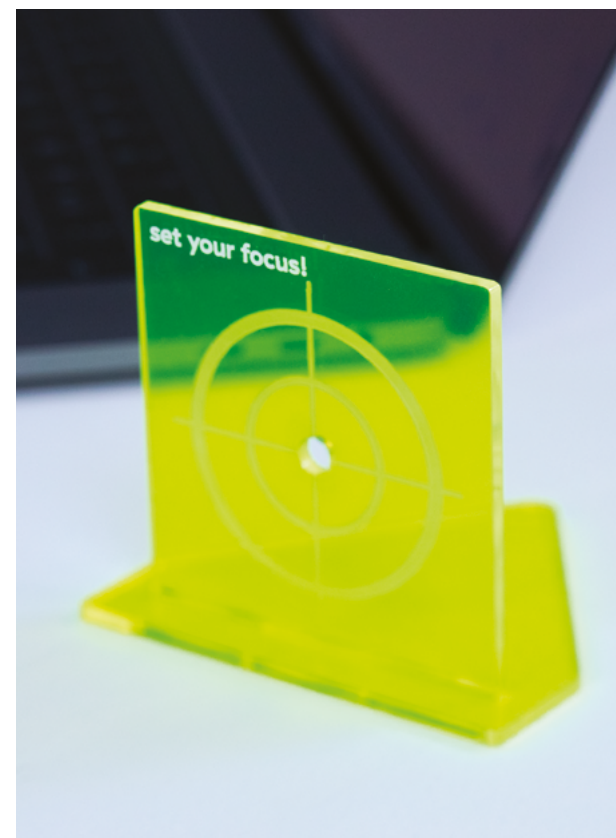
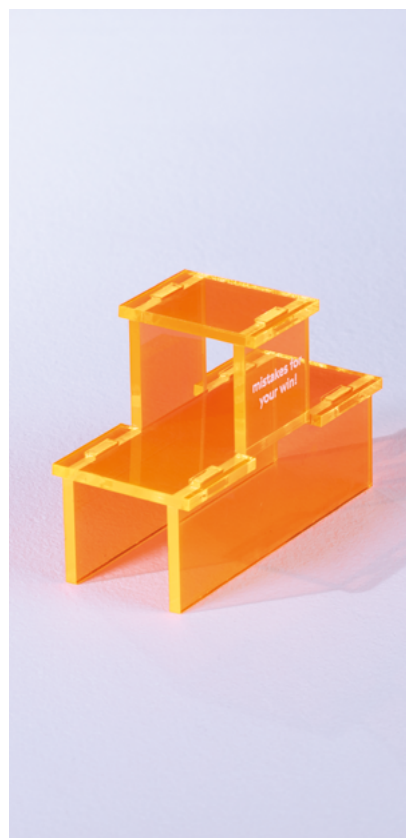
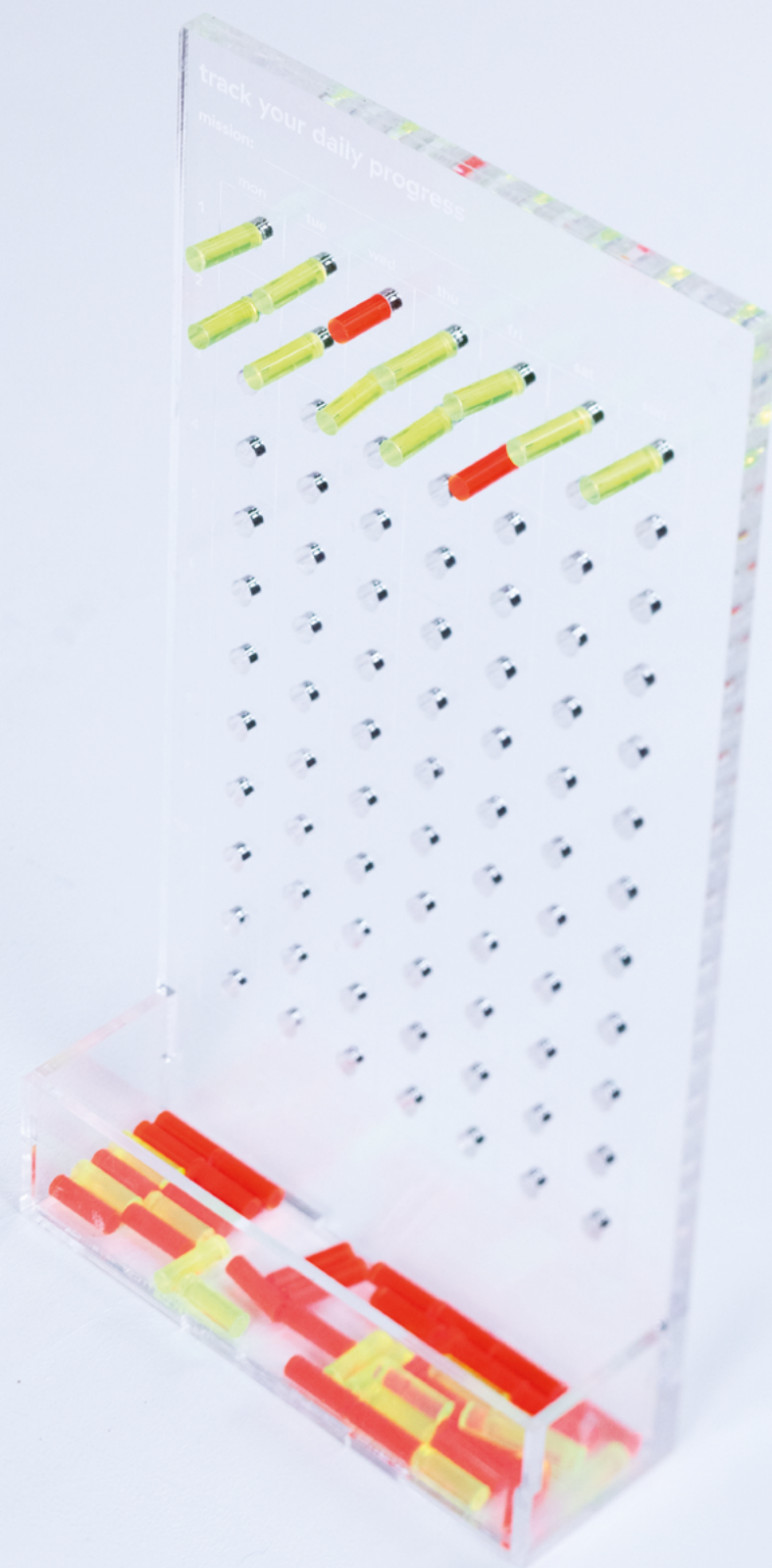


FIG. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30





3.2.3 ORDERING PROCESS AND LOOP

Due to the visual concept and the texts, the “resolution” of the page is not apparent. Users should perceive the page as a typical, pretty online store. The page advertises the one solution to solve your blockages. The texts and form language should create the desire to be able to solve the problems with a simple purchase. The issue of resistance is communicated through the metaphor of the seed.

As soon as the person is interested in a product, they come to a standard product page that looks like all the others at Zalando and Co. As a counterpart to the dress size, one can indicate what one is mainly affected by – perfectionism, procrastination, inner criticism, etc.

Clicking on “Add to cart” takes you directly to the ordering process. Which never ends.

This should be structured so that the humorous–satirical statement of the continuous ordering process increases with time. A style element in this process is videos, which remind of Youtube tutorials in terms of the setting. I myself appear as the protagonist. The videos are concise and are alternated with text. The beginning should still be relatively subtle. One goal is to make people laugh and draw attention to the issue in a humorous way.

The pages are diverse and dynamically structured. Examples like the one with the empty toilet paper rolls are meant to introduce people to building the tool themselves quickly. The example with the toilet paper rolls was provided with videos on the respective pages, in which they are directly asked to become active. The statement “The powerful tool to grow ideas is you” is revealed gradually. On the website’s header is a free tool offered where you can get a questionnaire to simplify the process of doing it yourself. This download is again put to one at heart during the infinite loop.

The process should include about ten different pages that are repeated.

I will also provide a form to get in touch with me for further help and share thoughts about the topic.



FIG. 41

Conclusion & Reflection



4.1 CONTRIBUTION

How to solve blockages is a question that creatives grapple with repeatedly.

In this paper, I demonstrated how the issue of blockages is inescapable and that we are all affected by it but are rarely shown how to deal with it tangibly. Based on the question and the first intention, how I can make people more creative, I find it pleasant to conclude that people become creative as soon as they can implement their ideas unblocked. I am also convinced that if people who currently consider themselves non-creative would also deal with their blockages, this would significantly increase creativity.

To see how the handling and consciousness of inner critics in my environment has changed, only in that this topic is in the room is beautiful. Small objects such as the products in the shop might seem small, but they definitely impact our awareness of our creative behaviour.

With Garden of Doing, I offer a platform that draws attention to a topic that affects almost everyone in a new, funny and tangible way. It serves as an entry ticket to a journey of engagement with oneself and one's creative process and behaviour patterns.

4.2 REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS

In your hand now lies a work that has grown from a tiny seed to a young plantlet. The road there was often thirsty, over-fertilized, stormy and anything but sunny. But it was also just as often watered and healthy. It had not made me immune to blockages and my inner critic just because I was writing a paper on the subject. That meta-level was also exhausting at times, to be honest.

I wish I had taken more opportunities during the prototyping phase to launch pop-up interventions in public, get out more, and have a healthy dose of the “fuck off” mentality in my garden set.

I'm grateful to have experienced what it's like to work alone again. It has helped me to ask for help better and maintain an active exchange with my environment.

All in all, I'm happy with what I learned during the process.

4.3 LEARNINGS

Besides all the facts and knowledge I took away from this project, I was also able to grow personally. It was not always easy for me to carry out the project as an individual. I have found that my optimal breeding ground is working in a team. Still, I am grateful for the experience. I have learned to ask for help, which was very difficult for me before, and demand interaction with people. I had to jump over my shadow and get out of my comfort zone by asking people for interviews.

I also got away from thinking that society's collective understanding of creativity is the real problem and concluded that the problem is how creative people perceive themselves. My definition of creativity has expanded through conversations and hours of reading. Creativity has become something even more holistic for me, extending

into all parts of human life. For me, creativity now means being and acting in harmony with oneself. Continuing my daily routine with Everyday has also contributed to this change.

I found no one-size-fits-all solution to the issue, which is not particularly surprising, but at the beginning of the process, I had the romantic thought of creating a tool as a solution for everyone.

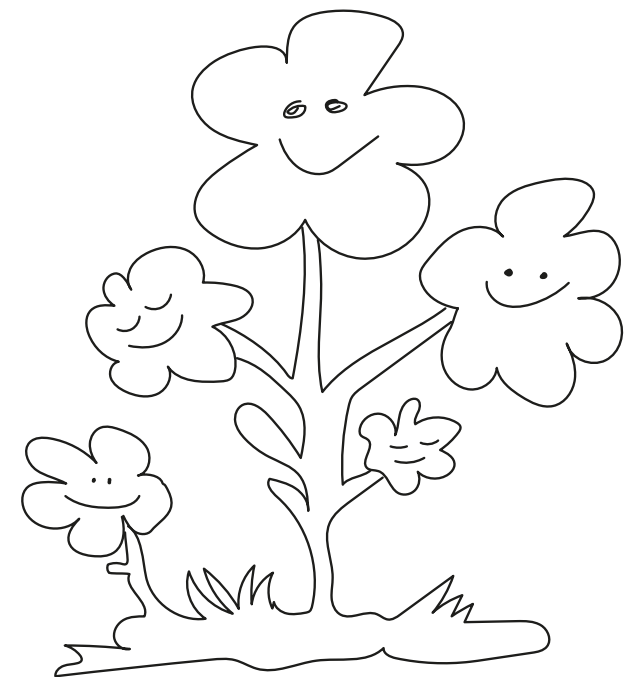
What excites me most is seeing how the circle closes once we start externalizing our inner life. Interacting with it helps us deal more deeply with what is happening to us. romantic thought of creating one tool as a solution for all.

4.4 FUTURE STEPS

For the future of this project, I hope that it can continue to grow. The online store is measurable by various parameters. The time users spend on the site, user feedback based on submitted items, and measurable by projects that are implemented that might otherwise have died.

In the future, I wish that it becomes more important to help students deal with blockages in educational organizations. I want to pass on the knowledge I have acquired about the subject in the form of courses, lectures, or small workshops. I wish that as many as possible start maintaining and cultivating their garden.

My goal is to continue working on the project and let the garden grow, and focus more on the community. It should become so colorful and blooming that it can no longer be ignored.



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IMAGES

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Fig. 1

Fig. 3 | Albert Einstein. (n.d.). [Photograph]. Parade. <https://parade.com/1240718/kelseypelzer/albert-einstein-quotes/>

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Fig. 24 | “GoD-Webshop”. Screenshot from 29. May by Alessia Wiss. (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss

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Fig. 32 | “Mistakes for your win!”. Photograph by Alessia Wiss (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss

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Fig. 36 | “Stage free”. Photograph by Alessia Wiss (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss

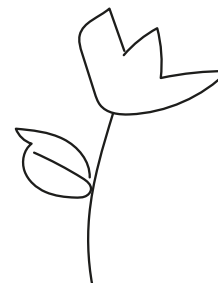
Fig. 37 | “Finish what you start!”. Photograph by Alessia Wiss (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss

Fig. 38 | “Harmony Board”. Photograph by Alessia Wiss (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss

Fig. 39 | “Trak-Sheet Closeup”. Photograph by Alessia Wiss (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss

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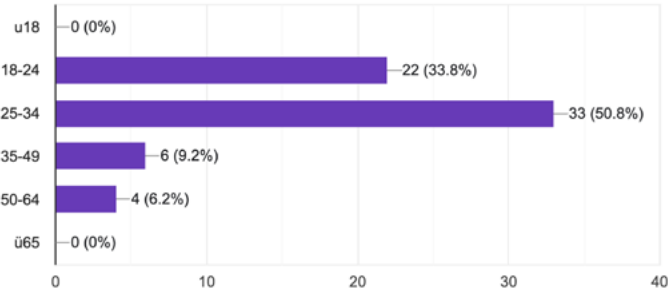
Fig. 41 | “Endless Loop” Screenshot from 29. May by Alessia Wiss. (2022, May) Copyright 2022 by Alessia Wiss



Appendix

The results of the survey from chapter 2.2.1 are presented on the following pages. As of May 30, 2022, 65 people have participated in the study.

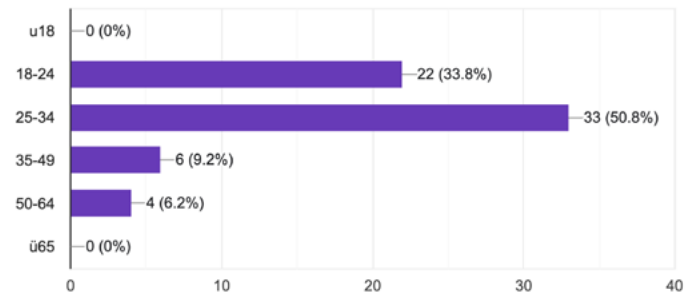
Wie alt bist Du?
65 responses



Was ist Deine Hauptbeschäftigung? (Beruf)
65 responses

Studentin
Student
Design
Innendekorateurin
Studentin
UX/UI Design
Product Manager
Lehrperson
Chef

Wie alt bist Du?
65 responses



Was ist Deine Hauptbeschäftigung? (Beruf)
65 responses

Studentin
Student
Design
Innendekorateurin
StudentIn
UX/UI Design
Product Manager
Lehrperson
Chef

Hast Du eine oder mehrere Nebenbeschäftigungen? Wenn ja, was? (Kann auch ein grösseres Hobby sein)
60 responses

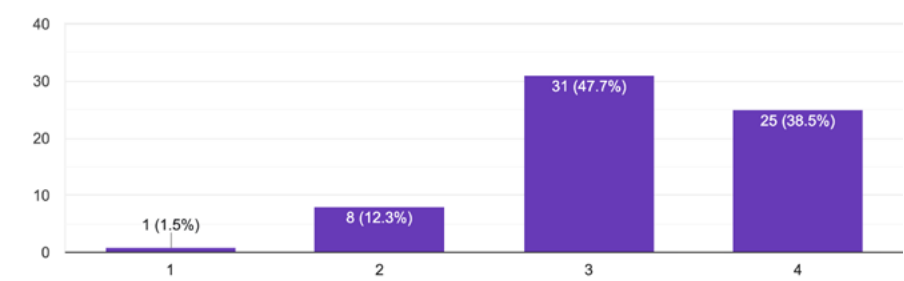
Nein
Kultur schaffende (Eventmanagerin)
Tennis, Musik, Theater, Angeln
Arbeiten in der Bar, Freunde treffen, Handballtrainerin sein
Grafik, Fotografie, Illustration, Tattoo, Musik, Kochen/Backen, Motorrad,...
Programmieren
bin noch DJ und ich studiere Teilzeit
Nei
Immer abwechselnde Hobbies, nach einer gewissen Zeit verliere ich das Interesse (momentan kochen, soziale Netzwerke. Sport. reisen. Musik. lucid dreaming. Poesie. und Kollegen treffen)

Bist Du in einem Anstellungsverhältnis oder selbstständig / freischaffend?
65 responses



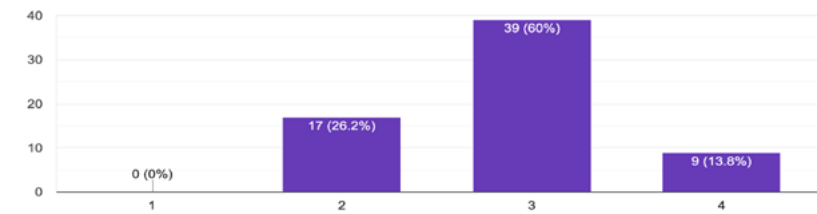
Würdest Du Dich als kreative Person bezeichnen?

65 responses



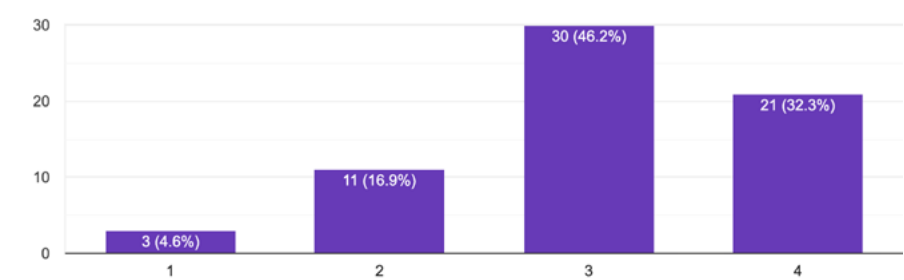
Wie stufst Du Deine Skills ein, verglichen mit Deinem Umfeld?

65 responses



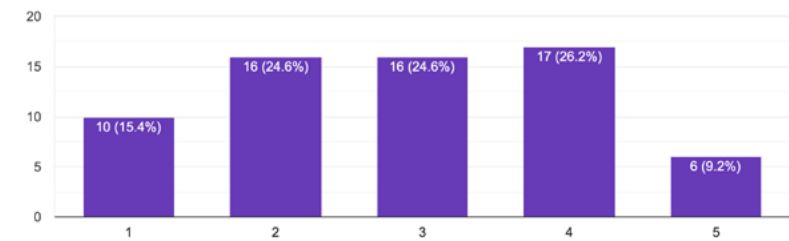
Bezeichnest Du Dich als perfektionistisch?

65 responses



Würden Dich andere als besserwisserisch bezeichnen?

65 responses



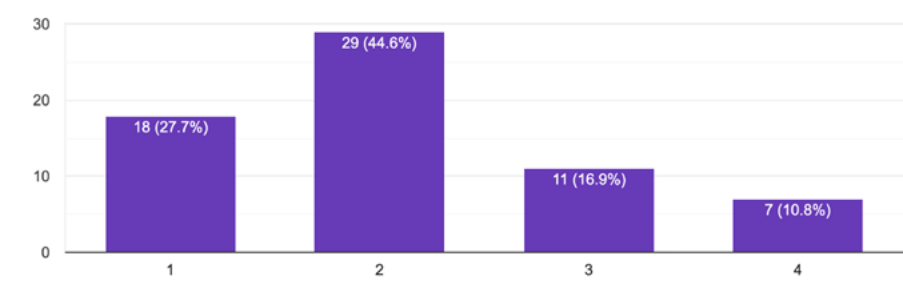
Welche fünf Projekte hast Du in den letzten 365 Tage umgesetzt und abgeschlossen, auf die Du stolz bist? (1-2 erklärende Worte pro Projekt sind hilfreich)

65 responses

Größere Aufträge
eigenes Theater mit einer Gruppe auf die Beine gestellt, Berufsmaturität abgeschlossen, Lebensfreude zurückgewonnen, neue Ziele in Angriff genommen
Ein Bild gemalt für einen Freund Emodied Interaction Kurs :P Zeichnungen für Expedition Mein Tagebuch (ist zwar ein Prozess) Meine Wohnung eingerichtet
Kleine Tattoos, Musik-Installation, grössere Abendessen veranstaltet, Techno-Parties organisiert, ...
Haken für mein Velo montiert :~P Portfolio geplant und umgesetzt Viele Dinge sind irgendwie noch nicht fertig.
hätte da vor allem akademische und berufliche Projekte zu nennen. aber stolz wäre ich, wenn ich mal

In welchem Kontext hast Du diese Projekte umgesetzt?

65 responses



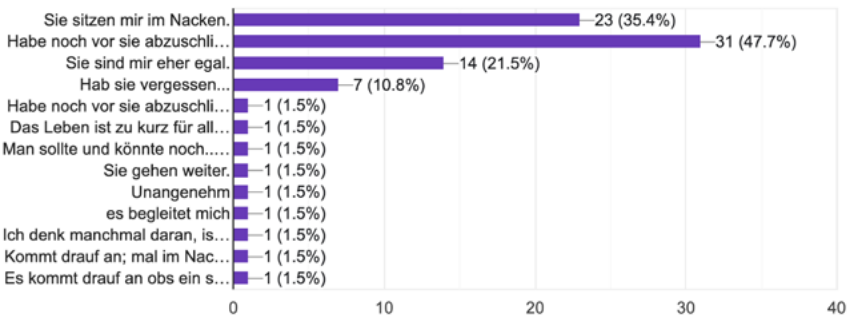
Erinnere Dich an ein Projekt das Du nicht abgeschlossen hast. Was hält Dich davon ab es abzuschliessen?

65 responses

Ein Bild dass ich fertig malen sollte.. Zeit und Angst es nicht gut genug zu machen
Andere Projekte und somit auch nicht genug Zeit dort weiter zu machen
fehlende zeitliche Ressourcen. oder wohl eher eine angemessene Priorisierung
Bullet Journaling (Perfektionismus, Kann nicht dran bleiben, weiss gar nicht wie ein Tag planen, wenn ich nicht weiss was ich machen soll oder was priorisieren)
Zeitaufwand
Meiner Meinung nach war es nicht so toll, dann dachte ich "lieber später ein Neues mit viel potential anfangen, als noch mehr Mühe in Etwas zu investieren was sowieso nicht so gepasst hat". Oder aus Zeitgründen.
Portfolio. Zeit
Zeit und vor allem Ressourcen

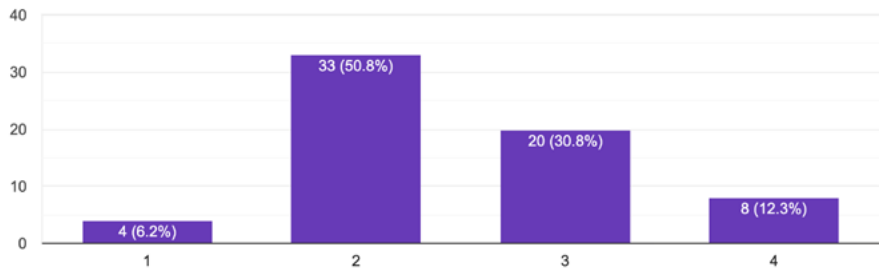
Wie fühlen sich unabgeschlossene Projekte für Dich an?

65 responses



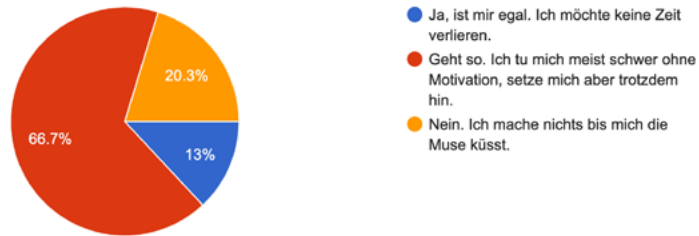
Wie oft nimmst Du Dir Dinge / Projekte vor, welche Du dann nicht umsetzt?

65 responses



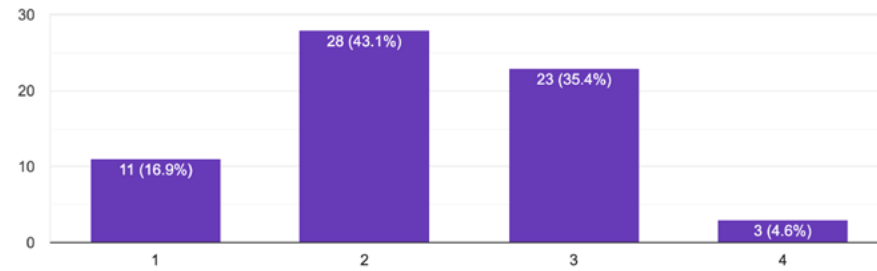
Kannst Du Ideen auch umsetzen wenn Du im Moment nicht motiviert bist und keinen Flow verspürst?

65 responses



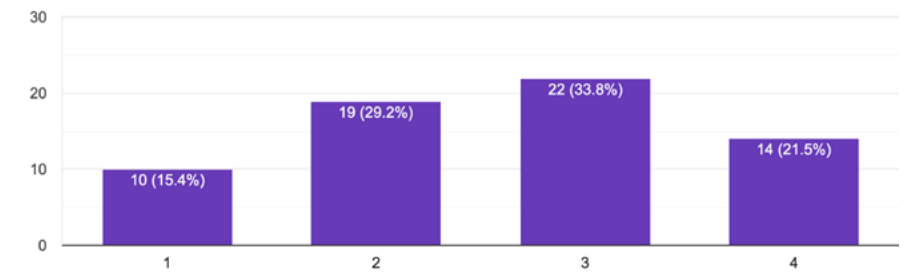
Würdest Du sagen, dass Du Dein Potential ausschöpfst?

65 responses



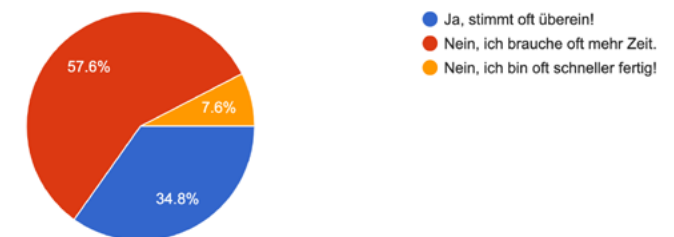
Wieviel Überwindung kostet es Dich, Ideen in Tat umzusetzen?

65 responses



Stimmt die aufgewendete Zeit überein, mit der Zeit, die Du für einen Task geplant hast?

65 responses



Wie oft konsumierst Du mehr als 40 Minuten am Stück Medien? (Filme / Serien schauen, Social Media scrollen, usw.)

65 responses

