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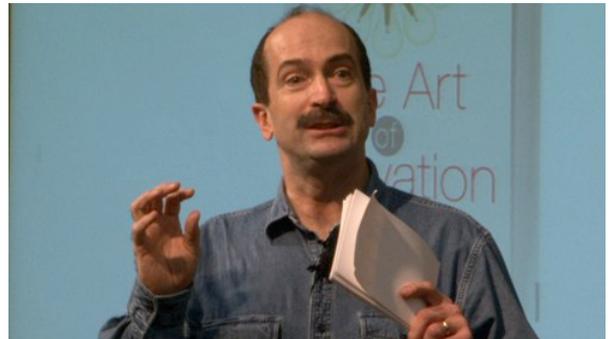
Thinking Like a Traveler

Tom Kelley, *IDEO*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2099/Thinking-Like-a-Traveler>

Like taking vitamins or exercising daily, Tom Kelley, General Manager of IDEO, points out that fostering lifelong creativity depends on instituting good, healthy mental habits. This first habit on his list of five encourages thinkers to become hyper-aware of their environment, and to notice the common and everyday with new eyes. Capture fresh ideas and don't be afraid to use them later, he insists.



Transcript

This is partly, this idea about innovative for life. This idea of building up momentum is partly about starting good habits. So just as you could start now, the good habit that relates to health and wellness. If you could, starting today, eat edamame as we do at our house you might imagine, instead of potato chips or pork rinds or whatever your snack of choice is. If you could do that, and start that habit, and continue it on that would contribute to your health and wellness over the course of your life. In the same way, you can start mental or behavioral habits that will help you be an innovator for life. And so it's really about forming habits now that are going to help you later on. And I came up with five habits. I'm sure if you put your mind to it you can come up with a lot more, but for purposes of the time we have available to us I think five will be plenty. You want it to be seven, plus or minus two if you've read that research, and so a five.

Nice and easy. And the first one and maybe my favorite of them is "think like a traveler". It's easy for me to this, I spend 100 nights a year away from home and so I think like a traveler all the time, I'm on a plane. But what I mean when I say "think like a traveler" is: Ever notice when you go to a distant city, especially when you travel internationally, ever notice that there's a piece of your brain that is turned up on high. You're in this hyper aware state where you notice everything. You notice how the coins and the money is different, it's all better than the money in America, by the way. We got a billion graphic designers or something in America, this is the best we can do? Our money is all green. I can't figure that out. The coins, we can't do the dollar coin. Anyhow, don't get me started.

So you notice that the money is different. You notice the shoes are different. In fact when you're overseas it's almost the sure the fire way to spot an American is look at their shoes. I don't know why. We always have different shoes than people in Europe or Asia, whatever. You notice the way they serve coffee is different. You notice the trains are different. Little bits of things and your brain is on high alert. It must have something to do with evolution or looking out for predators or something because when you are traveling internationally, that part of your brain is super active. And Tina, I don't if anybody realizes this, is actually a neuroscientist.

I bet she could tell us which part of the brain it is. I don't really care. All I'm saying is whatever part of that brain is that is super active when you're traveling internationally, try to turn up that part of your brain all the time. Because if you can do that, if you can have a higher state of awareness that people around you have, you will spot more opportunities and those opportunities will have value for it. So if you can observe more, if you can learn more, if you can get a better or more up-to-date, we'll come back to that in a minute, a more up-to-date view of human behavior, that gives you power. That gives you credibility as an innovator because something that's going to happen to most of the students in the room is you're going to someday soon join an organization in which people are twice your age and have 10 times your experience. And they will mentally try to use that against you. And you might find that ever so slightly intimidating but just remember this, if you capture

your ideas, if you write them down. If you find some way not to have your observations run down the drain and everybody's got a different way of doing this. For me, shows you how old I am maybe, for me it's a piece of paper.

It's a little pad in my back pocket. But for you it can be something on your smart phone, it can be something on your laptop, it could be something in your blog. But if you can capture those things and then use them as you try to make contributions to organizations, you've got to remember you are the world, undisputed expert of your own experience. So try to capture the lessons from your experiences. You will be able to use those in organizational settings. So that's this idea about thinking like a traveler. You know I think Yogi Berra, a former catcher for the New York Yankees, he kind of addressed this issue when he said, "You can observe a lot by watching." And I like Yogi Berra. He liked that that phrase so much that's he called his book by the way. But I think I get more value from this other guy, from this writer Marcel Proust who said, "The real act of discovery consist not in finding new lands," that's traveling, "but in seeing with new eyes." Which is thinking like a traveler and wow! This seeing with new eyes thing, it gets harder. The older you get the harder this becomes.