

Jumpstarting productive creativity anywhere, anytime – even when your schedule is thrown off

By Carol A. Poore, Ph.D., MBA

With so many distractions vying for our time and mental capacity, making good use of creative time and space is more important than ever.

That's why unplanned events, such as suddenly being disconnected from WiFi or a traffic delay, can cause stress and wear us down where creativity is stymied.

Sometimes, it's possible to redirect unplanned events and turn potential mental "lemons" into lemonade!

When the unexpected comes up, if possible, try to alter your situation, so that you accomplish your goals by using a different approach.

Science shows that when you change your environment, *if only for an hour*, you can re-wire your thinking and develop new, creative ideas and solutions.

What? Yes, it's true.

This is called stimulating the "reticular" part of your brain. By doing something new, you're creating new pathways for idea flow. Scientific evidence proves that as we pursue new experiences, we open new neural connections.

In fact, the May 1957 issue of *Scientific American* contained one of the first research reports describing the discovery of the reticular formation at the base of the brain.

Here's a practical example.

I arrived early to the airport recently, only to discover the flight, due to extreme weather conditions at my destination city, was postponed for three hours. Three hours! Normally, this would have been an irritating start to my travel day.

However, thanks to fun, new airport hangouts, I sought out a cozy and somewhat-quiet space where I could work for a few hours. I experienced [Vino Volo](#), a wine bar and café now located in many airports across the U.S. Working on my laptop, I ordered a sampler of wine and cheese. A brilliant concept!

During my brief stay, I was able to write three blog articles and interview someone at a neighboring table regarding my subject theme! I was a happy camper, enjoying delicious wine and food, and found that my unplanned time was amazingly creative and productive.

Why? By experiencing a new situation, I was "training my brain" to be thinking in "high def" according to [Cheryl Craigie, owner of The Manageable Life](#). I was evoking new sights, sounds, smells and emotions while challenging my brain to build new neural connections.





When this happens, current focus is magnified and mental clutter is more likely to be filtered out.

Even redirecting when there's a traffic jam can be an opportunity to explore new neighborhoods and stimulate the reticular area of the brain. Unpredictable situations can be more productive than we would normally think.

While unplanned disruptions don't always lend the opportunity to sample wine and cheese while writing and waiting at an airport, these unpredictable events sometimes can offer productive moments to take a deep breath, and use creative brain capacity.

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