



Scott

One Smoking Hot Piece of Brain Candy

Beguiling Success By Building Beautiful Mind

By Scott Ginsberg

Eye candy.

It's is an idiom of physical attractiveness that means someone with high visual appeal, yet little or no substance.

Brain candy.

It's an idiom of psychological attractiveness that means someone with high mental appeal and significant substance.

Which one describes you?

Hopefully the latter, as it's more enduring, more attractive, more equitable, more marketing, more memorable and more approachable.

The best part is, eye candy eventually loses its flavor.

But brain candy stays sweet forever.

My name is Scott.

I am the world record holder of wearing nametags.

I wear it all day, every day – even at the beach, in the shower and to bed.

Because you never know who you might meet.

But in the past four thousand days, I've learned lifelong lessons about

the practice, the power and the profitability of having a beautiful mind. And after building a profitable enterprise, a dozen books and seven hundred speeches, I decided to put together this book to show you how I did it.

With this 70-day digital devotional, it's time to make your mind smoking hot.

1. **Accept divine timing.** If you're good, you can be creative anywhere. For example, nothing bad ever happens to a writer – it's all just material. Having your heart broken by someone you thought you loved? Missing your flight and getting stuck at a dumpy airport hotel? Spending a week in the hospital with a tube in your chest? Sounds like the perfect experience to activate a creative awakening to me. Let it. Make yourself vulnerable enough to live a life wholly surrendered. It's that brand of humility grants you an all access pass to where your ideas might take you. Merge with the energy that urges you forward. Choose to gently move toward what scares you. You'll discover that the capacity to be delighted and diverted – and the ability to put yourself at the mercy of the moment – is what lets life sing through you. *Are you willing to ache with it all?*

2. **Adopt a role of humble inquiry.** As a mental omnivore, here's your credo: *Sapere aude*. That's the Latin phrase for "dare to know," first used in Horace's first book of Epistles. According to *The Latin Library*, the phrase forms the moral to a story where a fool waits for the stream to stop before crossing it. "He who begins is half done," Horace says. This speaks to the value of human endeavor, which, if you're a mental omnivore, is absolutely essential. You've got to get your ass out of the basement and into the world. That's how you acquire an experiential dimension: By falling awake, armed only with your pen, an open mind and a furrowed brow. Keep why alive. Insulated from inquiry means inundated with injury. *Why do you need permission to ask why?*

3. **Always brainstorm on paper.** Or a whiteboard. Or a flip chart. Whatever. Help yourself experience the symmetry, visual rhythm and shape of your message that would go otherwise unnoticed if you just spoke it. This helps if you're composing a message with a group. Posting the words on paper allows your idea to meet each individual where they are in the most democratic way possible. Sometimes all you need is to just look at your idea on paper for few minutes. Like a Magic Eye poster, you never know what message might come out. *How are you leveraging visual tools to see your message differently?*

4. **Appreciate creativity wherever you find it.** Even if it's a clever sign made by a homeless guy. Creativity is what you do, and you owe it to the world – and to yourself – to recognize, applaud and embrace all forms of it. In the same way that the Dalai Lama encourages us to honor any expression of faith, gaining an appreciation for any and all things creative is your responsibility as an artist. Just another way of saying *namaste* to your crafty colleagues. *Where are you afraid to see creativity?*

5. **Art requires structure.** For that reason, you need to be “due at the page.” Or the canvas. Or the studio. Or the wheel. Whatever your primary creative venue is, commit to the schedule of “being due” at same time, every day. Even if your mother in law is in town and wants to get together for coffee at, you tell her, “Sorry Phyllis, I’m booked up during that time slot every morning.” It’s all about setting boundaries. If you don’t set them for yourself, other people will set them for you. And then they will violate them. And it will be your fault. As Julia Cameron explained in *Walking in this World*, “It is impossible to say yes to our art and ourselves until we learn to say no to others. People don’t mean us harm, but they do harm us when they ask for more than we can give. When we do ahead and give it to them, we are harming ourselves as well.” Choose your creative time wisely. Let nobody steal it from you. *What’s your creative schedule?*

6. **Assess the risk.** There is an inverse relationship between your willingness to risk and the likelihood of criticism. One of the questions I ask myself every morning as I sit down to work is, “What do I risk is presenting this material?” If the answer is “not much” or “nothing,” I either rework it – or don’t publish it at all. It’s simply not daring enough. Too much ink, not enough blood. And whether you’re a writer or not, the challenge is the same: Create a filter for your own work that reinforces the importance of risk. You might ask, “Who will this idea piss off?” or “How much hate mail will this garner?” Otherwise you’re just wasting your time. Otherwise you’re just winking in the dark. *How do you assess the risk of what you release to the world?*

7. **Autotelic, not exotelic.** According to creativity guru Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, there are two ways to approach any activity. First, there's *exotelic*, which means we do something not because we enjoy it, but to accomplish a later goal, i.e., to catch fish. Then there's *autotelic*, which means there's no reason for doing something except to feel the experience it provides, i.e., because you love sitting on the dock. The challenge is to stop trying to label everything. This will lower your inhibitions and enable your natural creativity to flow organically. *What's your mode?*

8. **Bait multiple hooks.** If you inherited five million dollars tomorrow, would you invest all of it in one stock? Of course not. You'd diversify it across several accounts. That way your portfolio would have a stronger foundation, making it less vulnerable to external conditions. This same principle applies to creative professionals who have trouble with discipline. Personally, I'm always working on about fifty things at once. Because in my experience, attacking multiple projects simultaneously garners several advantages. First, it prevents burnout. That's what happens when your creative efforts are more diversely deployed: You don't give yourself the chance to get sick of something and abandon it. Second, by varying your creative endeavors, you establish thought bridges, subconscious connections and unexpected integrations between seemingly unrelated ideas. And as a result, you start to notice natural relationships and structures in your work you never would have seen by working on a single project. Ultimately, this approach relaxes the process and helps contribute to greater consistency in your body of work. *Are you willing to allocate your creativity attention to multiple endeavors?*

9. **Be a brilliant fixer and human mirror.** Whenever I'm reading, I'm writing. In my experience, it's just too hard to separate the two. When I'm not underlining passages, jotting down transient ideas, documenting adjacent thoughts or questioning the author's arguments – I'm fixing. I can't help it. That's just what I do. It's in my blood, and getting a transfusion would simply be too expensive. The cool part is, many of my best ideas came from something as simple as changing or adding a single word to an existing sentence. Your challenge is to incorporate some form fixing into your own creative process. You'll find that it's fun, challenging, energizing and the raging river of raw material never stops flowing. *How are you improving on everything that's wrong with everything else on the shelves?*

10. **Be a human mirror.** Give visual expression to your sense of life. Take your unique experience and put it out there on a platter for people to relate to. In an interview with *American Songwriter*, Bruce Springsteen shared his theory on this very idea: “The audience and the artist are valuable to one another as long as you can look out there and see yourself, and they look back and see themselves.” In short: Be bloodier. Don’t try to become who you think the audience wants you to become. Whenever you get on stage – whatever stage that might be – talk as if directly to one person. And the more intense you get about it, the more people will be grateful for it. You just have to be willing to love yourself and let them watch. As long as you’re not overly self-indulgent, it’s always satisfying to watch an artist being himself. It’s always compelling to show the artist in the process of becoming. And it’s always amazing to see an artist in transition. Almost like your audience feels privileged to be an observer of your process. Give them the chance to watch you use your talents, and then just sit back and smile as you reflect their world back to them. *Are you a mirror?*

11. **Be ahead of your time.** *“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”* Computer visionary Alan Kay coined that phrase in 1971. At the time, he was working in the research department of Xerox. But, as innovative as he was, he failed to convince the higher-ups that his new programming ideas would revolutionize computing. Until. Eight years later, pioneers from Apple Computers used Kay’s ideas to develop a revolutionary, user-friendly computer called The Macintosh. In the end, Alan’s vision for the future changed the face of technology forever. *Take that, toner breath.* That’s what happens when stop predicting the future and start inventing it: You don’t just make money – you make history. You don’t need to be a computer scientist to be ahead of your time. You just need to bear the daily fruit of an indomitable spirit of innovation. *Are you a futurist?*

12. **Be careful not to slide into complacency.** Yes, remember your victory dance. Yes, take pride in your creative victories. But don't over celebrate. Booking a weeklong trip to Vegas just because you finished your final draft three weeks before deadline as a bit excessive. Never trust the prosperity that accompanies prolificacy. Instead, regularly reinstate your humility with the birth of every new brainchild. As Howard Schultz reminds us, "Seek to renew yourself, even when you're hitting homeruns." The arrogance of past victory is the aerosol of future failures. *What are you sacrificing by watching your own touchdown dance on the jumbotron?*

13. **Be flexible in the way you view the world.** Don't think everything to death. Treat every experience with deep democracy. Relax. Consider nothing useless. Trust your spongy faculties to absorb something from everything. Explore ideas first. Then consider whether or not they're relevant to your world. Like the spongy kindergartner who absorbs everything she encounters – good and bad – your mission is to maintain creative flexibility with all that you experience. People. Ideas. Situations. Everything. *Are you willing to learn from people – even if you don't like them?*

14. **Be meticulous in your attendance to language.** The most fascinating book I read this year was *The Notebooks of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. From cultural observations to personal stories to linear notes to transient thoughts, he documented everything. *Everything*. And through his constant observation and meticulous attendance to language, Fitzgerald became one of the classic mental omnivores of his generation. Your mission is to emulate his process: Document stray phrases, cool words, unexpected juxtapositions, overheard-at-the-office-comments and other random dialogues. Keep a record of your reactions to issues. Create a separate folder for each one. Update, revisit and revise them daily. Your creative reservoir is guaranteed never to run dry. *When people speak, what do you hear?*

15. **Be more musical.** In George Carlin's *On Comedy* album, he discussed the power of rhythm in delivering messages. "If you sing while you're speaking, they'll hang on your every word," he suggested. If you can put your words to music, you've got yourself a message. Practice reciting them out loud. Snap your fingers or tap your foot as you edit. You might even turn some music on while you're writing to keep the beat. Musical is memorable. *Is your message is singable?*

16. **Be unhesitating.** Do you have something risky, dangerous and provocative to say? Go for it. Take a little artist liberty and slice into people's hearts. That's the best kind of art anyway: Bloody. Honest. Raw. True. Anything that disturbs people. After all, "Art is infection," as Tolstoy reminds us. The secret is to ask the following question as you create and, more importantly, before you share art with the world: "What do I risk in presenting this material?" If the answer is "not much" or "nothing," you haven't cut deep enough. Go back and draw some blood. Get to the point where hesitation is possible. Then let her rip. *What truth are you still waiting to express?*

17. **Become a master of your disinclination.** In the documentary *I'm Your Man*, songwriter and poetry legend Leonard Cohen reminds us, "You gotta go to work everyday, knowing that you're not going to get it everyday." The secret is cultivating an acute sense of when disinclination is around the corner. Personally, if I don't get anything good after about an hour – I go back to bed. Sometimes for twenty minutes, sometimes for three hours. I've followed this rule for eight years and have never, ever failed to come back to the page refreshed and reenergized. What's more, I almost always go on to pound out something amazing. Lesson learned: Discover what frustrates your ambitions. Know when you've got it, know when you've lost it, know when there's no way in hell you're going to get it, and know when you're going to have to take measures to get it back. Hey, it happens. Resistance can be a feisty little bitch. Don't be afraid to let her win every once in a while. Create around the constraint. It demonstrates humility for the process and motivates you to return with strength. *What's your policy for managing compositional paralysis?*

18. **Become your own muse.** People who complain that they can't find any good ideas should have their vision checked. Ideas are in abundance everywhere. Every minute of every day. And they're waiting for you to snag them. All you have to do is give them permission to happen to you. To make yourself available to their offerings. Art is learning to listen your world – then rendering whatever you feel. *How's your hearing?*

19. **Begin by bowing.** Humility grants you an all access pass to where your ideas might take you. But only if you recognize that it's not you coming up with these ideas. Because they're coming through you – not from you. Invoke the muse before you officially begin your day's work. *Say a prayer. Light a candle. Recite an invocation.* Whatever ignites your soul. The secret is to ritualize it. To establish a practice that's an official, consistent and necessary component to your artistic process. Approached in this humble fashion, there are no limits to where your creativity may lead. *What are you doing to set your creativity on fire right now?*

20. **Bring a new view into existence.** Not even world-class eloquence can rescue a shallow, unsupported, unactionable point of view. Establish a new approach. Pioneer in obscure areas. Maintain contrarian positions to as many subjects as you can. *How original, fertile and unexpected is your theory?*

21. **Build a portable creative environment.** A real artist can be creative any time, any place, with any tools. That's the mark of a master: She shapes her immediate surroundings to feel in harmony with the small slice of the universe in which she finds herself. As I learned in *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, "Whether the conditions in which they find themselves are luxurious or miserable, geniuses manage to give their surroundings a personal pattern that echoes the rhythm of their thoughts and habits of action. Within this environment of their own making, they can forget the rest of the world and concentrate on pursuing the muse." What are your portable creative environments? What enables you to enter into the creative flow at the drop of a hat? Have these on standby at all times. You'll discover that by keeping alternative workspaces ready to go with transportable lightning rods tailor made to your tendencies, you'll feel more in control of your surroundings. That way, when inspiration comes unannounced, you'll be ready to pounce. *Can you do what you do anywhere?*

22. **Build a strategy to leverage free.** The greatest barrier to success as a creative professional isn't incompetence – it's anonymity. It doesn't matter how amazing your art is. If people aren't exposed to it regularly, it doesn't exist. And your artistic identity – credible as it may be – may as well not exist. If you're not giving away your art, for free, every single day, you're either stupid or high on paint fumes. The more you give away for free, the wealthier you will be. I've adhered to my own free strategy for eight years. And it's the single smartest marketing move I ever made an artist. Ever. *What did you give away for free today?*

23. **Coat your voice in blood.** It's kind of paradoxical: The more personal your message is, the more universal your appeal is. I learned at the beginning of my career when I read Tolstoy's advice: "Write only with your pen dipped in your own blood." For that reason, my definition of writing has always been: "Slice open a vein and bleed your truth all over the page." Not ink – blood. And not words – truth. It doesn't get more human than that. Your challenge (even if you're not a writer) is to plug the message you're delivering – as well as the medium through which you deliver it – into that mantra. The cool part is: Bloody messages give audiences access to their truest inmost selves. But only because you went first. That's what it means to be a leader anyway: To go first. And if you don't think you're a leader, you're in trouble. *Is your voice coated with blood?*

24. Commence an unrelenting quest for continuous learning.

This is known as *curiosita*, according to Michael Gelb's book, *How to Think Like Leonardo Davinci*. That's what Davinci practiced, and he created the Renaissance. Not bad. I wonder what would happen if you gave yourself permission to be curious in every domain of your life. Who knows? You could create the next cultural movement. Worst-case scenario: Your creativity triples. Sounds like a win to me. *What's your personal philosophy about curiosity?*

25. **Commission you inner doodler.** Twitter founder Jack Dorsey said in a recent presentation, “Start drawing your idea. Get it out of your head and see it from a completely different perspective.” Even if you suck at drawing. Even if you’re more left-brained than a computer science professor. Draw it anyway. Tap into the unused creative faculties collecting cobwebs in the back of your brain. Produce visual understanding by letting the idea hatch before your eyes. My promise is that you’ll get so jazzed about the organic growth of your idea, that the thought of not executing it will give you indigestion. *What have you drawn today?*

26. Commitment and consistency are the price of admission.

Having an audience means having a responsibility to show up for them. These are your people, and they're waiting for you. And if you abandon them – either by not updating, not upgrading, not respecting or not listening to them – they will never forgive you. And they will tell everybody what a wanker you are. Of course, you're still entitled to your boundaries. Your audience doesn't own you. And you should press the off button as soon as your body tells you to. Nobody can be on stage all the time. And besides, your audience wants you to be healthy. That's what it takes to build an audience: A deep love of do. Stay accountable to the people who give you their ears. Because while audiences will show up in hordes if you talk a good game – they'll shove off in heaps if you don't walk a consistent game. *Is the message your preaching the dominant reality of your life?*

27. Commitment is the offspring of values. If you can't discipline yourself to do something every day, there's only one explanation: It's simply not that important to you. *Period.* People always make time – not find time, but make time – for what matters to them. That's how commitment works: It deletes distraction. It makes you wake up early. It turns habits into non-negotiables. When you're committed, you drop everything and get to work. Every day. The hard part is telling the truth about your current level of commitment. And if you're having trouble with that, here's an exercise you might try: Write down a list of the five things you're most committed to. Then open your calendar. See if your life agrees. If you're not happy with the result, either find something else that is important to you and commit to that, or take the current thing that isn't important to you and reframe it as – or reconnect it with – something else that is. *How will you use commitment to open the door to discipline?*

28. **Confusion is a sign of intelligence.** The many holes of a sponge hold water because of a scientific concept known as *surface tension*, which is the slight amount of elasticity that exists between the molecules of water. That parallels to the world of creatively, as being confused isn't always a bad thing. It's a stimulator of productivity. Especially when you "dare to be dumb" and follow up on your perplexities. That's the best way to absorb new material. A sponge holds water, not in spite of its holes – but because of them. Maybe you need a few more holes in your creative process. *How much tension are you willing to maintain?*

29. **Constantly cast about for content.** During a recent webinar, one of my callers asked the one question that absolutely drives me crazy: “Scott, where do you get your ideas?” Are you kidding me? Have you not walked down the street before? Ideas are more abundant than oxygen. Most people just don’t pay attention. They don’t listen with their hearts. They don’t see with the mouths. And they don’t hear with their fingers. That’s what mental omnivores practice: Incurable curiosity. You don’t have writer’s block – you have hearing damage. Perk up, son. *When was the last time you ran out of ideas?*

30. Convert your workspace into a progress-rich environment.

It's emotionally invigorating to surround yourself with evidence of your achievements. What's more, keeping past progress in front of your nose stimulates focus – even if it's incremental. As I learned in *Making Ideas Happen*, “As a human being, you are motivated by progress. When you see concrete evidence of progress, you are more inclined to take further action. Surround yourself with it. Celebrate it.” *What's on your wall?*

31. **Court inspiration.** To *court* is “to woo and pay homage.” Which means it’s more than just holding boombox outside of a girl’s window. Courting means inviting openly. Courting means pursuing proactively. Courting means honoring consistently. Courting means acknowledging publicly. Courting isn’t limited to your dating life – it’s also an essential element of your thought life. Because when it comes to the creative process, treating inspiration with respect and love is the only way to make it manifest.

32. Create a daily ritual for emotional release. Feelings weigh a ton. And if you never let them out, they're going to find a home in your body. I made that mistake years ago when I got so stressed I had to be hospitalized. Three times. In six months. *Yikes.* Fortunately, I took up vomiting. It gave me the perfect outlet to vent, bitch, complain, freak out and express every ounce of negativity running through my veins. Which was a challenge, because I'm such a positive person. But it all goes back to permission. And amazingly, once I would finish my three pages, I physically felt better. I got all the negativity out of my system. And my stomach cramps settled, my mental pressure released and my overall posture relaxed. No wonder I never miss a day: *My health depends on it.* Look, I don't know what battles you're currently fighting. But I do know that life can knock you on your ass sometimes. Next time you find yourself curled up in a ball on the floor, scoot over to the toilet and let her rip. Your body will thank you. *If you keep these feelings bottled up, where will it lead?*

33. Create an unprecedented dramatic device. Creativity pioneer Arthur Kohler explained that the measure of an artist's originality is the extent to which his selective emphasis deviates from the conventional norm. Couldn't agree more. Because that's what audiences love: People who are truly unexpected – not just the opposite of what's expected. In his book, *Advanced Genius Theory*, Jason Hartley explores the careers of musicians like Lou Reed and Bob Dylan. He writes, "If your audience expects you to go one way and you go the opposite way, it's basically doing the same thing. It doesn't take much imagination to do the opposite. But to do something that is completely off the spectrum like a Victoria's Secret commercial or a Christmas record, you blow them away." Constantly challenge yourself – every time you create something new – to do so in a way that knocks the world for a loop and introduces your audience to a previously fringe world. Because if you can make but a few people pause, you win. You just have to know when to pivot. *How unpredictable are you willing to be?*

34. **Cultivate a more acute sense of resistance.** Part of self-discipline is learning how to override yourself. That means becoming a master of your disinclination. That means discovering what frustrates your ambitions. And that means not allowing yourself the indulgence of saying you're too busy. The problem isn't decreasing productivity – it's diluted priorities. And you will lose the discipline game if you fall victim to what's latest and loudest. Extinguish whatever distractions seduce you. Drown out the world's chatter and find the energy that urges you forward. Stop performing minor tasks that engulf you in pointless, trivial action. Instead, create around the constraint. Take the energy you've been burning on creative avoidance and redirect it to help you execute what matters. *What's your system for stamping out redundancy?*

35. **Dare to be a beginner.** “Never too late, never too old, never too bad and never too sick to do this yoga and start from scratch again.” That’s the mantra of yoga legend, Bikram Choudhury. Interestingly, the word “discipline” comes from the Latin *discipulus*, which means, “student.” This suggests a few things. First: Declare your incompetence. Admit what you know you don’t know. Second: Learn to love mistakes. After all, a mistake ceases to become a mistake the moment you learn from it. Third: Try not to be too hard on yourself. Let go of the self-criticisms that make discipline a big bite to swallow. And finally: Be patient. Every great chess player was once a beginner. Remember: If the road to victory were smooth, everyone would already be there. *Are you prepared to zero out your board?*

36. **Desire is irrelevant.** Of course you don't want to go to the gym. But you will anyway. Because you know your body will thank you tomorrow. And of course you don't want to come in an hour earlier. But you will anyway. Because you know the people who matter will notice. This is easier said than done. Unfortunately, delayed gratification isn't exactly your strong suit. Especially in a society that gives you everything you want in six seconds. The challenge is making sure your lack of desire to do something is outweighed by the benefit of doing it. Use visual reinforcements to keep that ratio in check. Surround yourself with pictures, images and other reminders of the positive outcome of your discipline. This will help inspire a vision of the future and, most likely, annoy the hell out of your spouse. Good. Maybe this will inspire him to drag his ass to gym too. *Have you learned to love what's good for you?*

37. Discipline derives from the wellspring of why. Willpower is overrated. If you want execute what matters most – every single day – you need to tap the reservoir of whypower. Here’s the reason: When you actively cultivate the purpose driven nature of your work, discipline becomes a non-thought. What was once a desire becomes a habit. And what was once a habit becomes a non-negotiable. A positive addiction. Just something you do. That’s why I’m able to write for seven hours a day, every day: Because I keep a list of one hundred reasons why I do what I do, in my wallet, and I read it to myself every morning. That’s your challenge: To become a walking translation of stunning clarity of purpose. To pinpoint the deepest motivations behind what you’re trying to discipline yourself to do. Find that, and you’ll have no problem slogging it out every day. Daily bread without daily meaning tastes like daily crap. *How are you fueling your discipline with a firm why?*

38. **Disturb people.** The word “disturb” comes from the Latin *emotere* – the same derivative as the word “emotion.” That’s all you’re doing when you’re being a disturbance: Evoking emotion. Interrupting the quiet. Unsettling the peace. Upsetting the mental landscape. Could be positive or negative or neutral. Doesn’t matter. The point is: You can’t go down in history if you’re not willing to shake things up in the present. Learn to be constructively challenging – but without being ignorantly defiant. Learn to be delightfully disturbing – but without being painfully annoying. After all, grinding the gears just because you love the sound doesn’t help anyone. And doing something just for the sake of being criticized isn’t worth being criticized for. *Are your monkey wrenches well intentioned?*

39. **Do more experimental work.** Few musicians were – and still are – more ahead of their time than Brian Eno. As the former frontman of Roxy Music, and as the principal innovator of ambient music, Eno makes enthusiastic use of all that technology has to offer. He just tries things. He experiments. And his insatiable desire to tinker and toil with every tool available fuels his ability to innovate consistently. In his immortal words, “Art is the one place where we can crash our plane and walk away from it.” To infuse your creative practice with Eno’s winning attitude, here’s my suggestion: Gently move toward that which scares the crap out of you. Next time you have a radical idea that makes your stomach drop, don’t run from it. Listen to your body. It’s trying to guide you. Lean into your worry with all your might. And remember that if you’re not scaring yourself – you’re not stretching yourself. Comfort zone? Pshht. *Are you willing to set up basecamp in uncharted territory?*

40. **Do your own thinking.** You'd be amazed how many people delegate this task. They wimp out and let their friends, their company, their family or the media think for them. Yes, it's easier and faster – but it's also stupid and dangerous. And if you're not willing to ask yourself what you think before adopting the perspective of the masses, you're not an innovator – you're a sheep. People will try to define who you are and then make you believe that definition. You can't let that happen. Take a hint from novelist Ayn Rand. She was more ahead of her time than most of her literary contemporaries. Not only because she grappled with questions most people didn't even have the guts to ask, but also because she asked people to ask her about her thinking. That's how she stayed sharp. That's how she stayed relevant. And that's the lesson we can all learn: *You can't be ahead of your time if you're behind in your perceptions.* You must strive to reevaluate commonly held ideals. You must stick closely to the shape of your truth. And you must exhibit intellectual toughness and uncompromising progressive character. No matter how many haters oppose you. No matter how many times you're hit by the snarls. *Are your thoughts your own?*

41. **Don't be selfish with your brain.** You can't keep your thoughts to yourself. Ideas weren't meant to stay ideas. And the people who change the world never do so with their mouth closed. Nobody is going to steal your thunder. That is, not if you're smart enough to be so identified with your work that nobody could steal it, and if they did, people would know it. What you have to remember is, when you share your expertise generously, people will recognize it, become addicted to it and eventually depend on you for it. Hell, they might even have something to add to improve it. Whether you increase your creative openness, ramp up the frequency with which you publish your ideas or solicit more feedback from the people who matter most, your efforts will not go unrewarded. You just have to be willing to share. To trust that the more you give away from free, the wealthier you will be. And to have faith that the world will pay you back. *Who have you shared your creativity with today?*

42. **Don't just sit in bed thinking.** Get up and go think on paper.

This kinesthetic process allows you to notice patterns, structures, questions and assumptions connected to your idea that were previously unavailable to an unmoving mind. What's more, the simple act of experiencing your idea three-dimensionally moves you lightyears beyond where your brain could have taken it unassisted. So, whether your capture device is a journal, whiteboard, sketchbook, audio recorder or video camera, just get it down. Puke it out. Otherwise your thoughts are going to find a home in your body. And there's no way you're going to get any sleep when *that* happens. *What is rising up from within your depths?*

43. **Embrace the virtue of volume.** The amount of ideas I have swirling around in my head – at any given moment – would frighten the average person. As such, inspiration is unavoidable by virtue of my enormous input and constant stream of stimulation. It's simply a matter of probability. You don't write seven hours a day and read five books a week without getting a few ideas. And the best part is: It doesn't require a heavy workload or significant stressful activity to accomplish this. Creativity is a highly relaxed, incremental process. And if you want to get there, here's my suggestion: Start your idea factory. Practice freezing what happens to you, extracting the inspiration from your life and documenting your experience along with your reactions to that experience. Soon, inspiration will form a line around the block just to get five minutes of your time. *If deleted one hour of television from your life, how would your creative volume change?*

44. **Everything is fair game.** Here's the approach I take to creativity: I never met a piece of content I didn't like. And the limitless sources of ideas are as richly dense as a Chinese street party. Cement your insights and give cohesion to the chaos, fuse information from every source you can get. Embroider the accumulated threads of daily observation into a striking tapestry of innovative thinking. With this kind of palette diversity, it becomes easier to discover new dimensions of awareness and locate more layers of insight. As long as you commit to being bolder in your experimentation, you win. *Are you actively approaching the world with posture of deep democracy?*

45. **Finished is the new perfect.** In a recent interview, Ira Glass made a brilliant comment on the creative process: “Your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is a killer. And your taste is why your work disappoints you.” That’s a tough pill to swallow: Knowing that not everything you make will feel like a masterpiece. In fact, I remember getting to that point with brandtag. The obsessive-compulsive part of me wanted to keep editing, revising, updating and improving the final piece. But the impatient part of me said: *Just ship the damn thing.* Declare it done. The hay is in the barn. Because without this crucial moment, you trap yourself in the infinite regression of better. And it’s more convenient to be a victim of resistance than to risk executing what matters. My suggestion: Stop ironing out the wrinkles nobody is going to notice. By fixating on improvement, you’re missing what you already are. *When will you realize that you’re the only person waiting to get everything right?*

46. **Follow your unintentionals.** Don't overlook fringe thoughts. And don't be afraid to take a mental detour and find yourself in a different place from where you started. That's the fun part about creativity: The detour is the path. And it's those offhand, unintentional suggestions that mature into ideas that end up denting the world. The cool part is, once you learn to go where your unintentionals take you – and learn to celebrate once you get there – fresh new music starts to make its way into your life regularly. All because you affirmed it. After, gratitude is the great gravitator. Courageous artists are the ones who let ideas happen to them. *Are you creating what you feel like creating, or listening to what wants to be created?*

47. **Get good at recognizing beginnings.** The reason prolific professionals are masters at starting, progressing and executing their projects – is because they've perfected the art of seed spotting. They see everything with the eyes of the future. They estimate movement value early. And they take action on those concepts without delay. That's the mark of prolificacy: Lots of irons in lots of fires. Working on multiple projects simultaneously. Doing so helps you create thought bridges, subconscious connections and unexpected integrations between unrelated ideas. As a result, you will automatically notice natural relationships and structures in your work. What's more, your creative efforts are more productively deployed when you start multiple projects simultaneously. Yes, it requires considerable self-regulation to pursue multiple projects concurrently. But by shifting between ideas as circumstances dictate, you never get burned out and always execute without remorse. *What did you start today?*

48. **Give yourself permission.** Boundaries are saviors. They reinforce our integrity, preserve our values and protect us from dangerous situations. But when it comes to creativity, every artist needs a space without circumference. A private container of safety where judgment can't enter. And a structureless venue where ideas can run free without the scrutiny of readers, critics, editors – and, most of all, yourself. That's why vomiting is so essential to your creative practice: *It's the only place where you're completely free.* Nobody is going to see what you wrote anyway. You can be any version of yourself you want. That's how vomiting works: It liberates you from the tendency to edit, which later pays off when it comes to the real work. And simply by risking honesty in private, it starts to become easier to live your truth in public. But you have to give this time to yourself. You have to believe that you deserve this gift. Otherwise you'll never steal the time to pull the trigger. *Are you willing to get up twenty minutes earlier to create this space?*

49. **Greet life with openness.** When readers and audience members ask what inspires me, I respond with one word: *Everything*. Movies. Interviews. Nature. People. Books. Graffiti. Abandoned parking lots. Everything. All you have to do is pay attention. That's all creativity is anyway: Active listening. You don't have writer's block – you have hearing damage. To court inspiration, salute all you encounter with a posture of deep democracy. That means say yes to all of it. That means reject nothing and take in everything. And that means choose to treat everything you experience with unconditional positive regard. What's more, developing a deep love of do. Refusing to stand for the idle moment. That way, interesting things don't happen to you – you happen to them. Ultimately, you have to be approachable to the world. And you have to allow the world to be approachable to you. Because if you harbor a hardened heart, inspiration won't think twice about returning your calls. Remember: Feared, creativity atrophies. Saluted, creativity blooms. *What will you have to change about your attitude to become inspired by everything in site?*

50. **Keep ignition sources handy.** During a television interview in the late nineties, George Carlin shared a fascinating insight about his creative process. “I hardly touch drugs anymore. Maybe once a month. But I always have a joint nearby. Because when I’m writing and really pouring it out, one hit is all I need. One hit, and it’s punch up time. With that judicious use, there’s some value. Other than that, most of the drugs we use don’t let us leave them alone.” Carlin proves that pulling teeth isn’t about taking drugs, but about having access to an ignition source. Using something to open a window and broaden a vista. Personally, my drug of choice is reading. From books to blogs to articles to tweets, all I need is one inspiring word, one disturbing phrase or one noodling sentence to make my eye twitch and send me off to the creative races. That’s the moment. That’s the ignition source that will spark something for me to build on. And it enables me to turn a seed into forest before the rest of the world even realizes it’s raining. *What’s yours?*

51. **Let craziness be the inspiration.** Not the brakes behind your ideas. I call this profitable insanity: The most underrated weapon in your creative arsenal. Sadly, the world is lightning-quick to confuse crazy with dangerous. Or stupid. Or unprofitable. Or mentally unstable. Almost like a reverse halo effect. As if being called crazy was a dangerous thing. But the reality of creativity is: Success requires crazy. You don't have to pull a Van Gough and resort to self-mutilation. But the courage to keep your work singular, unexpected and expeditiously non-conforming will always serve you well. Remember: If you're not nuts, you're a putz. *How do you respond when people tell you that you're out of your mind?*

52. Live in an atmosphere of encouragement. Where people don't ask you to edit yourself. Where support flows uninhibited. And where you're enabled to be the best, highest version of yourself. That's the foundation – the support system – from which courageous creativity grows. Personally, I was cut from the cloth of artists. From painters to musicians to dancers to writers to wood carvers – everyone in my family creates something. As such, there's never been a shortage of artistic encouragement in my life. And I give thanks for that every day. Even if you don't come from a creative bloodline, figure out which people your support structure can best contribute to your foundation. *How many creative people are you having lunch with this month?*

53. **Make transparency your natural tendency.** People follow people because of how they think – not what they do. If you want to build your audience, either bring your brain to the table or take your ass to the door. Bleed your truth all over the page or blow your chances of standing on the stage. Every great comedian knows this by heart: You have to have a point of view instead of just telling jokes. At the same time, strike a balance between sharing your life and puking your troubles. Nobody needs that much honesty. And there's a difference between transparency and group therapy. Instead, learn to be a strategic screw up. Be selective about what you reveal. Yes, remain committed to communicating how you feel. But before you start vomiting in the name of authenticity, always ask yourself the question, "Is this actually important to my audience, or does it just make me feel better?" What's more, give your audience a chance to imagine your truth with you. That way it's participation – not just voyeurism. *Are you free enough to risk being seen by people?*

54. **Motion creates emotion, and emotion creates art.** There's something about moving through world: It helps you feel real, makes you feel alive and invites inspiration to join you for the ride. Here's a list of practices: First, take the train when flying would be cheaper. Work overtime to notice the landscape. Relish the opportunity to watch the world pass you by. Second, walk when catching a cab would be more convenient. Force yourself to become more intimate with your surroundings. Spot things you would have otherwise missed in the car. Third, ride your bike when catching the subway would be easier. Break your routine. Bare the cold. Let your senses be overwhelmed. Each of these examples paints you into mindful, artistic and stimulating corners. And if you infuse them into your normal creative routines, you'll be amazed at what you find. *Which of your daily travel routines are you willing to violate?*

55. **Never stop absorbing.** Being a sponge isn't just a cute little metaphor assigned to curious, innocent children. It's actually quite scientific, according to author Susan Smith Nash, Ph.D. "*Cognitive receptivity* is a state of mental preparedness. It is a combination of cognitive readiness – the learner's levels of development – and of psychological openness – the learner views the environment." Three lessons learned. First, be consumed by overpowering curiosity. Initiate a love affair with the things that never cease to make your head tilt. Second, stay devoted to your thought life. Make a conscious effort to remain intellectually captivated and productively preoccupied as often as possible. Third, seek out the inherent novelty in all you perceive. Execute new awareness plans frequently. *How welcoming is your brain?*

56. **Never underestimate the value of volume.** My favorite scene in *The Bucket List* is when Jack Nicholson makes a crucial decision: *He's going to kiss the most beautiful girl in the world.* Confused, Morgan Freeman asks him how he plans to accomplish that. And in one word, Jack says it all: "Volume." That's what all audience builders know: You have to play the numbers. You have to increase the probability of success by virtue of volume. Take the Grateful Dead, for example. If anyone knew how to build an audience, it was those guys. But contrary to popular belief, their success didn't just come from their legendary shows. Live concerts weren't the sole source of their massive followership. Sure, they did over two thousand shows – but the Grateful Dead still made records. Over a hundred and thirty, to be exact. That's more than any other rock band in history. And if you want to keep on trucking with your audience, you have to come to terms with something: You're not writing a book. Or publishing a blog. Or dropping an album. You're contributing to an ongoing body of work. Forever. *What level of volume has your audience come to expect of you?*

57. Notice things and give them names. Everyone has heard everything before. If there is nothing new under the sun, what do you say? Create names, designations and titles for the things you notice. Make them original, creative and consistent with the branding of your philosophy. These names are your content, your products, your branding, your expertise, your marketing, your technology, your philosophies and your differentiators. As Seth Godin says, “Part of the challenge in breaking through is finding a niche you can overwhelm.” When you name something, you can do something about that something. You can begin exploration and working with that something. You can help people talk about that something. You can change people’s thinking about that something. *What are you naming?*

58. **Patiently wait for the right water.** When you draw a bath, it's never hot right away. You have to let the cold water swirl into the drain for a few minutes first. Eventually, when hot stuff starts to pour out, you plug up the drain and ease yourself in. But until then, you have to release the water without committing to it. Otherwise you'll fill up the tub with the wrong stuff. Vomiting is exactly the same way. The point is to purge all the crap out of your system first thing in the morning: *Yesterday's fight with your mother. Last night's bizarre dream. That annoying barking dog from next door.* Just puke it all out onto the page. And keep doing that until the hot water shows up. Even if you feel like a negative, whineybag. Because about maybe fifteen minutes later when the real meaning starts to manifest, you know it's time to stop vomiting and start creating the real work. Without this necessary release, you'll never dig deep enough beneath the surface of life's bullshit to find the art that matters. *Are you bathing in the wrong water?*

59. **Recalibrate your creative baseline.** Every morning during my daily appointment with myself, I listen to the same twenty-minute audio recording. It's a combination of deep breathing, self-hypnosis, guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation and mindfulness meditation. And I attribute much of my creative and spiritual foundation to this very ritual. The cool part is: You can't download this audio track from the Apple store. My therapist and I wrote the script together, he recorded it during one of our sessions and then I went back and layered music over the words. Nobody else on the planet has ever heard it, and nobody ever will. Because it's personalized for me. Interestingly, I recently found my creativity lagging. Almost to the point of boredom with my own material. Sure enough, I met with my therapist and we recorded a new audio experience. Fast forward to a few months later, and my creativity is on fire. I'm writing stronger material and working on new projects that are bigger than anything I ever could have imagined. That's the thing about creativity: It doesn't happen to you, it happens through you. And if you want to open the channel to that higher force, you have to regularly recalibrate on a baseline, spiritual level. *How do you renew your creative spirit?*

60. **Seek out the inherent novelty in all you perceive.** Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, founder of the flow movement, has written volumes on courting inspiration. In his book, *Creativity*, he suggests the following: “Participate as fully as possible in the world around you. Fascinate yourself with the ordinary. Evaluate critically every novelty you encounter and study ordinary things intently.” It’s a beautiful thing. Like when you’re so engrossed in flow that you don’t realize you’ve spilled hot tea down your leg or spattered blood all over the fret board. That’s when you know inspiration is close. And the good news is: Each of us has our own personal and emotional response to existence. We simply have to make the conscious choice to tap into – and create a personal dialogue with – our immediate environment. What’s more, we have to constantly look for recurring cycles of activities or repetitive patterns in our surroundings. As philosopher Ferris Bueller once observed, “Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.” *How much time are you spending becoming more interesting?*

61. **Stay in touch with your aesthetic sensibility.** Beauty is always relevant to something. And when you surround yourself with things that bring peace to your visual eye, inspiration isn't far behind. My girlfriend, for example, reminds me that the environment is the world's biggest art museum. Do you have a lifetime pass? If not, get out of the house immediately. And as you experience what nature has to offer, look past what you see. Don't just notice it – not why it exists. Don't just think it – think about why you think it's beautiful. The goal is to enter into an engaging relationship with the world around you. To sit with studious attention and become an audience to the symphony of life. Nature, after all, is an endless source of novelty. A glowing source of inspiration wait to infect you with its beauty. *Are you human enough to let it inspire you?*

62. **Study all, but imitate none.** Although Joni Mitchell absorbed influences from a number of different art forms, she still invented everything about her music. From performance style to lyrics to genre to guitar tunings to chord progressions, there wasn't an element of her art that wasn't original. She conducted the orchestra, composed the score and played the music. But you don't have to be a musician to execute this strategy. The secret is to install a practice of constant, individual expression in everything you do. To constantly ask yourself, "If I were me, what would I do in this situation?" That's how you become uncopiable. That's how you become your own adjective. And that's how you give your music a singular quality. By avoiding people and situations that seek to systematically beat the originality out of you. You just have to be willing to pick the box that says, "other." There are no cover bands in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. *Are you the echo or the origin?*

63. Study the anatomy of innovative talent. I'm obsessed with documentaries. Doesn't matter what the subject is. If I can invest ninety minutes dissecting the world of someone smart and cool, count me in. I even keep a journal on my coffee table to document powerful lessons learned from people who were ahead of their time. The point is: You have to make time in your schedule to saturate yourself with inspiration from those who dared to challenge the odds. Whether you watch, read or listen, the process always invites a few cool things. First, you'll get into their heads. That's the best way to understand the innovative mindspace. Second, you'll get into their process. That's the best way to learn how people make decisions that matter. And finally, you'll get into their lives. That's the best way to find out how to embody an innovative spirit. Success leaves clues. Everywhere. *What's your learning plan for finding them?*

64. **Thomas Edison was a fisherman.** Sure, he was the world's greatest inventor, too. But fishing was his thing. *His territory. His place. His solace.* And in those days, fishing was serious business. A man could never be disturbed while he was fishing. Fast-forward to a few centuries later. If you take the official tour at the *Edison Winter Estate* in Ft. Meyers Florida, you might get a chance to snap a picture of Tommy's favorite spot. According to their records, Edison built his own private pier for fishing in the deep water, which he visited daily. But that's not the cool part. What's cool is that Edison never used bait. Just a hook. He was known to go fishing without any bait so he could be alone with his thoughts. For hours. Every single day. That's how processed oriented he was. That's how detached from outcome he was. One thousand patents later, I guess it worked out pretty well for him. *And until we teach ourselves to abolish our intentionality, until we become intrinsically motivated, and until we discover that the purpose can be found in the process, the true potential of our ideas will never be fully realized. Are you using bait?*

65. **Thoughts aren't messages.** A thought is local; a message is global. A thought is a noun; a message is a verb. A thought is the grist; a message is the gist. A thought is edible; a message is digestible. A thought is limited; a message is universal. A thought is internal; a message is outgoing. *Which one are you delivering to people?* A thought is inaccessible; a message is relatable. A thought has a limited shelf life; a message lasts forever. A thought is raw material; a message is a polished product. The ears hear a thought; the heart heeds a message. A thought raises an important point; a message injects an important point. A thought is a function of cognition; a message is a function of packaging. *Which one are you delivering to people?*

66. **Tourniquet the creative flow.** I'm a writer. And I write between four and seven hours a day, every day. But each summer, I stop writing for one week. It's painful, but only because I love writing so much. And that's exactly the point: If you love it, you need to have enough self-control to put it on hold. Because if you don't take regular breaks from the work, it can grow stale. If you never step back from the trees, you'll forget about the forest. What's more, creating a healthy sense of distance from your work gives you the space to refresh, replenish and rejuvenate. And by damming up the flow, compressing the circulation and applying enough pressure, there's an explosion waiting for you when you're ready to return. That's what smart artists do: They fast. They take creative sabbaticals. Ideally, right after they've been on a roll for a while. Yes, it requires tremendous self-control – especially if you love to create. But part of having discipline is having enough discipline not to have discipline. *Are you willing to tie a rope around your heart just to let the blood build up?*

67. Understand what your job is. Comic writer Alan Moore once said, “If the audience knew what they needed they’d be the artists.” Therefore: It’s not your job to help them afford you – it’s your job to help them justify what they can afford. It’s not your job to tell consumers how to consume you – it’s your job to diversify your intellectual property in a way that meets people where they are. It’s not your job to teach people all the time – it’s your job to instill belief in the audience that they can learn from you. It’s not your job to change your audience’s minds – it’s your job to overwhelm their sensibilities so they can change their own consciousness. It’s not your job to constantly up-sell the next gig – it’s your job to use the current gig to take people to a place they ache to go again and again. Ultimately, you have to provide something your audience can’t live without. *Who’s warming their hands by your fire?*

68. **Vomiting is the gateway to self.** Writing isn't just my occupation – it's my religion. And here's what I mean by that: The word "religion," comes from the Latin *religio*, which means, "to link back." The way I see it, your religion is the one thing in your life that every other thing in your life links back to. For me, it's writing. I'm the kind of person who doesn't know what he thinks about something until he's written about it. As Julia Cameron explains in *The Artist's Way*, "Only through writing do you discover what you know. But writing also teaches you that you never write just what you know – you write what you learn as you're writing. Ideas come to you and trigger other ideas. Thoughts crystallize and connect with others, and the combination produces a compound: An insight." You catch up on yourself. You find out what you like and don't like. And you examine and metabolize the different elements your experience. *What will vomiting teach you about you?*

69. **Welcome the unusual.** Aussie novelist and playwright Morris West is famous for the following observation: “One has to abandon altogether the search for security, and reach out to the risk of living with both arms. One has to court doubt and darkness as the cost of knowing.” To incorporate this practice into your thought life – not just your life, but your thought life – try this: Experience something that completely takes you out of who you are. Be an omnivorous scavenger. Cease never from exploration. View things from as many angles as possible by engaging every sense and fully taking in ideas with their whole being. By broadening and sharpening your sensitivity to alternative types of aesthetic value, you’ll make yourself available to new types of inspiration you would have otherwise missed. Remember: When you look with all of your eyes, love cannot be far behind. Good ideas are waiting. *Are you willing to let them sneak up on you?*

70. **When you're in a hole, stop digging.** The best way to find ideas is to stop looking for them. Next time you reach a point of diminishing returns, when your ideas are simply circling the drain, flee. Instead of racking your brain hoping to blindly bump into a solution, go perpendicular to the task at hand. Get the heck out of the house. Like Lao Tzu once said, "If you cannot see the answer clearly, step back. Don't stare harder." Go somewhere, be with someone or expose yourself to something that is completely unrelated to your work. This gives your brain a break and lets your subconscious do the heavy lifting for a change. By physically and mentally displacing yourself, you allow the lungs of inspiration exhale into your life. And when you least expect it, you'll experience something that makes you want to get back to the page immediately. *Do you trust the creative process enough to do the work when you're not around?*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Ginsberg is an author, speaker, consultant, mentor, publisher, award-winning blogger & one smoking hot piece of brain candy. He also wears a nametag 24-7. Even to bed.