

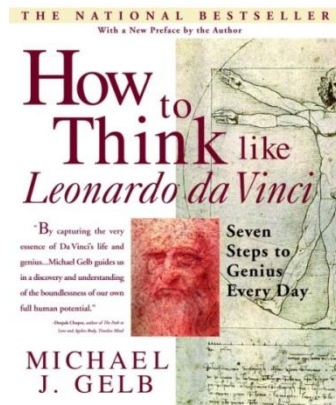


STEPS TO THINKING LIKE A GENIUS

Summary of workshop by Michael J. Gelb

Overview

In our complex world, thinking creatively is an essential skill for all of us as we seek to reach our full potential. What if you could call on history's greatest genius, Leonardo da Vinci, to be your personal mentor in cultivating this ability? This is the question [Michael J Gelb](#), pioneering creative thinker, explored in his workshop at the 2012 [Mind & Its Potential](#) conference.



Leonardo was the embodiment of the creative spirit and his approach to optimising human potential is now more relevant than ever.

Anatomist, architect, botanist, city planner, chef, humorist, engineer, equestrian, inventor, geographer, geologist, military scientist, musician, painter, philosopher and raconteur, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) helped bring the Western world out of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.

Every child is born with the genius potential of a Leonard da Vinci – unfortunately, we often go about “de-geniusing” them. Michael J. Gelb has crystalised da Vinci’s creative thinking in his international best-seller [How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day](#) into seven principles:

1. **Curiosità** – *An insatiable quest for knowledge and continuous improvement*
2. **Dimostrazione** – *Learning from experience*
3. **Sensazione** – *Sharpening the senses*
4. **Sfumato** – *Managing ambiguity and change*
5. **Arte/Scienza** – *Whole-brain thinking*
6. **Corporalità** – *Body-mind fitness*
7. **Connessione** – *Systems thinking.*

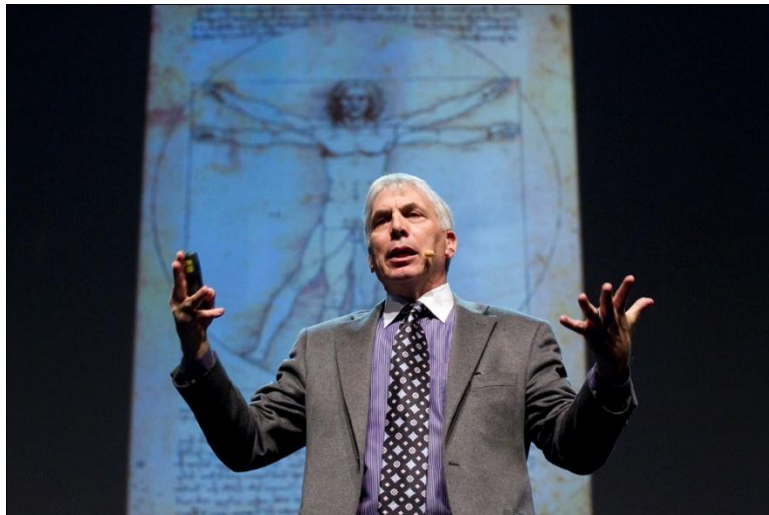


About Michael J. Gelb

[Michael J. Gelb](#), is the world's leading authority on the application of genius thinking to personal and organizational development.

He is a pioneer in the fields of creative thinking, accelerated learning, and innovative leadership and Founder & President of **High Performance Learning** and **The Creativity and Innovation Leadership Academy, USA**.

Michael is the author of 12 books including the international best seller *How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day*.





Curiosità – an insatiably curious approach to life and unrelenting quest for continuous learning

“The desire to know is natural to good men.”

Leonardo da Vinci

We're all born with a natural curiosity about our world. Babies and children are intensely curious about the people, places and things around them – experimenting and questioning in their quest to understand themselves and their world. Leonardo retained his childlike wonder and insatiable curiosity about the world throughout his life – so how can we do the same? How can we nurture our own genuine, passionate curiosity and desire to learn?



Keep your own journal or notebook

- Usually you get your best ideas when you're relaxed and by yourself with no fear of embarrassment holding you back.
- Write down the ideas that come to you at 4 in the morning – by recording them you are inviting your intuitive mind to be more a part of your everyday thinking
- Start doodling creatively about your ideas
- Record questions that interest you
- Write down simple observations about a chosen theme for a day

Some other ways to fire up your Curiosità:

- Find your ideal hobby
- Learn a new language
- Make time for reflection and contemplation
- Read, read, read
- Spend time with little children – they can teach us so much!
- Nurture your emotional intelligence

Further reading:

Creative Journal Writing: The Art & Heart of Reflection - Stephanie Dowrick, author and Interfaith Minister
>> [LINK](#)

Curious? Discover the Missing Ingredient to a Fulfilling Life - Professor Todd Kashdan
>> [LINK](#)

Todd will be speaking at both [Happiness & Its Causes](#) 2013 and [Young Minds](#) 2013.





Dimostrazione – a commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence and a willingness to learn from mistakes

“Obstacles do not bend me.”

Leonardo da Vinci

Like Leonardo we need to be the “disciples of experience”, learning from our mistakes, inviting the opinions of others and challenging long-held beliefs to truly think creatively.

Examine your experience – in your notebook spend time exploring the most influential experiences in your life. How have they influenced your beliefs and worldview? On reflection, could you rethink some of your conclusions?

Three points of view –

consciously examine your beliefs from at least three different angles – invite different perspectives on ideas. Try making the strongest possible argument *against* your belief. By inviting contrary opinions we can open our minds to other possibilities.

Learn from mistakes and adversity – so often we learn as children that mistakes are to be avoided at all costs, and yet only by making mistakes are we able to be creative. In the words of James Joyce, “Mistakes are the portals of discovery.” What is the biggest mistake you ever made? What did you learn from it? Think about what you would do differently if you had no fear of mistakes.

Further reading:

The Pursuit of Perfect – Tal Ben Shahar, leading positive psychology lecturer and author >> [LINK](#)

Learn to fail or fail to learn – The Happiness Coach blog post >> [LINK](#)



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Sensazione – the continual refinement of the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience

“The five senses are the ministers of the soul.”

Leonardo da Vinci

Sharpening the senses, sight, sound, touch, taste and smell, are the keys to opening the doors of experience. As Leonardo noted, so often we look without seeing, hear without listening, touch without feeling, eat without tasting, move without physical awareness, inhale without awareness of odor or fragrance, and talk without thinking. How can we be more mindful of 'la dolce vita', savouring our every experience?



Vision: Looking and Seeing

– focus on something nearby and then something far away - repeat to enliven your eyes and expand your perception, study the lives and work of your favourite artists, describe the sunset, [learn to draw](#).

Listening and hearing

– take time each day to [listen](#) to the layers of sounds around you, practice silence, listen to great music from the classical cannon, develop active listening.

Aromatic Awareness

– breathe in and notice what you smell right now, make your own perfume, study aromatherapy.

Taste

– develop comparative tasting with favourite foods such as cheese, honey, chocolate or wine – start with three varieties, smell and taste, describe your experience.

Touching and Feeling

– go outside and explore the textures of nature, notice the quality of different people's touch, give a friend a foot massage, have a massage your self!

Synthesia

– the merging of the senses that characterizes great artists and scientific geniuses. Try drawing music, vocalize sounds inspired by a beautiful painting, make a delicious [minestrone](#), Leonardo's favourite, everyday dish!

Further reading:

Wine drinking for inspired thinking – Michael J. Gelb
>> [LINK](#)

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Sfumato – (literally “going up in smoke”), a willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty

Keeping your mind open in the face of uncertainty is key to unleashing your creative potential. Sfumato is the ability to maintain your poise, centredness and balance in the midst of the unknown. How can we nurture Sfumato and increase our tolerance for uncertainty?

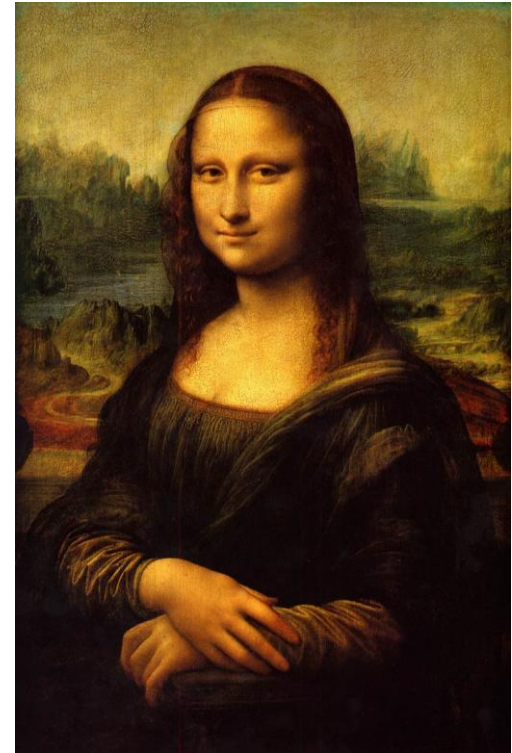
Make friends with ambiguity – think about three times in your life when you felt ambiguous. What was the situation? How did it feel? Where in your body did you experience ambiguity? How do you respond to feelings of ambiguity?

Meditate on Mona

What is [Mona Lisa](#) smiling at? What is her essence? Allow your analytical mind to calm down and appreciate Leonardo’s embodiment of paradox.

Take time for solitude and relaxation – take time at least one or twice a week to go for a walk in nature or sit quietly by yourself

Trust your gut – try honing your intuition by writing down your everyday hunches in your notebook and then checking their accuracy. Listen to what your body is telling you.





Arte/Scienza – the development of the balance between science and art, logic and imagination, whole-brain thinking

We all have thinking preferences usually favouring either the right or left side of the brain. Are you a more artistic, holistic, intuitive right-hemisphere thinker? Or do you prefer the more logical, analytical, fact-based thinking style of the left? For Leonardo art and science were indivisible. How can we too become whole-brain thinkers?

One of the best tools for enhancing whole brain thinking is 'mind mapping' created by the UK's innovative thinking pioneer, Tony Buzan.

Practise mind mapping – all you need to start is a topic, some coloured pens and a sheet of paper and follow these rules:

- Begin with a symbol or picture representing your topic in the centre
- Print key words or draw images on curved branches radiating from the centre
- Print one key word per line
- Print your key words on the line and make the words the same length as the lines
- Free associate and add smaller branches with images or words related to your key words
- Use colours, pictures, dimensions and codes for greater association and emphasis

Here's a short [Mind Map Tutorial](#) using Tony Buzan's iMindMap software.

Make your own mind maps – create a mind map of your next day off, your dream vacation or a perfect evening with a friend. Take about 20 minutes for your first practice map.

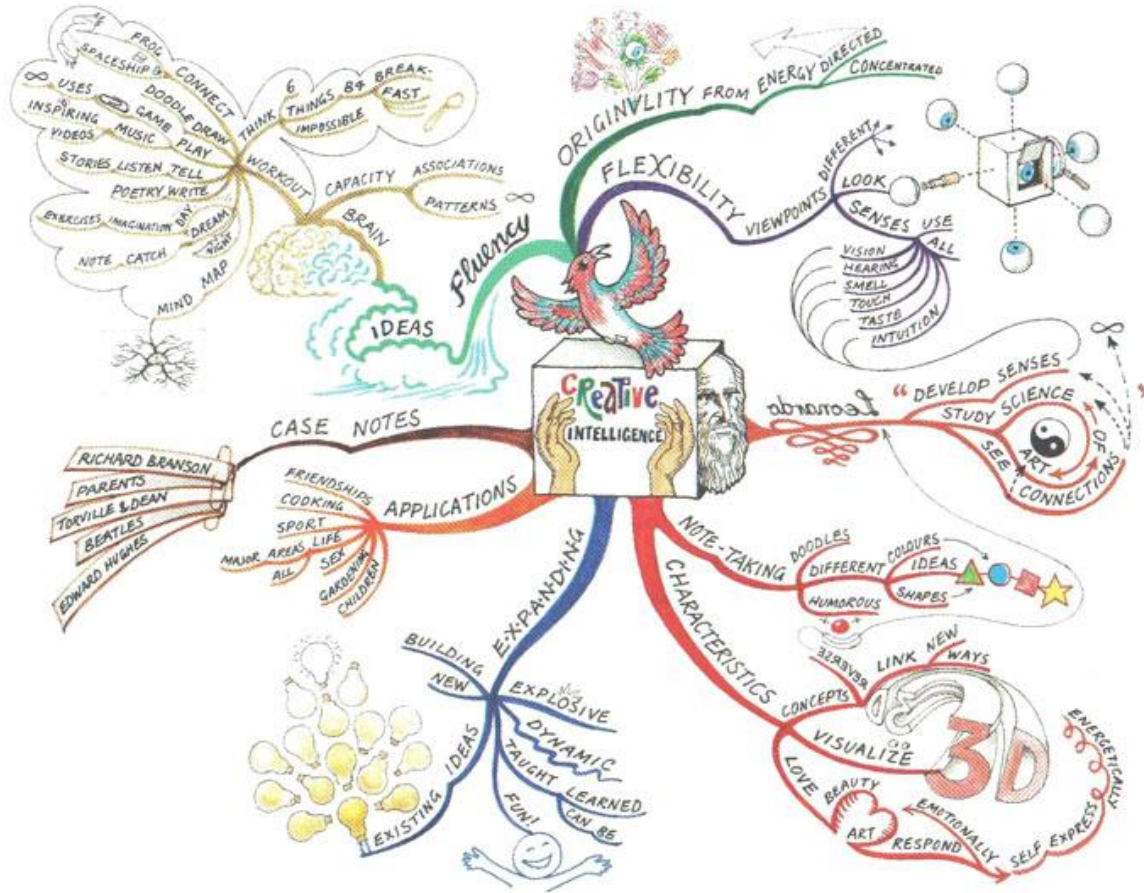
Video presentation:
Innovative learning and thinking techniques
Tony Buzan speaking at the [Mind & Its Potential](#) conference.

Useful websites:

[ThinkBuzan.com](#) – inventors of mind mapping

[Whole Brain Thinking](#)

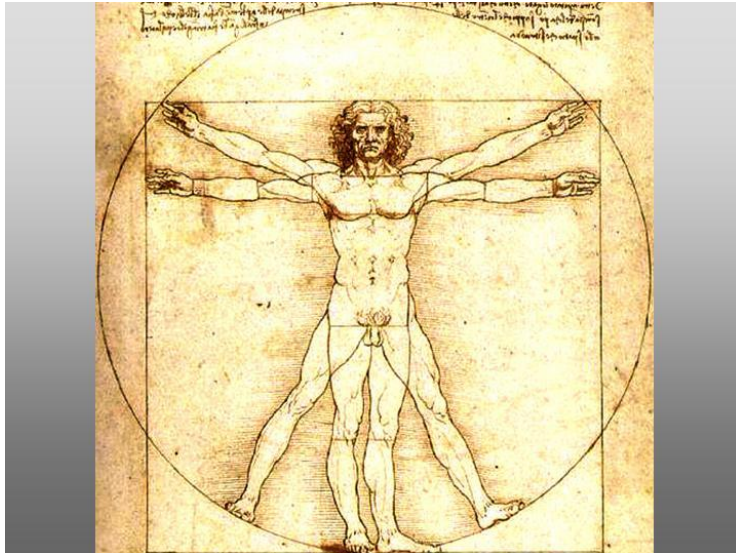
Creative thinking mind map



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Corporalità – the cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness and poise

Rather than the cartoon image of a weedy intellectual, Leonardo was gifted with remarkable physical energy and aptitude. What better advice to follow that Leonardo's own on how to maintain health and well-being.



Maintain your health

- “To keep your health these rules are wise:
- Beware of anger and avoid grievous moods..
- Rest your head and keep your mind cheerful
- Be covered well at night
- Exercise moderately
- Shun wantonness and pay attention to diet
- Eat only when you want and sup light
- Keep upright when you rise from the dining table
- Do not be with the belly upwards or the head lowered
- Let your wine be mixed with water, take a little at a time, not between meals, and not on an empty stomach
- Eat simple (ie vegetarian) food
- Chew well
- Go to the toilet regularly!”

(Taken from **Michael Gelb's** [How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day](#))

Learn to figure sketch

Another way to connect to Corporalità is to familiarise yourself with the human body through life drawing of the figure. Discover the divine proportion in the human frame – the message of the Renaissance is that the divine is in you.

Learn to juggle

A wonderful way to develop ambidexterity, balance and mind/body co-ordination - join in the fun of Michael Gelb's presentation at [Mind & Its Potential](#) 2012.



Conessione – a recognition of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and phenomena. Systems thinking.

“When the tiniest bird alights on a tree, the whole world is affected thus.”

Leonardo da Vinci

As humans we seek for connections – emotional, social, physical, intellectual and spiritual. We look for health, affection, a sense of belonging and intimacy. We want to understand the patterns and relationships underpinning systems. We seek oneness with the divine.

Contemplate wholeness –

What does wholeness mean to you? Do you experience it in daily life? Try expressing your concept of wholeness with a drawing, gesture or dance.

Make connections – seeing relationships and patterns between seemingly unrelated things is the core of creativity. Play with finding connections eg. between an oriental rug and psychotherapy (the rug has intricate repeating patterns and so does your psyche).

Can you make connections between:

- An oak leaf and a human hand
- A laugh and a knot
- Mathematics and the last supper
- A pig's tail and a bottle of wine
- A giraffe and coleslaw?

Conessione meditation - bringing your attention to your breath is a simple and effective way to experience conessione in the midst of a hectic day. Just take a few slow breaths and notice the flow of the breath in and out. Think how you share the same air with all living beings and reconnect with yourself, your environment and everything in it near and far.

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DATES FOR THE 2013 EVENT TO BE ADVISED

mindanditspotential.com.au



17 – 18 June 2013
Sydney Town Hall

youngminds.org.au

