Jumpstarting Creativity
An Activity Guide for Sparking Your “Aha Moments”
Barnet Bain in collaboration with Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Foundation

TEEN & ADULT GUIDE

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Parental Authorization

Attention: Parent/Guardian must complete and sign this page and give to the accompanying adult if it is not the parent. Or, some school systems require them to be turned into home room teacher.

I/We, the undersigned, grant our son/daughter (name of student) ____________________________ permission to participate in an out-of-school educational activity as part of the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Day.

Should a medical emergency arise while my son/daughter is participating in this field trip, the accompanying adult or I will be responsible for initiating medical treatment. I give permission for immediate treatment as required in the judgment of the attending physician.

If there are any changes to the information provided herein, it is the parent’s responsibility to provide the updated information.

________________________________________
Signature of Parent or Guardian

________________________________________
Signature of Parent or Guardian

________________________________________
Date

Special Note: Parents/Guardians of students who are participating in the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Day event should fill-in an “Excused Absence Form” if your school needs it.
An “Aha Moment” — What is that?, you might ask.

Sometimes it’s called a “light bulb moment” because it’s like flipping a switch and suddenly being filled with inspiration, excitement, or awareness. It can shed light on something, like what to do next, where to go next, or who to talk to. It’s a flash of insight that may lead us to discover or understand something. But most of all, it is a moment when we experience a feeling that matters to us—it could be a feeling of peace, enthusiasm, optimism, hope, connection to ourselves and the people around us, or another feeling.

So much of what we think about and do and strive for in our lives is really fueled by a desire for these enchanted moments—when we are experiencing a quality or feeling that I call “The Most Amazing Thing.” The Most Amazing Thing is an extraordinary power that each one of us possesses. And it’s a uniquely different power for everyone. It’s the feeling that you most want to experience—that one that makes you feel the most alive. (And you can also change it any time you want to.)

We often think that what matters to us is something “out there”—like popularity, awards, money, the right boyfriend, girlfriend, or partner, or a material possession (like a certain type of clothes, a bike, a car, a house, etc.). And while it’s perfectly okay to want those things, they alone are never The Most Amazing Thing. They are always substitutes for that deeper feeling that we seek.

Through the activities contained in this guide, you can get clear about what inspires you, what excites you, and the quality of feeling that is The Most Amazing Thing for you—all of which is rocket fuel for your own creative expression.

As a filmmaker, author, and teacher of creativity, I have discovered that “aha moments” and creativity go hand-in-hand. When our moments of inspiration meet with a willingness to take action, something always gets created—whether that “something” is a painting, a poem, a song, an idea, a YouTube video, a note to a loved one, a great conversation with a friend, or some other form of self-expression. And that matters...

Who you are and what you feel is important. There is only one of you. And whether you are 14 or 44, following your own trails of inspiration is one of the keys to a life of happiness and fun … which leads to all kinds of innovation, collaboration, and contribution.

Everyone one wins when inspiration is a priority.
Introduction continued

Activities to Spark Your Aha Moments:

Included below are the following exercises:

**Part I - Activities for Sparking Your Creative Fire**
- The Five Senses Practice—bring your dreams to life  pg. 6
- Drawing Your Solutions—the fun way to solve problems  pg. 7
- The Space Between Practice—moving beyond confusion and doubt  pg. 9
- The Heart Lock-In Technique—a practice for melting stress  p. 11

**Part II - Jumpstarting a Creative Project**
- Choosing Your Project  pg. 12
- Relax Your Mind—playing with random selection  pg. 13
- Making the Links—generating new ideas  pg. 14
- The Commitment of Time  pg. 15
- The Next Best Step  pg. 16

**What You Will Need—recommended supplies:**
- Notebook for writing down your answers and drawing *(and other ways of expressing yourself).*
- A pen or pencil.
- Art supplies of your choice (crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint, etc.)

**Share an “Aha Moment” of Your Own — on video!**

You are invited to make your own 1-2 minute video, which will be added to the video library shared by the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Foundation and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. See page 16 for details.

**Meet Barnet Bain — on page 18**
Part I

Activities for Sparking

Your Creative Fire
The Five Senses Practice

Bring your dreams to life

Think of something you would like to create — a goal, a wish, a dream. It could be something you want to make, achieve, or experience. What is your desired outcome?

This following exercise is an opportunity to engage with your desired outcome through your five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, and seeing. This is an exercise for holding in your imagination a clear sense of what you want to create and bringing it to life by engaging with it.

First, imagine what it feels like to simply touch things — to pet the head of a small furry dog, to plunge your hand into a bucket of ice, or how it feels to walk for the first time in a pair of brand new sneakers.

Now, think of the thing you want to create and imagine what it feels like to touch your desired outcome. For example, what does it feel like to hold the certificate in your hand for completing the program, to feel the strong muscles in your legs after running the race, or to walk barefoot through warm sand on the vacation you’d like to take with your family?

Now that you have your desired outcome as the focus of your attention, use your notebook to answer the following questions—allowing yourself to write down the first thing that comes to you:

❖ My Desired Outcome (goal, dream, wish) is:

❖ Touch: What is it like to touch my desired outcome?

❖ Taste: What is the taste of my desired outcome?

❖ Smell: What is the fragrance or smell of my desired outcome?

❖ Hearing: What is the sound of my desired outcome?

❖ Seeing: What does my desired outcome look like?

When you make it a habit to feel, see, and sense intensely what you want to create in your life—when you purposely direct your attention in this multi-sensory way—you may find your dreams coming to life more quickly than ever.
Drawing Your Solutions

The fun way to solve problems

When it comes to creating something, like the desired goal, wish, or dream you focused on in the activity above, do you sometimes run into obstacles that seem to stand in your way — problems that cause frustration or doubt? Or are you dealing with a particular problem right now that is just getting you down in general?

This activity can help you to find a solution (or solutions) and have some fun while doing it. When we do things like draw, paint, dance, run, or sing, we are inviting under-utilized *body intelligences* into our creative process. By engaging our imagination and feelings—and in the case of this exercise, engaging them through art—we can access creative solutions that are beyond logic and reason alone.

Let’s dive right in to YOUR solution—the relief and ease that are just around the corner…

**Preparation:** Select your art supplies. Find the paper you like. Choose the drawing tools that you enjoy—pens, colored pencils, pastels, crayons, markers, or a combination thereof.

**Step 1:** Bring to mind a problem that you are having, whether big or small. Without getting stuck in it, go ahead and see it, sense it, feel it.

**Step 2:** With your paper and drawing tools, give yourself the OK to address this problem through ART. No need to “fix” anything with your logical mind right now. Your drawing can be abstract, and not necessarily representational. The important thing is to put your heart into it. That’s what seeds activity in your imagination and sparks innovation—the results and effects of which you may find bubbling up in surprising ways in days or even weeks after.

*In no particular order, simply starting wherever you wish…*

❖ Draw your **problem**—the obstacle or difficulty you’re dealing with.

❖ Draw your **feelings** about the problem.

❖ Draw your **desires** related to it—what you want to have happen.

❖ Draw your **solution** (or solutions)—the keys to resolving your issue.
Step 3: Make a commitment to yourself to act on the solution (or solutions) you have drawn. What is your art inviting you to do or feel or express? And when? Do you need to ask for support from someone to fulfill your promise to yourself?

Either directly on your piece of artwork or in your notebook, write down the answers to these questions. If no answers come immediately, that’s a normal part of the creative process, too. Write down, "I am ready and expecting answers and solutions to bubble up in my imagination in surprising ways." Your job now is to be on the look out for clues and answers to show up in surprising places.
The Space Between Practice

Moving beyond confusion, doubt, and fear

Sometimes, the things we most want (or want more of) can seem just out of reach—like closer friendships, more fun and laughter, better grades or a feeling of achievement at school, to name a few. We can find ourselves full of doubt, worry, or fear—upset about what we don’t have or what doesn’t seem to be working; confused about what to do or where to go next. But these cycles of negative thoughts and feelings happen to everyone from time to time and can be moved through quickly with a little practice.

This exercise is powerful practice for freeing yourself from the web of anxiety that all of us occasionally get tangled up in. I call it a practice in co-fusion—a way to get past the fog of confusion. Co-fusion is the process of putting together two separate things—two things (such as pictures in your mind, ideas, thoughts, or feelings) that seem opposed to one another. When you play with paradox in this way, holding disparate things simultaneously, you are working with one of the fastest ways to get unstuck and to unleash the your innate powers of creativity and innovation.

Find a comfortable place to sit and to take yourself through the following steps. Once you’ve read through each of the steps, you can go through them with your eyes softly closed:

**Step 1:** Behind the screen of your closed lids, imagine your most joyful future; imagine your heart’s desire with respect to whatever it is you want to create for yourself, for another, or for your world. Feel it, sense it, and see it as best you can. It doesn’t have to be a perfect connection. Feeling it is the key.

**Step 2:** Move your joyful future over to the right-hand side of the inner screen behind your eyes.

**Step 3:** Imagine your worst terror, your darkest fear, your most frightening thought. A few examples: “He or she won’t love me.” “I will lose this person who I love.” “I will be alone and scared.” “I will get sick.” Whatever it is, do not be afraid to see it and feel it.

**Step 4:** Move that image and experience to the left-hand side of the screen behind your eyes.

**Step 5:** On your inner screen, you now have your heart’s desire on your right side and your worst nightmare on your left side. Your visualization of them doesn’t have to be in vivid detail; just feel them as best you can.
Step 6: Imagine yourself stepping into the middle of the two scenarios, into the space between your most joyful future and your worst nightmare. Experience yourself in the field right between these two potentials. Spend as much time here as you feel comfortable, which can be as brief as 2-3 minutes.

Now take a breath, and let it all go. Great job!

Facing your darkest fear in this way releases the creative energy that gets bound up inside of fear, denial, or repression. You have already dissipated much of its power. Let go of any worry about which future awaits you. Your willingness to do this exercise makes all the difference, allowing creative energy to flow rather than being bound up trying to keep “good and bad” neatly segregated. Now your attention and imagination can go to work creating brilliant futures. Your ability to direct your energy toward your hopes and dreams is greatly strengthened by your willingness to step into the ultra creative space between all things.
The Heart Lock-In Technique

A practice for melting away stress

The following technique is a simple yet powerful tool that I learned from my friends at The HeartMath Institute, a heart-science research center. It is a practice that balances thinking with feeling; creating what is called heart-mind coherence. Use this any time you feel stressed or when you feel like there is a block to a wish or desire.

**Step 1:** Find a peaceful place to relax for five to ten minutes. Close your eyes, take a breath, and shift your attention to the area of your heart.

**Step 2:** Imagine that you are breathing slowly through your heart...breathing in and out with ease.

**Step 3:** While you continue breathing through your heart, recall a feeling of love or appreciation. Maybe it is for a loved one or a pet, or the smell of fresh cookies, or new leaves on the trees in the springtime.

**Step 4:** Imagine that you are gently sending out that heart feeling—that appreciation or love—to yourself and to others.

**Step 5:** Continue this transmission from your heart for the full five to ten minutes (or more, if you would like). As thoughts come in, gently return to your heart.

When you feel complete, bring your attention back to your center and slowly open your eyes.

Not only is the Heart Lock-In Technique a powerful way to deal with stress in any moment, it is an equally powerful way to re-pattern your brain—turning what is familiar and comfortable into something totally new. It’s a practice for gently bypassing the tendency to over-think and address obstacles with and through the heart.
Part II

Jumpstarting a Creative Project

Your creativity has been stirred, unlocked, and engaged. Now it’s time to play with the momentum of that creative power, putting it all to use toward a specific creative project. It could be something you would like to create or make for school, work, or for your own enjoyment at home.

What would you like to CREATE? A song, a short film, a new friendship, a book, a social action movement? Write down a few initial ideas here or in your notebook:

My creative project:

The next set of activities will help you to put your desire into action.
Relax Your Mind

Playing with random selection

Now that you have identified a creative project—something you would like to create, begin to relax your mind and body. It’s time to take a little mental vacation and allow yourself to stop thinking for a few minutes.

One fun and effective way to turn your attention away from everything you’ve been thinking about and doing up to this point is to put your attention elsewhere through the following process of random selection.

From the five options below, choose three—plucking things right out of your immediate surroundings. Write down your answers in your note book as you will be using them in the next exercise:

1. Go to the eleventh word on a random page of your dictionary or thesaurus. What do you see? Raincoat? Raspberry?

2. Open to a section of HuffingtonPost.com and count down to the seventh picture you find. What is that image of? A politician? An image from space? A panda? A piece of quiche?

3. Walk outside and find four things that contain the color red. What is the fourth thing? A flower? A bicycle? A stop sign?

4. Open a book to page 20. What is the first thing you see—the first thing that captures your attention? A word? A color? A shape? An image?

5. Search the general “Jobs” section on Craigslist.com (even if your focus right now is your education and not holding a job). Count down to the twentieth listing. What service does that job provided? Waiting tables at restaurant? Copywriting? Overseeing social media for a non-profit organization?
Making the Links

Generating new ideas

If you have already chosen a creative project, how do the random selections from the previous exercise apply to your idea? Look for the links between your chance selections and your project.

If you haven’t yet chosen your creative project and are looking for clarity and inspiration, see what new ideas and new thinking your random selections spark for you. Is there a particular word, object, picture, symbol, or color that triggers a fun thought, feeling, idea, or possibility that you like?

In either case, give yourself permission to be imaginative with your interpretations…

Try on opposite thinking: “That object is completely different from______.”

Try metaphors and similes: “That is just like___________________________.”

Look through the eyes of humor: “Wouldn’t it be funny if_______________.”

Let your imagination trigger as many fresh connections and associations in your mind as possible, and follow where they lead you. Write your answers down in your notebook.

Many times, the ideas that seem the most farfetched, the most outrageous, or the least significant, might offer the strongest creative kindling … the ignition that you need to jumpstart your project.
The Commitment of Time

Once you have identified a new project or gotten re-inspired about one you already had in mind, the next important step is to create the time—to make time in your schedule to pursue your desired goal. Time and scheduling is a fundamental aspect of the commitment that we make to our creative pursuits.

Taking your other daily and weekly time commitments into account, what does your ideal schedule for this project look like?

❖ Is it twenty minutes every day?
❖ One hour five days per week?
❖ One full day each week?
❖ Is it in the morning, afternoon, or evening?

Play with the possibilities and then make a decision that you stick with no matter what.
The Next Best Step

What do you need?

You are almost there. Your creative jumpstart requires one more decision ... and it’s all about action. It might be an action in the outer world, or it might be something internal.

❖ Perhaps you need to gather tangible resources, such as supplies, tools, sponsorship, financial assistance, or the aid of another person.

❖ Or it could be that you need to access an internal resource—a feeling or state of being such as trust, faith, or courage.

❖ And maybe your next best step involves sending an email, making a phone call, scheduling a meeting, cleaning out your backpack, or cleaning off your desk.

Take a moment to relax, to settle into yourself and take a slow, deep breath. Ask yourself, “What is the next best step for me to take?” Write the answer in your notebook.

If the next step involves accessing a feeling or a quality of being, what will help you to bring that forth? Is it talking to the person you feel the closest to? Is it taking some time to be alone? Is it listening to music that you like?

Whatever that next step is, the most important thing is to follow through with it in a timely fashion, preferably within the next twenty-four hours. Ready, set, go!
Make a Video! … Tell the world about your own “Aha Moment”

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Foundation and I invite you to make your own 1-2 minute video sharing an “Aha Moment” that made a difference in your life—a flash of insight, a sudden discovery, a wave of inspiration, or a moment when you just knew something, like why something mattered to you or what you would really like to do when you grow up (whether literally or figuratively).

I made a video, too, where I’m talking about The Most Amazing Thing that I described in the introduction on page 3. You can do what I did and simply use a computer at home to tell us about something you experienced that has stayed with you.

Here is the link to my video: www.SparkingAhaMoments.com/Barnet

You can submit your video file simply by visiting the main website and following the instructions: www.SparkingAhaMoments.com, the video library shared by the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Foundation and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.
About Barnet Bain

Author, filmmaker, and educator, Barnet Bain’s film credits include Milton’s Secret (director, writer) starring Donald Sutherland and Michelle Rodriguez — based on the book by Eckhart Tolle and coming to theaters this fall; Oscar-winner What Dreams May Come (producer); Emmy-award nominee Homeless to Harvard (executive producer); and Jesus (aka The Jesus Film, screenwriter).


For more info: www.barnetbain.com

From Barnet Bain and team …

We warmly acknowledge our partners in creativity for all of their extraordinary work — Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Foundation.

www.DaughtersAndSonsToWork.org