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## The Alpha Wave *Creativity and the Brain*

“When you are creative is when you are most like God.”

--Blind Keyboard Player, 1997

I have never forgotten this statement. Creativity is a magical process. People talk about the muse as though it is a foreign entity that takes over the brain because gun to head, creativity proves elusive. It isn't just there for the taking by anyone at any time.

Why are some people more creative? What makes them special in this strange contest to see the word cat and instead of jumping to dog and other pets, to suppress that common idea and move on to something like 'narcissist' or 'gymnast.'

What *is* creativity? When it comes to neuroscience, the answer rests in the ability to take information that we already have and apply it in a new way. Reality, reimagined. It bypasses common associations and creates something never thought of before. At least in that mind. One of the most central brain states to achieve this sort of originality is in the Alpha Wave.

Our brain has a few frequency options, though sources debate about the exact numbers.

Delta - 0.5 - 4 Hz  
Theta - 4 - 7 Hz  
Alpha - 8 - 13 Hz  
Beta - 13 - 100 Hz \*  
Gamma - 25 - 100 Hz \*

Alpha isn't *only* responsible for creativity. It's also connected to calmness, relaxation of the mind, the body and learning. An inward focus not actively processing the outer world. Some people might define such a thing as happiness. Those people might be me.

One of the connections in creating alpha brain activity is in resting the visual cortex, either in physically closing the eyes or in that 'zoned out' state where the eyes are working, but the brain isn't processing the information that it is getting. Daydreaming, we call it.

The most common way that people tend to enter into this state, without any intent to do so is through activities that they have done countless times before that have

become old hat to them. Have you ever tried to drive to a new place to meet a friend and ended up at work? Well, hopefully a genius idea and funny story came out of it because that is exactly the sort of joy you can get from Alpha brain waves.

The most important question, then, is can you get into an alpha brain state on purpose? Can you increase your creativity by activating alpha waves in the brain?

Happily, you can! There are techniques that you can use, both old and new, that help activate the 'flow' of creativity by rolling out the alpha wave.

The first is boring tasks. I mention it first because it might stop someone from mentally glossing over it. It isn't often connected to creativity. Generally, creative people hate being bored, but it is in that calming repetition that the brain is able to relax.

The second is in another form of creative repetition and that is drumming, or another repeated pattern. Anything that the brain doesn't have to concentrate on, which will bring it into beta level or above, will allow the mind to relax into the alpha state.

Deep breathing is automatically relaxing and takes people into an alpha brain wave.

Exercise such as jogging or other repetitive patterns that also, necessarily, bring in deep breathing. Ever get ideas while working out?

Yoga. Predictable movement, meditation and deep breath work.

Massage.

Meditation.

Close-eyed visualization will also do it. Any time one closes their eyes, they are shutting off the visual processing and bringing them that much closer to the alpha wave. Adding another image inside the mind also builds alpha brain waves.

The most fascinating of all is *forgiveness*. Holding a grudge blocks alpha waves. So one of the best things that someone can do to get into a creative flow is to stop holding onto it. Instead of bitterness and resentment, forgiveness and gratitude actually change the wavelength in your brain to embrace relaxation and creativity. Creativity and imagination has also been linked to empathy, so the ability to forgive might be easier with people who have a higher abundance of alpha waves.

Alpha waves seem to guide flow, whether creative or relaxed, where the conscious brain isn't spending a lot of time exerting control and is free to wander. It is the explorer of interesting things that strike us and pulls different experiences from the past to mix in with new information.

As with all that is beautiful in life, it cannot be forced, but it can be encouraged.

Perhaps it truly is the way we can be most like God.