

# YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 93

*If you encounter highly judgemental people when using creative thinking techniques, how might you help them to be more flexible in their thinking?.....*

## Help judgemental people create.....

*"The map is not the territory!" Alfred Korzybski Philosopher*



**"Get in to their map..."**

Illustration from [www.loosetooth.com](http://www.loosetooth.com) – worth a look!

### ***How might you deal with highly judgemental people when running a creative workshop?***

Imagine sitting at lunch in a European capital with a large group of colleagues and clients. At your side is your host, a senior manager who proudly tells you that the main course is the national dish of salted cod.

Next, imagine the waiter places the dish in front of you. The smell of fish and garlic hits your nostrils and your stomach heaves as a wave of nausea engulfs you. You know you can't eat this food, even if the country's President were your host.

As you sit inert, you notice several colleagues grimacing as they eat and you hear your host ask quietly if everything is all right. Hideously embarrassed, you mumble that you feel unwell and with true hospitality, you are offered an omelette. As the fish dish is taken away, you recover faster than a Premier League footballer awarded a penalty shot after diving.

I found myself in this situation many years ago and recalled the incident last week, when facilitating a creativity and innovation course for the Open University in the UK. I was running an elective on the use of the "Story Spine" technique for strategic thinking.

Whilst others engaged themselves in the technique, I noticed one student flicking through his course book. He looked uncomfortable and I enquired if he were OK. He apologised, explaining that as he felt the technique would not be useful, he was not willing to use it. Taken aback, I tried to encourage him but he was resolute and spent the rest of the session flicking through his book.

My immediate reaction after the session was how close minded and judgemental he had been and how this must impact on his life. But then I recalled a comment once made to me when I had complained about someone's attitude to something, "Stop moaning and try and stand in their map of the world!"

I struggled to get into his map because I am pretty much open to trying anything new, until I recalled the fish dish episode. This was a time when I had flatly refused to try something new and different. True, I had felt physically ill, but from his demeanour and words, my student probably experienced a similar reaction.

People with strong judgement tend to enjoy making decisions and can be valuable for evaluation stages of the flexible thinking (or creative problem solving) process. However, some will react negatively to more "creative" techniques. Such techniques use perception,

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intuition and the subconscious to help us tackle a challenge. With no logical direction, how can they produce a result? Well, they won't, if you don't try them...

## SO

How might we encourage highly judgemental people to try such techniques? Here are five suggestions:

- [Avoid the term "creative"](#) when proposing a technique to highly judgemental people. This is one reason why I use the term "flexible thinking" to describe creative problem solving.
- [Build trust](#). Create the right climate. I had never met my student before and with only 50 minutes for the session, had little time to build climate.
- One aspect of building trust is to [create quick results](#) with some less risky techniques and prove they can work.
- Ask them to [defer judgement](#) until they have used the technique (which is easier to do if you have built trust).
- Ironically, Story Spine is a structured method to help people create stories and I didn't regard it as particularly "wacky". So one other lesson learned is to [put yourself in the mental map of your participants](#) when considering which technique to use. But take a risk as well!

## ACTION

Consider the above points when using creative techniques with certain groups and see how you get on. If you have any other suggestions, please let me know....

If you are interested in more information on Story Spine, please e-mail me.

## TO CLOSE

I couldn't believe it when I ran my next elective, on Energising Groups. Here was the same student! I heard him groan when I had them all lie on the ground, but I let him get on with it and the session passed without comment from him. Seeing him afterwards, I asked if he had found the session of use. He explained that he had come to the wrong session, thinking it was on team building.

I walked away smiling. He probably makes better decisions than me, but he had a lousy map of the venue! Enjoy getting in to somebody else's map of the world this week. You may be surprised!

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*Contact John or Kate Brooker:*

*Speak: +44 (0) 20 8869 9990*

*Write: [hi@yesand.eu](mailto:hi@yesand.eu)*

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