

Exercises to help you relax, recharge, and refocus

**CREATIVITY**  
*for*  
**PROFESSIONALS**



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# Fostering Creativity Through Low-Pressure Activities

Elsbach and Hargadon (2006)\* suggest creativity among chronically overworked professionals can be enhanced by alternating between periods of cognitively challenging high-pressure work and periods of low-pressure, low-cognitive difficulty work. Have you noticed that the quality of your work performance changes based on the types, frequency, and duration of the mindless activity breaks you take? We hope some of these activities give you the break you need to relax, recharge, and refocus.

## The Perfect Gift!

Your first challenge is to imagine you have been given the perfect gift. It could be anything and is exactly what you want or need right now. Imagine opening your gift. What is it?



\*Elsbach and Hargadon, *Enhancing Creativity Through "Mindless" Work: A Framework of Workday Design*, Organization Science, 2006. There is more to discuss about all of the content in this booklet. Reach out if you are interested.

# Executive Word Search

Let your mind wander as you look at the letters and words below. Can you think of how each word relates to something you or your team are doing?

D	E	C	I	S	I	V	E	L
E	W	T	R	U	S	T	R	O
G	R	N	R	P	N	F	I	G
A	I	A	A	Y	O	U	P	I
G	S	R	W	C	I	N	S	C
N	K	O	I	A	T	W	N	A
E	N	T	C	A	P	M	I	L
E	G	A	R	U	O	C	A	N
L	E	A	D	L	O	B	W	P

Aware  
Bold  
Can  
Courage  
Decisive  
Engaged

Fun  
Impact  
Inspire  
Lead  
Logical  
Map

Now  
Options  
Risk  
Spark  
Trust  
Try



## Add more humor to your day

"Studies reveal that humor makes us appear more competent and confident, strengthens relationships, unlocks creativity, and boosts our resilience during difficult times." *Humor, Seriously\**

One way to add more humor to your day is to be generous with your laughter. Do you know any fun jokes? Any funny stories? Are there any mistakes you can think of that you can turn into folklore?

Practice being generous with your laughter using the jokes below.

I'd tell you a chemistry joke,  
but I doubt I'd get a reaction.



I brought my co-worker an elephant and  
put it in the corner of his office.  
He said, "Thanks!"  
I said, "Don't mention it."

Past, present, and future walk into a bar... It was really tense.

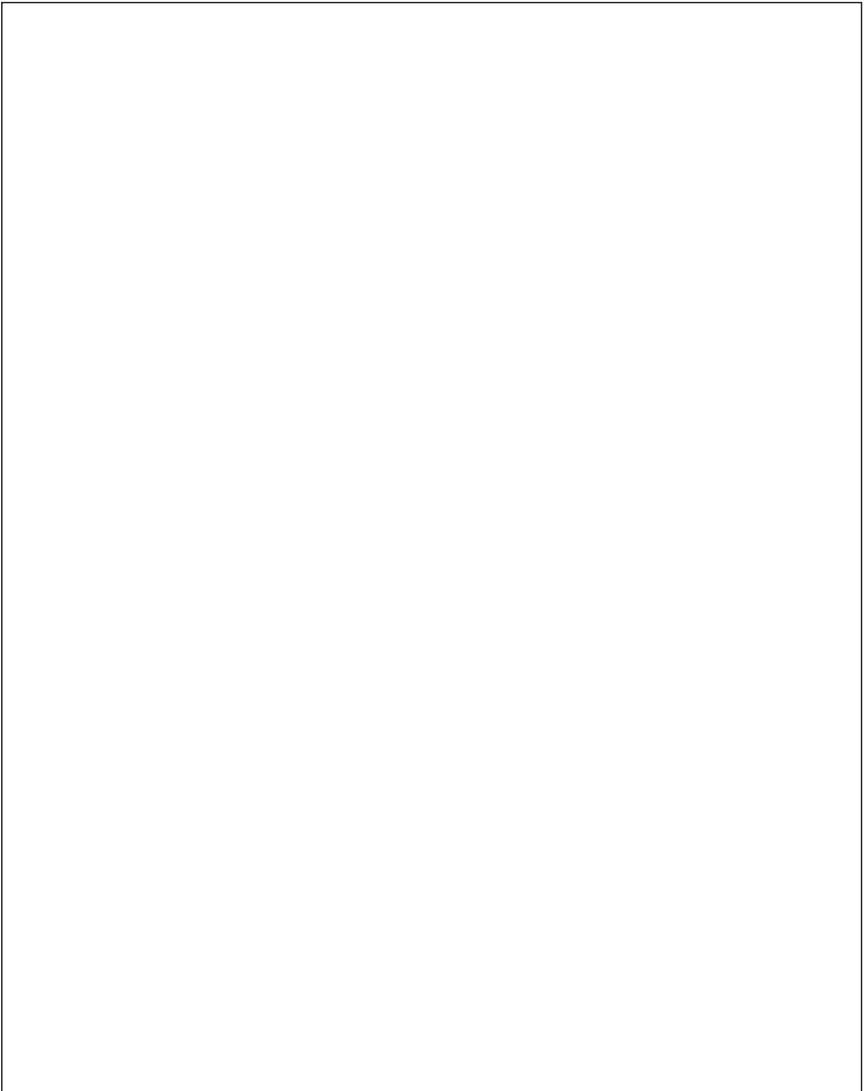
Two antennae got married - the wedding was  
lousy, but the reception was outstanding.

How many programmers does it take to change a  
lightbulb? None! It's a hardware problem!

\*From *Humor, Seriously* by Jennifer Aaker and Naomi Bagdonas  
see <https://www.humorseriously.com/>

## Words in a Word

How many words can you make out of the letters in the word  
DEMONSTRATE in 2 minutes?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write down the words they can form from the letters in 'DEMONSTRATE'.

Online generators return over 1000 words using the letters in  
DEMONSTRATE. Examples include demeanor, mentors, and attend.



## Business Books Match

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ___ 1. Atomic Habits           | A. Adam Grant         |
| ___ 2. Dare to Lead            | B. Angela Duckworth   |
| ___ 3. Outliers                | C. Brené Brown        |
| ___ 4. Thinking, Fast and Slow | D. Carol Dweck        |
| ___ 5. Grit                    | E. Daniel Goleman     |
| ___ 6. Good to Great           | F. James Clear        |
| ___ 7. Mindset                 | G. Jim Collins        |
| ___ 8. Radical Candor          | H. Kim Scott          |
| ___ 9. Think Again             | I. Michelle Obama     |
| ___ 10. Influence              | J. Robert B. Cialdini |
| ___ 11. Quiet                  | K. Susan Cain         |
| ___ 12. Emotional Intelligence | L. Malcolm Gladwell   |
| ___ 13. Becoming               | M. John Doerr         |
| ___ 14. Measure What Matters   | N. Daniel Kahneman    |

How many titles and authors of these popular business books can you match? Have any of the books changed how you think about your professional or personal life? Are there any you want to know more about? Record at least one thought that comes to mind as you think about these books.

Looking for ways to meet other professionals and discuss ideas from books like these? Sparkling Leaders runs virtual networking sessions where we discuss content from popular business books and articles. In the sessions we briefly introduce key concepts. We then reflect on and discuss how we might apply them. Sign up at [sparklingleaders.com](https://sparklingleaders.com).

# BINGO!

Do, see, or think about five in a row, column, or diagonal.



The original American version of BINGO is a game of chance where players mark off numbers on 5x5 cards as they are called out until someone has 5 in a row, column, or diagonal. For a 5x5 grid with a free spot in the center, there are approximately  $5.52 \times 10^{26}$  card combinations (from Wikipedia).

On the board above, what is the maximum number of spaces you could complete without winning BINGO?

## Power Categories\*

Can you think of one word for each letter in the word POWER for the following categories? Write down the first word or phrase that comes to mind. Activities like these can prompt stories and help with writing speeches.

Colors Example: **P**urple, **O**chre, **W**heat, **E**merald, **R**ose

Finance Terms: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Titles you might bestow on others: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Things you might bring on a trip: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Places you might go: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Things you want to see, hear, or do: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Did you ever play Scattergories? It's a category-based party game originally published by Parker Brothers in 1988. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scattergories>



# Be Curious! Ask Questions!

Asking questions is a core leadership skill. When used effectively questions can build relationships, enable trust, and lead to exciting innovations. Figuring out which questions to ask, however, requires active thought and reflection.

**Try a Question Audit\***. For the next 12 to 24 hours, make a note of:

- The questions you ask others
- The questions others ask you
- The questions you ask yourself
- The questions you search for answers to



What were the last three questions you asked or things you searched for online?

\*One of the exercises we run based on *Questions are the Answer* by Hal Gregersen.

See <https://halgregersen.com/> for more about how Questions are the Answer.

# Alphabet Challenge

Can you think of a word or phrase you could tell a story about that starts with each letter below?

A \_\_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_ O \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_ P \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_ Q \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_ R \_\_\_\_\_

F \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

G \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_

H \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ V \_\_\_\_\_

J \_\_\_\_\_ W \_\_\_\_\_

K \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

L \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_\_\_\_ Z \_\_\_\_\_

# Business Buzzword Scramble

How many of the following buzzwords can you unscramble?

VPOIT \_\_\_\_\_

TUOHICIPNTO \_\_\_\_\_

LBOI HTE AOCNE \_\_\_\_\_

HRAD OPST \_\_\_\_\_

UEBL KYS \_\_\_\_\_

KTEA TIHS FOLNIFE \_\_\_\_\_

EPDE EIDV \_\_\_\_\_

NTEX NRTIGEOEN \_\_\_\_\_

WDBNHTAID \_\_\_\_\_

WNE NLAMOR \_\_\_\_\_

ILRCEC AKCB \_\_\_\_\_

RELVGEAE \_\_\_\_\_

NPIG EM \_\_\_\_\_

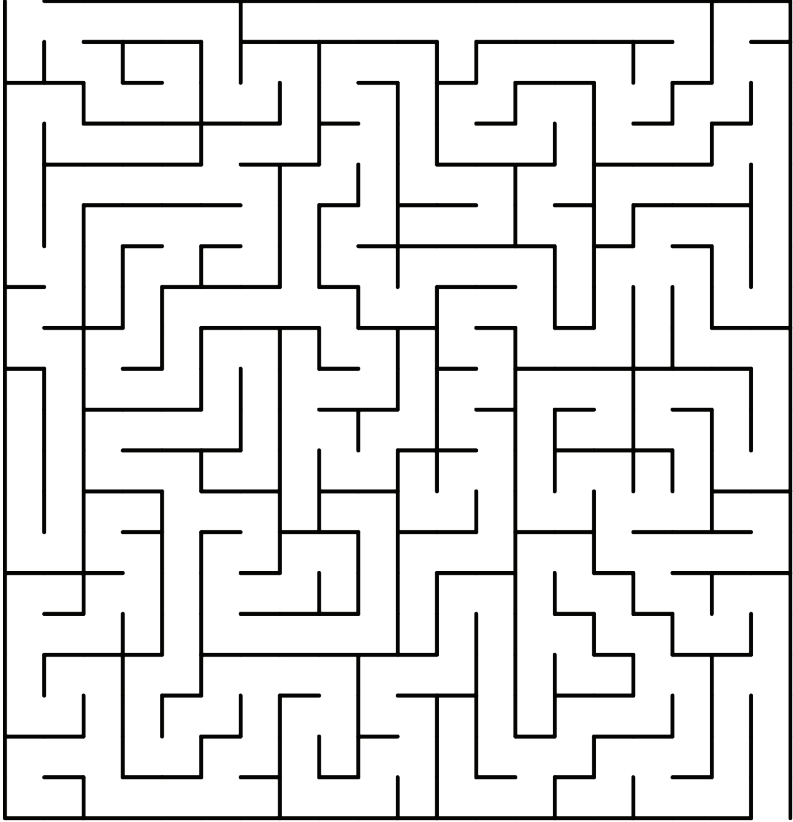
DRLIL DWON \_\_\_\_\_

OEMV HTE ELEND E \_\_\_\_\_

Do you use any of these buzzwords in your speech? Do you find yourself using them in writing? To communicate clearly and inclusively, it is recommended to reduce jargon and buzzwords wherever possible—especially when recruiting or applying for a job.

For more information see <https://www.canva.com/business-cards/jargon-of-jobs/>

# Help Scops the owl get to the airport!



Doing mazes can help improve visual tracking, which can increase visual comfort, ease, and efficiency. Vision tracking issues make reading difficult. Try doing the maze with just your eyes.

See <https://www.covd.org/> for more information about vision therapy and how it can help reduce eye strain.

## You've Got This!

Are you satisfied with your goal systems? In *Atomic Habits*, James Clear suggests we focus on who we want to be instead of what we want to achieve. Visualize the type of person you want to be, then set small wins to move towards changing your self-image.

Try using this focus with an Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)\* structure. For each objective or goal, list 3 to 4 measurable milestones (key results or small wins) you could achieve in the next 90 days.

I want to be the person who \_\_\_\_\_

Small win \_\_\_\_\_

Small win \_\_\_\_\_

Small win \_\_\_\_\_

Set a time each week to record your progress.

“We do not rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our systems.” Adapted from James Clear, *Atomic Habits*\*\*

\*OKRs should connect an individual's objectives (short-term goals) and key results (progress measurement) to team and company goals. Set OKRs quarterly then measure and share progress often. From *Measure What Matters* by John Doerr

For more information on OKR cycles see

<https://www.whatmatters.com/resources/a-typical-okr-cycle>



\*\*FYI James Clear's quote was adapted from Archilochus, "We don't rise to the level of our expectations, we fall to the level of our training." See <https://jamesclear.com/> for more about Atomic Habits.

# Congratulations!

We'd like to thank you for all you have been doing. Personalize the award medal circle and fill in your name below. Take a minute to imagine the perfect speech being given for you. What are the key points?



With our deepest appreciation we hereby honor  

---

  
with this medal in recognition for your passion,  
unconditional committment, and enduring service.

# Solutions!

## Word Search

D	E	C	I	S	I	V	E	L
E	W	T	R	U	S	T	R	O
G	R	N	R	P	N	F	I	G
A	I	A	A	Y	O	U	P	I
G	S	R	W	C	I	N	S	C
N	K	O	I	A	T	W	N	A
E	N	T	C	A	P	M	I	L
E	G	A	R	U	O	C	A	N
L	E	A	D	L	O	B	W	P

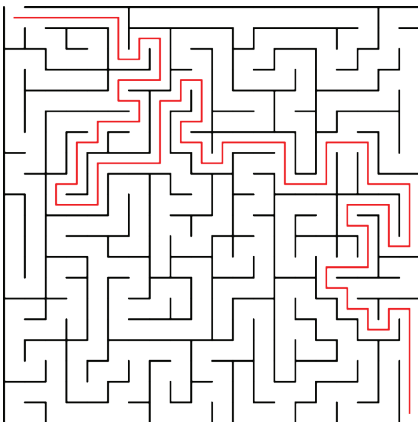
## Book Titles and Authors

(FCLNBGDHAJKEIM) Atomic Habits, James Clear; Dare to Lead, Brené Brown; Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell; Thinking, Fast and Slow, Daniel Kahneman; Grit, Angela Duckworth; Good to Great, Jim Collins; Mindset, Carol Dweck; Radical Candor, Kim Scott; Think Again, Adam Grant; Influence, Robert B. Cialdini; Quiet, Susan Cain; Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman; Becoming, Michelle Obama; Measure What Matters, John Doerr

## Example words from Demonstrate

Detonates, moderates, resonated, smartened, smattered, tormented, enamored, mastered, mattered, nematode, ransomed, reasoned, remotest, restated, streamed, teamster, attorns, daemons, demotes, denotes, donates, dormant, earnest, eastern, endmost, endorse, entreat, estated, maestro, matrons, matters, meanders, meanest, monster, randoms, renamed, roasted, rodents, rotated, sedater, senator, snorted, stardom, steamed, tandom, toasted, treated, started, stormed, amends, ends, meters, erased, meteor, modern, otters, roamed, resend, sateen, seared, seamed, snared, trades, trends, adores

## Maze



## Buzzwords

Pivot, Touchpoint, Boil the ocean, Hard stop, Blue Sky, Take this offline, Deep dive, Next generation, Bandwidth, New Normal, Circle back, Leverage, Ping me, Drill down, Move the needle

**BINGO:** You could do 19 activities, not including the free space, without completing a row, column, or diagonal.



Sparkling Leaders is for professionals who want to grow their executive presence and leadership skills.



We help solve business challenges, expand networks, and regain the spark that makes you shine - all in an inclusive environment focused on personal and professional growth.



Your time is valuable. We meet you where you are, help you identify your strengths, and evaluate how to build on them.



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