Sample Excerpts

Main related websites:

Talent Development Resources
TALENTEDEVOLVE.COM

The Creative Mind
THECREATIVEMIND.NET

Book site:

Developing Multiple Talents
DEVELOPMULTIPLETALENTS.COM

"Part book about creativity, part compendium of useful tidbits, quotations and research, and part annotated bibliography, this is a wildly useful and highly entertaining resource."

- Stephanie S. Tolan, fiction writer and consultant on the needs of the gifted.

"Packed full of insights and resources for the creative life, this book offers new ways to thrive as a creative person. I highly recommend it as a resource for anyone who wants to understand the psychology behind our creative drive."

- Cynthia Morris, Writing and creativity coach.

The full-length book has many more reviews - see the book site above.

Below is an image showing the book contents.

In the Kindle version of the actual book, the Table of Contents is interactive: you can click to navigate to any section.
Introduction

“If there is one word that makes creative people different from others, it is the word complexity. Instead of being an individual, they are a multitude.”

Creativity researcher **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi** (pronounced me-high chick-sent-me-high-ee), quoted in my post *The Complexity of the Creative Personality*.

"Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" - **Walt Whitman**

Quoted by cognitive psychologist and co-founder of The Creativity Post **Scott Barry Kaufman**, Ph.D., in his post *After the Show: The Many Faces of the Performer*.

This complexity of high ability, multitalented and creative people shows up in many ways, such as enjoying - or being challenged by - having a multitude of interests, abilities, and passions.
"I want to do wardrobe. I want to do hair. I want to do makeup... writing... directing... producing. I want to do all of it. I like it."

Actor **Abigail Breslin**

Many people share this kind of enthusiasm for exploring and expressing multiple creative talents and passions, often from a very young age.

In the book I have listed some examples of well-known people who do just that - mostly in the arts, but, of course, creative talents inform many fields.

"Photography, painting or poetry - those are just extensions of me, how I perceive things, they are my way of communicating."

Actor, painter, photographer, writer and publisher **Viggo Mortensen**

The dynamic complexity of creative abilities in multitalented people is a huge field of study. My appreciation for the creative work of the two actors above, plus countless other performers, writers, musicians, visual artists and other creators has led me into researching and writing on aspects of creativity and high ability for more than twenty years, concentrating on the personal and psychological sides of creators and how people can be more creative.

Hopefully you will find material in this book of interest and value in pointing toward areas to more deeply explore, and in helping you more fully realize your own multiple abilities.

My series of websites, columns and articles - and now this book - have grown out of my graduate studies in psychology, and personal research to better understand the dynamics of creative expression, as well as my own social, emotional, personal development and achievement challenges, and to publish material that might help other people as well.

The kinds of topics I have been exploring in my research, including interviews (by me, and by other interviewers) with writers, painters, actors, directors and other artists, as well as with psychologists and creativity
coaches, show up in questions I have noted in the comments of many creative people - and have asked myself - such as these:

*Why do creative people feel and think so differently from others?*

*Why are many artists so sensitive to outer sensations, emotions, and their own inner world?*

*Why are creative people so often self-critical?*

*Why are many vulnerable to moods like depression and anxiety?*

*How can I increase my satisfaction, emotional reward, and sense of meaning from what I am doing with my life?*

*What strategies can help enhance creative expression?*

There are many areas of psychology and other fields which I continue to explore related to those questions – such as positive psychology and happiness research, high sensitivity, mood and creativity, mental health, creative motivation, being an entrepreneur, self concept and achievement – and other topics, many of which are at least briefly covered in this book.

I have never had the sense of being on a career path. **Barbara Sher** writes about many people being "Scanners" (see the Work - Career - Entrepreneurs chapter) - but I have had rich experiences in many interesting (and many not so interesting) jobs, including glue testing in a chemical company lab; collecting beach sand for a marine zoologist; growing bread mold at CalTech for a geneticist; working as an assistant for a psychiatrist doing some of the early left-right brain research; repairing woodwind instruments; operating computer-controlled visual effects motion picture cameras, and working as a psychology counselor with depressed or addicted people.

Along the way, I've also done some photography, acting in community theater plays and as a movie extra, and also led support groups for gifted women, and helped an addiction psychologist develop his multiple websites.

Do you have similar questions, interests and jobs?

Maybe or maybe not - but this book is not about me, it is designed to help you explore your own abilities.
"All creative people have multiple talents, don’t they?"

In his post Creatives With Multiple Talents (on his blog The Artist's Road), Patrick Ross writes about meeting two students in a Masters in Writing program who are about to graduate.

"They told me about a talent show their class held at their last on-campus residency. One of them said he had performed on the violin. The other told me he has acting experience but didn’t want to do a one-man show, so he performed magic tricks.

"I said it was interesting that all of these writing students had another talent they could perform. The violin player looked at me as if I had just expressed bafflement that an orange was the color orange. 'All creative people have multiple talents, don’t they?'

"They do, scientists tell us, even if they don’t realize it," Ross adds. "After all, if you’ve never picked up a musical instrument, you may not realize you have a predisposition to excel at it.

"But the creative brain knows how to both master a skill and think in ways others would find counter-intuitive to breathe new life into that skill."

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An Exploration

This is not designed as a structured how-to or self-help book, so much as an overview of some of the key aspects of our personality and inner life that can affect how well we understand, access and express our different creative talents - and be able to do much more than one thing.

Along the way, though, there are suggestions by coaches, psychologists and others on strategies to help you explore more topics, and more fully realize your talents.

The chapters here are "headlines" about a variety of related subjects, with brief summaries of topics, plus quotes by creative people and some excerpts from research studies, as well as links to additional resources.

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One form of talent is obviously cognitive ability. How does that relate to other forms, such as creativity? In the fields of writing and filmmaking, for example, there are many examples of prominent achievers who are highly intelligent, with or without academic credentials; but there are also many very creative and productive people without uncommon intellect.

Multiple Intelligences / Multiple Talents

Educator Howard Gardner of Harvard articulated his ideas of Multiple Intelligences in several books including *Frames of Mind*.

In his article *Reframing the Mind*, Daniel T. Willingham (a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia) noted a number of intelligence researchers have discussed various human abilities, including aesthetic, athletic, musical, and so on, and "called them talents or abilities, whereas Gardner has renamed them intelligences."

Willingham notes that Gardner thinks people possess at least eight independent types of intelligence, and provides this list of definitions, with examples Gardner has provided of professions that draw heavily on that particular intelligence:

• Linguistic: facility with verbal materials (writer, attorney).

• Logico-mathematical: the ability to use logical methods and to solve mathematical problems (mathematician, scientist).

• Spatial: the ability to use and manipulate space (sculptor, architect).

• Musical: the ability to create, perform, and appreciate music (performer, composer).

• Bodily-kinesthetic: the ability to use one's body (athlete, dancer).
• Interpersonal: the ability to understand others’ needs, intentions, and motivations (salesperson, politician).

• Intrapersonal: the ability to understand one’s own motivations and emotions (novelist, therapist with self-insight).

• Naturalist: the ability to recognize, identify, and classify flora and fauna or other classes of objects (naturalist, cook).

According to Prof. Willingham, "Gardner claims that everyone has all eight intelligences to some degree, but each individual has his or her own pattern of stronger and weaker intelligences. Gardner also argues that most tasks require more than one intelligence working together."

Isn't that true for multi-talented people in general? A neurobiologist or actor may also have high levels of other talents or "intelligences" and make use of them in their profession - or not. Maybe they paint or write short stories "on the side" and never publish, but they are still multi-talented.

_The idea of multiple intelligences may no longer be valid._

_Wenda Sheard_, J.D., Ph.D., a past president of SENG Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (www.sengifted.org) and now an English teacher at The American School in England, writes in her post _Neuromythology and Neurobabble_ that "neuroscientists exploring the biological basis of intelligence have now all but disproven the theory of multiple intelligences, and found instead that intelligence is unitary, not separate."

She adds, "If you want more information, I suggest you check out John G. Geake’s well-referenced critique of the theory.

Geake writes, 'In other words, there are not multiple intelligences so much as multiple applications of general intelligence to various endeavors.'"

_Do we need a high IQ to be creative?

Creativity researcher _Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi_, PhD (pronounced me-high chick-sent-me-high) explains in his article _The Creative Personality: Ten paradoxical traits of the creative personality_ that "Creative people tend to be smart yet naive at the same time."

[From his book _Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention_]
He says that "a core of general intelligence is high among people who make important creative contributions," but according to the studies of Lewis Terman, "after a certain point IQ does not seem to be correlated with superior performance in real life" – including level of creative expression.

Csikszentmihalyi notes that Howard Gardner "remarked in his study of the major creative geniuses of this century, a certain immaturity, both emotional and mental, can go hand in hand with deepest insights." Gardner’s book is *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity as Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi.*

**High intelligence and ability can include high challenges.**

One of the themes I have noticed in the research on talent and creativity is that having so-called advanced potential, or being multitalented, does not confer any guarantee of success on any level, or any kind of "automatic" fulfillment of those abilities.

For example, Sally M. Reis, PhD of The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, notes in an article of hers (*Internal barriers, personal issues, and decisions faced by gifted and talented females*) that high potential and multiple interests, multipotentiality, can benefit many women, but others "often cannot find their niche, make it on their own, or choose a vocational path."

That can apply to us men as well, of course. Also see my article *Is Intellect an Albatross?* in which I explore the question of whether an exceptional mind has potential negative consequences, particularly for women.

[Photo from the article: Arianna Huffington is described by her friend and author Sugar Rautbord as “probably one of the most intellectually seductive human beings on the face of the planet. She has such a powerful brain, and she exudes an intellectuality that is almost sexual.”]

In her Foreword to the book "Enjoying the Gift of Being Uncommon" by Willem Kuipers, **Linda Silverman,** PhD (Director of the Gifted Development Center) notes, "The vast majority of gifted adults are never identified. Even those who were tested as children and placed in gifted programs often believe that their giftedness disappeared by the time they reached adulthood."
"It does not seem to matter how much success a person achieves—hardly anyone is comfortable saying, 'I’m gifted.' That is why this book is such a major breakthrough."

She continues, "Willem Kuipers bypasses the problem by coining a much more palatable term: eXtra intelligent (Xi).

"And, if someone has a knee-jerk reaction to that idea, Xi can also stand for eXtra intense. More people are aware of and admit to their intensity than to their uncommon intelligence. Parents note the intensity of their young child before they realize that their child is developing at a faster rate. High intensity is a close cousin to high intelligence."

Read more quotes and info about the book in my High Ability site post The Gift of Being Uncommon.

*It may be helpful to look at your own ideas about intelligence and ability.*

**We are infovores**

Research shows we are infovores – that our brains crave new information. That is especially true for exceptional, multitalented people.

USC professor Irving Biederman investigates the neuroscience behind the infovore phenomenon, and has carried out research showing that in "association areas" of the brain, where "sensory information triggers memory and taps into previous knowledge," there is a high density of opioid receptors, so we get pleasure when "a new piece of information tickles that part of your brain where you interpret the scene or conversation."

Continued in his article The 411 to avoid boredom.

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**Obsession - Perseverance**

"Sometimes creativity is a compulsion, not an ambition."

The language we use to ourselves and others about talents can have a big impact on our attitudes and motivation. For all too many years, I have been self-critical about focusing on creative interests instead of, for example, socializing. Choices like that generally aren't simply right or wrong, but it may be helpful to consider the consequences.

Positive Obsessions fuel creative expression

Creativity coach Eric Maisel, PhD thinks obsession is a more or less necessary element of creative achievement - at least the healthy variety of obsession. He says, "Negative obsessions are a true negative for everyone, but most creators — and all would-be creators — simply aren’t obsessed enough. For an artist, the absence of positive obsessions leads to long periods of blockage, repetitive work that bores the artist himself, and existential ailments of all sorts."

From his article: In Praise of Positive Obsessions.

Perseverance and a rebellious spirit

A variation on obsession is "stubbornness" or perseverance.

When she was a newly single mother and struggling to support her baby daughter in Edinburgh, J.K. Rowling chose to commit herself to her dream of becoming a novelist by writing "Harry Potter."

She admits feeling "very low" and having a need "to achieve something. Without the challenge, I would have gone stark raving mad."


Another Psychology Today article – Why Prodigies Fail – says that most childhood prodigies never fulfill their promise.
"Perseverance is a key part of it," says Robert Root-Bernstein of Michigan State University. "Many of them say that their expectations were warped by their early experiences."

The article notes, "When success comes too easily, prodigies are ill prepared for what happens when the adoration goes away, their competitors start to catch up and the going gets rough." (He is co-author with Michele Root-Bernstein of *Sparks of Genius: The Thirteen Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People*.

There can be a lesson here for any of us, not just prodigies.

Indiana University psychologist Jonathan Plucker notes, "I don’t see anyone teaching these kids about task commitment, about perseverance in the face of social pressures, about how to handle criticism. "We say, ‘Boy, you’re really talented.’ We don’t say, ‘Yeah, but you’re still going to have to put in those 60-hour work weeks before you can make major contributions to your field.’" (Jonathan A. Plucker is a co-author of *Essentials of Creativity Assessment*.)

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**Developing creativity with time, risk, love and hard work**

Creative achievement - especially the sort that gets mentioned in books and the media - has often been considered something special, that only a "genius" can do. I have often felt held back in writing, such as this book, by self-limiting ideas related to how I identify myself and my writing talents.

Professor of psychology R. Keith Sawyer, among others, disputes that idea. He was asked, "What advice can you give us nongeniuses to help us be more creative?"

His answer: "Take risks, and expect to make lots of mistakes, because creativity is a numbers game. Work hard, and take frequent breaks, but stay with it over time. Do what you love, because creative breakthroughs take years of hard work. Develop a network of colleagues, and schedule time for freewheeling, unstructured discussions."

He added, "Most of all, forget those romantic myths that creativity is all about being artsy and gifted and not about hard work. They discourage us because we’re waiting for that one full-blown moment of inspiration. And while we’re waiting, we may never start working on what we might someday create."
Mozart and so-called genius

In a New York Times op-ed, David Brooks pointed out that Mozart's early compositions "were nothing special. They were pastiches of other people's work." He added, "Mozart was a good musician at an early age, but he would not stand out among today's top child-performers.

"What Mozart had, we now believe, was the same thing Tiger Woods had — the ability to focus for long periods of time and a father intent on improving his skills."

From his article Genius: The Modern View – which also includes a video about the book "The Talent Code: Greatness Isn't Born. It’s Grown. Here’s How" by Daniel Coyle.

Eminence and creative achievement

Previous research has confirmed that a high IQ in childhood is not a guarantee for eminence or creative productivity. But in her article Discovering the Gifted Ex-Child, Stephanie S. Tolan notes that achievement - and giftedness itself - are open to different viewpoints.

She writes, "Not everyone perceives giftedness in the same way. Some see it as the achievement of something out of the ordinary, essentially external. Others see it as an internal set of out-of-the-ordinary mental processes that may or may not lead to achievement."

Thanks for reading this sample.

Note - images have been added to this sample - the Kindle & Paperback are text-only.

I hope this book will give you helpful information and inspiration to better understand and make use of what Jean Houston called the "vast crew within" - your wealth of creative talents and abilities.
To see more excerpts and information, plus links to purchase the various editions, visit the book site:

Developing Multiple Talents
developingmultipletalents.com

or purchase through these links:

**Paperback [218 pages]**
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**Kindle Edition**
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