## In the Zone

In American football, teams have to produce in the red zone (that space between the 20-yard line and the goal line). According to Todd Henry, founder of Accidental Creative and author of The Accidental Creative: How To Be Brilliant at a Moment's Notice, people have personal red zones, too. Here's what you can do to be at your best in your red zone:

1 Activities that increase your capacity to generate and make ideas happen, such as study, skill development or research. Stoking curiosity is vital, Henry says, yet "these are often the first activities to get tossed" when we're busy. Ask yourself, "What are you doing today to increase your capacity to do great work tomorrow?"

2 Activities that feed your creative soul, such as spending time with friends who inspire you. "Who inspires you, and are you protecting time on your calendar for them, even during busy times?"

3 Activities that provide creative traction, such as clarifying objectives with your manager or client. "Sometimes we are so anxious to jump into the work that we fail to clarify what's really expected of us," Henry explains. "Taking a small amount of time now to set objectives can save a lot of pain later. . . . Set aside time on the calendar each day to realign and ensure that you're working on the right problems."

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## **Better When Brewed**

Ever notice that when you actually try to think creatively, your mind spins and whirs, but often produces little? Instead, those tidbits of genius and moments of inspired thinking seem to emerge at the strangest times—like when you're walking the dog, taking a shower or vegging in front of the TV. Could it be that your unconscious mind has been working on the idea while you were going about your normal daily routine?

Research out of the Netherlands lends some support to that notion. Following a recent study, researchers from Radboud University Behavioral Science Institute

conclude that "the unconscious mind plays a vital role in creative performance." According to the team, participants who were given time to step away from a task were better able to identify their most creative ideas for solving it. According to journalist Tom Jacobs, "That realization provides essential information. . . . Knowing which ideas belong in the trash bin, and which deserve to be fleshed out further, is a real gift." As Friedrich Nietzsche said back in 1878, "All great artists and thinkers are great workers, indefatigable not only in inventing, but also in rejecting, sifting, transforming, ordering.

Learn more about the study at http:// goo.gl/5o3cO. You might also want to check out Jonah Lehrer's newest book, *Imagine: How Creativity Works,* which takes a look at the science of creativity. Lehrer also has some interesting views on why brainstorming doesn't work. Listen to his podcast with The New Yorker at

http://goo.gl/oGYAE.

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while." Steve Jobs



## For Starters

BigDig, from the Idea Sandbox (www.idea-sandbox.com), offers a revolving collection of thought starters. Here's a sampling:

■ Tackle the problem by substituting something. Who else instead? What else instead? Other ingredient? Material? Process? Power? Place? Approach? Other tone of voice?

- Confirm that you're solving the right problem. Is there a more significant one you're overlooking?
- Draw a picture of the problem, even a rough sketch. Sometimes if you can "see" the problem it's easier to solve.
- Examine the problem as if you were it. How would you feel if you were the idea you're developing?

FIND MORE AT WWW.BIGDIG.IDEA-SANDBOX.COM.

If you have a cartoon, anecdote, joke or interesting safety item you'd like to submit for publication on this page, send your contribution to professionalsafety @asse.org. Submissions will not be returned.

The winner of this month's PS Create the Caption contest is William Piispanen, a professional member of the Snake River Chapter. His entry appears below this photo.



Don't tip it; I think I found my cell phone.

Photo from Pete Flores, Gulf Coast Chapter