

GENIUS MODE RESEARCH

SPURRING CREATIVITY THROUGH REWARD SYSTEMS

Ding, R., Yang, B., Mei, X., & Li, T. (2025). How to make full use of human unconscious thought system in creative tasks? The positive role of performance contingent reward. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 59(1), e70001. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.70001>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Can contingent reward systems increase the fluency and flexibility of creative responses, both in conscious and unconscious thought systems?



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- When solving creative problems, people cycle between conscious thought (CT) and unconscious thought (UT).
- A person's interest or commitment to goals is a key factor in their ability to generate ideas (motivation).
- Intrinsic motivation has always been viewed as a stronger motivating force; however, external rewards has a profound impact on motivation.
- A reward system has a profound impact on **unconscious thought**, indicating an increased commitment to solving the problem even when not directly working on it.

DOS AND DON'TS

DO Ensure your extrinsic motivation system doesn't undermine intrinsic motivation.

DO allow students to cycle between conscious and unconscious thought by providing acceptable "distraction tasks" that provide space for unconscious thought but may not (at the time) show evidence of active thinking.

DO teach students the difference between CT and UT and the purpose of the "Distraction Tasks."

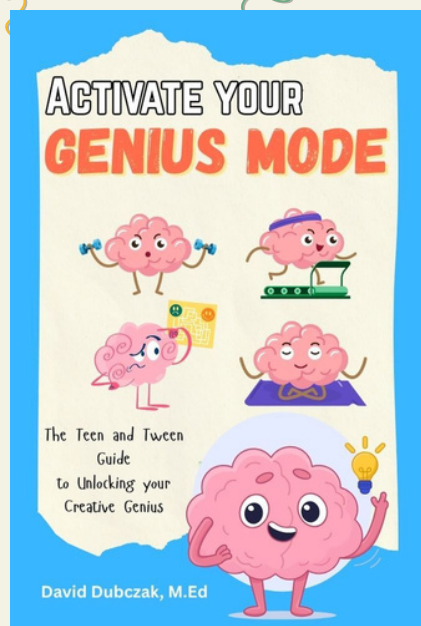
DON'T punish failure or create a psychologically unsafe environment for future creative ideation.



GENIUS MODE CONNECTIONS



This study builds on the Genius Mode principles of **Ideation** and **Incubation** (see the story about the first Nike shoe). It is important, however, that students truly understand the **Creative Thinking Process** and how we cycle between conscious and unconscious thought. By explicitly teaching the Creative Thinking Process and performing exercises, we can use unconscious thought with **intention** and **deliberately capture creative ideas** when they come. That makes the difference between students just "playing" and using the neuroscience of creative thinking to our benefit.



Reviews Say:

Empowering, Entertaining, and Perfectly Designed for Tweens & Teens! "Activate Your Genius Mode is a creative powerhouse of a book that speaks directly to young minds in a way that's equal parts hilarious, encouraging, and deeply practical."

YOU NEED THIS BOOK! I feel this book will enable me to explain and get them to not be so afraid of giving a "dumb" answer... I loved this book and can NOT wait to use it in my classroom in just a few weeks!!"

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