


We've already written quite a bit about some of the things other people do that can stop creative thinking... You can read them here: [www.dmiproductions.co.uk/info](http://www.dmiproductions.co.uk/info), But what can you do if you want to actively help someone else be more creative? Two techniques come to mind... We call them *Bounce and Build*.



**TWO WAYS  
TO HELP OTHERS  
THINK  
CREATIVELY**

### **Bounce**

Whenever you see a group of comedians or actors improvising together, you can bet they're working to at least one rule: *never say no*. This is sometimes referred to as "always agree", and the actress Tina Fey uses the example of someone pretending their finger is a gun to illustrate the point...

"If we're improvising and I say, "Freeze, I have a gun!" and you say, "No, it's not a gun! It's your finger" our scene grinds to a halt. But if I say, "Freeze, I have a gun!" and you say, "The gun I gave you for Christmas?" then we've AGREED that my finger is, in fact, a 'Christmas gun'..."

Now, some might be wondering what Tina Fey's example has to do with creativity. For others, it will be clear that the same rule applies to generating ideas. That's not to say that you need to be a "never say never" person in all walks of life! Rather, it's worth remembering that the real value of creativity may not be in the idea at hand: it might very well be in the next one, or the one after that!

In other words, you should aim to keep ideas coming – don't hijack the process by **immediately** saying no to an idea, or picking holes in it, or expecting detailed answers about logistics! This often stops people *wanting* to contribute more, whereas asking the same questions 24 hours later often gives enough space between the ideator and the idea for it to take shape... If you're looking to bring out the best in others' creative thinking, aim to be a person off whom one bounces ideas – and that means never saying no straight away.

### **Build**

So... When new ideas come up, it's very easy – and enormously destructive – to immediately find reasons against them. A child can do it! It's harder, but far more helpful, to 'never say no' during the early stages and be a person off whom ideas bounce... It's even more useful to be someone who helps *build* on a creative idea. But how do you do that?

One way is to start raising any questions, obstacles and potential pitfalls by adopting a constructive attitude that aligns with creative thinking. Instead of announcing why you don't think an idea will work, try saying "Yes – *and*..." This 'Yes' can convey acknowledgement rather than agreement, while the 'and' links to a concern in the form of a *question*. So if someone suggests, for example, collecting business cards at a trade show, but you're worried that dropping them in a goldfish bowl is old hat, you would first be sure to avoid the word no...

*"Working with DMI is a positive and enjoyable experience." Laura Marshall, Seven Stones*

Instead, you could say yes – or “Okay...” if ‘yes’ feels like too much for you – then add: “...and how can we make the bowl more interesting?” This not only stops a potential issue from feeling negative but also – and more crucially – continues *building* on the idea. You’re tapping into a creative vein rather than raising what might sound like a logical objection.

Another tack to adopt is to use the words, ‘What if?’ This an enormously important question that is very common in creative thinking – so much so that it has its own DMI Info Sheet, which you can see here: [www.dmiproductions.co.uk/info](http://www.dmiproductions.co.uk/info)

With the above example – the glass bowl appearing to be old hat – you might phrase the ‘What if?’ question along these lines: “Okay – and what if we want to get away from a glass bowl?” It really is that easy! In fact, once you’re in the habit of doing this, it might often seem like you’re not doing anything at all! Nevertheless, if you want to help others think more creatively, keep these two principles in mind: *bouncing* and *building*!