

The drugs don't work: Meditation and training are better at sparking creativity, say researchers

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A rock'n'roll myth has been debunked by researchers who discovered drugs don't spark creativity. The University of Essex and Humboldt

University of Berlin psychological study has revealed narcotics are the least effective way to inspire imagination. In a blow to fans of hard-living musicians, writers and artists, the research found that complex training programs, meditation and exposure to culture are the best ways to find a muse, with alcohol and pharmaceutical amphetamines such as Adderall failing to influence inspiration whatsoever.

Dr. Paul Hanel, from Essex's Department of Psychology, said, "We examined hundreds of papers to uncover the best ways to boost [creativity](#) and I hope the findings will help the growing number of people who rely on their creativity to earn a living."

"What worked best were complex training courses, meditation, and cultural exposure such as, studying abroad. We believe it is a [positive message](#) that drugs do not enhance creativity, given the side effects of drugs." The study—published in *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*—examined the findings including thousands of people to expose the mysteries of creativity.

The research showed training which highlights mental techniques that unpack the [creative process](#) has the best long-term impacts. And discovered mindfulness activities like meditation and open thinking boosted imagination in the short term. It was also found that visiting different countries and experiencing their cultures unconsciously expands horizons.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for fostering creativity—with people responding better to different situations and techniques. It is hoped the research will help schools and employers better understand creative thinking.

Dr. Hanel said, "Although it once seemed the preserve of artists, creativity is everywhere in the modern world. "Everyone from family

businesses through to giant companies needs to produce material to show their wares on social media.

"This could be the difference between success or failure for many people and I hope that this study will help them find inspiration." The lead author Jennifer Haase from Humboldt University of Berlin added, "There are many ways to enhance and encourage [creative thinking](#). Creativity is not a skill to be learned and then applied. Creativity results much more from a situational fit between the cognitive mindset and the creative challenge."

More information: Jennifer Haase et al, Creativity enhancement methods for adults: A meta-analysis., *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* (2023). [DOI: 10.1037/aca0000557](https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000557)

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