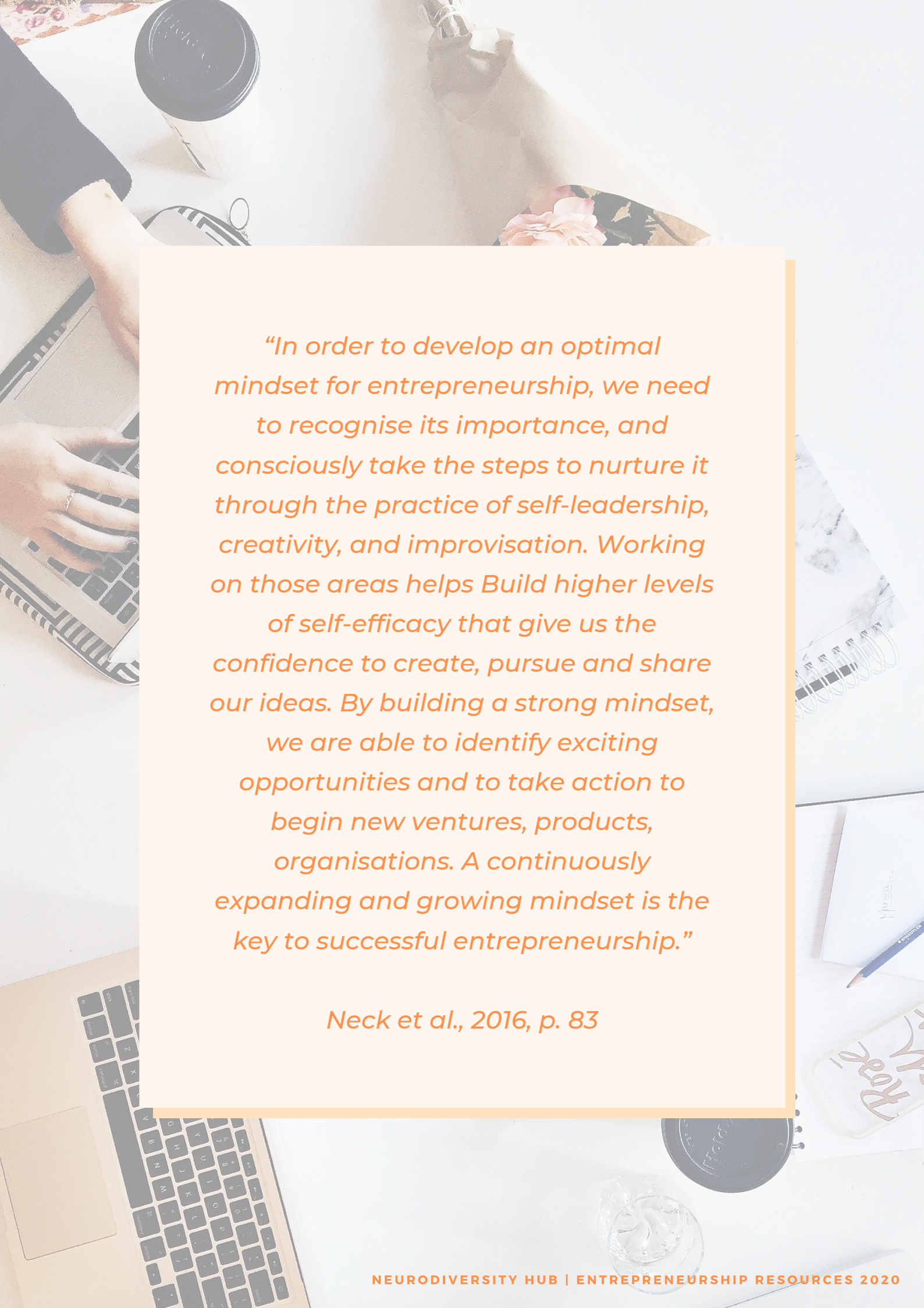


DEVELOPING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET



1



A top-down view of a workspace. On the left, a person's hands are typing on a silver laptop. A black coffee cup with a white lid is on the desk. In the center, a hand is holding a pen over a notebook with a floral pattern. On the right, a spiral notebook is open, and a blue pen lies on a white sheet of paper. In the bottom right, a glass of water is visible. The background is a light-colored desk surface.

“In order to develop an optimal mindset for entrepreneurship, we need to recognise its importance, and consciously take the steps to nurture it through the practice of self-leadership, creativity, and improvisation. Working on those areas helps Build higher levels of self-efficacy that give us the confidence to create, pursue and share our ideas. By building a strong mindset, we are able to identify exciting opportunities and to take action to begin new ventures, products, organisations. A continuously expanding and growing mindset is the key to successful entrepreneurship.”

Neck et al., 2016, p. 83

INTRODUCTION

The information in this booklet aims to support individuals with ADHD develop a mindset or mental attitude that is conducive to entrepreneurial activities. We use 'entrepreneur' as a generic term referring to an innovator, a source of new ideas, goods, services, and business/or procedures..

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As you read this section, keep in mind the following learning objectives:

1. *Understand what your current mindset is.*
2. *Understand what you can do to channel an entrepreneurial mindset.*



KEY TAKEAWAYS & OUTLINE

DEFINING MINDSET

p. 3

In order to start a successful business, you first need to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Go to [Defining Mindset](#) to learn more about:

- a. What a mindset is p. 3
- b. The two types of mindsets p. 3

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET AND ADHD

p. 4

People with ADHD are believed to have strong entrepreneurial mindsets. Go to [The Entrepreneurial Mindset and ADHD](#) to access:

- a. The components of an entrepreneurial mindset p. 4
- b. The relationship between an entrepreneurial mindset and ADHD p. 5

IMPORTANT HABITS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

p. 5-7

The three habits which are crucial to successful entrepreneurship are self-leadership, creativity and improvisation.. Go to [Important Habits for Entrepreneurship](#) to access:

- a. The self-leadership habit p. 6
- b. The creativity habit p. 6
- c. The improvisation habit p. 6

RELATING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET TO ACTION

p. 8

The [Relating the Entrepreneurial Mindset to Action](#) section introduces the importance of self-efficacy in actualising entrepreneurial intentions.

OTHER RESOURCES

p. 9

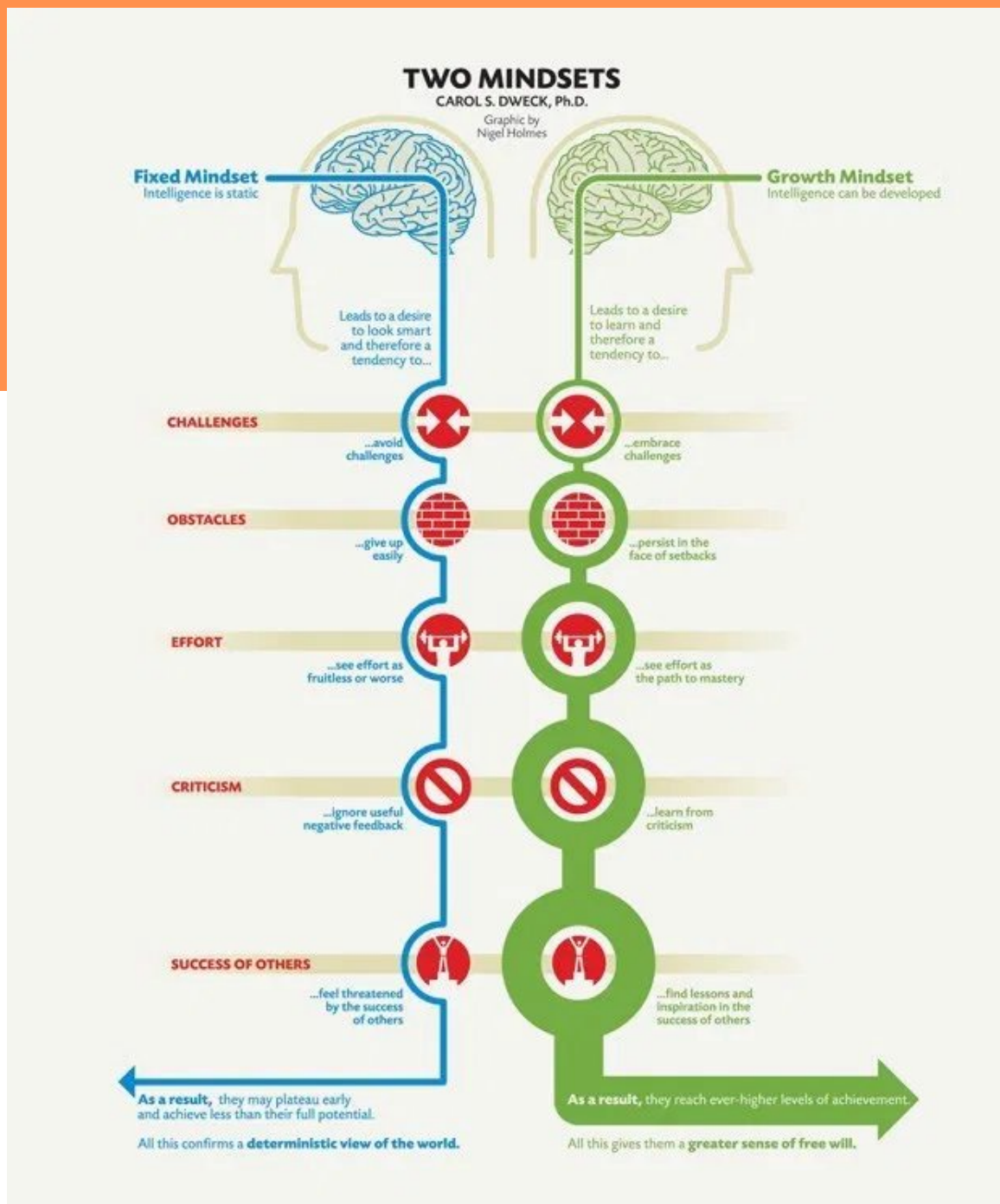
The [Other Resources](#) section offers a free online course on developing an entrepreneurial mindset presented by Michigan State University on Coursera.

WHAT IS A MINDSET?

Your mindset is a collection of your thought patterns, mental attitude, inclinations, habits and disposition that informs how you interpret and react to external events, circumstances and situations.

TYPES OF MINDSETS

According to Stanford Psychologist Carol Dweck, there are two types of mindsets: a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Read the diagram below and consider whether your thought processes and beliefs are more in line with a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.



DEFINING MINDSET

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET & ADHD

A growth mindset is crucial for entrepreneurs, as it represents a fundamental belief that failure is something to build on. The research paper [*ADHD-Related Neurodiversity and the Entrepreneurial Mindset*](#) breaks down the entrepreneurial mindset into four components:

1. Intuitive cognitive style

- a. tendency to take a broad perspective on problems and reach conclusions rapidly from little information.

2. Entrepreneurial alertness

- a. ability to scan and search for new information
- b. ability to connect previously disparate information
- c. ability to evaluate whether new information represents an opportunity

3. Entrepreneurial metacognition

- a. goal orientation
- b. metacognitive knowledge
- c. metacognitive experience
- d. metacognitive choice
- e. self-monitoring

4. Resource-induced coping heuristic

- a. resource acquisition
- b. resource protection
- c. resource development



Researchers (Moore et al., 2019) have found that entrepreneurs with ADHD display:

- **More intuitive cognitive styles** – meaning they are better at scanning and searching for information, and more confident in their ability to identify and recognise entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Higher levels of entrepreneurial alertness** – meaning that the biological need to avoid stagnation leads them to a heightened need for progressing their venture.
- **Higher metacognitive knowledge and monitoring** – meaning that those who have adapted to their neurodiversity pay more attention to things in their environment and are thus better at reflecting on their thoughts and behaviours.
- **Stronger resource-induced coping heuristic** – meaning that they will be more active than neurotypical entrepreneurs in acquiring resources, protecting their resources, and developing the resources they possess.

IMPORTANT HABITS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THE SELF-LEADERSHIP HABIT

Self-leadership is a process whereby one influences “their own behaviour, actions, and thinking to achieve the self-direction and self-motivation necessary to build their entrepreneurial business ventures” (Neck et al., 2016, p. 71). This is something that individuals with ADHD may struggle with due to their altered executive control and reward functions, but the extent to which this poses a challenge depends on the person’s environment. Here are three strategies drawn from *Entrepreneurship: The Practice and Mindset* (2016) that you can use to help practice self-leadership:

1. BEHAVIOUR-FOCUSED STRATEGIES

- a. **Self-observation:** to improve awareness of how, when, and why we behave the way we do in certain circumstances, you may want to consider keeping a diary to document your feelings and responses to different scenarios. This can help you to identify trends in your behaviour.
- b. **Self-goal setting:** write down your goals on sticky notes and posters to stick around your workplace. It may be helpful to create short-term goals (like daily to-do lists) from your long-term goals so that it’s easier to track progress and meet milestones.
- c. **Self-reward:** rewarding yourself when you reach your goals can be a great motivator. This can be something like watching a movie after finishing all the tasks you had planned for the day.

2. NATURAL REWARD STRATEGIES

- a. Natural reward strategies are about making aspects of a task or activity more enjoyable by focusing on the most positive aspects of the task. This could be something like listening to music while working or working outside for a change

3. CONSTRUCTIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS

- a. Constructive thought patterns Building constructive thought patterns are about “identifying destructive beliefs and assumptions and reframing those thoughts through practicing self-talk and mental imagery” (Neck et al., 2016, pg. 73). One great way to do this is to visualise yourself successfully performing an activity before undertaking the task.

TO DETERMINE YOUR PROPENSITY FOR SELF-LEADERSHIP, ASK YOURSELF:

- Do I usually act in anticipation of future problems, needs or changes?
- Do I tend to plan ahead on projects?
- Do I prefer to “step-up” and get things going on projects rather than sit and wait for someone else to do it?

If you would like, score how relevant each question is to you from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to gain a quantitative understanding of your propensity for self-leadership. For reference, entrepreneurs with ADHD score around 3.7 on average.

(These questions were drawn from a validated scale for assessing entrepreneurial intent used in the research paper *Exploring the association between attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and entrepreneurship* - Published in Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry)

IMPORTANT HABITS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THE CREATIVITY HABIT

While creativity is not something that one is born with, but rather a developed skill (Neck et al., 2016, p 74), there are demonstrable linkages between “creative, generative activities and the presence of ADHD” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 273).

TO DETERMINE YOUR PROPENSITY FOR CREATIVITY, ASK YOURSELF:

- Do I often like to try new and unusual activities that are not necessarily risky?
- In general, do I prefer a strong emphasis on projects with unique, one-of-a-kind approaches rather than revisiting tried and true approaches?
- Do I prefer to learn new things my own way rather than the way everyone else does?
- Do I favour experimentation and original approaches to problem solving rather than the methods others generally use?

If you would like, score how relevant each question is to you from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to gain a quantitative understanding of your propensity for creativity. For reference, entrepreneurs with ADHD score around 3.4 on average.

(These questions were drawn from a validated scale for assessing entrepreneurial intent used in the research paper *Exploring the association between attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and entrepreneurship* - Published in *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry*)



IBA INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKBOOK

Use page 5-18 of the *IBA International Entrepreneurship Workbook* developed by Dr. Tamara Stenn to identify what your passions are, what specific problem you want to address and the solution you hope to provide.

For use with the book, *Social Entrepreneurship as Sustainable Development*, c. 2017, T. Stenn, Palgrave

IMPORTANT HABITS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THE IMPROVISATION HABIT

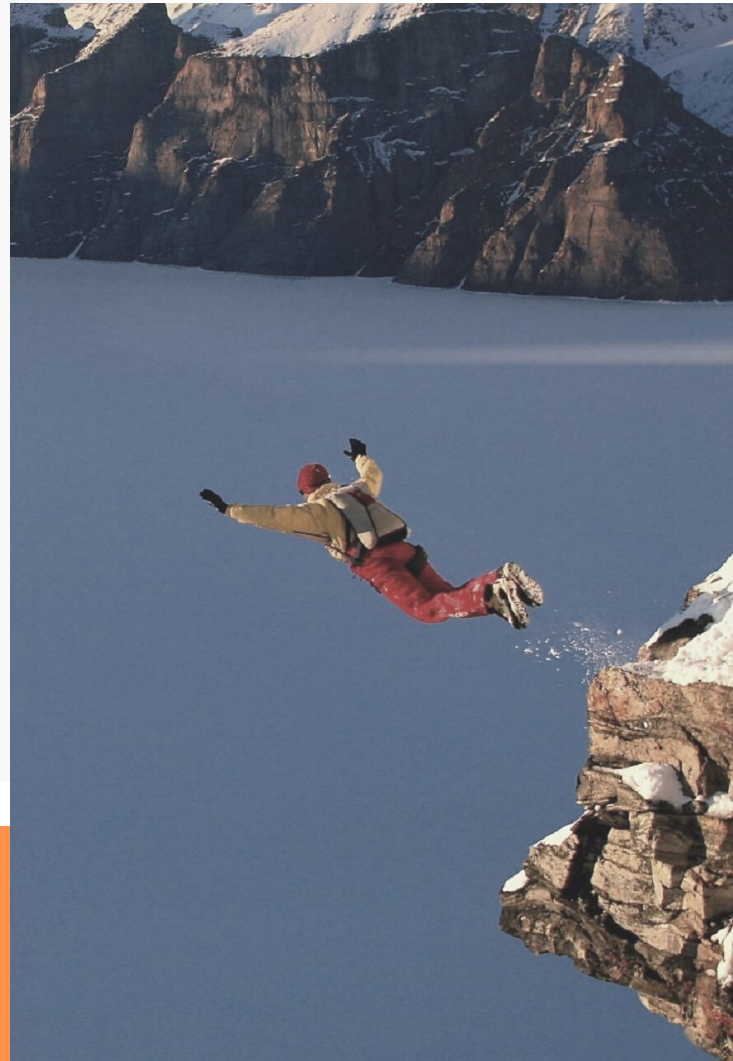
Improvisation is “the art of spontaneously creating something without preparation,” (Neck et al., 2016, p. 78) and entrepreneurship scholars have said that it is extremely important for opportunity development and entrepreneurial success. People with ADHD are generally skilled at improvisation due to their impulsiveness, high energy, and need for stimulation.

TO DETERMINE YOUR PROPENSITY FOR CREATIVITY, ASK YOURSELF:

- Do I like to take bold action by venturing into the unknown?
- Am I willing to invest a lot of time and/or money in something that might yield a high return?
- Do I act “boldly” in situations where risk is involved?

If you would like, score how relevant each question is to you from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to gain a quantitative understanding of your propensity for improvisation and risk-taking. For reference, entrepreneurs with ADHD score around 3.6 on average.

(These questions were drawn from a validated scale for assessing entrepreneurial intent used in the research paper [Exploring the association between attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and entrepreneurship](#) - Published in Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry)



ONLINE SKILL-BUILDING COURSE ON *MANAGING CHANGE*

This course from [Be Your Best Academy](#) will help you learn to manage the power of change through conscious actions. The course explores transitions, personal change management, emotional regulation, differing reactions to change and habit formation. The materials are research-backed and created by neurodiverse people with therapeutic aims for engaged learning.

RELATING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET TO ACTION

“As entrepreneurship demands practice to achieve success, the right mindset is necessary for that practice to be successful. When people believe they can succeed they are more likely to pursue the right activities to make that happen.”

Neck et al., 2016, p. 81

SELF-EFFICACY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS

The belief in one’s own ability, or self-efficacy, is an essential part of the entrepreneurial mindset, and a strong precursor to action as well as success.

If you would like to see how strong your self-efficacy is, you can take the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), a well-accepted method of measuring self-efficacy levels developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). To take the test, rate how relevant each statement below is to you with 1 = not at all true, 2 = hardly true, 3= moderately true, or 4 = exactly true. Tally up each of your responses to get a score between 10 to 40, with the higher the score indicating the stronger your self-efficacy is. Keep in mind that self-efficacy can change over time and is something you can improve.

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities
8. When I am confronted with a problem I can usually find solutions
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution
10. I can handle whatever comes my way

MORE RESOURCES

FREE ONLINE COURSE

DEVELOPING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET: FIRST STEP TOWARDS SUCCESS

Presented by Michigan State University on Coursera



Developing An Entrepreneurial Mindset: First Step Towards Success

Offered by Michigan State University. This course is the first in a series on starting a business. Though new venture creation is the focus of the...

At the end of this course a learner:

- Will be able to argue effectively against all of the reasons for not starting their business (or reaching some goal);
- Will be able to operate effectively within the new framework or model for starting a business (or any new endeavour), thus increasing their chances for success.
- Will be able to make the initial business startup decisions of what type of business to start, and what type of business owner to be.

The course provides learners with an understanding of the attributes and perspectives of an entrepreneurial mindset, and the process to acquire one. This course provides learners with insights to reframe their thinking in order to maximise their chances for success. We suggest that learners bring an open mind and be willing to thoroughly explore the nascent business ventures they have been carrying with them. The course introduces concepts that enable a person to start a transformative process in the way they think generally, and in the way they think about business specifically. This new way of thinking has the potential to positively impact not only them, but their family, and community.

Amaro et al., "Exploring the association between attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and entrepreneurship", *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry* (2020)

Lerner et al., "Dueling Banjos: The Harmony and Discord Between ADHD and Entrepreneurship", *Academy of Management Perspective* (2018)

Moore et al., "ADHD-Related Neurodiversity and the Entrepreneurial Mindset", Sage Publications (2019).

Neck et al., "Entrepreneurship: The Practice and Mindset", Sage Publications (2016)

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35-37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON.

Stenn et al., "Social Entrepreneurship as Sustainable Development", *IBA International Entrepreneurship Workbook* (2017)