NEW HORIZONS EDITION

> a Soft-Systems Guide to Creativity, Problem-Solving, & the Process of Reaching Goals

by Don Koberg & Jim Bagnall

**New Horizons Edition** 

# The UNIVERSAL TRAVELER

a Soft-Systems Guide to Creativity, Problem-Solving, & the Process of Reaching Goals

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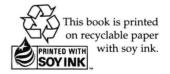
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The UNIVERSAL TRAVELER is designed to serve as a general guide to behaving creatively in a fast-changing world. We believe that it is generally applicable to all sorts of problem situations in any area of endeavor because of its non-specific approach. It can help you deal with life's various events more effectively and creatively as well as alter your status from tourist to that of an explorer- someone capable of setting new goals and cutting fresh paths to old destinations.

Like other travel guides, 'The Traveler' can help you plan your many (problem-solving) voyages to both familiar and strange places. Its itinerary for solving or resolving any type of goal or problem systematically includes varied options for making your journeys more enjoyable and meaningful. Plus, it can help make those trips more creatively satisfying. In the end, it remains your job to understand how systematic thinking can work for you, to fill-in the specifics and select the best way(s) to get where you want to go.

### This book has three parts:

PART ONE: CREATIVE TRAVEL and FITNESS CENTER is where you can 'tool-up' to embark on ever-more satisfying problem-solving excursions. It includes introductory and general background information regarding the "whats" and "whys" of pro-active thinking, problem-solving, process, creativity, and personal involvement along with a plan for how you can learn to "make your dreams come true."

PART TWO: MISSION CONTROL serves as the 'briefing and trip-planning' center. It contains a universally adaptable strategy for reaching goals, realizing intentions and dealing with adverse situations; including a step-by-step, easy-to-follow guide for

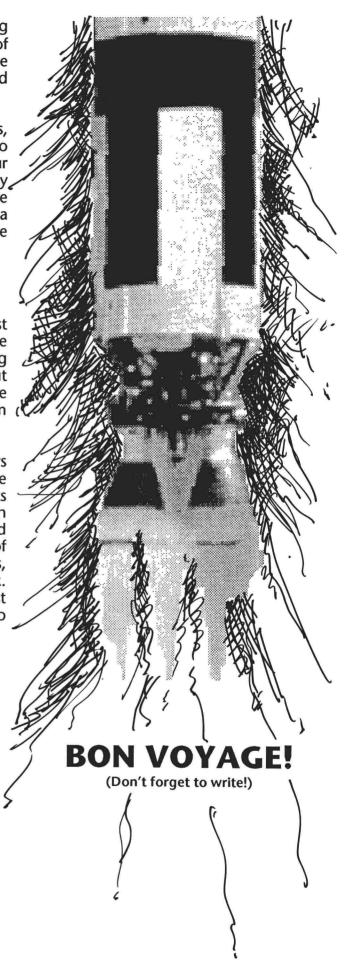
managing specific personal problem-solving adventures, along with many general "how-tos" of creative problem-solving. **Mission Control** is where you'll become oriented to your overall trip plan and make preparations for take-off.

PART THREE: SIDE TRIPS, includes games, ideas, suggestions and general information designed to stimulate your enjoyment and to encourage your developing creative behavior. Here, you'll find many additional ways to simplify your creative problem-solving education and help you design a more satisfying life composed of ever more self-controlled and memorable events.

### Note: Please write in this book:

If you bought it, it's yours. Why not get the most from it? It has been designed with ample blank space to provoke you to experiment. Reading and listening attentively are important to learning, of course. But remember that both of those learning methods are indirect in the sense that their content comes from (someone else...not from you!

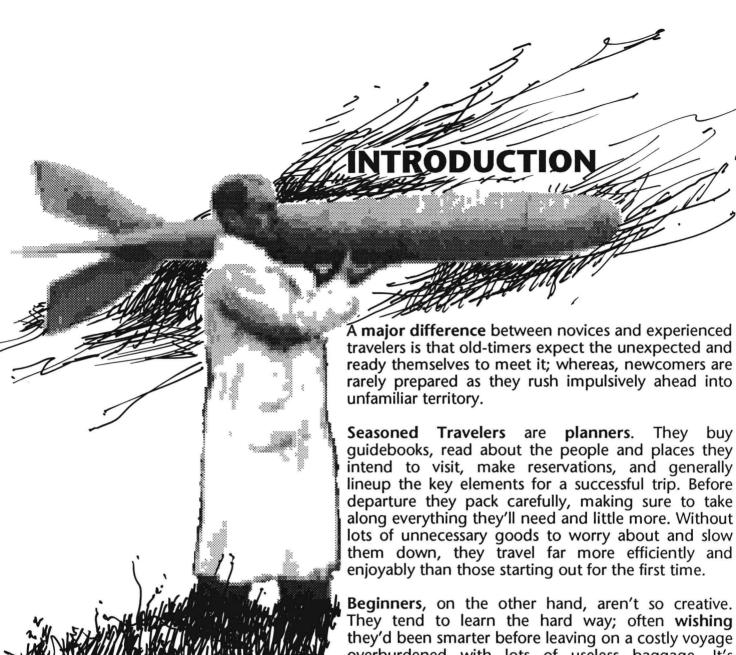
True learning and growth doesn't occur until readers or listeners begin to test the validity of what they've read or heard. Only by adding personal comments which either paraphrase or question the information received, can you become personally involved. And each time you 'participate' in some way, the value of your work increases for you. So, please add notes, sketches, and examples of your own to this book. Alter the illustrations or paste-in new ones. Don't just scratch out what you disagree with. Change it to reflect your own views.





Preparing for your Creative Problem-Solving Voyages

THE KNACK FOR CREATIVE TRAVEL
CREATIVITY ASPECTS OF PHYSICAL
AND MENTAL HEALTH
BECOMING A SELF-MANAGING NAVIGATOR
DISCOVERING PROCESS
MAP-READING: TRAVELING THE PROCESS PATH
TO SUCCESS
GENERAL TRAVEL AND LANGUAGE GUIDES



Beginners, on the other hand, aren't so creative. They tend to learn the hard way; often wishing they'd been smarter before leaving on a costly voyage overburdened with lots of useless baggage. It's usually not until afterwards that they begin to discover what they could have done up-front to reduce the high cost of their travels later on. Although vowing that "next time" they'll be ready for any mishap instead of 'blasting-off' unprepared, they rarely record their plans for improvement...and end up having to relearn the same lessons over and over again.

Here, in the CREATIVE TRAVEL and EXPEDITION FITNESS CENTER, you'll find the basic requirements for embarking on any type of creative problem-solving journey. In one light-weight package, it contains all you'll need for the entire process of successfully and enjoyably getting ready, getting there, and getting back.

### CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND GOAL-ATTAINMENT

### The Life Process as a Creative Journey

The 'process of life' is generally measured in stages or events. As we become more aware of being in charge of that step-by-step process, we begin to improve our movement between its stages. As self-navigators, we set our courses and overcome barriers as we strive to reach them.

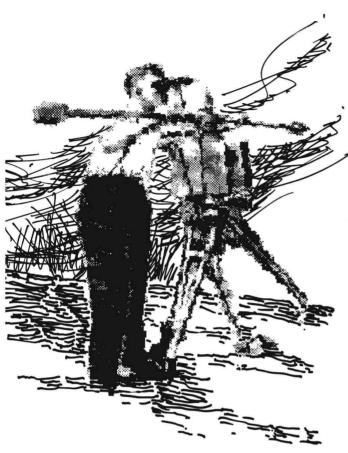
Learning to live life more creatively, i.e., constructively different from normal, is no secret. Every normal person already knows how to behave in unusual ways. The difficult part comes with knowing when to behave that way, developing the freedom to actually do it, and gaining expertise (knowledge, attitude, and skill).

Problem-Solving is part of living. The general definition of 'a problem' is 'a condition or situation in need of change or repair'. We are all part of the same changing and developing imperfect existance. In dealing with life, everyone is forced to be a problem-solver. Some people just do it better; i.e., more constructively and/or more enjoyably than others. That's where creative behavior or design comes into the picture.

Creativity is identified by behavior. Behaving creatively is not only a key part of being professional; it's also a measure of how highly one's professional services are eventually valued. To professional problem-solvers, the act of design implies creativity. It describes the activity or process of creative problem-solving. Another word for process is sequence; i.e., a series of interrelated actions or events. Professionals are conscious of process and behavior.

The literature on the subjects of design process and creativity contains literally dozens of documented methods and procedures outlining the creative solving of problems. Creative problem-solving is synonymous with design process; a sequence of unique actions leading to the realization of some aim or intention.





### Developing a Knack for Behaving Creatively

The word 'creativity' implies a difference; an inventiveness; a uniqueness. Creativity is a term we all use to define unusual behavior; those unique, but still acceptable activities which differ from what is normal or expected. In a nutshell creative behaviors are unique, atypical, and beyond normal.

The term 'unique' is generally used to express something more than mere newness. We expect the unique to be 'truly new' i.e., to go beyond our current understanding; to in some way be an eyeopener, a step forward; to include some kind of constructive, progressive content. What we actually mean when we use the term **creativity** is 'behavior which is **constructively different** from what we would normally expect'. In short, Creativity is probably best described as **constructive extraordinary behavior**.

Learning to behave creatively requires awareness and effort to control behavior instead of being a mere bystander in the life process. Like many possible "good intentions", accepting the challenge of behaving differently from others is often easier to say than do.

As we observe creative problem-solvers in action, they seem to glide through the situations which confront them. They appear to bound easily over all barriers and seem able to handle any issue easily. They appear always quick to do and say things which get to the heart of any problem faster than others. They seem to be **clear thinkers**. We pay attention to the unusual results they produce. We admire and often envy their ability and we tend to think of them as being **special** people...as having a certain 'knack' that others lack.

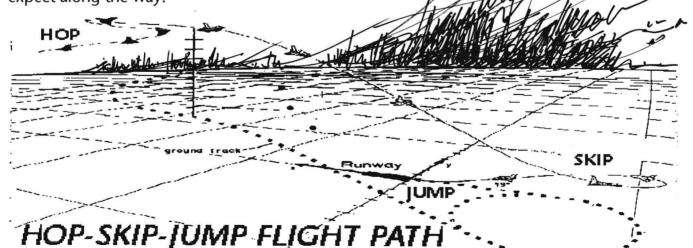
Although their creative behaviors aren't always noticably different from normal behaviors, these special people always seem to be doing the 'wrong' things and getting the 'right' results. Not only do they "get away with murder", they also seem to get what they want from life. We'd like to imagine them as being lucky or 'gifted'; as being somehow 'blessed' in ways that the rest of us missed out on somewhere along the line. But, the truth, of course, is that, creative people are no luckier (or more blessed) than others...with few exceptions. They have merely learned

to make their own 'luck.' Their abnormal behavior works for them instead of against them. They can quickly identify what they want and do what it takes to go after it. They are merely normal people who behave abnormally when necessary.

By contrast, other people seem to always need a boost. They struggle to achieve even the smallest aims. For them, getting closer to what they might want is a constant battle. Even their wants are vague. Without clear goals or knowledge of how to reach them, they're always at a loss for what to do next. The result? They replace work with worry, spend much of their energy getting nowhere, and are not very satisfied with their life. Sound familiar?

The difference is surely not determined by birthrights. Becoming more of a self-starter isn't reserved for only a special few. Anyone can learn to be more creative. It's all in knowing a few basic behaviors and developing a constructive, active point of view. Analysis of any of the dozens of so-called "success courses" being offered today, shows the focus to be on two everessential issues: knowledge (knowing what it takes) and attitude (self-belief, plus a willingness to get started).

For most people, the desire to include more creativity in what they do is like dreaming of an excursion to a mysterious, uncharted, far-off destination. Few people ever realize such fantasy. But, dreams can be made to come true. Getting to any intended destination is just a hop, skip, and jump from where you are right now. The path has been clearly marked by many previous travelers who have returned from their adventures into once uncharted regions of creative problem-solving to share vivid descriptions of what you might expect along the way.





# MENTAL and PHYSICAL HEALTH

# Developing and Maintaining Healthy Minds & Bodies for Creative Problem-Solving

Physical and mental health can be important factors when trying to deal creatively with the many strange, often complex problems we face in our lives.

Have you ever heard people say things like "I couldn't enjoy Paris because I had a cold the entire time" or "I wish I could pull myself out of bed to get started on this goal of mine?" Of course you have. But, colds can usually be prevented or managed. And a will to win is certainly acquired by self-control. Clearly, physical and mental fitness for the task at hand is critical to success.

If the adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is valid, then preparing for travel by getting both physically and mentally 'fit' makes sense. NASA's Astronaut Training Program is a definitive example of people preparing for fool-proof travels. No one questions the importance of fitness on journeys into space where allowance for error is obviously very small. But, to the average person embarking on everyday ventures, preparation doesn't seem so essential... until it's too late.

### Gain Strength - Avoid the Pitfalls

Healthy minds and bodies are generally developed and maintained by a collective method known and practiced as **preventative maintenance**.

Those who are fit and well-prepared for life's process tend to actively maintain their creative problem-solving strengths. Because of their interest in fitness, they are typically better able to resolve problematic situations with greater success. We call it "having a positive attitude."

**Strength** is normally an advantage; a 'plus' factor. It implies **power**. When appropriately used, being strong tends to simplify any task. Everyone would like to be stronger but, conscious, intentional, building up of

strength isn't normal. Weakness is far more commonly expressed in our behaviors. Working toward building up creative problem-solving strength is still somewhat of a unique (creative) behavior: it's one of those 'constructive abnormalities.'

A more typical approach is to bypass preparation in the rush to get the problem solved ('out of the way'), and return to status quo as quickly as possible. We tend to say "There's **no time** to get ready, or get setwe've just got to **go**." And, of course, when the focus is on speed instead of quality, enjoyment or personal education, fitness for the task is easily side-tracked.

Another cause for a general lack of readiness is that it's not always clear that the energy spent in fitness-training will actually result in greater profits later on, i.e., preparation tends to seem like work without a guaranteed payoff. Here, the need to develop personal interest and a positive attitude are again key ingredients. We can be coerced or intimidated, but making decisions to gather information, to develop useful skills, to eat a well-balanced diet, to build a variety of problem-solving muscles, etc. are nearly always personal perogatives.

The basic **strengths** needed for creative problemsolving can be summarized in a few terms:

### Awareness

Curiosity and appreciation of life and living

### **Passion**

Zealous love of the quest and determination to interact with life and its events

### Self-Control

Taking charge of one's own behaviors

Each of these strengths is a valuable asset by itself. But, when combined, the three unite to become an abnormally powerful force.





fitness agenda.

### **Awareness**

Children are forever amazing adults with their apparently unique awareness of the basic details of life. Forgetting that children must be sensitive to life's patterns and details in order to learn and develop, we instead imagine that their behavior is intentional and, therefore, creatively unique. We delight in a child's fearless experiments with what we have grown to accept as fact, and tend to wish we had their freedom. Kids, however, don't think of one another as behaving more or less creatively. To a child, other kids are merely behaving normally, while adults, who were once fearlessly sensitive children themselves, learn to put aside life's 'details' in order to see bigger pictures...thereby missing much of life's delights.

Developing a keen alertness to life and its many facets is a paramount characteristic of creative behavior. It's another of those necessary and constructive behavioral 'abnormalities.' But being aware of life wasn't always so abnormal. It is a natural human behavior which children depend on for intellectual growth and which we normally stop using and improving with adulthood. Adult awareness involves controlling the bi-modal brain function of quickly alternating between sensing reality and knowing what is sensed.

There are at least three levels of awareness:

The basic level is **recognition** (acknowledgement of a situation or thing); the second level is **sympathy** (caring about the situation or thing); and the third level is **empathy** (deep personal sharing of the attributes of the situation or thing). All three levels are learnable and controllable.

Becoming aware of another person, for example, might start with recognizing a name, obvious physical features and other identifying details; then, into a deeper level of sympathizing with their peculiar aspects and behaviors, such as seeking out important common interests, and finally, into the deepest sensory level of empathy; i.e., actually feeling the joys and pains of the other (sometimes referred to as 'being in love').

### **Enthusiasm**

Wanting something badly enough is often all it takes to make that dream come true. Active devotion to purpose is undeniably special. Yet, the more typical reaction to most of life's situations can best be described as wishful, rather than assertive. Being zealous about getting what we want is clearly a unique attitude; another creative plus-factor.

Enthusiasm for solving a problem situation or for reaching a goal stimulates a collective sense of purpose. It brings all of one's energies together for success. It creates inertia of its own that's hard to restrain. Such an internal spirit of profound concern is crucial to entering any arena of competition with intentions of winning. It is an essential ingredient of political competition, athletic challenge, and of course, deep-seated religious beliefs. Like keeping a fire alive by adding fuel and regulating the damper, passion also needs regular rejuvenation and management.

The basic fitness program for stirring-up and/or rekindling enthusiasm involves understanding the human need for rewards. People need some sort of gratifying pay-off or incentive for their efforts. And rewards come in a wide variety of forms with an equally broad range of effectiveness. Similar to moving a stubborn donkey, some of us get up and keep going with rewards of mere 'carrots', while others respond only when prodded with a 'stick' (punished). Where a 'pep talk' might work to excite half a team, the other members may need more tangible stuff. Awareness of the various kinds of 'rewards' or 'threats' you need to keep going on your own strange and perilous voyages can save lots of time and energy. It's all a matter of foresight.

### **Self-Control** (Habit Management)

An essential key to becoming fit as a **navigator** is an ever-developing ability to **make and break habits**.

Self-Control is the ability to manage one's habits. And habits are merely repeated behaviors. Creative behavior often involves up-grading or replacing old behaviors with new, better behaviors. The trick is to identify those behaviors considered to be creative and then allow ourself the freedom to begin practicing them. The first part is simpler than the second. Knowing that curiosity is essential for gaining insight doesn't make it easy to overcome older, established, question-blocking behaviors.

Habit-making is a proven habit-breaking method. Try focusing on achieving a positive new behavior instead of fretting over dumping an old one.

