Brainstorming ✓

#theprocess

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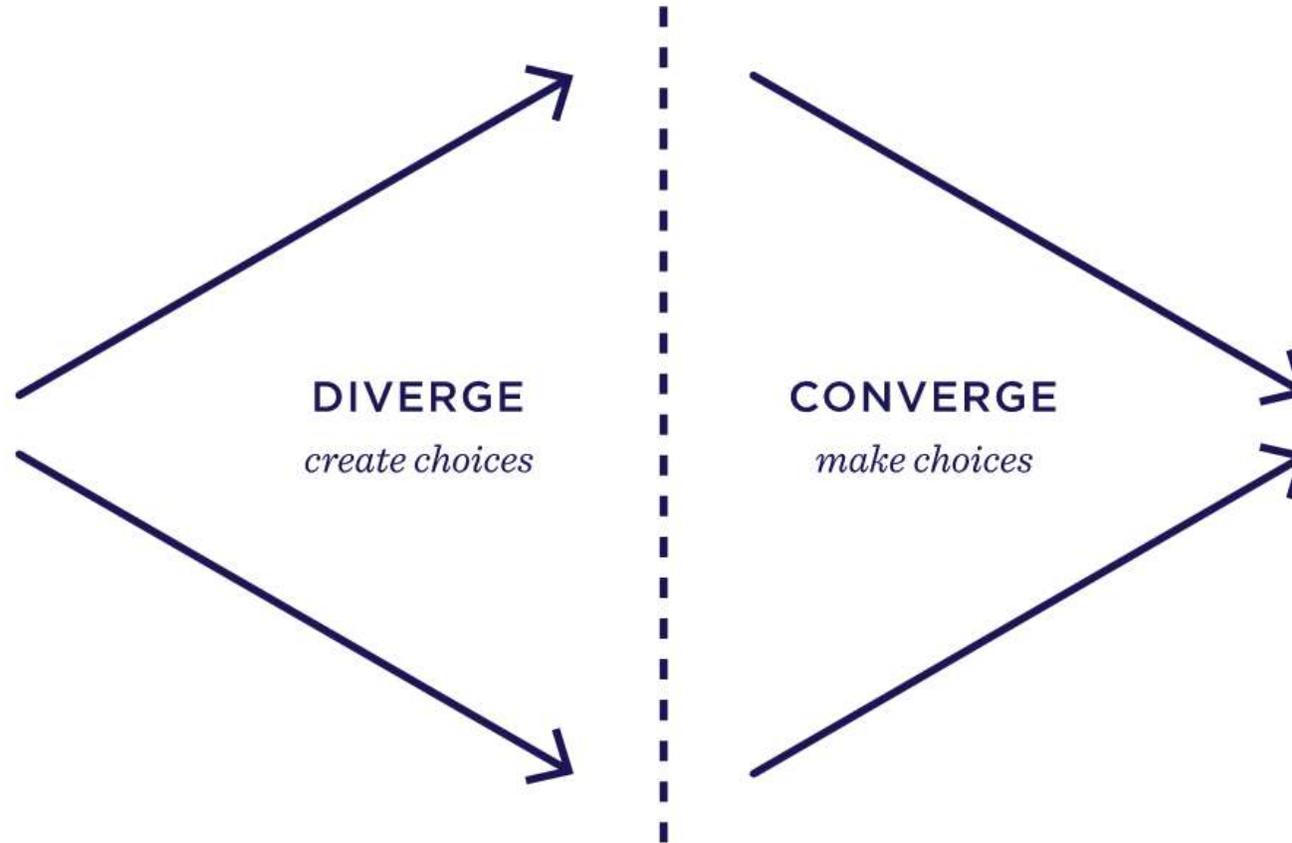# Outline

Brainstorming in Practice
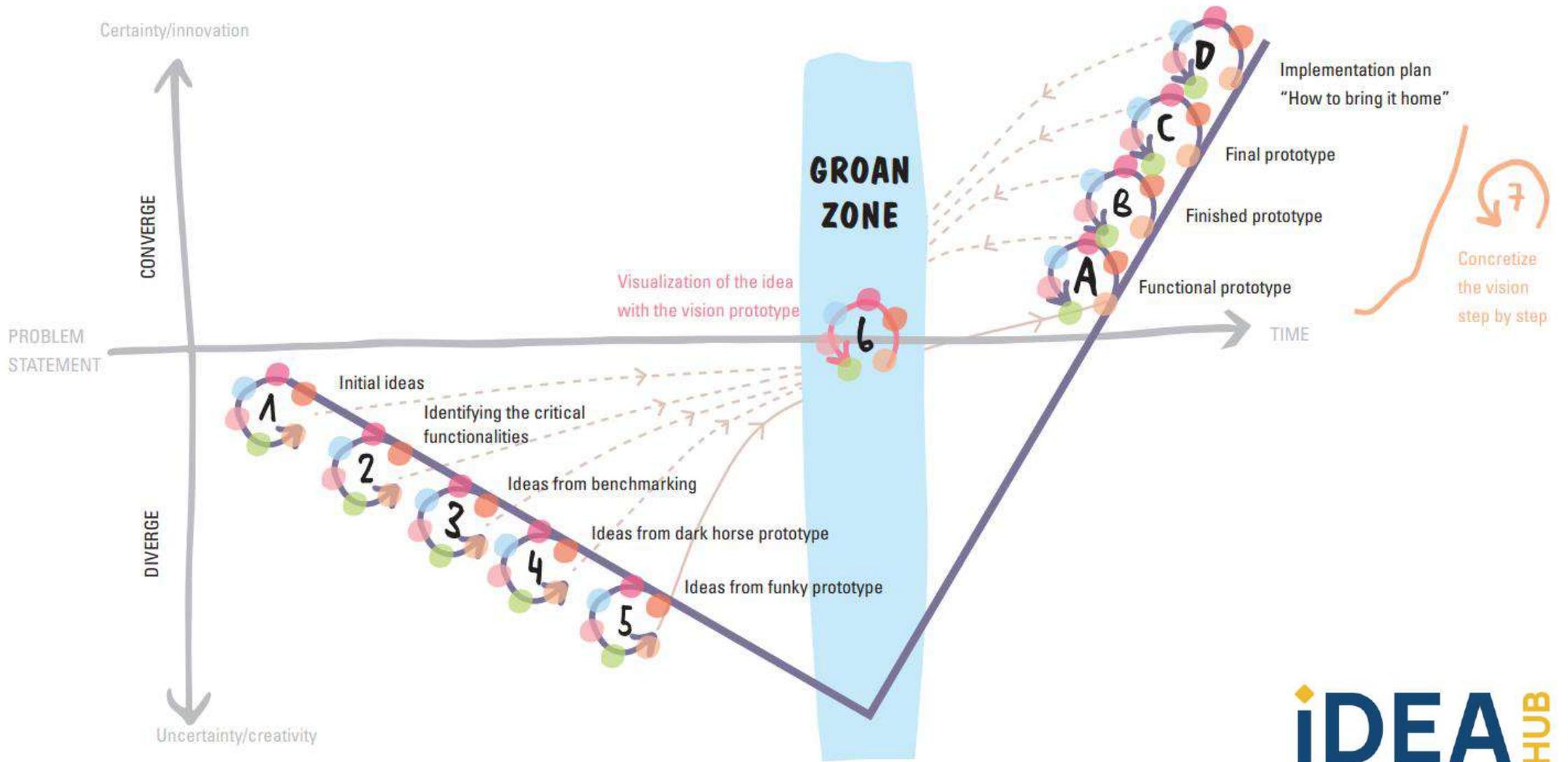
What's Brainstorming?

Brainstorming Techniques

Challenges

Q&A's

In Divergence—teams go wide to find insights and generate new ideas.

DIVERGE

create choices

CONVERGE

make choices

In Convergence—teams narrow their focus by refining ideas and synthesizing information.

Certainty/innovation

CONVERGE

PROBLEM STATEMENT

TIME

DIVERGE

Uncertainty/creativity

GROAN ZONE

Implementation plan
"How to bring it home"

Final prototype

Finished prototype

Functional prototype

Concretize the vision step by step

Visualization of the idea with the vision prototype

Initial ideas

Identifying the critical functionalities

Ideas from benchmarking

Ideas from dark horse prototype

Ideas from funky prototype

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Brainstorming draws on **logic, imagination, intuition and systemic reasoning** to explore the possibilities of what *could be* and *to create desired* outcomes that **benefit the end user** (the customer).
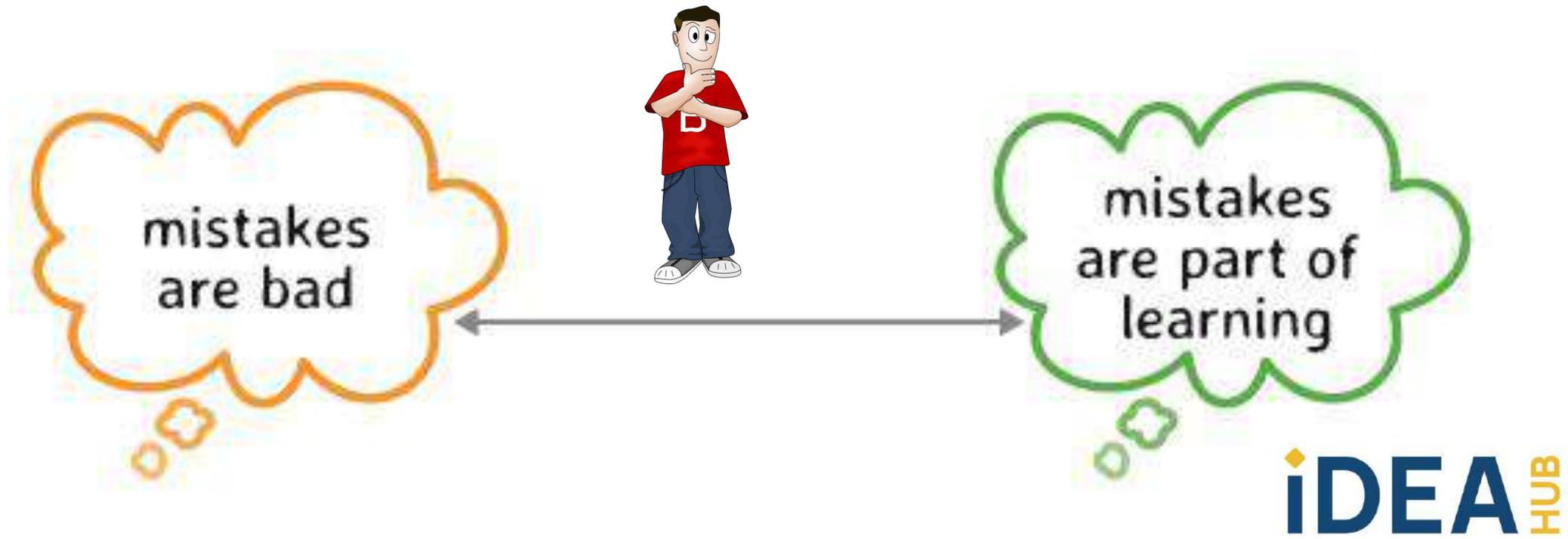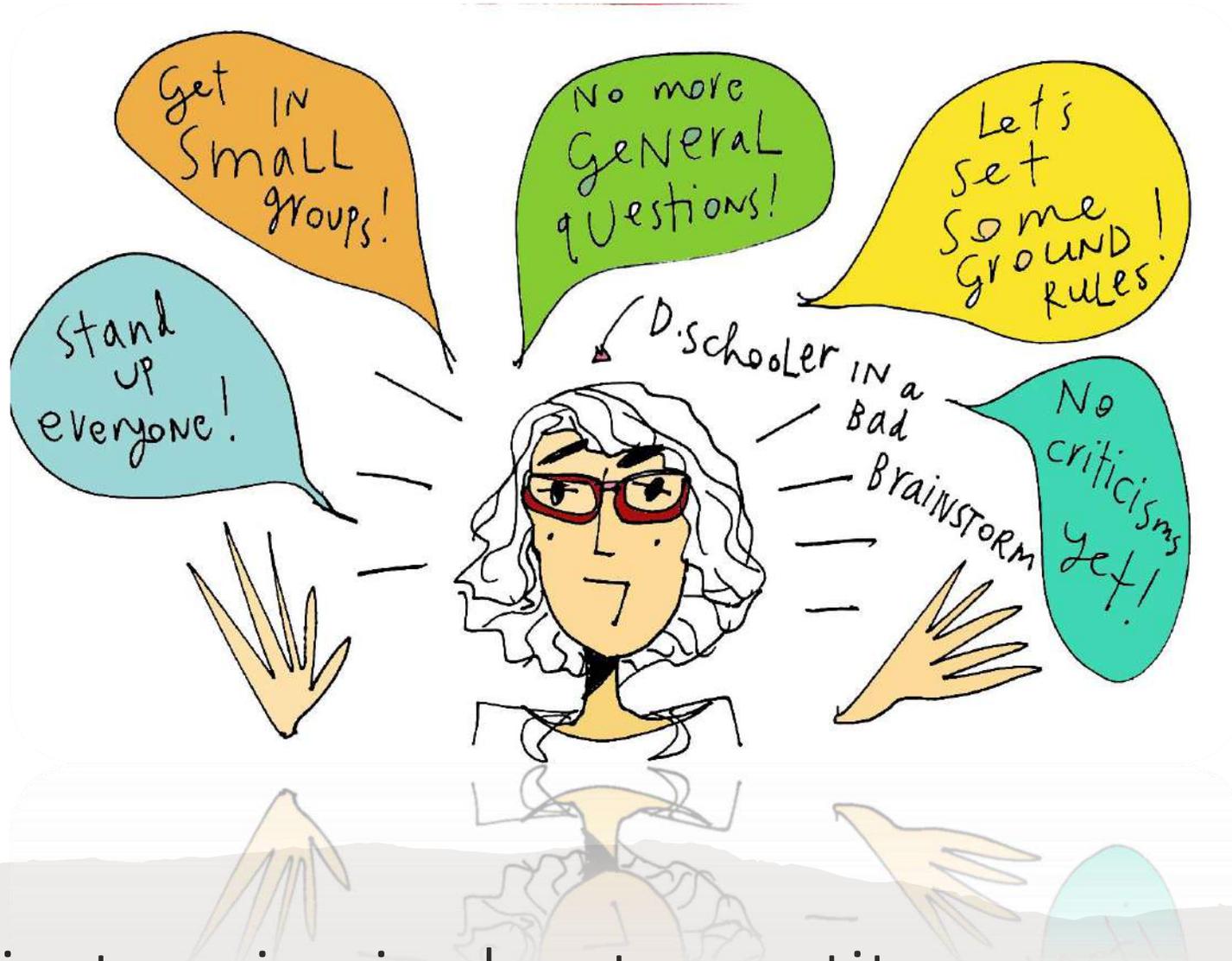
Brainstorming is about quantity over quality!

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What's the best way to brainstorm?

While there are **basic rules** that make the process meaningful and effective, there are dozens of ways to **inspire creative ideas**.

Many **facilitators** use <u>more than one technique</u> in a single brainstorming session to keep the creative **"essences"** flowing while supporting ==different styles== of **thought** and **expression.**

Key …

Brainstorming **isn't complex**—though there are **important techniques** for ensuring success.

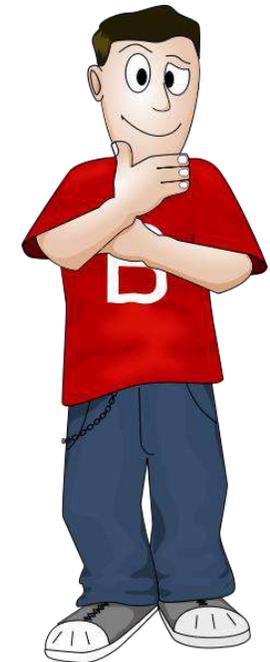# Understand the Difference Between Urgent and Important

Urgent things require your **immediate** attention.

Doing things that seem **urgent** but are actually of little significance costs us all *a lot* **of time**.

Just because something is urgent, *doesn't mean it's important.*

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	DO NOW	DO NEXT
NOT IMPORTANT	DO LATER OR DELEGATE	IGNORE

You should always focus on what's important:

- Starting with **urgent issues** and following with **less urgent ones.**

For things that are urgent, but not important:

- Try and delegate if there's someone who can do them for you.
- If not, come back to them later (if necessary at all).

Things that are neither urgent nor important?

- Ignore them.
- Or save them for last if they're your guilty pleasures like playing video games ☺

Basic brainstorming – How Does It Work?

"off the wall"

Get	Ask	Review
Get a group of people together to address a **problem, challenge, or opportunity**	Ask your group to generate as **many ideas as possible**—no matter how **"off the wall"** they may seem. • *During this period, no criticism is allowed.*	**a.Review** the ideas b. S**elect** the most interesting, **c. lead** a discussion about how to **combine**, **improve**, and/or i**mplemen**t the ideas

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Hey Hey Hey

It's not always easy to generate new ideas out of nowhere

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No matter **how well you've prepared**, there's always the **chance that distractions**, **personality clashes, anxiety**, or **ordinary boredom** can get in the way of effective brainstorming.

When that happens, you'll be glad to have a **collection of great ideas** for moving the **process forward!**

Two kinds of brainstorming sessions

A. The kind that leaves you energized and inspired

B. The kind that leaves you drained, feeling like you came away with more questions than answers.

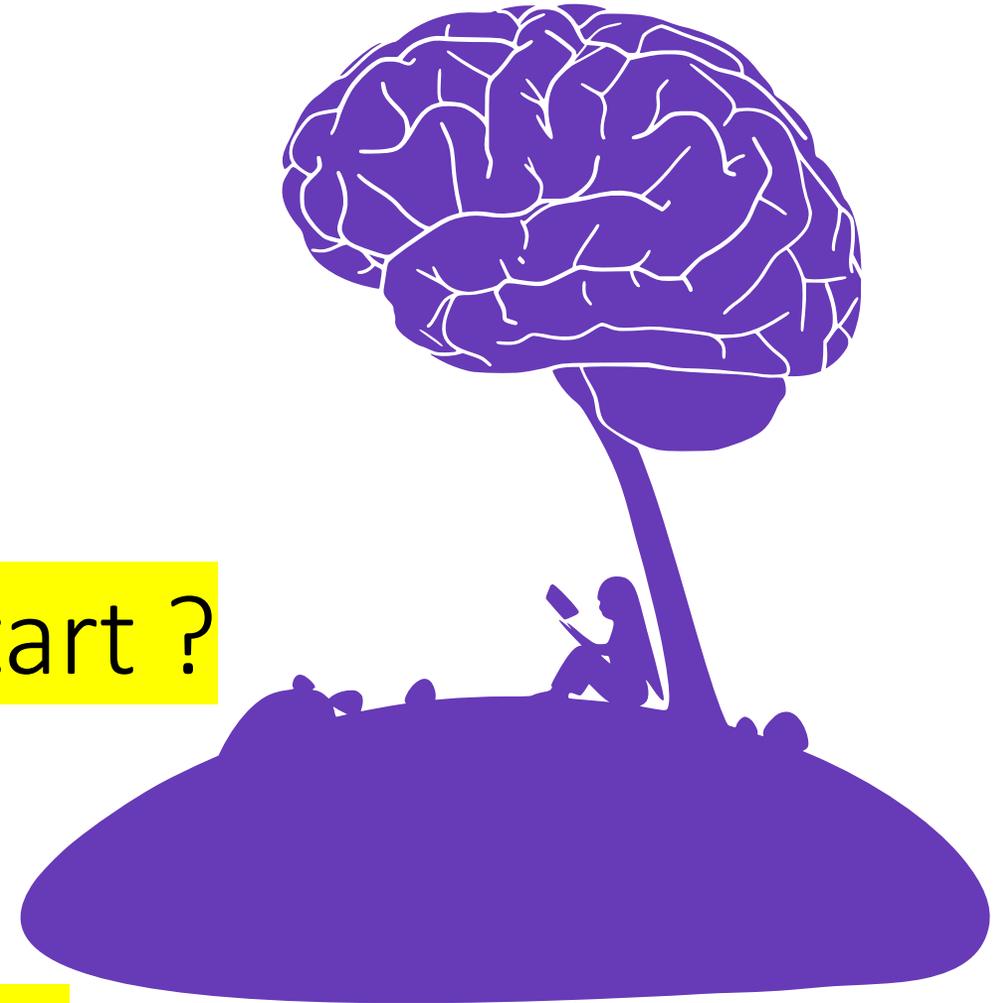# We have all been there, but it doesn't have to be like that!

Note: A **successful brainstorm produce a solution** to a problem, but you'll remind **people how creative they** and their t**eammates** can be.

Pump The Juice!

How do we even start ?

What's the process involved?

Start with icebreakers or warm-ups

Carving out space for an <mark>icebreaker exercise</mark> at the beginning of a brainstorming session sets the **tone**, **encourages mingling**, **and brings the group together** around a common or shared experience.
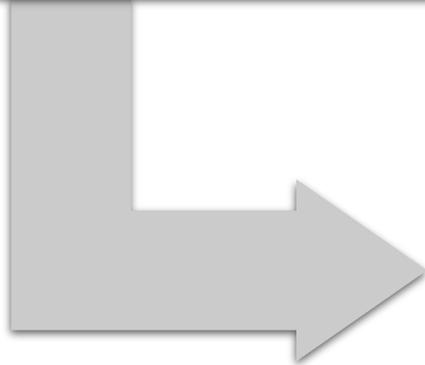
Not only that but they will **boost energy and positive vibe**s in the room and promote team building.

(it's contagious, you know)

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Get creative juices flowing

- **Letting your guard down** (like singing karaoke with coworkers) is an effective way to bond with others.

- Using **tried-and-true improv techniques** helps teammates loosen up, warm up and immediately break down barriers.

Several but not all

One-minute life stories.

- In pairs, each person has one minute to tell their life story. The other person listens and then has to repeat back as much as they remember. This promotes active listening (something we all can benefit from).

Yes, And.

- Play out a scene or conversation with the group where every line starts with the words "yes, and."

Virtual sketch session (Online, Virtual)

- Quickly sketch a picture of your workspace, your pet or even an original emoji for how you're feeling that day. Then, share what you've drawn with your team.

Map out – don't throw out – bad ideas

Roadblocks to <mark>free thinking</mark>

In fact, brainstorms work best **when every attendee is at about the same level.**

- Use the beginning of a brainstorm to **come up with as many "bad" ideas** as you can.
- Not only will this generate a **few laughs** but it will **spur positive energy** and keep productivity high.

Mighty Groups – Keep the groups small

- The two secret ingredients to a highly effective brainstorm are equal parts **first-hand experience** and **group size**.

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Think about…

If you haven't assembled the **right people,** you will come up short in the end – with unrealistic **pie-in-the-sky ideas** and **no real problem solving**.

- The key? Work with a diverse group of individuals who all have on-the-ground knowledge of the problem you're trying to attack.

The sweet spot for the ideal number of participants?

- Five - Seven.

Too few, and you might find yourself in the idea "STAGNATIONS", too many and the number of ideas also starts to "UPLAND".

Consider a change of scenery
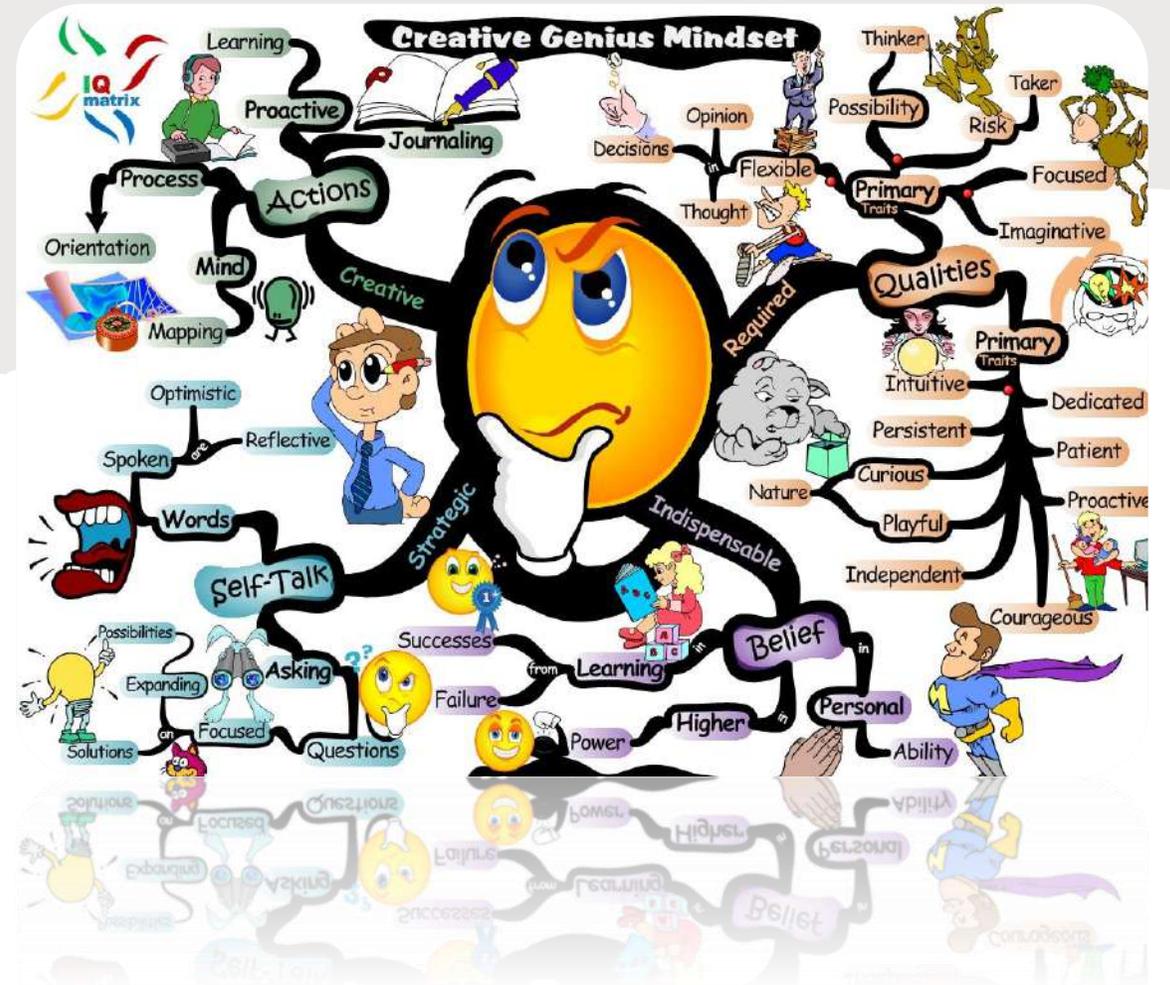
- If you've ever fe*lt brain drained, stuck, or like you're hitting a major creative block*, you know that going for a short, brisk walk can immediately snap you out of it.

- Your environment is very important to creative thinking - a "creative space".

NOTE: Do heads-down ideation to avoid groupthink

- Groupthink is an **easy trap** to fall into when you're brainstorming.

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Here's how to structure a brainstorm with heads-down time:

- Start with a **quick 3-5 minute icebreaker**.
- Give the team structure with <u>goals for the brainstorm.</u>
- Spend 15-20 minutes of "heads down" time for individual thinking.
- Have each participant present their ideas to the group.
- Carry out a silent dot vote to identify the top ideas.

Let's try one ???

Get curious with questions "Question Burst"

- Sometimes when **you're feeling stuck**, try framing your session around a set of <mark>brainstorming questions</mark> rather than answers.

- By asking questions rather than providing answers to a problem, participants can **discover new**, **unseen pathways** towards a **collective solution**.
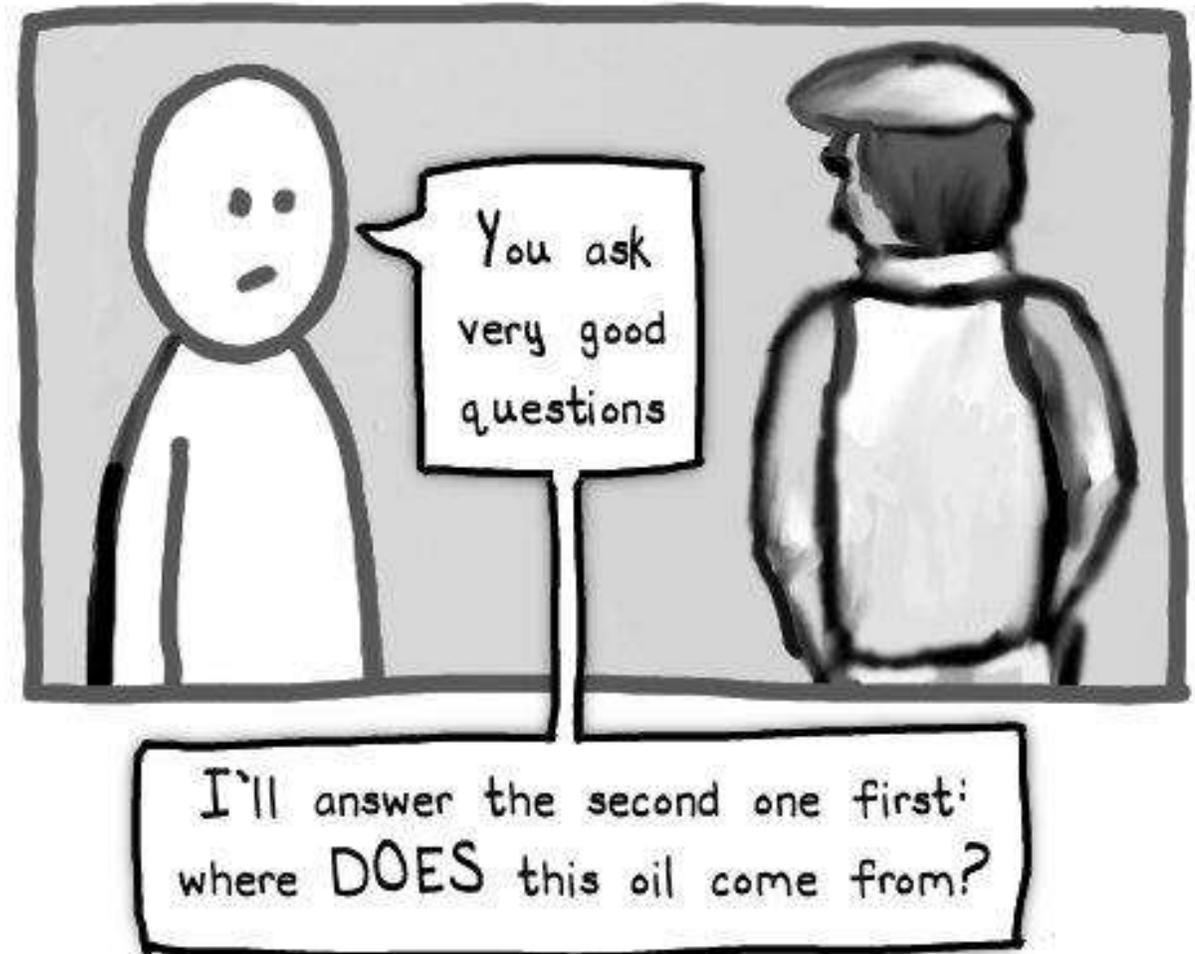
Consider sub-groupings or break-out sessions

If your brainstorm is being dominated by a **few outspoken individuals** ☺ it might be time to consider breaking out into smaller groups.

Assign each smaller group (3-5 people) one question (and one question only!) that they will spend the next **10-20 minutes brainstorming** on their own.

Smaller groups are **set up for success** because they'll be **forced to speak up** (lest they languish in awkward silence), whereas in larger settings **quieter introverts** can **slide under** the radar without contributing ideas.

Don't forget to wrap up your session

Shortly before your brainstorm is set to adjourn, participants should spend some **time discussing their favorite ideas from the session.**

- Whether that's by **silently voting** on the best ideas or by **merging ideas** with similar ones to **map out themes**, the end of any brainstorm should feel like the *culmination of a lot of hard work, team effort, and good vibes.*

- Once things have **wrapped up**, the **facilitator of the brainstorm** (i.e. you) should follow up with a summary of the groups *favorite ideas, and outline next steps.*

Brainstorming questions For kick-start

Empower "you" to ask great questions.

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Keep that in Mind!

- The most productive questions are open-ended, short, and simple.

- Shifting **from descriptive**, easy questions (what's working? what's not?) to more c**omplex**, **speculative ones** (why or why not? what if?) tends to produce better breakthroughs.

Why are questions so important?

- Brainstorming sessions are designed to **be open-ended and spontaneous.**
  - So, shouldn't our questions be the same? Why should we put any thought into them beforehand?

Several points to think about....why?

In our day-to-day life, we constantly monitor what we say because we fear judgment.

At work, we double-check our emails multiple times before sending them.

We hold back during meetings because we don't want to look dumb. This is understandable.

People are hired, fired, and promoted based on whether they make intelligent decisions.

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Brainstorming disrupts

The flow of everyday life.

Speakers feel free **to throw out ideas** without fear of judgment— and **listeners** do not judge.

If you're doing it right, a brainstorm **introduces vulnerability**.
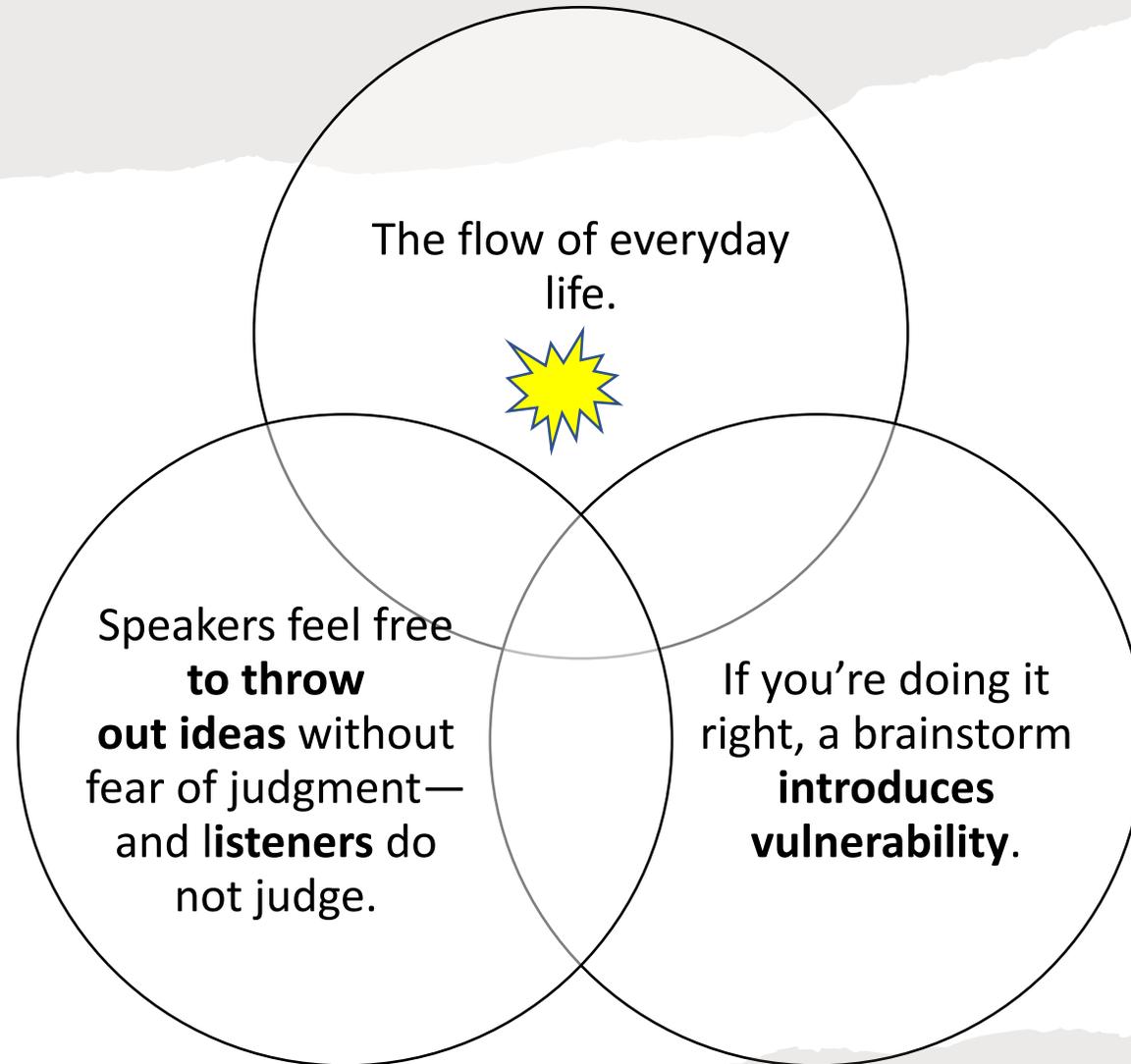
Creating that kind of environment is not easy!

It's a fundamental disruption of our thinking and behavior.

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A. **Observational Questions**

Observational questions can be answered by **your senses**: anything that can be seen, heard, touched, or felt.

- These types of questions are useful for kicking off a brainstorm.
- They **invite participants** to set the stage for the discussion, taking stock of what you've experienced.

Examples…Start your Brainstorm…

What do you notice about the product we're looking at?……

When you ……………………………………, what jumps out at you?……

What are we trying to achieve in this meeting? ………………

What concrete steps should we take to move forward?………………

Observational questions work well in a variety of settings

The entire group can share observations, people can pair up, or people can jot down their ideas.

It might help for people to sketch out their observations before sharing with the wider group.

Experiment to see what works best—this can be part of the fun!

B.Introspective Questions

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As the name suggests, introspective questions encourage participants to **think deeply by looking inward.**

- Rather than focusing on visual processing, participants focus on emotional or cognitive processing.

Examples....

How easy or difficult is it to interact with …………………..?

Is there an element of ……………………..that surprises you?

Does anything about this ……………. remind you of other ……………….you've ……………………?

Do you have any questions about …………………….?

How do you feel about this project?……………………….

What about this project excites you (or not)?………………………

C. Retrospective Questions

Retrospective questions ask participants to look *backward*, allowing your teammates to share the significance or implications of the topic at hand.

Retrospective questions are important for encouraging everyone to think about what they learned from the session.

They're a fun and efficient way to start translating ideas into action.

Examples…

What have you learned?.........

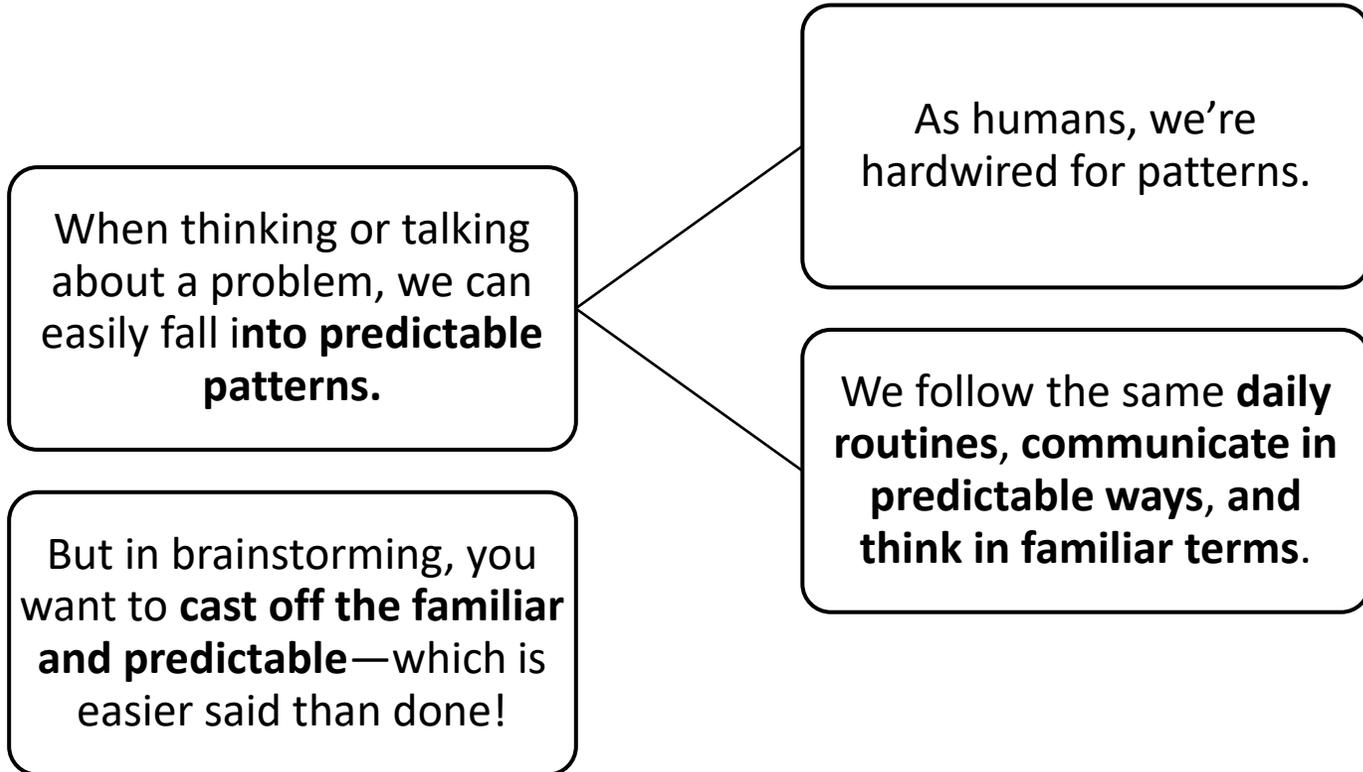What would you like to learn more about?.................

What should we do differently next time?.................

What additional information should we gather before we start this project?....................

What categories can we sort these ideas into?................

D. Lateral Thinking Questions
"It makes sense"

When thinking or talking about a problem, we can easily fall i**nto predictable patterns.**

As humans, we're hardwired for patterns.

We follow the same **daily routines**, **communicate in predictable ways**, **and think in familiar terms**.

But in brainstorming, you want to **cast off the familiar and predictable**—which is easier said than done!

Don't be afraid to get creative with these questions…

What if we scrapped this approach and tried something else?...........
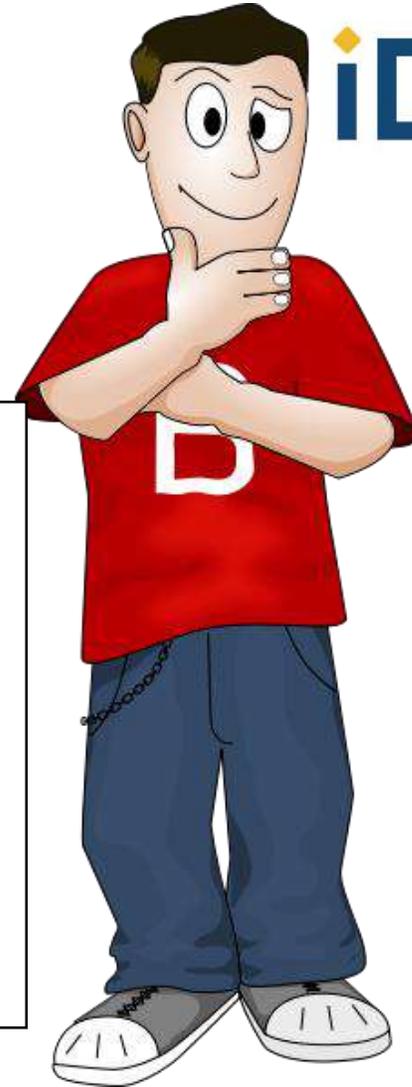
What would happen if we didn't do this project at all?............

How can we think about this problem from someone else's perspective?............

If we had infinite resources, what would this look like?.....................

you're here to be vulnerable and take chances

E. Actionable Questions

01

As the brainstorm winds down, your teammates will want **to find out what they can do with** the information they've gathered.

02

Sometimes, it can be challenging to see how brainstorms—which **tend to be chaotic, messy, and** frenetic— can actually turn into a project or process.

03

That's where actionable questions come in.

Examples…

What should we start, stop, or continue doing? Be specific……….

Who is taking the first step?…………

Which of these action items should we tackle first?………….

STATEMENT

When done right, a **brainstorming session shouldn't feel like a chore** but rather an opportunity to c**reate something together**, especially when your brainstorming technique supports **different styles** of thinking and expression.

?What is brainstorming?

- No matter your preferred method, most brainstorming techniques involve three steps:
    1. Capture ideas
    2. Discuss and critique the ideas
    3. Choose which ideas to execute

- Every brainstorming technique also involves the same ingredients.

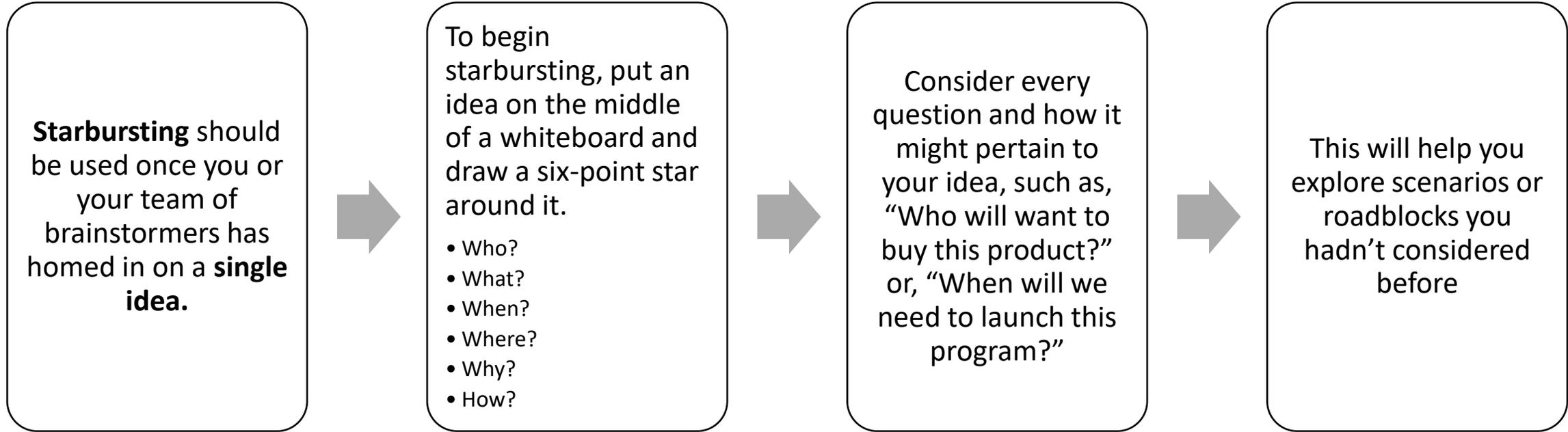- All you need is an individual or group of people, a problem to solve or an opportunity to address, and time.

Let's See some of them approaches….

Starbursting Visual Technique

Starbursting should be used once you or your team of brainstormers has homed in on a **single idea.**

To begin starbursting, put an idea on the middle of a whiteboard and draw a six-point star around it.

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Consider every question and how it might pertain to your idea, such as, "Who will want to buy this product?" or, "When will we need to launch this program?"

This will help you explore scenarios or roadblocks you hadn't considered before

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The five whys, a.k.a. why analysis

Similar to starbursting, the five whys brainstorming technique helps you evaluate the strength of an idea.

Challenge yourself to ask "why" questions about a topic **or idea at least five times** and consider what new problems you surface—and, importantly, note how you can address them.

To help organize your thoughts, consider using a flowchart or fishbone diagram in hand with this brainstorming technique.

SWOT analysis

The notion?

Discuss the following aspects of your topic to determine whether it's worth executing:

- **Strengths:** how does the idea dominate or stand out from competitors?
- **Weakness:** are there any flaws in the idea that could jeopardize its execution?
- **Opportunities:** what else can you capitalize on based on this idea?
- **Threats:** what are potential downfalls that could arise if the idea is launched?

How Now Wow
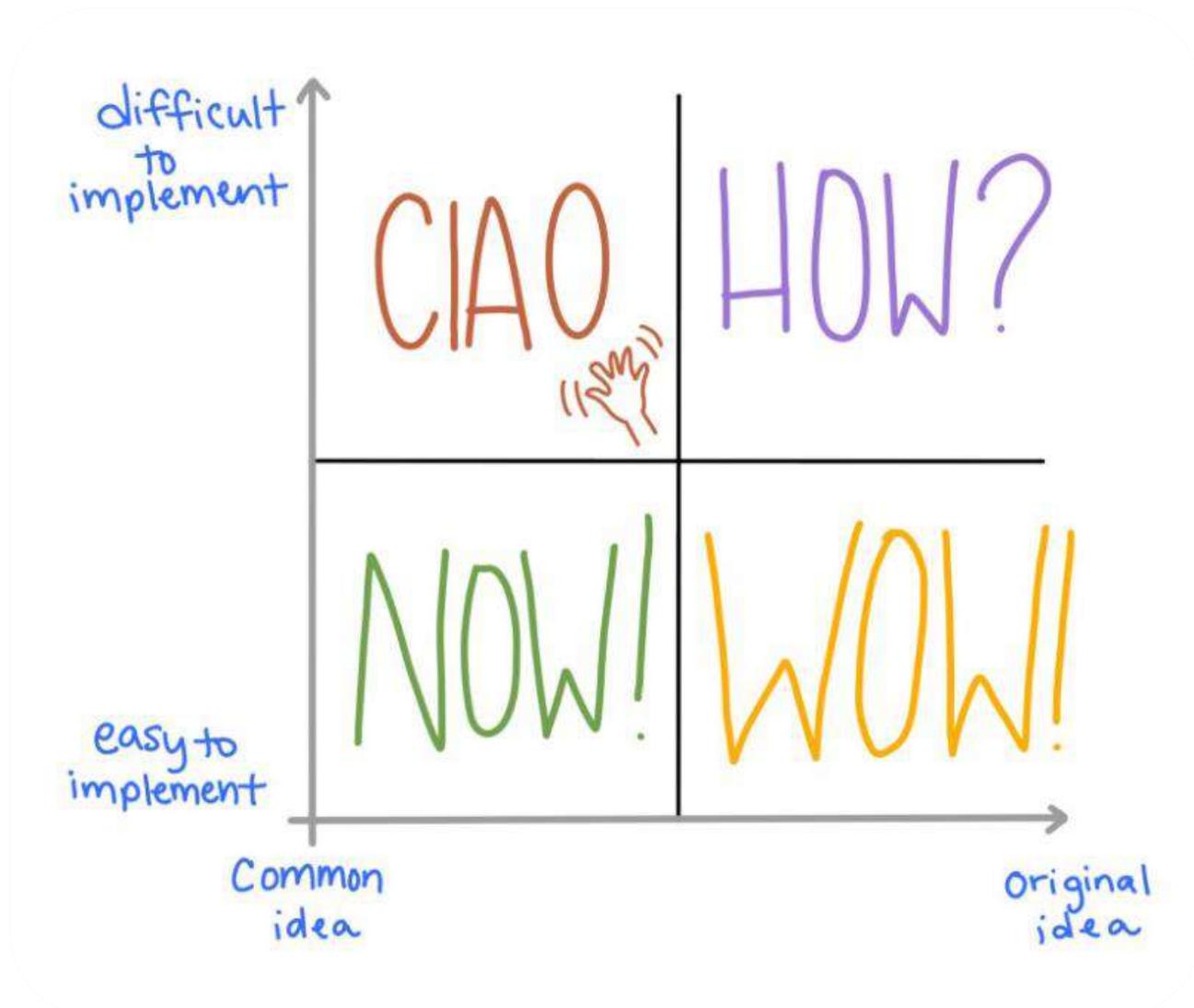
The How Now Wow brainstorming technique is all about categorizing ideas based on how unique they are and how easy they are to implement.

Once you've collected several ideas, either individually or from team members, talk through where they fall in the How Now Wow spectrum:

- How ideas are ideas that are original but not executable.
- Now ideas are unoriginal ideas that are easily executable.
- Wow ideas are never-been-pitched before ideas that are also easy to implement.

To help organize your ideas, consider using a matrix of four squares with difficulty weighted on the Y-axis and innovation on the X-axis.

Mind mapping – Visual Brainstorming Technique
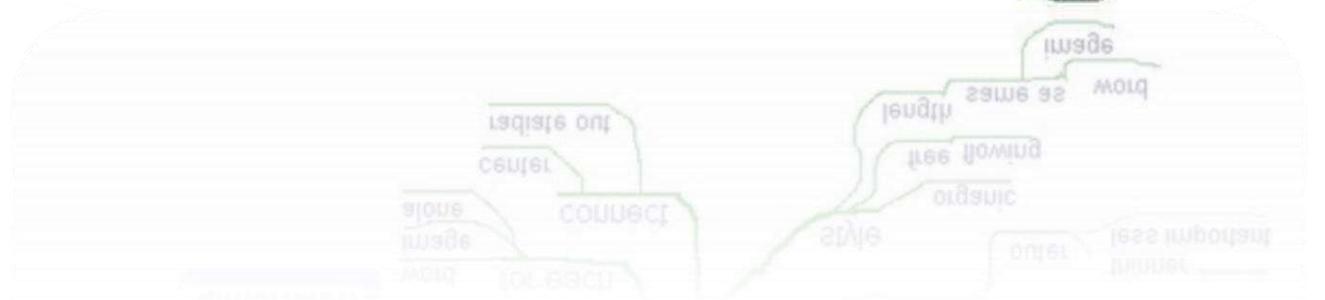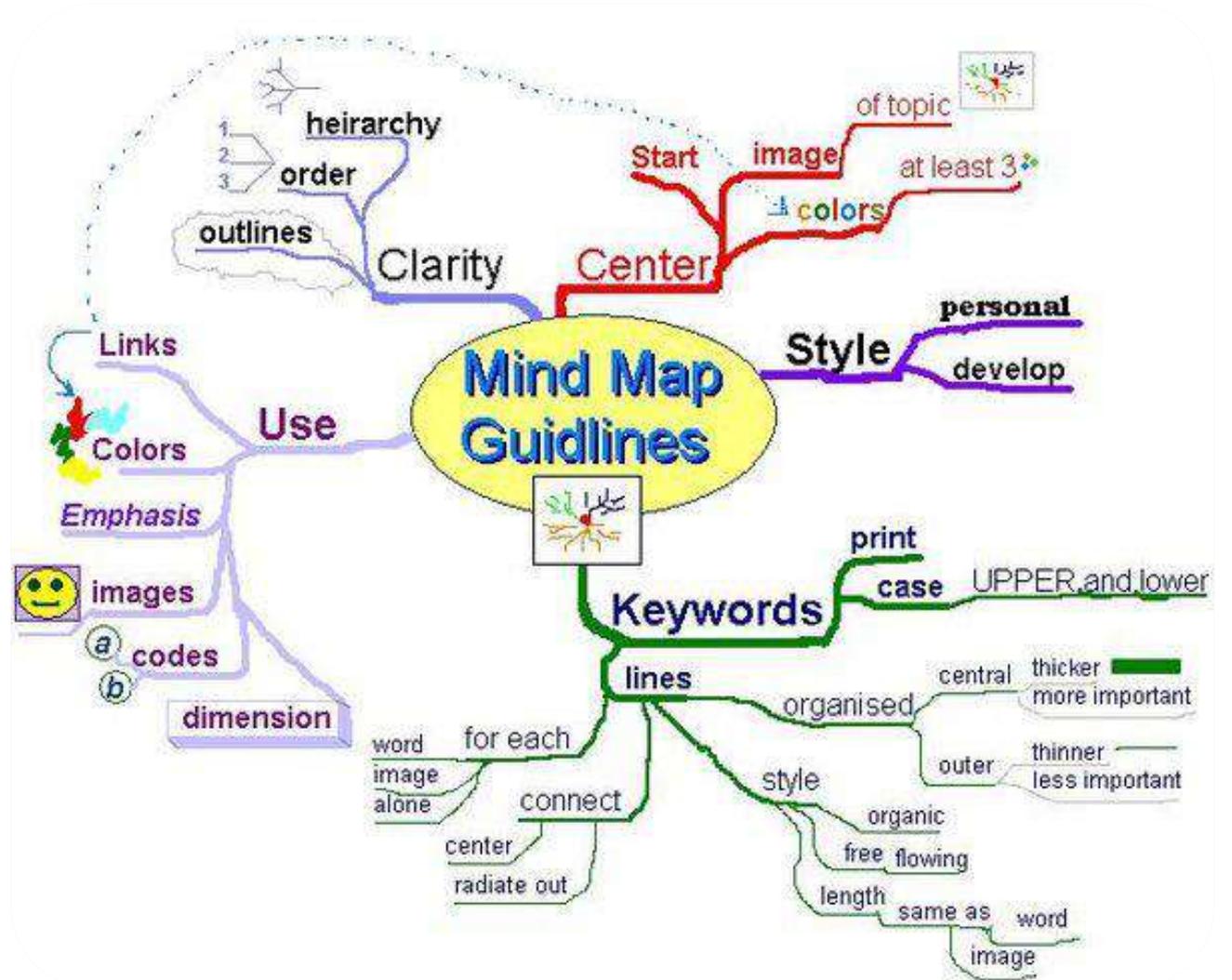
Mind mapping does this by using the first idea to inspire other ideas.

You'll need a large piece of paper or whiteboard to do this.

Begin by writing down a topic and then drawing lines connecting tangential ideas to it.

This essentially helps you paint a picture of your topic at hand and what might impact its execution or even expedite it.

Fixed versus Open

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Gap filling, a.k.a. gap analysis

Gap Analysis

GAP

Key factors for change

Current State

Desired State

Action Plan

When you're struggling with how to execute an idea, that's where gap filling comes in—to address the **obstacles standing in your way**.

Begin by starting with a statement of **where you are and then a statement** of where you want to be.

It's worth writing these out on a large piece of paper or a whiteboard for all of your brainstormers to see, perhaps using a flowchart or mind map to do so.

Then, list obstacles that are preventing you from getting where you want to be and work through solutions for each of them.

By the end of your brainstorming session, you should have a clearer plan of how to get where you want to be.

Quiet brainstorming techniques

- The quiet brainstorming techniques **allow brainstormers to contribute ideas** on their own time and often anonymously.
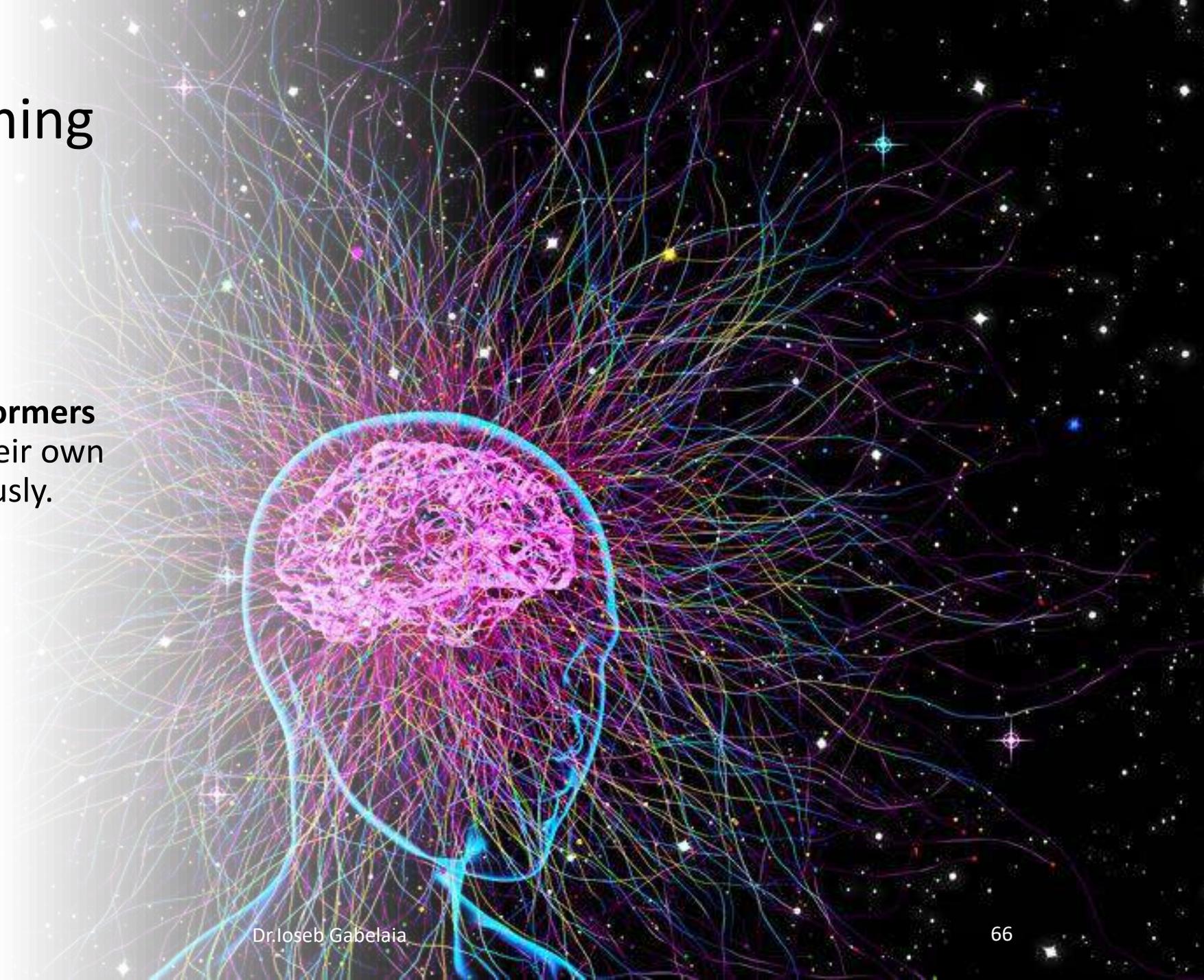
Great for remote teams, brain-netting is essentially a place for a team to brain dump their own ideas, whether that's a **Slack channel, Google Doc, or your project management tool.**

The notion is that brainstormers can add ideas whenever inspiration strikes and that the list will be ever-evolving.

Of course, the team leader might want to inform their team of brainstormers of any important dates or deadlines when they need solutions to a problem.

They may also want to hold a meeting to discuss the ideas. All brainstormers' identities can be left anonymous even in the meeting.

Brain-netting, a.k.a. online brainstorming

SCAMPER
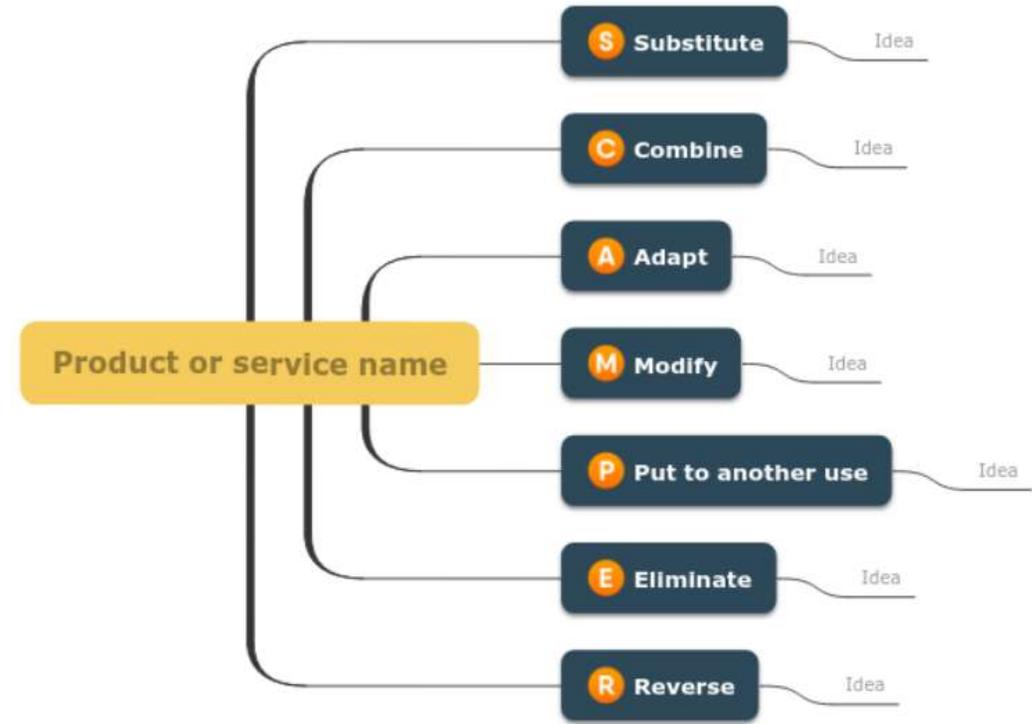
The SCAMPER brainstorming technique encourages brainstormers to look at an idea from different angles and it uses its acronym to inspire each lens:

- Substitute: consider what would happen if you swapped one facet of a solution for another.
- Combine: consider what would happen if you combined one facet of a solution with another.
- Adapt: consider how you could adapt an idea or solution in a new context.
- Modify: consider how you can modify an idea to make it higher impact.
- Put to another use: consider how else you could leverage your idea.
- Eliminate: consider what you could remove from the idea or solution so that it's simplified.
- Reverse effective: finally, consider how you could reorganize an idea to make it most effective.

When used in a group brainstorming session, you might want to use templates to track responses or pair the SCAMPER method with a brainwriting session to encourage all brainstormers to evaluate ideas from every angle.

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Roleplay brainstorming techniques

Drama lovers rejoice!

These roleplay brainstorming techniques encourage brainstormers to figuratively walk in someone else's shoes or put on their hat—or six hats, in one instance—to address a problem or dream up ideas from a new perspective.

An added benefit of this? When brainstormers take on a personality that's not their own, it lowers inhibitions since it's technically not their point of view being brought to the table.

Six thinking hats

PROCESS

Blue Hat - Process
Thinking about thinking.
What thinking is needed?
Organizing the thinking.
Planning for action.

CREATIVITY

Green Hat - Creativity
Ideas, alternatives, possibilities.
Solutions to black hat problems.

FACTS

White Hat - Facts
Information and data.
Neutral and objective.
What do I know?
What do I need to find out?
How will I get the information I need?

BENEFITS

Yellow Hat - Benefits
Positives, plus points.
Why an idea is useful.
Logical reasons are given.

FEELINGS

Red Hat - Feelings
Intuition, hunches, gut instinct.
My feelings right now.
Feelings can change.
No reasons are given.

CAUTIONS

Black Hat - Cautions
Difficulties, weaknesses, dangers.
Spotting the risks.
Logical reasons are given.

This brainstorming technique requires a minimum of six brainstormers to wear imaginary hats—hence the name— that require them to look solely at an idea from one specific angle.

For instance, one brainstormer might be wearing an impact hat and only concern themselves with the impact of an idea and another might be wearing a constraints hat and only looking at the constraints of an idea.

You can pick and choose which angles are most important to your organization. And by the end of the group discussion, the whole brainstorming group should be able to hang their hats feeling confident about the ideas you'll pursue.

Group brainstorming techniques

Participation is required for the round-robin brainstorming technique.

Everyone must contribute at least one idea before the entire group can give feedback or share a second idea.
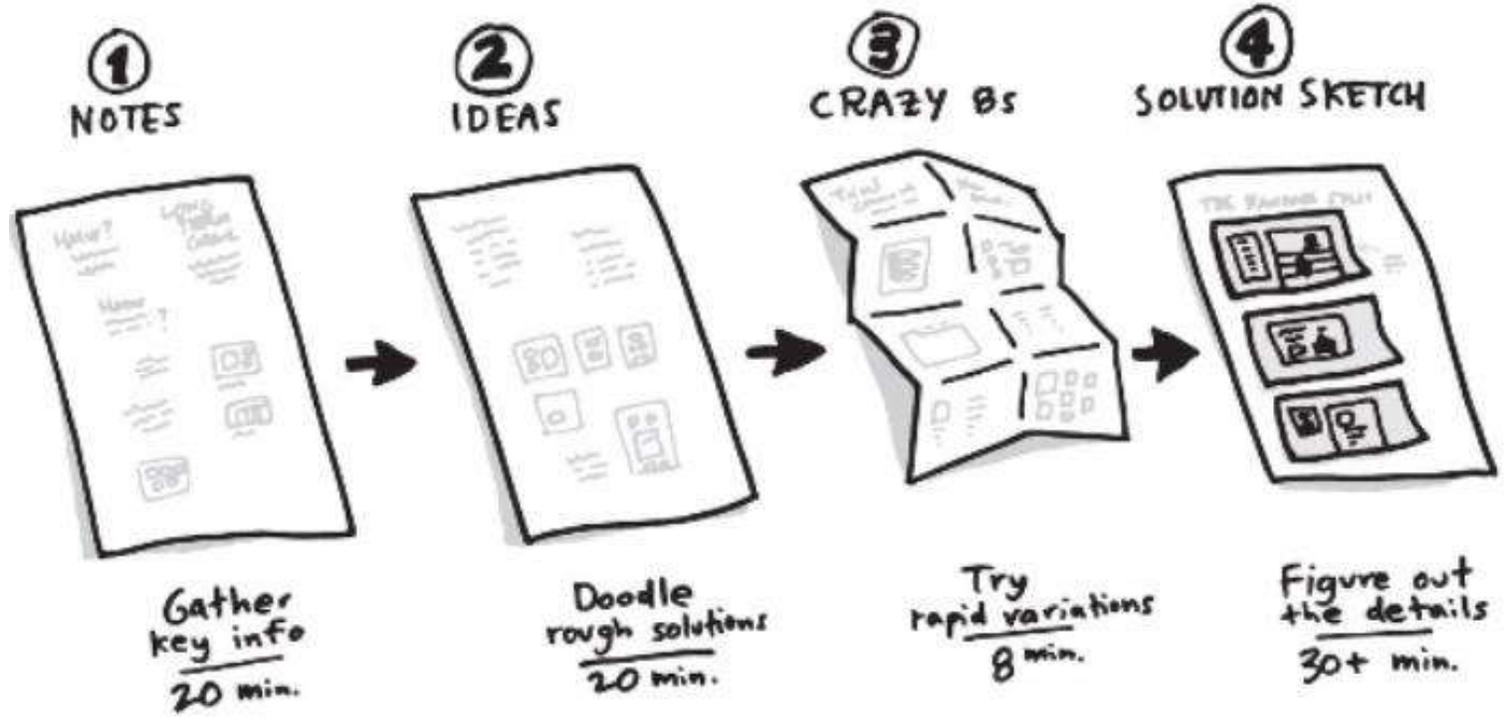
Given the requirement that everyone must share an idea, it's best to allow brainstormers time to prepare ideas before each round-robin brainstorming session.

This brainstorming technique is great for introverted team members and also for larger groups to ensure everyone can contribute. Moreover, the round-robin brainstorming technique also promotes the notion that the only bad idea is no idea.

Round-robin brainstorming

'A very off-the-cuff brainstorming technique, "what if" brainstorming is as simple as throwing out as many "what if" questions surrounding a topic as possible, similar to the rapid ideation brainstorming technique.

Walking through the scenarios might help spur new obstacles pertaining to your problem. Essentially, the "what if" brainstorming technique helps your team evaluate all the possibilities.

What if' brainstorming

Crazy eights

① NOTES
Gather key info
20 min.

② IDEAS
Doodle rough solutions
20 min.

③ CRAZY 8s
Try rapid variations
8 min.

④ SOLUTION SKETCH
Figure out the details
30+ min.

A short and fun brainstorming technique, crazy eights delivers on quantity by encouraging brainstormers to think quickly using a template that has eight boxes and only eight minutes on the clock to sketch out eight ideas.

Once the timer stops, the group discusses their ideas.

For a larger group, consider having each brainstormer narrow in on only three ideas and give them a longer time limit of six minutes to sketch them out in more detail.

The 6-3-5 Technique!

- Six people come together around a common problem, then each jots down three initial ideas on their own, and then after five minutes, they rotate their notes and repeat the process.

Motive - To generate ideas in a group

Participants - Design Thinking team (1 moderator, 6 participants)

Duration - 20-30 Minutes

What is it about?

- With the 6-3-5 method, a large number of ideas for solving a given problem can be created within a team of 6 people.

- The ideas are developed together: each participant gives first 3 proposals, which are extended by the others within 5 iterations

The goal

- The aim is to collectively develop as many ideas as possible for the given problem.
- The point is not the maturity of the ideas, but rather the quantity of the approaches and the integration of the whole group with the aim of discovering new creative ways to solve the problem

How to do it?

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1. Phrase the problem you are dealing with in a concise sentence on the whiteboard.

2. Each participant receives a sheet of paper with an empty table (3 columns with 6 rows each).

3. For the first line each participant writes down 3 ideas to solve the problem.

4. After 3 minutes, the sheets are passed clockwise to the next person.

5. Everyone now tries to develop the existing ideas and write down 3 new ideas.

6. Steps 4 and 5 are run five times until all lines are filled.

7. The group analyses, evaluates and discusses the results together.

When do you need it?

- The 6-3-5 method is useful when new and innovative problem-solving ideas are allowed and needed.

- It is expressly not necessary that the team is familiar with the problem area, because new and unusual ways of thinking can better help to solve the problem

Brainstorming challenges

- The golden rule of all brainstorming sessions is quantity over quality.
- The more ideas you have, the better your chances are that one will be worthy of execution.
  - For these reasons, especially in group brainstorming sessions, be sure all team members check their criticisms at the door and let it be known that the only bad ideas are no ideas.

Brainstorming challenges include

- Unbalanced conversations, sometimes due to extroverts dominating discussions
- The anchoring effect, meaning brainstormers cling to the first few ideas shared and don't move on to others
- Awkward silences, which often occur when participants are not prepared

At last,...

Brainstorming is a terrific technique for idea generation, coming up with alternatives and possibilities, discovering fatal flaws, and developing creative approaches.

But it's only as good as its participants and facilitator.

The better you are at selecting participants, setting the stage, and encouraging discussion, the better your outcomes are likely to be.

Remember

Rules to start with

Create a safe space.

Quantity over quality.

Embrace crazy ideas.

Combine and improve ideas.

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