This and the following excerpt, Act Like a Creative Thinker, offer two slightly different perspectives on creative thinking, some parts of which overlap. Be flexible and take whatever works for you from both of these to enhance your creative thinking skills—and, whatever you do, THINK BIG!

Think Big – 5 Quantum Thinking Principles

Think of these principles as the five things your brain would want if it were stranded on a desert island—it’s the think-big survival kit to do more and get more out of every situation.

1. There’s Always Another Way
2. Be Curious and Risky
3. Get Lots and Lots of Ideas
4. Find Models in the World
5. Stay Focused on Who You Are and What You Want

Principle #1: There’s Always Another Way

When something doesn’t work, there’s always another way to get it—if you’re flexible enough to find it. This isn’t the kind of flexibility that helps you reach your toes—it’s the kind that helps you reach your goals. When you’re flexible, you simply find another way to make things work out.

Let’s say you’re training for a tennis tournament by running six days a week, but you sprain your ankle. Instead of giving up, you decide to swim in the mornings until you heal. Not only do you win the tournament, you decide to go out for the swim team next year. Or let’s say you plan lunch with a friend at your favorite restaurant. When you find out it’s closed for remodeling, you try a new place down the street and it becomes your new favorite spot!

Sometimes it’s hard to recognize, and even harder to admit, when something’s not working, especially when it’s your idea. But being flexible means that you can get off what’s not working, shift perspectives, and maintain the ability to change what you’re doing to get what you want—it’s that simple.

Principle #2: Be Curious and Risky

Curiosity is like the seek button on your radio—it helps you tune in to the world around you.

When you were a child, you were curious about everything—and you absorbed information, facts and ideas at an incredible rate because of it. The same is true today. The more curious you are, the faster you think and the more you learn because your thinking automatically keeps up with your curiosity.

But as we get older, curiosity feels riskier than it used to because we’re more aware of authority and feeling “stupid.” And, for some reason, these things have a stronger signal than the hundreds of questions swimming around our heads.
Principle #3: Get Lots and Lots of Ideas

“The best way to get a good idea is to have a lot of ideas.”
—Linus Pauling

Like shopping at a superstore or buying a bunch of raffle tickets, improving the selection and number of ideas in your head increases the chances you’ll come across the right one.

According to inventor Dr. Yoshio Nakamata, holder of twenty-three hundred patents, people who want to think bigger should stuff their brain. “Keep pumping information into it,” he says. “Give your brain lots of raw material. Then give it a chance to cook.”

Get more ideas in your head by resisting the urge to judge every thought and idea that comes your way. Remember, you have permission to think whatever you want. But you don’t have to say everything that pops into your head. In fact, it’s probably a good idea not to!

Another important thing to remember when stuffing your brain is that you can try ideas on for size. You don’t need to believe 100% in an idea just to think it.

Principle #4: Find Models in the World

Who were your role models as a kid? Your big brother or sister? A math whiz? A popular artist or musician?

If you know of someone who’s good at something you want to do or get better at, you can use that person as a model to scale up your thinking and make it happen. Using models isn’t just for kids who dream about being the next Beyoncé or Michael Jordan—it’s for anyone who wants to control their thinking and stretch their mind.

Finding and using a model begins with a “think bigger” mindset. Most of us wouldn’t think the majority of things in the Guinness Book of World Records were even possible unless someone showed us they were.

When you know what’s possible, you just need to figure out how to do it. Think of something big and amazing that you’d like to do or accomplish, like compose a symphony, climb a mountain, write a book, or compete in the Olympics. Whatever your goal, you can make a quantum leap toward it by finding someone who has, or has nearly, done it already. Study their approach, thinking patterns, and motivation. Realize and believe that it’s totally possible. It’s not a matter of whether you can do it. It’s simply a question of how you’re going to make it happen. Who knows, maybe you’ll become a model for others!

Following the example of a model is a way to realize what’s possible. But it will only work if you can personalize it and make it fit your life.

Principle #5: Stay Focused on Who You Are and What You Want

This principle is more than just a warm, fuzzy feeling. It’s about finding the best way to get from point A to point B and enjoying the ride.
If you feel a rush of satisfaction after solving complicated theories or mathematical equations, feed this natural excitement and curiosity and see where it takes you.

When you're focused on what you love, you may discover new strengths and interests along the way. If you love dancing, push yourself to think of new ways to explore your passion. Check out different genres like tango, salsa, hip-hop and foxtrot. Learn the music, meaning and stories behind each move. In the process, you may realize that you enjoy the study of history or anthropology more than you ever realized—you just never experienced the subjects through something you really care about, like dance.

Staying focused on who you are and what you want means keeping what works for you and changing what doesn’t match up. Along the way, look back to notice patterns in thinking and actions that will keep you heading in the right direction.

“Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”
—The Queen in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland

Excerpt from the Quantum Upgrade Series Quantum Thinking: Think Bigger, Make Things Happen by Bobbi DePorter