**A F\*cking waste of Time or Brass-Tacks Science backed Guide to High Level Creativity: A Book Review of *Do the F\*cking Work:***

Do the *F\*cking Work: Lowbrow Advice for High Level Creativity*, written by Jason Bacher, Brian Buirge, Jason Richburg and published by Harper Design, NY in 2019 is not your normal sugar-coated soft-pedaled balloons and unicorns guide to creativity. It is a non-fiction, brutally direct, profanity infused, collection of life advice presented in a visually stimulating way. Its slap in the face nature is softened by the humorous recollections of the journey three graduate students embarked on to convert a crazy idea into a successful consulting business that continually inspires high level creativity around the world.

Easily offended by profanity? Then perhaps, this is not the book for you with its over 318 appearances of profanity. But before you walk away, remember:

“Being offended is always a choice (p 9)” and,

“A diamond in the rough is exponentially more valuable than a polished turd. Seeing real value and being able to draw it out is the difference between being an expert and being an enthusiast (p 67)”

And we are creativity experts, right? Let’s dig in and try to determine if this publication is a diamond in the rough or an unpolished turd.

**First, the elephant in the room – the copious and intentional use of profanity.**

The authors boldly state that they included it to get attention, to make people uncomfortable, to shake people up and to challenge their perspectives. Could you find the same advice elsewhere provided in tepid neutrality? Most likely. Would it have the same impact – the science suggests it might not.

The survival of our species has depended on alertness to, and recall of, significantly arousing stimulation. And swears get our attention. In the article “Swearing, euphemisms, and linguistic relativity” (2011). Bowers and Pledell-Pearce show that obscenities do indeed stimulate our autonomic nervous systems to a greater degree than neutral or even euphemistic terms. While Van Lancker and Cummings note that profanity is selectively retained in cases where language processing has been severely impaired such as in Aphasia in their article titled “Expletives: Neurolinguistic and neurobehavioral perspectives on swearing” (1999). Both of these studies suggest we have a deeper connection with taboo language.

Additionally, while scientific research appears to be limited, popular psychology websites such as Psych Central, Psychology Today, and Association of Psychological Science suggest other benefits of profane language usage; such as improved ability to socially bond with others, increased feelings of power and control, reduction of tension that may block communications, as well as improved physical and psychological health. All in all, it looks like Bacher, Buirge, and Richburg’s use of profanity works in our favor.

**Second, does the advice align with the needs of high-level creativity?**

In podcast episode #576 of Bullet Proof Radio, long time expert in creative genius/eminence Dean K. Simonton indicates that while a minimal level of IQ is needed to have creative eminence other factors such as stick-to-it-ness, openness to experience, curiosity and willingness to fail over and over again seem to be greater predictors of high level creativity. I believe the following advice from the book seems pretty well aligned:

 **Stick-to-it-ness**:

“Be Fucking Persistent – Success is 99 percent resuscitation. You haven‘t failed until you’ve given up, so just don’t give up. Feeling exhausted? When you’re really exhausted, you’ll drop dead. What motivated you to get started? What’s changed? If there was a reason to get in, there’s reason to stay in (p 121).”

 **Openness to experience:**

“Make the Fucking Leap: That thing you’re avoiding, that thing that seems impossible, that thing you’re afraid of? That’s exactly what you have to do. Starting makes it possible; hesitating makes it painful. Fortune favors the bold, so find your spirit. Whatever you’re holding on to is holding you back. Let go. There are endless reasons why you might not make it, but the only sure way to fail is being unwilling to try (p 22-23).”

 **Being very curious and exploratory:**

“Explore all your fucking options: Have you really considered what you’re capable of, or just what you‘re comfortable with (p 60).”

 **Willingness to fail over and over again:**

“Celebrate your fucking failures: Hooray, you suck! You won’t get a trophy for that, but you will get some experience (unless you’re dumb). Don’t barricade your fragile ego behind accolades, status symbols, and mounting proliferation; just accept that you are going to lose sometimes. Lean into it. Use it as feedback. Every failure brings you one step closer to success (p 123).”

**Third, does the advice provide value? Is it a diamond cloaked in profanity or a profane waste of time?**

Personally, I find *Do the F\*cking Work* to be the former. While generally not a big fan of the flippant use of swears it serves a purpose here. I found this book to be entertaining, inspiring and one that I will refer to time and time again especially, when I need to be stirred from malaise and kicked into action in quick order. It is one you can read cover to cover or just randomly open for thought provoking advice. It stands out amongst other creativity books, not only for the language it use, but more importantly how it faces head on the messy roller-coaster ride of high-level creativity.

 Sometimes, I think we get caught up in the thrill of ideation and the security of developing a plan. But we fall short on expressing all the hard-core work, preparations, and perseverance that is required on either end of the process for high level creativity to come to fruition. Here is where this publication shines. With all its tough love advice this book takes creativity down from its ivory tower and makes it accessible to all. Whether it is advising one to constantly push the boundaries of one’s own knowledge through experience and exposure, or buck the conventional paradigms, it gets to the nitty gritty of what it takes to create and produce, which is action.

The main point of this book is that high level creativity is hard work, but the journey is well worth it if you do the work, embrace life fully, make the necessary sacrifices, and persevere. And I think that, as a field, while we educate and show others the value of creative thinking, we also need to shine a light on the more difficult aspects of it; in order to provide support for those who are neck deep in the process, that looked like it would be easy, then find that it is not. The book highlights that while creativity screams for openness, flexibility, and risk taking, we still put it in a box to fit what we think is socially acceptable. It’s a behavior that we need to start questioning more in depth, especially in the light of all the world changing successes that started out as socially unacceptable creativity. Creativity expert or not, I would recommend this book to every adult as a daily booster shot of questioning everything to reach higher levels of creativity.

In conclusion, look for the diamonds in the rough, know that profanity can be used for good, and be prepared to go on a thrilling adventure.

**References:**

Asprey, D. Intelligence is Not Enough: The Genius Zone – Dean Simonton [Audio podcast] <https://daveasprey.com/dean-simonton-576/>

Bacher, J., Buirge, B., & Richburg, J. (2019). *Do the Fucking Work: Lowbrow Advice for High-Level Creativity*. Harper Design, NY.

Bowers, J. S., & Pleydell-Pearce, C.W. (2011). Swearing, euphemisms, and linguistic relativity. *PLos one*, 6(7), e22341. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0022341>

Burton, N. (revised 2020). Hell yes: The 7 best reasons for swearing. *Psychology Today.* Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201205/hell-yes-the-7-best-reasons-swearing>

Grohol, J. M. (2018, July 8). Why do we swear? *Psych Central*. Retrieved from: <https://psychcentral.com/blog/why-do-we-swear/>

Jay, T., & Janschewitz, K. (2013). The science of swearing. *Psychological Science*. Retrieved from [www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/ publications/observer/2012/may-june-12/the- science-of-swearing.htm.](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/%20publications/observer/2012/may-june-12/the-%20science-of-swearing.htm.)

Van Lancker DV, Cummings JL. Expletives: Neurolinguistic and neurobehavioral perspectives on swearing. *Brain Res Rev*. 1999;31:83–104. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0173(99)00060-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0173%2899%2900060-0)