

# #creativeHE JAM JAR ACTIVITY DAY 1

## Summary of posts made as a way of curating the conversation

### TASK DAY 1

*Creators:: Summarise your thoughts around a specific creative and inspiring learning and/or teaching experience by filling an empty jam jar with your key take aways from this. Share your jar here in the community and engage with others in conversations around the content of their jars. At the end of the day, reflect on this experience.*

Most participants looked around their immediate environment, found jam jars that they used and described their contents then created meaning from the contents. The whole conversation was about meaning making.

Jamjars are used to accumulate and store resources, especially tools, that have potential to be used, in the right context, to enable us, or others, to be creative. Suggesting that creativity is more likely to emerge if certain resources are readily available in our immediate environment. Connecting this to teaching perhaps a key role for teachers is to provide the tools and other resources for thinking and doing things with the materials and knowledge used in the discipline.

Some participants noted the affordance or potential to act creatively through the objects we store in our jamjars. Even the most mundane objects (eg a tea bag) can be used in the right context if the user has the imagination and skills to do so. Linked to this is the idea that we involve ourselves in certain mediums to express ourselves creatively.

The conversation also touched on the idea of inspiration the question 'what inspires us' was neatly illustrated by someone spotting a typo error 'feelings' and using this to create a meaning-rich contribution - proving the point that anything can inspire us its all a matter of creating meanings that have particular significance to us. Linked to this is the idea of curiosity and interest that drives our involvement in being creative.

One participant shared an insight she had gained through using analogy in her teaching, creatively using flowers as a metaphor for growth in her own understanding.

The conversational process is all about sharing thoughts, beliefs, feelings and experiences and ultimately about sharing and co-creating meanings.



**Paul Kleiman** Thinking about jam jars and creativity, and what to put in mine, I glanced across to the shelf across the room and this struck me as a useful image. A rather grubby old jar of pickles (creativity can be sharp and vinegary), stuffed with different brushes (to create all sorts of brushstrokes) a carpenter's pencil (to mark out boundaries - which can be crossed), scissors (to cut and not just add) , and a metal tool of indeterminate function ( creativity always need a bit of mystery and uncertainty)

**Norman Jackson** Its clearly the jam jar of a maker / artist  
+**Paul Kleiman** I never saw the link between empty jam jars with making and creating before but I have one with screwdrivers, several for nails, screws and other bits and bobs that I'm sure will come in useful one day. So jam jars are stores for resources and tools we think might be useful one day.

• **Sandra Sinfield**  
I have THE SAME jar at home - only mine is a dill pickle jar (in the UK we call them 'wallies')... and I had not thought about

the 'sharp and vinegary' point before. Thank you!

**Paul Towers** This is brilliant. I have a jar just like this, filled with the same stuff. But it's in the shed and its pitch black outside. I like the idea that creativity can be sharp and vinegary. Completely agree! It also can be a desired taste for some. Thanks for the post.



**Norman Jackson** Being inspired is all about feeling and doing things because you feel a certain way I thought this picture on Sara Zimmerman's blog captured some of these feelings <http://sarazimmerman.net/2013/01/21/super-inspired-illustrated-diary-entry/>

**Chrissi Nerantzi** Wonderful Norman. I like the link between thinking and doing. That does also involve risk taking? How can we help others and ourselves, overcome this hurdle that often stops us from "doing"? Chrissi

**Jean Edwards** A few years ago I began making and posting a drawing every day. This habit, which I have maintained for about three and half years now, has changed my approach to creativity. Before I would have waited for the 'special' and 'perfect' thing to draw, often waiting weeks at a time, now I draw no matter what, realising it's the doing of it that's important, not the subject matter.

**Wendy Taleo** I was inspired by your typo "efeelings"! I think that Inspiration in the online environment is about hitting emotions/feelings to get a reaction. I have found that the people I respond to (and learn from) are the posts that raises my feelings.

**Jonathan Purdy** Nice visual of how to embrace/deal with inspiration. Spoken of in this chat <<http://ab.co/21iiKYv>> with Elizabeth Gilbert, author of 'Big Magic', creative ideas float around seeking a collaborator. In Tom Waits case, he wasn't ready for one that popped into his head while in traffic so he asked it to come back at a more convenient time....or move it on to Leonard Cohen :)

**Ruth Proctor** [My jamjar contains] Building blocks, play dough, Lego, playing cards, pegs, string, ribbons, sequins, pom-poms, mirror, guitar, crayon, eraser, elastic band, paper clip, pencils, a heart, squirrel, pineapple, tea bag, eye mask,



**Chrissi Nerantzi** There is a lot of stuff in your jam jar. Do you use any of it in your practice? I would love to hear more about the tea bag and the eye mask for example ;) Chrissi

**Ruth Proctor** Building blocks, Lego, play dough and pencils+notebooks are probably the resources I use most frequently in practice. The tea bag was for having a quick brew as a creative pit stop, - either just to take

a moment to think and reflect and come up with a new idea to try, or as a restorative catch up with friends / colleagues - with the chance to share ideas together. The eye mask is for napping! - I think being creative needs energy and enthusiasm, and if I'm really lucky, I might wake up inspired with a new idea to try out.

**Jean Edwards** You can never tell when an idea will appear! I like your tea bag - I've just seen an art teacher post somewhere about using empty tea bags for printmaking, so even when you've had your tea there could be a creative possibility in the bag itself!

**Norman Jackson** I think you are right + **Jean Edwards** it all depends on the affordances you recognise in the experiences, events, people materials in your life, and the will and talents you have for utilising those affordances.



**Paul Towers** I think I have 100's of jam jars dotted about the house (mainly left over from my wedding a couple of years ago where we used them as candle holders) but I decided to create a new collection. So we have

A knife - to shape, mould and carve ideas  
 Brushes - to paint ideas on blank canvases  
 Pencils/pens - to draw and mark on multiple surfaces  
 Tipp-ex/eraser - because mistakes happen, but we should encourage them and if need be change them  
 Highlighters - because we should highlight success and failure (failure is good)  
 Battery charger - because even the best practices need recharging.

We shouldn't forget the jam jar itself. Just like us it can be a vessel that can be filled, ideas can be mixed and like Jam it can be preserved.

**Chrissi Nerantzi** What a great collection Paul. What you say about mistakes is interesting. How can we create a setting where we can flourish through making mistakes? Do current assessment practices enable this for example? Is this a little rabbit/hare you made? Chrissi

**Paul Towers**+1 I think play has failure within. We play with an idea, it fails, we try something new. Certainly in an arts context and even in a Blended/digital learning context we try something (having a play) if that doesn't work we learn from the experiences and try something new. Yeah I make little wire trinkets. This little rabbit started out as elephant - I was playing, made a mistake and changed it (but kept the elephant)

**Paul Kleiman**+1 Whenever anyone mentions 'failure' I'm always reminded of Samuel Beckett's wonderful phrase: "Fail again. Fail better". I used to tell my students - and still do when I get the opportunity - that it's better to 'fail gloriously' (and really learn) than 'succeed boringly' (and not learn). The problem is that when it comes to assessment it's focused predominantly on product not process.

**Rebecca Jackson**+1 I'm curious to know who here is trying to create a culture in learning spaces where students are told failure can be good...I see so many first year uni students who are frightened of not getting the right answer, and don't deal well with the possibility that there are multiple answers or, worse, we don't know the answer. How do others deal with this?

**Paul Kleiman**+1 Hi Rebecca, it's very hard in the current climate. I certainly used to say to my design students, right at the start : "I and my colleagues are going to drive you mad! You will inevitably present work to us asking 'Is this right?'. And we will say 'We don't know, or we're not sure, what do you think?'. And you will say 'But you're the teacher, you're supposed to know!'. And we will say "Often we genuinely don't know. Persuade us." There was initial resistance, of course, but they began to realise that when you're dealing creativity right and wrong are very relative concepts. The key question is: Does it work?

**Paul Kleiman**+1 I ought to add that we designed an assessment methodology that rewarded 'glorious failures'!

**Rebecca Jackson**+1 That's brilliant, Paul. I love the idea of glorious failures. How did that work?

**Paul Kleiman**+1 Described here: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/negotiating-assessment.pdf> Essentially the higher the 'creative risk' the more we focused on ideas, process and documentation and less on product.

**Sandra Sinfield** We encourage our students to make mistakes - and it is hard for them to 'let go'. One thing we try is free writing in class - just loosening up to see what comes out when they don't censor it... For some - it becomes the best thing they've ever got!

**Paul Towers** +**Paul Kleiman** that's a brilliant. Glorious failure is a brilliant idea.



**Chrissi Nerantzi** very insightful conversation here :) Wondering about asking students to fail if educators seem to be doing everything right... and/or not taking risks and failing too? How can this work? What role does modelling play in this process? Can we really play it safe and ask our students to take risks?

**Paul Kleiman**+1 I don't think anyone is asking students to fail. But if you're taking risks then failure is clearly a possibility. As to modelling, I think it's important that we, too, take risks, and are seen to do so.

**Sandra Sinfield** Absolutely - as +**Howard Rheingold** said about us as staff taking risks: if you can't fall off - you're not dancing on the edge!

**Norman Jackson** Glorious failure sounds like a battle cry from the first world war. In my experience there is nothing glorious about not succeeding only feelings of dissatisfaction and dejection. We make mistakes on all sorts of scales and yes play provides an environment in which things can be tried and abandoned if they don't work. But failure becomes a different matter when high stake are involved. When we have invested a lot of time, effort and emotion (ourselves) in trying very hard to achieve something failure is not so easy to recover from. It requires resilience and emotional effort that is not so easy to develop in the classroom. This is the context for failure from which creativity has the chance of emerging and this is why the lifewide dimension of a student's higher education is important - its often in the spaces outside formal education where these things happen.



**Jonathan Purdy** partly for this OEW and more because of some research study I'm doing, today I read 'Teachers' conceptions of student creativity in higher education' - Jahnke et al, 2015. In response to "How teachers express student creativity" one of six clusters was "showing curiosity and motivation". My homemade marmalade jar and objects represent my 9yr and 6yr sons' fascination with spinning tops and how to make money from collecting and selling Hot Wheels cars. Determination and questioning are big drivers of creativity.

**Chrissi Nerantzi** ,,I love your playfulness and your sons' ideas. How can we transfer some this curiosity but also determination, as you say, into the HE context?



**Jean Edwards** The contents of my jar look rather ordinary but they have the potential to unleash creativity in my students. I'm planning and collecting resources for two sessions next week exploring the connecting between art made in the physical world and digital manipulation of images - in my jar are some of the things I'll be taking to the sessions for the students to create with. The other key items will be iPads - on which this photos was taken. As I collect the resources I'm filled with anticipation of what we'll make together.

**Norman Jackson** +Jean Edwards I like the idea that we accumulate, make and store resources that have potential to be used, in the right context, to enable us, or others, to be creative. It suggests that creativity is more likely to emerge if certain resources are readily available in our environment. One of the most important roles of the teacher is to provide resources or guide learners to places where they will find resources they can

use.

**Rebecca Jackson** Out of the ordinary comes creativity. How we combine and utilise the ordinary, and the thoughts, instincts and hunches behind how we decide to employ the ordinary, that's where creativity lives.

**Sue Watling** I'm wondering what your digital 'ipad' jar might contain Jean :-). Are there any particular apps you find useful for encouraging students to think creatively?



**Belinda Green** This is my jam jar, full of creative goodies. The medium I work in is mostly digital, so my paintbrush and pencils for this activity was PicCollage. I've never used it before, so forgive my first attempt! I have learnt SO much from my online community of fellow LearnTechs, Designers, Artists, Teachers... Especially from social media sites such as Twitter and Google+

**Norman Jackson** This is a nice extension of the conversation +Belinda Green to incorporate the digital tools we use and the idea that we involve ourselves in certain mediums to express ourselves creatively. I wonder what do these ideas mean for teaching in particular disciplinary contexts?

**Rebecca Jackson**+1 I agree with Paul - it's great that you used a medium to learn something, and managed to 'stick to the brief' while doing something different. This is creativity, isn't it? Getting to your goal by an interesting means.

**Sue Watling**+1 Great to see a digital jar Belinda :-)



**Mike Reddy** This is my jar. Or, rather, it is a picture of my jar. Actually, it's just a lot of coloured dots. No, it's nervous impulses starting (upside down) at the back of your eyes. From there on, it links to all those memories and sense information inside your head; you being countless others I have never, may never, or have already, met. So, this isn't MY jar. It's yours. You tell me why it's open. Why it has a seal and a clasp. Why there are coffee rings behind it. What is the significance of the wood.



**Rebecca Jackson** Here's my jam jar that represents a key learning experience...or, rather, a key realisation...a slow burn that develops into an important insight. While I was doing my PGCAP course, I realised that I was using analogy ANYWAY to explain things to students, and that some students found it effective. I used things like pasta or cake recipes to help students master key concepts in theoretical linguistics. I understood that growth of understanding can come from making connections from things we understand in other domains already. I learned that analogy has an important place in my teaching. The flowers represent the growth of new understanding.

- **Belinda Green** What a lovely (and very seasonal) idea! We often have to think creatively and use analogies to convey a concept. I particularly like your reference to cake recipes..... ☐

**Rebecca Jackson** I always use cooking analogies and stories...maybe I should use some other inspiration!

**Sue Watling** Love the daffs Rebecca :-). As an allotmenteer your daffodils made me think of the teaching approaches metaphor activity which you might have seen over on the P2PU site - are there any you identify with more than others?<https://courses.p2pu.org/en/courses/2615/content/5637/>



**Jean Edwards** Following Sue Watling's question about the digital elements in my jar I've made this! These are the apps that we'll use along with the scissors, glue and paper next week.

**Nikos Fachantidis+Jean Edwards** It looks that the ordinary and the digital elements of your jars are in balance and most of the times this is crucial in order to offer educational environment proper for personalised learning, supporting individual student's skills and not blocking their expression by the nature of the tools.

**Paul Kleiman** Interesting combination and important balance. Funnily enough all these jam jars and associated conversations, and a recent conference prompted me to write two linked blogs in the past couple of days. Today's one was on what I called from virtual to visceral learning.

[https://stumblingwithconfidence.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/see-](https://stumblingwithconfidence.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/see-me-feel-me-touch-me-pt-2/)

[me-feel-me-touch-me-pt-2/](https://stumblingwithconfidence.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/see-me-feel-me-touch-me-pt-2/)

**Sue Watling** I was interested to read part two of your blog on the role of the 'visceral' in comparison to the 'virtual' Paul. It sounds like you are describing a blended or flipped learning approach where information can be accessed digitally and the face to face time reused for more meaningful interactions. The challenge is to change existing practices – I recognised the 'physical warm-up' scenario and am guilty of face-pulling! Here we are being creative online where it's easier to cross time and distance barriers – so how can we develop more creativity opportunities outside of the virtual?

**Sue Watling** I do like how you've blended the real and the virtual for this activity + **Jean Edwards** a useful example of creative thinking :-)

### Acknowledgements

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*Norman Jackson Course Facilitator*