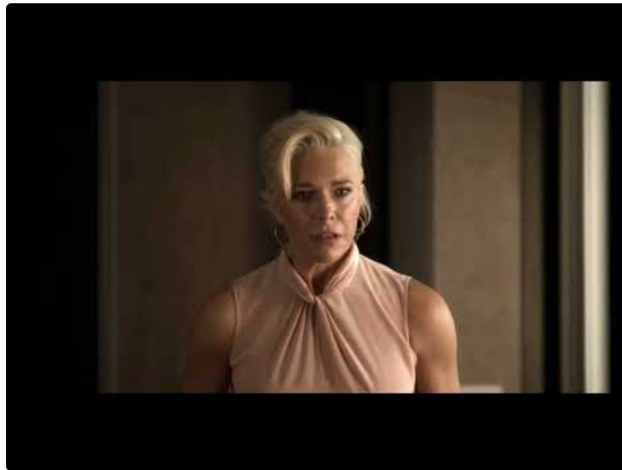




Greetings, fellow human!

Did you know the next couple of generations are going to save the world?

It's a lot to put on them, but they've got this. We can learn so much from them, and this week, chatting with my kids has felt like hanging out with past Jana.



Here are my two takeaways that kid and adult Jana needed to learn this week, and maybe you do, too.

1. Take up some space.

Amid friend and academic drama, my teenage mini-me said, *"I don't want to take up space in the world because it might take up space other people need."*

She wants to keep the peace at the expense of her own. Boundaries are difficult to set at any age, but we can all agree that the teen years are rough—more so now that tech is constantly at our fingertips. But if you don't set them, you set yourself up to become a doormat and lose yourself in the process.

You can't keep 100% of people happy 100% of the time, or you'll die trying. **Our creative takeaway:** Take up some space. There's enough for everyone. Set boundaries. Instead of being everything to everyone, boundaries will help you free up time for yourself.

2. Think inside the box...

My office windows view our front lawn and driveway, so they're perfect for keeping my eye on my first grader and her neighborhood friends. They created a massive chalk drawing of a house because I told them to stay in the neighborhood where I could see them. The detail was 🏡: It had rooms, furniture, decor, and winged fire- and flower-breathing cat dragons (everything a kid could ever want). And it was some crazy stuff! Nothing that you could buy from Target, Homegoods, or Crate & Barrel.

They pretended they were a family and could walk from room to room, just like it was a dollhouse they lived in. I gave them parameters, but they made a portal to another place. I gave them a neighborhood to stay in, and they just added their own house.

Our creative takeaway: Think inside the box—but make it weird. Better yet, create your

own box to stay in.

You hear me talk a lot about creativity within constraints. And that's exactly what we have. We're busy. We have responsibilities. We have jobs. Those are some of our constraints.

You're in a box. Make it weird, and make yourself at home.

Alyssa Towns vs Creative Block



Freelance B2B SaaS writer Alyssa Towns is like Roy Kent. She's here. She's there. She's everywhere (as the fans' chant for Roy Kent goes in *Ted Lasso*). Unlike Roy Kent, she's a ray of sunshine. I first met her on Twitter. Then, LinkedIn. After that, she showed up in our Grammarly Ambassadors community Slack. She's such a busy one, that Alyssa. That's why she's this week's guest.

Why/how are you busy?

Until a few weeks ago, I was a full-time senior communications manager specializing in internal communications and change management and a freelance writer late at night and on the weekends. I was too busy.

Now, I'm busy becoming a full-time freelancer! I write blog content about work-related topics (the future of work - hello, hybrid world, employee engagement, career development, etc.) and other business-related topics (last week, I wrote about omnichannel marketing, for example). I plan to use my internal communications and change management background to make work better for everyone.

I also volunteer on the board of directors for the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP) Colorado and run our marketing and communications operations.

What's a favorite quick tip/activity for a creative burst?

This is funny, but hear me out: take a shower.

I've joked about getting my best ideas in the shower for years. I leave the shower with so many random ideas and connections in my work that I still need to make (e.g., an identified dependency I missed) or house-related to-dos (which drive my husband up the wall!)

As it turns out, [science suggests I'm not alone](#), but showering isn't necessarily a magic cure. So, if this doesn't work for you, try finding other ways to let your mind wander!

Would you please tell the folks about a time you were creatively stuck and how you pushed through to get your creativity pumping again?

I get creatively stuck when my mind is an absolute mess. Last May, I was desperate for any ounce of creativity to slap me across the face, help me wrap up a big all-hands presentation, and submit two freelance assignments to a longstanding client before an international vacation.

Between my to-do list, heightened travel stress, and trying to keep my head afloat, I spent more time than I'd like to admit staring at my laptop screen with zero ideas about how to wrap up the presentation that I had been working on for the last month, and whining every time I opened either of my drafts for my client (both of which were about topics I knew plenty about). It was brutal.

About two months prior, my husband and I had purchased gravel bikes and started riding around town with friends. Our friend group had been talking about [Lookout Mountain in Golden, CO](#) (famous for road cycling), which I never thought I'd muster up

the courage to do (it's steep, and I barely remembered how to ride a bike!).

About ten days before our trip, I felt frustrated, stressed, and overwhelmed, and nothing was helping. One afternoon, I thought I might feel brave enough to climb Lookout Mountain, and the weather was perfect. (Or maybe I wanted to do anything except tackle my responsibilities?)

The spontaneity of the challenge worked. We climbed to the top of Lookout Mountain, and I felt incredible when we reached the top! Doing something outside of my comfort zone forced me to ditch my unhelpful thoughts and focus on the challenge of climbing to the top of the mountain. It reminded me that I was capable and gave me a confidence boost that allowed me to return to my responsibilities with new, fresh ideas.

What do you do for fun that helps keep you going? Why? I don't know that any of these things fall outside the norm. Still, I love going to weekly trivia with a group of friends (spoiler alert: I suck at trivia), paddleboarding and swimming in the summer, and sending snail mail to my loved ones with confetti surprises inside.

Want to hear more from Alyssa? You can follow her on [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#). Maybe you'll become such good friends that she sends you confetti surprises. 🎉

A few bits from me:

Creative quick tip:

Here's a super-effective strategy from my teaching days:

Which brainstorming technique yields more quality results?

A. Set a time timer and think of as many ideas as possible.

B. Brainstorm a set number of ideas.

I'll wait.

The answer is A. Why?

Because it offers you the freedom and flexibility to think as much as you can within the given time. If you have a set number, you'll stop when you meet the goal, limiting your potential for creative ideas.

Imagine the creative potential when you're brainstorming without a limit, just ping-pong out ideas as fast as you can. There are bound to be some gems in there.

I've experimented extensively with this technique to see if it was valid. Half of my students were assigned a set number, and the other half were given a time limit.

The time-limit groups' ideas were double the set-number groups' ideas, so they had more ideas to mold into gold.

This is why photos now look better than photos from the past. Film that had to be developed limited the number of photos we could take. Now, we can take unlimited photos with digital cameras, so there's bound to be a great one in there.

Fun find:

Remember the last newsletter where I waxed poetic about spring?

This week, we're expecting a wicked Nor'easter. They're predicting around a foot of snow between now and Saturday.

Too bad my brain is in spring mode because I love good snow.

As a kid, daffodils were always my favorite. I rescued ours before a snow heap buried them.



My creative work:

This week? I've been pondering many thinky thoughts but haven't had time to practice much creativity.

When burnout rears its nasty little head, I tend to sink into comfort activities so my brain can buffer.

My family has rekindled our love of Animal Crossing this week, which is a pleasant way to zone out.



Maple is one of my favorite little villagers.

Whew! That was a lot today. This email was supposed to be short, so thank you for staying with me.



Tell me: How do you redefine the boxes assigned to you? Then, have yourself a lovely weekend and make some space for yourself.

All the best,

Jana

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P.S. I'm also a freelance content and copywriter who writes relatable things to help people help people.

I've crafted blog posts, case studies, and emails for companies like Veeqo, Omniscient Digital, Hopin, OpenPhone, and Sprout Social.

How can I lighten the load for you and your team? Hit reply or [contact me here](#).