



The Deliberate Creative Podcast with Amy Climer

Transcript for Episode #076: The Connection Between Change and Creativity with Michael Diettrich-Chastain

August 17, 2017

Amy Climer: Welcome to The Deliberate Creative Podcast Episode 76. Today's episode, I have Michael Diettrich-Chastain on. We are going to have a conversation about the connection between change and creativity. Before I introduce Michael, I want to share with you a very exciting moment in the life of this podcast. As of Episode 75, this podcast has reached 50,000 downloads! Wow! I am so excited. I had no idea when I started this podcast what would happen. I had no idea if people would listen to it. Now, thousands of people each month are listening to The Deliberate Creative Podcast and I get feedback and comments and questions via email and social media thanking me and also asking more questions about creativity.

What that says to me is that, one, people are interested in being more creative, which is awesome, and that there is this curiosity about how to be more creative and how can I do that with my team and with my organization and that is really exciting to me. That is my purpose. That is my mission, is to help you all be more creative in the work that you are doing. I believe that the world is an amazing place and it will be even more amazing if everyone is able to tap into their full creative potential. Just imagine what that would be like. It is almost hard to fathom, but I really think we would solve pretty much every problem on the planet if we were all able to truly tap into our full creative capacity. That is my mission. This podcast is part of that.

Those of you that know me, you know that I also work with leaders on a one-on-one basis. If you are a leader and you like this stuff but you are like, "Ah, how do I really integrate this? I want step-by-step instructions. I want to work with someone. I want to get advice and that mentorship." If you are interested in that, reach out to me. I actually have just developed a new coaching/mentoring package that I will be happy to talk with you about.

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On that note about the great feedback I am getting from the podcast, I wanted to share with you all an [iTunes](#) review that recently came in. This review is from Frimenco and it is called Tinker, Explore and Stop Being an Adult. Five stars. Frimenco says:

“Look at a problem with new eyes. Fearlessly try it out, learn, try again, have fun doing that and get out of the rut. Be a child again. These are the messages I got from the episode about tinkering. Ask how and what questions to open creative dialog. Questions that begin with “why” can be so limiting. These are two takeaways from the episode about asking questions. At the end of each podcast, you’re asked to challenge yourself based upon the topic of the week. It will help you learn and practice the methods discussed. Dr. Climer has an authentic, sincere and helpful style of presenting the material and she invites insightful guests.”

Wow! Frimenco, thank you so much for the thoughtful, authentic, amazing review. I really appreciate that. So awesome. If you are interested, the episodes that Frimenco is referring to are [Episode 43](#), titled Tinkering with Jason Kotecki and [Episode 70](#) with Chad Littlefield about how to ask really good questions. Check out those two episodes if you are curious about those topics.

If you would like to leave a review on [iTunes](#), you can go to www.climerconsulting.com/itunes. That link will take you directly to [iTunes](#) where you can leave a review and share your thoughts. I would love to hear from you. It helps the podcast and it definitely is great feedback from me. With a review, you could help us get to another 50,000 downloads, which would be super cool.

All right, I want to introduce today’s guest, Michael Diettrich-Chastain. Michael is an organizational consultant and coach and he owns a company called Arc Integrated. He has done a lot of research and is an expert in change and helping individuals and teams make changes in their life and in their work. He has developed a model that he is writing a book about right now and so I invited him on the show to talk about that and to help us understand some of the elements that we need to integrate in our life if we want to make change and be more creative. Here is Michael.

Michael, welcome to The Deliberate Creative podcast. Thanks for being on the show.

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Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Amy, thank you so much for having me. It is good to see you.

Amy Climer: Great. Can you start off and tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, absolutely. My name is Michael Diettrich-Chastain and I have a company in Asheville, North Carolina named Arc Integrated. We provide professional coaching and business consulting to teams and leaders, as well as folks going through a career transition or wanting to improve work-life balance or reduce stress professionally and personally.

Amy Climer: How long have you been doing this?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: My background is a little bit mixed. My education is in counseling, actually. I was a licensed psychotherapist for a number of years and in undergraduate school had heavy interest in industrial organizational psychology, which is, essentially, the human side of business, as I like to think about it. After undergraduate, I was a consultant for a company up in Milwaukee for a little while and did some professional coaching, some account management and some sales. And then went back and got the graduate study in counseling and kind of did this more in-depth human development work around personal change and then moved back into the consulting role for a couple of years. I have kind of gone back and forth in between really in-depth personal change and professional organizational change. I would say that is definitely my area of interest, is human change in the context of professionalism, as well as our personal life.

Amy Climer: And now this Arc Integrated business is like blending those together.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: That is right. The fusion of both.

Amy Climer: Awesome. Sweet. I know one of the things we are going to talk about today is about change because you are an expert in this idea of helping people change and make changes in their life and in their work. We want to dig into the connection between change and creativity. Let's start there.



The Connection Between Change and Creativity [07:10]

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: I find that there is so much connectivity between sustainable change and being creative. Another way to think about it is what prevents us from creating change and what prevents us from being creative. There is a concept that I studied in graduate school called decentering, which is essentially the idea that to consider a problem from multiple angles. As a little bit of a side note, one of the things I studied in grad school was called Expressive Arts Therapy. This idea is that you get to engage in an artistic process, whether it is drawing or music or sculpting or any kind of process and that that essentially helps you explore creative solutions to a problem. And so the idea of decentering, in regards to this artistic process, would be that you would use art as a way to remove focus from a problem in order to come up with a creative solution. I think that how that is connected to change is that often times we get stuck in a particular lens or a particular vision of what is possible and it prevents us from really digging into that creative part of ourselves to discover what is available to us.

Amy Climer: It is like intentionally distracting yourself in a way.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, I like that. That is good.

Amy Climer: It is interesting because you are distracting yourself, but you are not distracting yourself with a different problem, but instead in a way that you could do some incubation of the problem without even knowing it, letting that subconscious or unconscious, whichever part of the brain.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah. I think the concept to decentering is not just specific to this expressive arts idea. I think there are a lot of ways to distract ourselves or to look at things from another angle, so to speak. To be creative in our problem solving. That is why I think creativity and change process is so closely linked.



The CHANGES Model and How You Can Use It to Be More Creative in Your Life [09:10]

Amy Climer: Very cool. You also have a model that you have developed that helps people make changes in their life that could be applicable to either a team or an individual. Let's talk about that and kind of use that as a way to even get back into the decentering as well.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Absolutely. In my work facilitating change over the last 11 or 12 years now, both within the context of the teams and leaders, as well as individuals, I found these common principles that either help or hurt people's ability to create sustainable change. The model that I created for this is CHANGES. It is an acronym, but it is seven dimensions that in my work I have observed to be crucial for the ability to create sustainable change.

Amy Climer: Can you walk us through that?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah. The acronym is CHANGES and so the dimensions are; C is Cognition. The way we think. How does the way we think help or hurt our ability to create change. H is for Hurt, meaning our emotional self. How does our emotional self inhibit us or help us to create sustainable change. A is Action. What are the habits, routines, disciplines that we have in our life that impact our ability to create change? N is Nourishment. When I think about nourishment, I think about how we eat, our level of exercise, our level of sleep, all of which there is a ton of research to show how that impacts our mood, our productivity, even also the biological level. I think that physical component of ourselves, I also have seen time and time again, either help or hurt people create change.

G is Guts. I think about guts as courage. I think a lot of times -- we were talking about this earlier -- people often have the insight into what they want, but maybe not the courage to really pursue it. And so I think that is such a huge piece. We can have insight all day and understanding all day about something, but unless we really have the guts or the courage to pursue it, it is not going to be creative.

E is or Environment. I am a big believer in the old saying that we are the average of the five people we spend the most time with. Environment I think about is not only people, but our community, our relationships, our family of origin, our workplace. All of these things so heavily



impact who we are and our ability to create the lives that we want. So environment is another component, another dimension.

Finally, S is Spirit. I say that and sometimes I think people have a funny reaction to it. Whenever you talk about religion or spirituality, I think there may be some challenges, but I do not use it in a way to look at spirituality or religion. I use it as a word to talk about belief. Because I think, again, based on my years of experience that people's beliefs of what is possible of what is available to them largely impact their ability to create or to sustain change.

Amy Climer: I am just thinking that goes all the way back around to the C, the Cognition, like our beliefs are what we think about.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Absolutely.

Amy Climer: I love it.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: I think about it as a holistic model too, meaning that the idea is that we optimize all of these things, all seven dimensions, not just one of them. Because, again, in my experience, if we can optimize all of them, our likelihood for success goes up. If we do not consider one of them, then that might be a possible real challenge and what is preventing us from creating the change that we want.

Amy Climer: Can you take us through connecting this model about change back to creativity?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, absolutely. I think that you could almost substitute creativity for sustainable change. I am sure you have probably experienced this in your work too. The way that people think -- so C, Cognition -- the way that people think often inhibits them or opens them up to possibility, to creativity. Do you feel like that is relevant in your work?

Amy Climer: Oh gosh, absolutely! Yeah, I see it all the time.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Absolutely. So nourishment, for instance, when you think about how someone sleeps, their level of self-care, their diet, their exercise, based on the research that we know how that is so connected to mood and mental health issues and productivity and even in the workplace, you could say the same thing that if we are not taking enough care of our



physical selves, our ability to be creative is going to weigh in as well. Definitely related to creativity there.

Amy Climer: When you think about nourishment, I was also thinking about sometimes when say an organization is trying to implement some change or a team is trying to share with the rest of the organization this idea they have and this concept they want to really pitch to an organization, it can be hard for people to even imagine that happening if they have not had some examples and input. And I was just thinking about the nourishment piece of like what else is out there and getting outside of yourself a little bit as needed. There are times that you need to be in yourself and there are other times that you are like, “Okay, let me look around and see what else is out there.”

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah. And it is interesting, the whole industry of wellness programs as they relate to organizations, that is based on that whole idea that if we can improve the wellness of our staff, our organization, our workplace community, that productivity, team effectiveness, creativity is all going to go up. And so there is an entire industry based on the idea that nourishment or wellness is a huge factor that is going to influence our success.

How Self-Care Can Impact Creativity in Teams [14:51]

Amy Climer: Yeah, that is great. Maybe just another comment or two about this self-care. Is there anything more about what listeners maybe need to think about as far as taking care of themselves and how that relates to being creative in teams?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Can I actually share a study with you?

Amy Climer: Yeah, of course.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: I reference this study in an upcoming book that I am working on, but I think it is fascinating as self-care relates to individual and organizational success. According to some [research](#) by an organization in Minneapolis named Experience in Motion, they revealed that when healthcare organizations, their staff and practitioners engage in self-care as an organizational strategy, it not only improves the healing experience for themselves and their patients, but also improves business measures. Here we have got an example of how self-care



not only impacts the bottom line of a business, but of course, the effectiveness of the team and the impact on those that they serve.

Amy Climer: Which is just another type of bottom line, right?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Exactly. Yeah, I love that.

Amy Climer: The bottom line does not always have to be financial.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, exactly.

Amy Climer: That is great. All right, so self-care is important. What might be another piece we can dive into in the CHANGES model around creativity in teams?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: I can share another piece of [research](#) that I think is really interesting. It is a little bit more in-depth on the science end, but I think it's definitely related to creativity. When we think about the characteristic of an individual and their openness or their flexible nature which, of course, is related to creativity, the more openness and the more flexible I can be, that is essentially saying I might be more likely to be creative. In this [research](#), this was a study done in 2008, it actually showed that people that were identified as more flexible or more open to possibility actually were able to pick up on greater visual stimuli. Meaning that they could see in their environment more than those that were less flexible and less open, and another way to say that, less creative.

Amy Climer: Interesting.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: And so we have got research to show that actually being more creative, being more open and flexible can actually impact us at the biological level and what we are able to perceive. And I just think there are so many interesting directions we could take and what that is correlated to.

Amy Climer: The thing that came to my mind when you were saying that is I was thinking about traveling abroad and how, at least, my experience is that usually when I am traveling abroad I am in this very open state. I am like, "Oh my gosh! I am going to new a culture, a new country,



maybe a new continent, I am going to experience all these new things.” And so because I have this more open mindset, I see things that I do not notice downtown, right?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, absolutely. I think that is a neat way to think about like how do we actually take an action and improve something like openness or flexibility and I think a great example is travel. If someone is listening to this and they say, “Well, that’s great, but how do I actually improve flexibility or openness?” One possibility might be to travel more. Because the more difference we can recognize in what is out there environmentally, culturally, the kind of people that we get to connect with, that is going to create a more open and adaptable sense of being. And so I think travel is excellent.

Amy Climer: I am remembering a study and I am going to probably get this wrong, but that people that studied abroad tended to be more creative.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: There you go.

Amy Climer: And so I was like this is a great study to pitch to my company like, “Hey, send me to Europe, whatever.”

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, absolutely.

Amy Climer: Probably a lot of companies are not going to do that. That would be great, but even I think going to the next city over or like if you live in a big city, going to a small town and just thinking, “Okay, I’m going to just go today and just see what happens.”

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Absolutely. I think kind of connection to travel or putting yourself in a different environment, I think any opportunity to be a little uncomfortable, to stretch our limits of what we are used to can be hugely advantageous in a number of ways. So yeah, a company might not sponsor you on a trip to Europe, but you can always go into a community that maybe you are less familiar with or get involved in a group that is unfamiliar to you. I think there are a lot ways to push our boundaries.

Amy Climer: Yeah, absolutely. That is great. We talk about travel and this sense of openness. This makes me think about what we mentioned earlier about decentering. Can you talk about the connection there and how people can use that decentering process?



Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, absolutely. When you think about looking at problems from multiple aspects, that to me could be done in a number of ways. Any opportunity to get uncomfortable or to be in something that is unfamiliar could be a way to think about decentering. It might be that travel is a certain option or it might be looking at your situation with a different dimension or a different lens like in the CHANGES model. If you are stuck on a particular problem or stuck in creating a particular change, have you considered changing the lens from how do I think about this problem to how am I nourishing myself and what is my emotional wellbeing like and how is that impacting my inability to be creative around the solutions that might be available. How is my environment impacting my ability to be creative around what is available to me? I think as far as decentering goes, there is a lot of ways we can do that.

Amy Climer: When you are talking about thinking about these different elements, we are kind of talking about the individual as far as your nourishment and that kind of thing. But I was thinking about at a team level, what is the environment you are setting up for your team? And yeah, the physical environment, but I think more like the emotional or the mental environment. Are you bombarding them with these random tasks and everything is urgent, or is there mental time and space for them to work on creating projects together?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Exactly, and I am not going to get the study right, but I know that there has been research around about why people leave jobs and why they stay in them and I know one of the main factors is psychological safety. So certainly related to emotional well being and what can we do to create that well being, whether it is in the individual or in the team context. Absolutely.

Amy Climer: That psychological safety and that trust amongst a team is huge.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, definitely.

Amy Climer: That is one of the things that I found in my research. Whether or not a team has psychological safety has a big impact on their ability to be creative together.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, I love that. Makes a lot of sense.



Weekly Challenge [21:48]

Amy Climer: Michael, I love this CHANGES model. Maybe we can move into the weekly challenge. One of the things that I do in every episode is ask, what is something listeners can do this week to start implementing some of the ideas that you shared?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Great, I am glad you asked that. One of the things that I am really passionate about when I work with clients, whether it is an organization or an individual, is translating insight into application because we know that sustainable change is not possible without an application of insight. I am sure you have seen this, and I have certainly, that people can have an understanding of something and if they do not really know how to apply it, then it is pointless.

As far as an action item, I am a big believer in the idea of the daily practice. What I mean by that is having some kind of regular discipline routine that you can do, preferably, at the same time every day for 20 to 30 minutes, that can help focus on yourself first before you expend energy on your team, on your productivity, on your organization. That practice could look like a number of things. It could be a meditation, it could be an exercise program, it could be walking with a loved one or walking with your dog or whatever it is, but I think it is often times less about what it is specifically and more about the disciplined act of focus on self before focusing on other.

Amy Climer: Can you help connect this idea of this daily practice and me going for a walk in the morning or meditating or yoga, whatever it is I am going to do every day? How does that translate into the work that I am doing with my team several hours later?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Sure, absolutely. My belief, and I think this self-care research also points to that, is that if we can focus on self-care first, our productivity, our ability to communicate, our level of stress is all going to be impacted. If we know those things, then my ability to connect and be more productive with my team is going to increase as well. And so even though we talk about self-care and a daily practice as oriented towards me, it absolutely impacts the collective. Because if we know that stress and tension and mood and all these things are connected to self-care, then we know that those things are obviously also connected to



team functionality. And so I would argue that, again, focusing on the self first in some kind of routine, disciplined way is going to impact the effectiveness of a group.

Amy Climer: Awesome, cool that is great. That is exactly what I was looking for.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Oh, good.

Amy Climer: Michael, if people want to learn more about you and your work, where can they go?

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: All right, sounds great. You can find me at www.arcintegrated.com. If you would like, I am giving away a sample chapter of my upcoming book. The book is called [CHANGES](#) and it is about this CHANGES model. You can get a free copy of the first chapter. It is a first draft, I will mention, but you can download that for free at www.arcintegrated.com/book. I would love feedback on it and I people want to learn more, please reach out. I am always happy to connect.

Amy Climer: Cool. I will put all those links in the shownotes. I love that you are giving away the draft and you are just like, “Hey, this hasn’t been edited, whatever,” like putting it out there. That is awesome. Super cool.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: I am really excited about it. Hopefully, it will be out in the springtime of next year, 2018.

Amy Climer: Awesome. Thank you so much for being on the show.

Michael Diettrich-Chastain: Yeah, thanks for having me.

Amy Climer: Michael, thank you so much for being on The Deliberate Creative podcast. I really appreciate having you here. If you are interested in the research that Michael shared, if you want to read that research or if you want to check out [Michael’s website](#), I will put all of those links in the shownotes. You can get the shownotes at www.climerconsulting.com/076 because this is [Episode 76](#). Head over to www.climerconsulting.com and you can see the shownotes for this episode as well as all the other episodes as well.



If you want to stay connected outside of the podcast, you can follow me on social media: on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or you can connect with me on [LinkedIn](#). If you do connect on [LinkedIn](#), it is great to get a note of who you are and why you want to connect. Sometimes I just get random people and I do not know who they are. It kind of gets a little creepy sometimes. So send a note, if you want to connect on [LinkedIn](#). I would love to connect with you.

You all, thank you so much for listening to The Deliberate Creative podcast. It is great to know people are out there listening, that we have reached 50,000 downloads and here's to another 50,000. You all, have a wonderful creative week. Talk to you next time. Bye.