



The Secrets to Having More “Eureka!” Moments

Joseph Guinto, writing in the **American Airlines magazine**, shares the secrets to having better “aha!” moments. I’m a big believer that real, long term creativity is a matter of showing up every day and doing the work. However, there’s no question that “Eureka!” moments happen, and as Guinto says, we can create an atmosphere where they tend to happen more often. Along with Guinto’s advice, here are a few keys that have helped me discover more creative breakthroughs:

1. **Notice everything.** I’ll never forget driving outside Dallas with a friend a number of years ago. I noticed a strange light sculpture far in the distance and mentioned it. My friend said, “*One thing about you is that you notice things nobody else sees.*” For creative breakthroughs, open your eyes and start seeing the world that no one else notices.
2. **Write it down.** I often tell the story of a business man who had a breakthrough idea while he was shopping with his wife. He quickly wrote down the idea but was distracted and promptly forgot about it. Six months later he put on the same jacket and found the written note in the pocket. He acted on it, launched the start-up, and within ten years, sold it for \$70 million. Had he not written it down, he would have completely forgotten about that life-changing idea.
3. **Ask questions.** There’s a Chinese proverb that says, “*He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes. He who does not ask a question is a fool forever.*”
4. **Do nothing.** Sometimes our “business” clutters our lives and fogs our brain. Don’t forget to take the time to pause and reflect. Over my career, most of my best ideas came to me when I was bored out of my mind. There’s just something about quiet reflection that makes remarkable mental connections happen.
5. **Read more.** I’m amazed how often I sit next to people on plane flights that either do nothing for hours, or play video games. Nothing wrong with video games, but sometimes you need to feed the creative engine inside. What are you reading? Is it “People” magazine, or something that can impact your life and career? And don’t shy away from longer books. Sometimes it takes time to develop a powerful idea, and if all you’re reading is short posts or magazine articles, you’ll miss much of the richness of deep thinking.

Breakthrough ideas and eureka moments seem like they “just happen,” but the truth is, people who have them, have created the atmosphere where they happen more often.