Essence of Creativity: A Guide to Tackling Difficult Problems

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Challenging problems both attract and repel us. They frustrate us, accelerate our pulses, cause ulcers, and perhaps even curtail our lifespans. On the other hand, the knotty problems of life offer us food for thought, sustaining our creativity, and adding emotional spice to the human experience. We encounter difficult tasks day in and day out. The solutions to these problems must be sought with resourcefulness and creativity, for until now we have had little insight into the nature of these tasks, and even less into methods for resolving them. This unique book explores the nature of challenging problems in all walks of life, and describes the creative techniques for addressing them. It is particularly relevant for problems that admit no obvious solution, whether they concern scientific knowledge, technology, the arts, or social situations. By understanding the dynamics of problem solving in general, the author argues, we can better organize the pursuit of specific projects. The initial phase involves crystallizing our objectives and developing a coherent plan. The next step is to evaluate the results and determine whether the work should be concluded, begun anew, or given up altogether. With this general strategy, even seemingly overwhelming problems can be approached systematically and efficiently. The author goes beyond the normal distinction between routine and innovative activities, defining the role of creativity in novel decision-making. In addition, he distills the existing literature on creativity, innovation, and project management to present a concise set of strategies and practices that can be applied in a myriad of settings ranging from university laboratories to corporate planning centers. For the sake of concreteness, a number of examples from research and development environments demonstrate the book's basic principles in action, showing how even the most difficult problems can yield to knowledgeable ingenuity. Written in a clear, readable style, *Essence of Creativity* will appeal to a broad spectrum of readers: engineers, business managers, computer scientists, executives, cognitive psychologists, and educators in many fields, as well as general readers seeking effective ways to handle difficult problems.

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