

THE STORM CLIMATE THAT NURTURES THE STORM ATTITUDES 119

years later, happily, my parents had another son. But he was born sick, so my mother focused a tremendous amount of energy on him. It was hard, but her attention on the new baby was good for her, as it eased the pain of her loss. I did everything I could to help her so she'd not be sad again, and the baby wouldn't die. I helped raise my baby brother and sister. I dressed them and bathed them. I cleaned their clothes, but because we didn't have water indoors, this meant breaking the ice in the winter and using my little hands to rub the clothes in the freezing river until I couldn't bear it.

After I grew up, I paid for my brother's and sister's high-school and college tuition. To this day, we've never had a conversation about why I did this for them. They think I just had too much money. But to be honest, I often didn't have enough money to pay for the bus to college after I paid their tuition. Sometimes I had to borrow money from my friends' parents or had to sell things to meet my obligations. I'd do anything for them because I loved my mother, who lost her son, the brother they never met or don't remember.

Research findings on the resilient attitude

The resilient attitude (see figure 5.5) is characterized by recovering and thriving after challenges or failures.¹⁴⁰ Extreme trauma doesn't necessarily beget disorder.¹⁴¹ For example, Holocaust survivors displayed stress-related symptoms but also resilience and even psychological growth.¹⁴² This was thanks, in part, to their commitment to something or someone, to their sense of control or self-efficacy, and to their interpretation of adversities as a challenge.¹⁴³

Despite challenges and adversities, innovators build resilience by setting clear goals and maintaining self-efficacy through:¹⁴⁴ first, committing to and taking actions for goals instead of dwelling on bad things; second, considering troubles as temporary, controllable, and specific to the troubles; third, using a wide range of flexible coping strategies; and fourth, turning failures into lessons, believing every experience is a learning opportunity, and failure is better than no experience.

Innovators' resilience prepares them for uncertainty by thinking of multiple possible scenarios and figuring out what to do in each case. They



Figure 5.5. Resilient (and Combative) Storm Attitude

find and use resources; actively seek and ask for support and assistance; and build trusted alliances and networks through their resourceful attitude.¹⁴⁵ They're realistic about threats and risks and make plans.¹⁴⁶ They seek balanced views between their own perceptions and outside views. They seek feedback for their weaknesses, mistakes, or failures rather than strengths or successes.¹⁴⁷ They're resilient to and *seek* negative feedback—brutally honest advice, ruthless objections, and ferocious criticisms—to calibrate their perception of reality and further refine their inbox and newbox thinking for their creation.¹⁴⁸ They improve themselves by distinguishing between task-related negative feedback and personal attacks.¹⁴⁹ Their critical thinking and newbox thinking are further enhanced when their climate frames criticism and negative feedback as contributions.¹⁵⁰

The creative process (ACP) involves uncertainty and risks, and innovators' resilience overcomes their frustrations and failures.¹⁵¹ Focusing on their passion and goal fills their emotional needs and is a form of self-reward or a refuge from their adversities.¹⁵² Their self-efficacy, resilience, and persistence for the goals overcome bad luck.¹⁵³

6. Risk-Taking (and Reckless)

In 2000, I decided to move to America. All of my friends warned me not to, for three reasons: first, all Americans had guns; second, Americans had sex on the first date; and third, Americans had AIDS. In South Korea, only soldiers and police officers have guns. My friends had these images of a dangerous America because of the movies and the news they'd seen. (Strangely, the American soldiers who gave us scholarships and Ping-Pong tables or who threw caramel candies—still my favorite candies—to us were never portrayed in the movies or in the news.) I was willing to risk these dangers in America!

Most Korean immigrants who move to America either are married to an American or know other earlier immigrants who can help or support them. Without either luxury, I arrived at the Los Angeles Airport in California with only my nine-year-old daughter and four-year-old son. I'd signed a lease for an apartment in La Jolla through the Internet, but by mistake, the lease didn't begin until two days after we landed. So, we



Figure 5.6. Risk-Taking
(and Reckless)
Storm Attitude

wedding ceremonies are administered by former teachers/professors, and the government has a program to help adults find their former teachers. Confucian countries offer significant financial benefits for teachers, including better pay and incentives (like low or no-interest mortgages on their homes in Japan, and no income tax in Taiwan),¹³⁶ which promotes competition for teaching positions. This results in a highly qualified body of teachers.¹³⁷ When a problem arises, Confucian parents ask, “What’s wrong with my child?” whereas American parents often rush to blame the teacher by saying, “What’s wrong with the teacher?”¹³⁸ In Confucian educational systems, mutually respectful and helpful relationships between parents and teachers provide united support for children,¹³⁹ which nurtures children’s mentored attitude, enabling inbox and newbox thinking.

*2. Confucians instill a hard work ethic and willpower in children instead of waiting for an inborn ability/gift/talent.*¹⁴⁰

Whereas American parents believe inborn talents/gifts are greater predictors of children’s success than diligence, Confucians believe otherwise.¹⁴¹ This Confucian principle nurtures children’s diligent and persistent attitudes, which enable inbox and newbox thinking.

The miracle of the Asian Five Dragons (immense economic growth in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore) in the 1980s was due to hard work, thrift, persistence, and pursuing diplomas and higher degrees.¹⁴² The Confucian principle that contributed to that growth is also vital to developing expertise, which is the foundation of ION thinking.

Westerners’ (including Americans’) belief in inborn ability can inhibit their hard-work ethic and self-criticism for further improvement, while inflating their self-esteem. Compared to Confucians, Westerners often exhibit less self-criticism, higher self-esteem,¹⁴³ and more self-enhancing biases.¹⁴⁴ This is especially detrimental as it prevents Westerners from accepting and applying negative feedback to their tasks. When Confucians receive negative feedback, they work hard to improve themselves by correcting their weaknesses according to the negative information. They consider that negative feedback helps themselves identify their shortcomings or deficits, which causes them to not only pay attention to negative feedback but also to take it very seriously.¹⁴⁵ In contrast, because Westerners often consider that their tasks are performed by their

inborn ability, when they receive negative feedback, they feel offended or threatened (as they see the negative information is on themselves, not on their tasks), which causes them to not only see negative feedback as unfavorable, inaccurate, or a personal attack, but also to be less persistent in their tasks.¹⁴⁶ However, Confucians seek, rather than avoid, negative feedback.¹⁴⁷ While Confucians focus on improving their work, Westerners focus on recovering their self-esteem by thinking about positive information or past successes (or consoling themselves with the thought that they are at least better than average), all of which serve self-serving biases, inflated self-esteem, and thus inaccurate self-efficacy.¹⁴⁸ Westerners' belief in their inborn ability stifles the self-disciplined, diligent, self-efficacious, resilient, and persistent attitudes, which prevents them from striving toward fulfilling even greater creative potential. However, because Confucians live in exam hell, children focus mostly on the lowest-order inbox thinking skill (memorization) measured by their exams, which limits not only their expertise development and critical thinking (inbox thinking), but also outbox and newbox thinking.

3. Confucians force children to memorize others' written words in exam hell.

There is much pressure to pass exams—instead of exploring, questioning assumptions, or discussing their own ideas.¹⁴⁹ To prepare for the college entrance exam, Confucian students endlessly memorize textbook information. They're pushed into tutoring sessions and exam-preparation courses, and their parents invest in private tutoring or cram schools (private test-prep institutions), even when this can cost half of some households' income each year.¹⁵⁰

The origin of an exam hell dates back to China's civil service examination system in the 600s.¹⁵¹ It was when millions of men (and no women) from the middle class were allowed to rise to the upper class by passing the exams. Passing the exams brought them—and their entire extended family and ancestry—many advantages, such as financial rewards, prestige, and power.¹⁵² The exam system stabilized the social hierarchy and status quo.¹⁵³ To pass the three-year cycle exams, candidates sought and purchased previously successful exam essays (mostly based on Confucian classics), which they memorized by rote.¹⁵⁴ Due to the extremely high rewards from passing the exams, teenagers started taking the exams and

reflection creates the opportunity for their solitude and immersion, which are necessary for developing expertise.

PTIs don't wait for a sign of a gift/talent. They provide children with diverse resources and experiences, and inspire and encourage them to be curious or interested in something as early as before age three.⁴⁵ By that age, for example, children who have been provided with such resources/experiences have heard thirty million more words than children without such resources, which predicts their later learning (so no “baby talk”).⁴⁶ PTIs expose children in *playful* ways to diverse subject and fields and other experiences.⁴⁷ After an initial sign of children's curiosity, preference, or interest (CPI), PTIs' purposeful planning and their analysis of and guiding of children's performance and practice leads to the children's self-efficacy in their CPI.⁴⁸ Mentors provide immediate feedback for children's gradual and steady improvements.⁴⁹ They help develop children's specific high goals to improve specific aspects of their performance by giving brutally honest positive and negative feedback that compares their actual performance to their goals while providing opportunities for practice and performance (for ten thousand hours).⁵⁰ This leads to innovators' expertise, which becomes their passion.⁵¹

Practicing and performing for extended periods of time leads to unique patterns of neurological development and physiological adaptations in children's minds.⁵² This is the *real cause* of a gift/talent in children.⁵³ This rejects the common belief that inborn abilities are the source of passion and innovation. In fact, gifts/talents that appear early (like in prodigies) limit developing expertise and subsequent innovation.⁵⁴ Most parents wait for a sign of gift/talent in children *before* providing resources or inspiring/encouraging and challenging them to develop expertise. But *reversing* this order leads to a better chance of innovation:⁵⁵ First, PTIs provide children with resources and experiences in the soil climate; second, they help them find their CPI in the sun climate; and third, they help them diligently build their self-efficacy (learn what they're good *and* bad at) and develop CPI expertise in the storm climate. Fourth, a gift/talent emerges in the children, which becomes their passion; and finally, they discover and develop their own unique ideas beyond their expertise in the space climate for their future creation, which can lead to an innovation.

The list below includes more specific ways to develop expertise.

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can produce the best apples. Gardeners understand that they must cultivate the 4S climates to bring out the best in seeds and not rely on the seeds' genetics. Likewise, parents and educators must cultivate the 4S climates for children, regardless of their gender, instead of relying on genetics or

²⁷⁸ My American students are offended by my blunt, honest feedback and think that it is a personal attack, which is also because they have always received positive feedback. But my Korean students were motivated to work even harder in response to such feedback. Giving everybody trophies or constantly sugarcoating feedback for mediocre accomplishments will deprive children of reality and what it truly takes to accomplish a goal. Many believe that only praise/positive feedback is good and negative feedback is bad for children, but negative feedback is more effective than positive feedback when helping students achieve their goal.²⁷⁹ Brutally honest feedback for children's improvement is critical for the storm climate.

Within the ACP (the Apple-tree Creative Process), applying all inbox, outbox, and newbox thinking at appropriate times facilitates innovation.²⁸⁰ While cultivating all four of the climates (including the storm climate) parents and educators must help children independently find their curiosity, preference, or interest (CPI) as early as possible and develop ION (inbox, outbox, and newbox) thinking. Memorization and comprehension skills are necessary for developing initial expertise in their CPI, and further development requires application skills so they can use their learned material to apply to or solve new and real-world situations or problems. Unfortunately, these application skills are not measured by most standardized tests.²⁸¹ Along with inbox thinking, children must also develop outbox thinking to generate unique ideas. Most young children are capable of outbox thinking, but it progressively decreases if they're in anti-creative climates—especially test-centric climates—that foster anti-creative attitudes. The decrease occurs at home first, then in schools, and then it continues in large-scale social institutions.²⁸²