

Brainstorming: An idea past its prime

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The Washington Post:

Our lives are cluttered with unnecessary traditions, ideas and institutions. Warm weather came early this year, but there's still time for a good spring cleaning. After purging old receipts, broken appliances and unloved outfits, what else should we toss? Outlook asked 10 writers what they thought we'd be better off without. From the Cabinet to premium gas to chick flicks, here are their picks.

Brainstorming is probably the most widely used creativity technique in the world, employed in design firms and science labs, movie studios and classrooms. First proposed by the advertising executive Alex Osborn — the Don Draper of his day — brainstorming is typically described as an ideal template for collaboration, the best way to generate new ideas in a group.

The technique is easy to summarize, since it's premised on a single assumption: Criticism is bad for the imagination. This is why the very first rule of brainstorming is the prohibition of negative feedback. "Creativity is so delicate a flower that praise tends to make it bloom, while discouragement often nips it in the bud," Osborn wrote. "In order to increase our imaginative potential, we should focus only on quantity. Quality will come later."

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