

Brainstorming with Tarot Cards: Four Easy Ways to Get Your Ideas Flowing

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By Nikki Harper

Staff Writer for Wake Up World

So, you have a problem and you can't for the life of you find a solution. Or you're trying to come up with a new idea – for business, for a gift, for a creative project – and your mind is blank. Did you know that tarot cards can be very useful brainstorming tools? What's more, you don't have to be an expert tarot reader – or indeed, know anything at all about tarot – to use tarot to brainstorm. Here are four ways to be inspired by the tarot, three of which can be used by complete beginners.



1 – Symbology: The Clues are in the Pictures

Tarot cards in most decks are rich in symbolism. Everything from the colors to the landscapes, via the objects, animals, clothes, numbers, plants and the weather – all of these things have been deliberately placed into the card by the artist.

To brainstorm using symbology, shuffle the deck and draw a card at random. Put aside any knowledge you have of the card's traditional meaning. Look very closely at the card – what can you see? Write down every element of the picture, and next to that element write down what the symbology of this means to you. If you see a rabbit, do you think of spring or out of control expansion? If you see rain, do you think of misery and sadness or do you think of cleansing and refreshing? If there is a building, does it seem mystical, authoritarian or welcoming?

If you want help with symbology, you could use a dictionary of symbols, but the most important thing is what each symbol means to you, not what it's "supposed" to mean. Once you have your list of symbols and meanings, try to apply these to your problem or idea. Draw another couple of cards if necessary, and repeat.

2 – Storytelling: Set Your Imagination Free

To use this method, draw three cards from your shuffled deck. Again, put aside any knowledge of their meanings. Look carefully at the first card. Who is this, or what is happening? What happened just before this point in time? What might happen next? Where is this person going, what are they thinking, what problems are they facing?

Look at the second card. Can you move the story of the first card on with the second one? Make a link between them, however tenuous, and repeat for the third card. At the end, you will have told a (possibly very weird....) short story – however odd it might seem, can you use anything from this story to apply to your problem or idea? Think laterally and creative connections may jump out at you.

3 – The Whole Deck: A Wild Ride of Mental Associations

This is a fast and furious method for brainstorming, which can have surprisingly revealing results. Shuffle the entire deck. Now turn over one card at a time and immediately write down the first thought which comes to your head, whether or not connected to what the card is supposed to mean. This might be a phrase, a memory or just an image. Do it quickly and then immediately move on to the next. When you have finished all of the cards, you'll have 78 things on your list; if you're not quite up to that, just set a number in advance and contract with yourself to keep going for 15 cards, or 25, or whatever seems reasonable. When you're done, look at your list – can you see any patterns? Does anything jump out at you which you could apply to your current situation?

4 – Trusted Advisors: Asking the Major Arcana

The final method is for those with some experience of tarot, and it uses only the major arcana. Shuffle the cards, and draw six of them. Lay them out in front of you, and ask each one the same questions, such as "Where should I take my business in the next 6 months?" or "What can I do to make Mary's birthday special?" Treat each of the cards as if they were your advisors. If the Wheel were a person, what would its answer be? What about Judgement? What about the Tower, or the other cards you have drawn?

Write down the answers the cards give you. Does any of this make any sense, or switch on any light bulbs in your head?

All of these brainstorming methods work best with an unfamiliar deck, either a new one or one you don't use too often – this allows you to see the cards with fresh eyes and removes the temptation to use the tarot knowledge you already have. It's important not to self-censor – even silly thoughts or apparently random ones can have value.

Using the tarot to brainstorm can be a very enlightening experience. If you don't find inspiration through one method, try another – the cards have so much to offer you, quite aside from their normal tarot reading role!

About the author:

Nikki Harper is a spiritualist writer, astrologer, and editor for Wake Up World.