

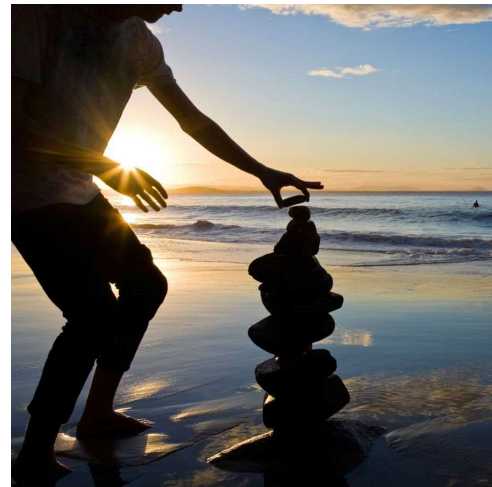


## Versatility - why it matters

Are you the type who thrives on meticulous plans, or do you prefer to dive into life's challenges with a sense of spontaneity? Perhaps you find yourself somewhere in the middle, striving for balance.

Understanding your approach to planning and improvisation can provide valuable insights into how you navigate life.

Being versatile helps you manage stress, embrace opportunity and 'lean in' to growing your business or career prospects.



## Discovering Your Approach: From Planner to Improviser, and Everything in Between

### The Spectrum: Planners vs. Improvisers

At one end of the spectrum, we find **Planners**—individuals who thrive on structure, organisation, and predictability. At the other, we have **Improvisers**—those who relish flexibility, creativity, and going with the flow.

Neither approach is better or worse; each has its strengths and challenges.

But life often demands versatility—the ability to shift between structure and spontaneity, depending on the situation.

**Planners** often feel most comfortable when everything is mapped out. They excel at preparing for all possibilities and thrive on routine. However, their need for control can sometimes lead to **analysis paralysis**, where overthinking prevents action. Planners may also struggle with **imposter syndrome**, doubting their abilities when they feel they lack sufficient preparation or knowledge.

Strengths of Planners	Challenges of Planners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliability and consistency.</li> <li>• Attention to detail and foresight.</li> <li>• Strong problem-solving skills, especially in structured environments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty adapting to unexpected changes.</li> <li>• Fear of improvisation or imperfection.</li> <li>• Tendency to over-plan and under-act.</li> </ul>

Imagine an ice cube—stable and solid but unable to flow until it softens. Planners can benefit from warming up to flexibility, allowing themselves to melt into the moment.

**Improvisers**, on the other hand, thrive in uncertainty. They're confident in their ability to adapt and often take things in their stride. While this approach brings creativity and resourcefulness, it can also lead to disorganisation and missed opportunities if structure is entirely absent.

Strengths of Improvisers	Challenges of Improvisers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and adaptability in dynamic situations.</li> <li>• Comfort with risk-taking and experimentation.</li> <li>• Ability to find joy in the process, regardless of the outcome.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of follow-through or attention to detail.</li> <li>• Difficulty planning long-term goals.</li> <li>• Risk of appearing unprepared or inconsistent.</li> </ul>

Think of water—fluid, adaptable, and quick to fill any container. But without structure, water can lose its form, spilling everywhere. Improvisers benefit from creating frameworks to channel their creativity.

### **Striking the Balance, How to Develop Versatility**

True versatility lies in learning to flow between these approaches. It's about recognising when to plan meticulously and when to let go and adapt. Versatile individuals can confidently face uncertainty while staying grounded in preparation.

#### **Planners: Practise Safe Spontaneity**

- Experiment with small improvisations, like cooking without a recipe or choosing a random activity for the weekend.
- Trust your ability to adapt—remember, not everything requires a detailed plan.

#### **Improvisers: Build Minimal Structure**

- Start with simple routines, like a weekly to-do list or blocking out time for important tasks.
- Reflect on how structure enhances your creativity rather than limiting it.

Imagine sculpting clay. It begins soft and supple, allowing infinite creativity. But over time, it hardens, taking a defined shape. Balance lies in recognising the moment when it's time to shape the clay—or let it remain pliable.

### Reflections

Our upbringing can also influence our tendencies toward structure or fluidity. For instance, birth order theories suggest that **eldest children** often adopt a sense of over-responsibility, while **youngest children** may lean toward spontaneity, enjoying freedom from expectations. There may be many other contributing factors; however, focusing on what is and what can be done going forward may be a better use of your energy.

Recognising your patterns is the first step toward growth.

**Reflection:** Where do you fall on the scale of responsibility? Do you tend to take on too much, or do you avoid structure altogether?

The Ice Sculpture: Creating an ice sculpture requires dynamic, creative work within a limited timeframe. The beauty lies in admiring it before it melts.

**Reflection:** How can you appreciate your efforts and achievements, even temporary ones?

Dinner Planning: Do you meticulously plan every meal, or can you embrace shortcuts, like using jar sauces or packet food?

**Reflection:** Does everything have to be “perfect” or “homemade,” or can “good enough” be enough?

Street Art: Street artists create for the joy of the process, knowing their work may not last.

**Reflection:** How can you focus on the pleasure of creating without worrying about permanence or competition?

## **Building Balance: Exercises to Try**

### **For Planners:**

- Schedule a “free day” where nothing is planned in advance, allowing space for spontaneity.
- Try a creative activity with no defined end goal, like painting, journaling, or baking without a recipe.
- Practice saying “yes” to a spontaneous invitation from a friend or loved one without overthinking it.
- Loosen your structure by including a “flexible block” in your schedule where you simply follow what feels right in the moment.
- Delegate a task to someone else and trust their process.
- Experiment with hobbies that thrive on unpredictability, such as gardening or improvisational cooking.

### **For Improvisers:**

- Create a loose plan for the week ahead, focusing on just one or two priorities to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- Set a timer for a short “life admin” task, like organising a drawer, replying to emails, or budgeting, to bring a sense of accomplishment to your day.
- Establish a grounding morning or evening ritual, such as journaling, stretching, or listing three priorities for the next day.
- Outline a “micro-schedule” by planning just the next two to three hours for a structured but manageable approach.
- Commit to a single goal for the week and see it through to build consistency.
- Track one aspect of your day—like water intake, steps walked, or time spent on a passion project—to create a mindful routine.

**Versatility** is about finding your sweet spot. Whether you’re a meticulous Planner or a free-spirited Improviser, learning to embrace elements of the other approach can enrich your life. Like an ice cream softening to its perfect texture or a clay sculpture taking form, the key is to recognise when to melt, mould, or solidify.

So, where do you see yourself on this spectrum? Are you ready to embrace your inner Planner, Improviser, or Versatile creator? Let the process inspire you.