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On the first day of my creative thinking course we were asked if we thought we were creative. I remember five hands being raised in a class of eighteen, and mine was definitely not one of them. I had just graduated from Boston College with a bachelor's degree in biology and creative was probably the antithesis of what I thought I was or could ever be. I considered myself analytical, skeptical and realistic. Creative was a word to describe those artsy people who could paint and sing, neither of which I can do even at an average level. I was in this program to get the knowledge and experience I needed to work on the business side of advertising, not to learn how to doodle new ad ideas or create taglines. After seeing so few people raise their hands, our professor told us that being creative was something we could learn. I rolled my eyes and in my head thought, "My professor is insane. He has no idea what he's gotten himself into, attempting to make me creative." It turns out he was totally right.

During my first few classes I was on a bit of a roller-coaster ride. I found myself completely inspired by the commercials we watched and the ads we analyzed, but then found myself frustrated when trying to complete certain exercises like the Morning Pages. I wanted to be creative and create advertisements like the ones we were studying, but I just couldn't master the exercises I thought I had to master in order to be creative. I made a couple decisions

on this roller-coaster ride, the first being to stop the Morning Pages that did nothing but frustrate me. I then started working on things that were going well and boosting my creative self-esteem. I did a ridiculous amount of mindmapping, jotted down any ideas I had for ads, carried an idea book around with me and sat in on a drawing class (where I learned that I could draw!). With this new confidence, I started to believe I could be creative. The first time I saw this as a reality was during an in-class exercise where we had to complete a numerical pattern. Everyone was able to figure out a pattern with the value of the numbers, but I was the first to spot a pattern based on shapes. I think I carried that victory around with me proudly the rest of the week, sharing the exercise with anyone who would listen to me.

The moment I knew I could add creative to the list of my descriptive qualities was after I presented my topographical map of my journey to school to my classmates. I had never gotten such positive feedback or felt that I had made such an impression on my peers as I did in that moment. I was able to take our assignment and interpret the problem we needed to solve in a way no one else thought to do and I was so proud of this accomplishment.

While today I may not be making maps and advertisements on a regular basis, I creatively solve problems every day. This is something that I never would have been able to conquer without taking a creative thinking course and learning how to expand my mind to create multiple solutions to everyday problems. This is a necessary skill to have in the advertising industry and one that will make you stand out once you have it down.



Key Insights

1. Don't be afraid to be creative! It's not just for painters and singers, its for everyone. Once you let go of the fear, your creative energy will flow.
2. Don't give up after a failure. Wieden and Kennedy have a huge board in the Portland, Oregon, office that says, "Fail harder." You can't come up with any good ideas without going through a whole lot of bad ones first.
3. Give yourself time. I often felt like if I were going to come up with a great idea, it would hit my right away. In reality it can take days before you come up with anything good and it can hit you at anytime (mine usually hit me in the shower).