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When I was four, I fell off the slide at preschool. As a child, I bounced back pretty quickly and was back on the slide a few minutes later. My dad picked me up from school later that day, telling me I had had the wind knocked out of me. “Daaaaaad, no,” I corrected, as if he had gotten it completely wrong. “I had the ideas knocked out of my head.”

Sixteen years later, in the middle of my junior year of college, I was feeling once again like I had gotten the ideas knocked right out of my brain. Not because I had fallen off a slide, but because I hadn't been pushed to come up with something truly innovative in a while. Of course, I considered myself creative. I had chosen to pursue a field known for its creative types and to attend a college built on principles of innovative thinking, but when was the last time I had immersed myself in the process of developing new ideas? But here I was in Breakthrough Thinking, ready for the challenge of sparking my creativity.

My initial excitement for this course, and where I believe my creative process truly began, came in the form of our weekly blog writing. I loved that the blog could become anything I wanted, and I explored creativity in a variety of ways, from my own experiences with creative thinking, to Dr. Seuss' creative process, to data visualization you can wear on your hand. There were so many things I wanted to learn about, and I enjoyed challenging myself to write about

each topic in a way that hadn't been done before. I found inspiration in what I wrote about and kept a notebook full of articles I came across or interesting tweets, and referred back to them, both when writing my blog posts and when developing ideas for projects. Now I am working on expanding my blog to include sections for book reviews and inspiration collages.

At the same time I was taking this course, I was also interning for PUMA in their international office in Boston as the Clever Programs marketing intern. As the Clever Programs intern, I worked on several aspects of PUMA's sustainability initiatives. This internship really challenged me to push the boundaries of my creativity and approach problem solving in an entirely new way. Using brainstorming techniques such as word associations and reverse problem solving I was able to provide insightful copywriting for my department and was referred to work with other departments by my supervisor. I was given advanced projects, including working on compiling, writing and designing a guide to provide a framework for the Clever brand. I also found myself holding my work to higher standards and using critical thinking to analyze projects for the consumer's perspective. When writing copy for social media I applied the principles of storytelling—I was telling the Clever brand story in each post on Facebook and twitter. Everything was simple, fun and relatable.

Another example of the results I experienced based on this course was when working with

Kristin Lieb, professor at Emerson and author of *Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry: The Social Construction of Female Popular Music Stars*. We were asked to come up with strategies for marketing her book beyond the academic world. My team was able to combine the skills we had honed all semester and each brought a fresh perspective to the challenge. We embraced all of our personal styles to produce work that was both strategic and beautiful. We presented Kristin with specific social media strategies, ad designs, guerilla marketing techniques and collateral, which was all collaged into a customized book, so that she could take notes on our presentation. Before this course, I never would have thought of creating a book as a means of presenting a final project.

With a semester of college left to complete after taking this course, I am looking forward to applying my creative knowledge in classes of all disciplines. My course load is diverse—I'm taking accounting, nonfiction writing and my marketing capstone—but I am confident my varied interests will complement my future career path. Moving forward, I think the biggest challenge to practicing creative thinking and creative problem solving will be surrounding myself with people who encourage fresh and thought-provoking ideas. I am a big believer in the unplanned collaboration and open communication. I think if I can find an environment that embraces the Breakthrough Thinking philosophy, creativity can only flourish.



Key Insights

1. A bad idea can become a really good idea. In other words, there are no bad ideas. With the right peer culture, innovative thinking and trust, even something that seems silly can become a big idea.
2. Set your own standard and make it a high one. No project is too big or too small—throw yourself into it and exceed your own expectations.
3. You have to do things other than the things you have to do. Inspiration can come from personal experiences, events, movies, magazines, conversations, or a road trip. Don't forget to take a step back and make time for your passions.