KRISTINA SHIGAEVA

SEARCH COORDINATOR
AMP Agency, Boston

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/pub/kristina-shigaeva/62/416/2b4

I remember on the very first day of the Breakthrough Thinking course, my professor asked for a show of hands of those individuals who thought they were creative. I was one of the few people who didn't raise her hand. At that point in time, I didn't quite understand the concept of creativity the way in which I understand it now. Before the course, I was convinced that creativity was something that you were born with; you either had it or you didn't and I was positive that I was in the latter category. It was reserved for those elite few that had a special skill like painting or writing music. I never had any "artistic" talents, so therefore I believed that meant that I wasn't creative.

I continued to be skeptical of my abilities but was also open and willing to try all the thinking techniques presented to us in class. The first time I sat down to "mind map" I felt pretty silly, sitting at a table at Panera Bread, drawing circles and words and pictures. It made me feel like I was back in grade school, not necessarily in a bad way. In fact, it was kind of liberating having the freedom to allow my mind to wander in whichever direction it wanted to go. Before the course, I would rein in my imagination if it strayed too far from the assignment at hand. But for the first time, I let my thoughts and ideas run free. It was liberating and refreshing ,and I could see my ideas going in new, unexplored directions.

The final project for the course was to conduct a research project about a certain individual or company and make a presentation on our findings. I was assigned to Banksy, the infamous and mysterious graffiti artist. I began the process by gathering information about him and doing thorough research into his life. The longer I researched, the more I realized that there wasn't much information about Bansky available on the internet. There were various clues that gave me tiny bits of insight into his childhood and past life, but nothing was confirmed or concrete. The more I researched, the more frustrated I was becoming; it felt like there was no information on Banksy, just these random, unverified bits of gossip about his life. I was a little bit jealous of my classmates who had research projects about organizations and individuals with a plethora of information available about them. How was I ever going to make a presentation about someone whose real name I wasn't even sure about?

Throughout the research process, I felt a little bit like a detective, trying to piece together random clues and unrelated pieces of information into a somewhat comprehensive narrative. One

night, I had an idea; what if I made a presentation as though I were actually a detective that was investigating the illusive and mysterious Banksy? After this "aha!" moment, all these unrelated tidbits about him were no longer a point of frustration but were rather seen as "evidence" and "clues" that I could use in my presentation to my class. This project was one of the most exhilarating and rewarding assignments I've ever had because I truly felt that I embraced the concept of "creativity". I followed through with the detective narrative for my whole presentation, never falling out of character, a fact which kept the audience engaged and interested.

Ever since my experience in the Breakthrough Thinking class, I believe that my entire way of thinking has changed. I trust my ideas, no matter how ludicrous or out there they may seem at first. I don't edit myself as much and I think that the quality of my ideas has really improved.

Key Insights

1. Trust your instincts, and let your ideas run free. Don't settle on your first good idea because by doing so, you may not arrive at that amazing idea that is sure to come.
2. Constantly expose yourself to new situations and experiences. I have found that I am often inspired when I do something out of my comfort zone, and it makes me look at things in a new way and allows for more inventive and interesting ideas
3. Collaborate with others. Through my experience in the Breakthrough Thinking course, I have found that some of my best ideas were often inspired by interactions and conversations with my classmates.

Explanation of Visual: These are the visuals that I created for my presentation about the graffiti artist Bansky. I created a "top secret" confidential folder that I presented to the class as though I was a detective.