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On the first day of class, we were asked to raise our hands if we thought we were creative. I confidently did not raise my hand, along with 50% of my class because I surely never defined myself as being creative. Shocked at the overall hesitancy, my professor assured me that by the end of the course he would have us all raising our hands. Fast-forward weeks later and I'm positive that if I was asked the same question "Do you think you are creative?", I would raise my hand high. So what had changed in the course of 14 weeks?

To begin with, my definition of creativity was fundamentally flawed. I used to have this preconceived notion that creativity was when you could pick up a pencil or a paintbrush and design something that looked both gorgeous and effortless. However, being an artist is only one outlet in the world of creativity. What the professor taught me was that creativity means being able to think and communicate both something new and interesting. It is being able to contemplate about the "here-and-nows" and connect those ideas to the "what ifs". The Creative Thinking course taught me that not only am I creative, but we all are. What we fail to understand is that our biggest enemy in our creative process is actually ourselves, and the self-doubt we have in regards to our capabilities.

The turning point for me, when I was rediscovering my creative side, was during a research project in our Creative Thinking and Problem Solving class. We were each given an assignment and asked to research and present our topic, but more importantly inspire our classmates. I had the fortunate opportunity to work on Pilobolus Dance Theater, which gave me extraordinary freedom to act creatively. The reason I reflect back on that particular assignment is because I truly used that experience to challenge myself to think big. It was also the first time that I thought of more than 150 ideas before deciding on one. It was the first time I asked myself “what if?” and answered “why not?” It was the first time that I didn’t let fear hold me back. It was the first time that not having control of every aspect was ok. And it was the first time that I connected two very essential ideas, creativity and collaboration.

For the Pilobolus Dance Theater project, I used my research as a brainstorming exercise. Every story or fact that I read on Pilobolus, I thought of how it could be used in my presentation. I ranked information according to importance, interest, and how it inspired me. When I thought about how I could best present, I took the time to think of as many ways as possible and even more importantly,

I left self-doubt out of the process. No matter how absurd or abstract the idea was I wrote it down. When I finally made a decision, I chose an approach that I thought would best encompass Pilobolus, capture my class’ attention and inspire them to think differently.

My Pilobolus presentation wasn’t groundbreaking. It was simple, clear and effective. I used a mix of mediums to convey the most important information and I supported in by using shadows. I spelt out Pilobolus using little human silhouettes on the wall behind me and when I was done, I invited my class to grab a silhouette and create something together. Not only was I able to inspire my class, I was able to surprise them. No one in our class knew what Pilobolus was that morning, but after my presentation no one would be able to forget.

My creative process is certainly not finished. Everyday I’m challenged to think differently, think bigger and thus, think creatively. However, what the Creative Thinking class has given me is the ability to silence the self-doubt and the fears that used to drown out my creativity. Instead whenever I’m given a new project or challenge, I now always have this voice that sounds off loudly, “what if?” and I quietly answer, “why not?”

Class Silhouettes:





Key Insights

1. Think. Think. Think. And then Think again. Part of my creative process everyday is thinking up as many ideas as I can. No matter how daunting the task ahead is, there is always a solution. It's not entirely wrong to go with the first creative solution that comes to mind, but if you give yourself the freedom to think, the likelihood is that you will amaze not only yourself but the world with your ideas.
2. Don't let fear hold you back. I know it's pretty cliché, but as you embark on this creative journey you will realize that you are your own worst enemy. What may sound ridiculous in your head, may actually translate into something brilliant to those around you. Don't self-doubt, don't hide.
3. Collaborate. It is often very easy to do everything by ourselves. However, part of the creative process isn't always knowing how to do everything, it is knowing who can do what you want to get done. Reach out and ask people for their insights, their opinions, or their skills if you need help. Don't isolate yourself. Creativity is always bigger and better together.