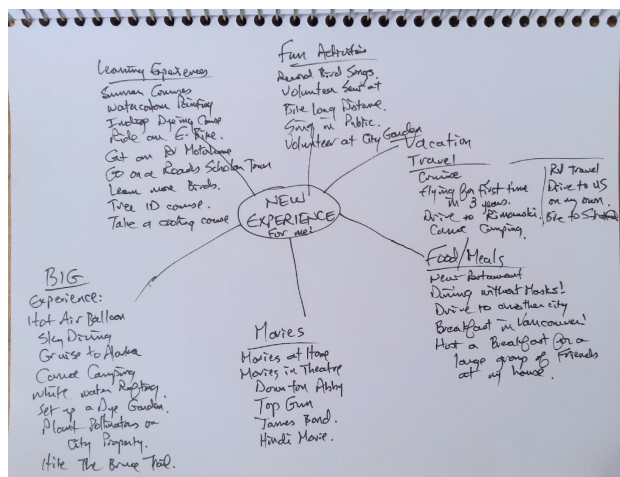


**Creative Problem Solving SOCS10172GD**  
**Sheridan College**  
**Ilene Atkins**  
**Instructor: Patricia Marshall**  
**Due Date: June 3, 2022**



**Ilene Atkins learning watercolour painting via Zoom.**



**Mind Map Brainstorming**



**Watercolours by Ilene Atkins**

The first challenge for this assignment was choosing an activity. There are a lot of possibilities for such an activity, and I initially found it a challenge to narrow it down to just one. I thought at first that there aren't many activities that I haven't attempted! I already have a fairly fearless attitude towards trying new things, but when I did Alex Osborne's Brainstorming exercise, I found there are still quite a few experiences on my bucket list.

For this assignment, I wanted to try something BIG, like skydiving or hot air ballooning. I didn't want to attempt something ordinary and small, like seeing a new movie or trying a new meal. I have travelled throughout the world, and I have seen a lot of various movies, so any experiences related to these activities didn't seem like a very big adventure. Over the pandemic, I have become accustomed to staying at home, and I suppose there is within me an element of reluctance to venture out again. On the other hand, I have a yearning for something different, so the Brainstorming exercise was enlightening.

I attempted to line up my process with one or more of the CPS models, but I found that I was working unconsciously and intuitively in my thinking on this process. I found this also during my first year at Sheridan. I am accustomed to working out my process in my mind. I will occasionally scratch out a few notes or mathematics, but I generally don't document my process. This is something I am still learning to remember to record. The processes of CPS I have learned in this particular course have made me very aware of the need for documenting the creative process, in particular in a corporate setting where an employee or a team needs to justify creative outcomes, or in my other courses at Sheridan, where I need to show my process along with my finished work.

I was able to align with OmniSkill's 5 Minute Guide to CPS: Imagine the Future, Find the Questions, Generate Ideas, Craft Solutions, Explore Acceptance, and Plan for Action.

Imagining the future involved settling on one activity out of any number of activities, with the goal of completing this assignment. Finding the questions involved what I could physically do, could I afford it, did it interest me, did it fit the time frame? Generating ideas came in a mind-mapping exercise. Crafting solutions involved thinking about how I could accomplish my goal. Exploring acceptance really

only involved myself, since it only affected me. Planning for action meant searching for and finding a course, paying for it, organising my supplies, and opening up my schedule to allow for the time required to attend and complete the course.

I put Dr. Alex Osborne's Principle of Brainstorming into action, and quickly sketched out a mind-map. Divergent thinking during the Brainstorming allowed me to explore a lot of different ideas. From there, it became somewhat easier for me to choose one activity. Convergent thinking allowed me to narrow down my ideas to a single activity. I was able to stay focussed, keep the novelty alive, and keep my objectives in mind.

The experience I ended up choosing that was new for me was a course in watercolour painting, completed last week. It occurred for two hours, once each week over a 4 week span, and appealed to me because it was to be taught online using the Zoom app. It was a small group of four students, and was taught by a very knowledgeable and talented artist through Homer Watson House in Kitchener, Ontario. It was specifically on painting reflections in watercolour, with a new scene presented each week for us to paint. The artist instructor guided us through painting each particular scene, describing how to sketch out the scene, how to mix the appropriate colours from the paint palette, and how to use different brush techniques to achieve various reflection effects. We students followed along with the instructor, and learned the painting techniques by replicating them ourselves. At the end of each session, each student had an opportunity to show their work and receive feedback. Throughout the course, the instructor patiently answered questions and spoke about the relevant aspects of using different materials.

I chose this experience because of my recently developed interest in drawing. As part of my first year course in the Textiles Studio at Sheridan, I was required to take a drawing course in each semester. We were encouraged to use a variety of drawing media, and I experimented with a series of three watercolour paintings for a specific assignment. To begin with, drawing isn't my natural talent, and painting with watercolour was completely foreign to me. I was intrigued, though, and wanted to learn more about the process.

Signing up for a course this summer seemed the perfect solution, and Homer Watson House presented the short course I was looking for. I was excited to be learning a skill that had previously been a mystery to me. It evolved from something I previously knew very little about, something I thought I would not even be able to do, into something I was actually quite skilled at. Perhaps the most valuable thing I learned is that I can transform a mysterious and unknown subject into something at which I am reasonably skilled.

Do I normally try new things, or do I find it difficult? I have been a life-long learner all along, so learning something new isn't usually difficult for me. I should say, though, that some things are harder for me to learn. I have found that if I really focus and apply myself, I am able to learn even the subjects that are more difficult for me.

I am also reflecting on a course in my first semester at Sheridan on a required computer aided design program. It was very unfamiliar to me in many ways. I was feeling completely lost in the subject material, and fell behind right from the start when my computer gave me some challenges. It took considerable effort and creative mind work to overcome my feelings of failure to catch up and eventually excel in the course. I knew from previous life experience that I needed to find a way to get past the feeling of despair if I was to continue with the course. I was at the point of deciding I could either continue with or drop the course. I considered the future, and knew the course would not be any easier for me in a later year of my program, so I decided to find a way to continue. My preference is to be ahead in the game, instead of being behind. I knew that dropping the course would haunt me in future years, and I instead wanted a feeling of success. We covered this material in the discussion on metacognition and the self-assessment of DaVinci's 7 Principles. I think it is valuable to know oneself and to find a way to reach a goal, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

By way of comparison, my chosen activity of watercolour painting was not difficult for me to learn. It has always been much easier for me to learn things that are appealing in terms of interest and fun. Any of the creative arts fit into this category, whether it is colour theory, woodworking, ceramics, tailoring, fabric dyeing, quilting, glasswork, or drawing.

For this watercolour course in particular, I was able to apply my previous training and knowledge in composition and colour mixing to my new paintings. I had been unfamiliar with the techniques of watercolour painting, and had some initial worry about being able to master them. I was immediately reminded in David Kelley's YouTube video of a moment in Grade 3, when my teacher trashed my snow scene I had drawn with chalk! That moment completely destroyed my creative confidence. It has taken me many years to overcome this, and I realise now that I can indeed draw, and that I am creative. With a little guidance and instruction in these past few weeks, I was able to improve my watercolour painting abilities, and feel my creative confidence growing with each course I complete at both Sheridan and other places.

I've reviewed my Brainstorming list, and I might be able to work towards opening myself up to other new experiences in the future. Looking at the activities I've listed instils in me an excitement about other new possibilities. The very act of returning to full-time studies at Sheridan after so many years in non-creative corporate employment is quite far outside my comfort zone. Studying in a creative field, amongst other creative people, and taking courses that are creative and artistic in nature, all help in opening myself up to other new experiences, and improves my creative confidence.

I understand that trying new experiences will enhance my creativity. The creative confidence module in Week 4, specifically the Sweet, et al article, has made me realise that I already score fairly high in this regard, although I recognise within myself that this has come about slowly over a good number of years. For many years, I told people I was good technically, but not creatively. At some point, I made the decision to be creative. I think this began when I started quilting around 2001, and has grown with the inspiration of other talented and artistic quilters. I believe I am empathetic in understanding and sharing the needs and motivations of others. I have set many creative goals along the way, and have accomplished the completion of many creative projects. I have also collaborated on quilting projects with a small group of local quilt artists. My journey to being able to call myself a quilt artist clearly illustrates my path to creative confidence.

This whole course on Creative Problem Solving has academically formalised many of the concepts I already understood through intuition and previous experience. The course in general, and this assignment specifically, has made me think more extensively about my own creative process. The Models of Creative Thinking easily translate to my being a more effective CPSer, by being aware of all of the available processes and by being skilled at applying them in any situation. I feel confident that I am able now to choose one or more models, concepts or definitions, and apply them to any situation where I need to be creative, whether the situation is in my home life or my professional life.