

Luận chính

I am a specialist, in the art of using geometry compasses.

Trúng tuyển

Emory University (#24_National Universities)

University of Washington (#46_National Universities)

I used to be described as a child who loved to meet people. Most of my childhood stories comprised me befriending strangers, and wreaking havoc within my neighbor's houses. I didn't have a compass, yet.

Entering primary school, I was "handed" one. I was always a chubby child, but I never noticed it until I developed a sense of self-awareness. Although not many of my peers used it to mock me, I still had low self-esteem. With the compass, I started to draw a circle around myself, engulfing and making me feel safe. In doing so, I grew distant from most of my social acquaintances and comfortably blamed it on my introverted nature.

It was only when I studied abroad that my compass hinge began to expand. Boarding a plane during COVID, and traveling halfway across the globe as a 14-year-old passenger, felt like being thrown into the unknown. It took me a long time to adapt, slowly and painfully widening my compass until I finally felt comfortable again. This experience left a lasting impression on me, reminding me of the uncertainty that came with being out of my circle.

Since then, I have been near to the boundaries of my circle but never had the urge to break through, until the biomedical research summer camp that I decided to attend. Everything went smoothly except for one final challenge—the presentation. The thought of presenting in front of 100 academic-armed peers and top-notch professors at one of the most prestigious universities was truly overwhelming. More than anyone, I understood how much suffering I went through being thrown outside of the circle.

My nerves made it nearly impossible to focus, stressing me out even more. "There was no turning back", I finally calmed enough to admit. Because going all in was the only way out, I had to push forward, no matter how terrifying. Therefore, my last week turned into a cycle of eating, sleeping, and practicing. I rehearsed my lines constantly, mumbling my presentation to myself, and even sleep-talked about the structure of DNA, as my roommates later reported.

As time passed, the moment finally arrived. My group was assigned the middle time slot, but I could not hear a word since the first presentation. My hands were sweating, my vision was blurry, and my legs were shaking—my circle was more intimidating than ever. The moment I started to speak, internally, I closed my eyes, waiting to be thrown again.

But nothing happened.

As I continued, surprisingly, I was still comfortable. The terrible anxiety I came across wasn't there. Before I comprehended it, the audience was applauding as I delivered my speech. But how? Why was I still comfortable?

Upon reflection, I realized something profound: I had been thrown, but not outside of my circle. Instead, through my preparation—many rehearsals, talking to myself in the mirror, and absorbing knowledge along the way—I had subconsciously drawn a larger circle, with the old one now at its center. Indeed, I felt no fear because I was still within my comfort zone, just in an expanded version of it. Only then did I come to understand that I dictate my circle, and the more I prepare myself, the more I can enlarge it.


Much like the rings in a tree trunk that form as it ages, each circle I drew with my compass represented my growth and maturity, serving as living proof of the experiences that shaped me. Now, as I stand at the edge of my current circle, once again awaiting the unknown as my compass widens, I understand that everything I have been through has prepared me for this. I am ready to keep expanding, hoping my future endeavors will help me grow into a towering tree rooted in my wisdom and past.

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