

EDITED BY COLIN ONG, PHD

A Collection of Essays



# MENTOR MINDSET

*Reflections on life lessons from  
creativity mentoring.*

[ycisl]

YOUTH CREATIVITY, INNOVATION &  
SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM  
AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Mentor Mindset

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# PREFACE: A SENSE OF PURPOSE

When you woke up this morning, did you have a refreshed sense of purpose? Did you have a “would-love-to-get-it-done” thought floating around? I did. And writing this preface was at the top of the list.

This publication is based on a collection of short essays written by mentors in the ITW-DTI (Innovators Toolkit Workshop-Design Thinking Incubator) program of Summer 2021. Every one of these mentors was a high school student who volunteered to interact with project teams and guide them in our Stanford YCISL-style of design thinking. Almost all the mentors had participated as students in an ITW program within the prior 12 months and they saw mentoring as an opportunity to learn more.

The essay prompt given to the mentors was “...tell a story using one or two specific situations that you experienced.” I set a word count target of 500 to 1,000 words thinking that would be a good length to capture moments concisely in a design thinking way.

Although I was tempted to edit the essays, I restrained myself from doing so. Thus, I feel that I preserved authenticity in their compositions and their stories would be their own and exhibit true ownership. The wisdoms that they reflected upon were organic and if you happen to have the good fortune to meet them one day, they would want to tell you the same story.

As curator of this collection, I have tried to frame this collection in a compelling and inspiring way that makes mentoring one of your personal goals. Also, I am writing this Preface and will work on an “opening scene” narrative and epilogue to mindfully express my gratefulness to the mentors for their contributions to the success of the YCISL ITW-DTI program. The framing theme I have selected is *intrinsic motivation* (credit to Daniel Pink) which explains why my sections reflect autonomy, mastery and purpose. I hope this stimulates and boosts your mentoring senses too.

# OPENING SCENE: A SENSE OF MASTERY

I expect a mentor to have a sense of mastery. An emotionally intelligent sense of who they are and how to manage themselves so that they have the intention to grow through the interactions with mentees and symbiotically with the mentees. They have a methodology based on reciprocal learning and active listening which requires timing and empathetic word choice skills. Of course, they have know-how as well and have the self-confidence to establish themselves as experts (relatively) - but they also know how to fill and cross gaps with speculation and conjecture. Yet, mentors bear humility and respect the mentee envelope by not directly inserting their opinion and design. Mentors trust their mentees...and vice versa.

This essay collection contains stories from the mentors about how they developed their mastery. For most, this was their first mentor experience. The guidance given to them was to support understanding of the workshop design thinking processes and ensure practice of the team collaboration methods. They were to ask questions that lit up new directions or prompted for deeper thought - to promote creative and critical thinking. They would build on their recent mentee experiences.

Zoom window open. Admit participants. Make the mentors Co-Hosts. Look for everyone to enable their videos. I would start the workshop and kick-start with my personal story and self-introductions. Somewhere along the way, usually about 1 hour into the workshop, we would send the design thinking project teams to their breakout rooms. A moment later, mentors would be sent to visit the teams in their breakout rooms and...do their thing. I would remain in the main Zoom room to take any questions from team members popping out of their breakout room. When mentors returned, we would discuss team dynamics and progress. Were the teams communicating and did they practice the design thinking skills? This was the point where I could observe mentor mastery growth and the momentum was palpable. Now let's get to their stories.

# 1

## *"A two-way learning process" - Aarna*

As Professor Colin puts it, we're all on our own 'design thinking journeys' - so let me take you through mine.

Two years ago, if you had asked me what creativity means to me, I would have said it's about coming up with unique solutions to the problems you observe around you. But today, after almost 2 years of being a mentor in YCISL creativity workshops, my answer has changed quite drastically. Creativity to me, is reimagining anything. It is what helps you explore your limits and push your boundaries without constraints. It's not just about being solution-oriented but also about exploring new horizons and uncharted territories. Creativity is what made Carl Benz invent the first two-seater, light-weight car in the late '80s while everyone else was trying to optimise the horse-carriage. It is not just about marginal benefits, but also about making quantum leaps in the outcome.

Apart from gaining a new perspective on creativity, over these 2 years, I have also gained confidence. Confidence in my abilities as an ideator and an innovator. The workshops have empowered me to express my views and creative thoughts without any restraints or fear of rejection. In my first workshop as a mentor, I remember being in a breakout room with 3 other students where I was hesitant to share some of my out-of-the-box inputs. Only later, when I did put forth my opinions, I realised that unleashed creativity of a different order in the discussions. This solidified my belief in my thought process and today I am much more secure about my ideas.

Professor Colin often reminds us of the Mel Robbins' quote - "It's very, very simple to get what you want. But it's not easy." Every achievement is a result of initiative, hard work and

patience. I have learnt to trust the process. Every part of the process is instrumental in shaping the final outcome. From the initial rapid brainstorming, divergent-convergent thinking, asking questions to creating a story and presenting the final outcome - it is all a learning experience. It has been incredible to see the seeds of ideas germinate and bloom, workshop after workshop.

This journey of YCISL workshops, starting as a participant and moving on to being a mentor, has also been a journey in leadership skills for me. Guiding the participants, unplugging the bottlenecks in their thought process, motivating them to challenge their limits, promoting teamwork and performing with responsibility, has developed me into a more compassionate and yet outcome-oriented leader.

Moreover, YCISL has been a two-way learning process. I have learnt as much, if not more, from the participants as I have offered to them. From their high and low moments, I have picked up many lessons along the way. Their innovative ingenious ideas helped me expound my own thoughts and acquire new perspectives. Their enthusiasm and energy brought in cheer and smiles in these unprecedented tough times of the pandemic. Given the global reach of the program, I got an opportunity to meet students from all around the world and appreciate their culture and school systems. Despite the virtual connectivity of the participants and the mentors, the young innovators in the program were truly inspirational and motivational.

As Richard Nixon once said, and Professor Colin Ong reiterates in his workshops, "each day is a chance to do something memorable for someone". And these workshops have been an opportunity for me to do something memorable for all the young participants. Imparting them the lessons of creative thinking and staying positive, and making them actualise their dreams has been extremely satisfying. Witnessing the transformation of young, unsure students into confident innovators as they progressed through the days of the workshops has indeed been delightful. Their initial hesitancy and premature editing of ideas progressively decreases and always paves way for an environment

that nurtures creativity. From a fixed mindset, they collectively move to a growth mindset as the end of each workshop nears. The impact the workshops have on each of them is very tangible as evident in the fantastic presentations that emerge on the last day of the workshops.

Finally, and most importantly, through these workshops I have made friends for life from across the globe. From South Korea to Spain, I can now say I have friends in different parts of the world. I will never forget my hilarious broken Spanish conversation with Lola, a mentor from Spain. I have had the most amazing team of mentors by my side. We work together like an orchestra - motivating and inspiring not only the participants but each other as well. And like in all euphonious orchestras, we have an amazing conductor - Professor Colin who is always there to guide us. This has definitely been one of the most impactful experiences of my life. The workshop has created a global community and I am proud to be a part of it.

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**About Aarna:** Aarna Sanghai lives in Mumbai, India. She is a keen artist, a national-level soccer player, and a member of her school's robotics team. Aarna is co-founder of 'TrailblazHer' which empowers girls in STEM. You will find her hanging out with friends, exploring the outdoors, and listening to her favourite playlists.



# 2

## *"A spark to ignite their excitement" - Darlene*

Sir Ken Robinson, an international advisor on education, once said, "If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original." If there is one thing that was blocking my creativity: it was the fear of being wrong. I was once a girl that restricted my ideas, doubting and criticizing my every move. Like many children in this world, I was being educated out of creativity without realizing it (Sir Ken Robinson). Luckily, a spontaneous decision to join Professor Colin's YCISL workshop has helped me uncover the wealth of creativity and potential I never knew I had.

I started as a participant during the ITW- DTI Summer 2021, eager and curious about the new skills I could obtain. Throughout the workshop, I discovered passion and inspiration while brainstorming sustainable solutions to problems. In addition to thinking outside the box – I also thought around, inside, and under the box. Mel Robbins stated, "Your problem is not ideas; your problem is not acting on them." From developing divergent-convergent thinking, doing the 30 circles exercise, and constructing catalog sheets, I learned to brainstorm without judgment and cultivate ideas to develop a smart space for my house.

Knowing how impactful this workshop has been for me, I was motivated to help others see their potential and creativity. After all, Albert Einstein quoted, "Creativity is contagious. Pass it on." Thus, this became the beginning of my mentoring journey.

Throughout the workshop, I learned that mentorship is not a fixed skill you can merely learn from a textbook; you improve through experience. On the first day as a mentor, I was a jumbled-up ball

of confusion, trying my best to navigate through the fast-paced program. The second day - I've taken notes from the first, but I still struggled to push the groups in fear of stressing them out. On the third day, I became a more confident mentor as the pieces of the puzzle were being put together, the teams were making remarkable progress. On the final day, I watched with a smile on my face seeing how far each group had come. While mentoring has its obstacles, the lessons, perspectives, and advice that you receive are invaluable.

As a mentor, I learned to have empathy and increase my emotional intelligence. One group was struggling to come up with an initial idea for their converged product. They tried generating a plethora of ideas but kept hitting a wall because all seemed to exist already. As I entered their room, I could sense the discouragement from their frowning faces and unenthusiastic expressions. Professor Colin advised that mentors shouldn't spoon-feed their mentees with answers but instead encourage them to form ideas independently. All this team needed was a gentle push, a spark to ignite their excitement. By guiding them with questions, raising their spirits, alongside Professor Colin's assistance, this team succeeded and managed to win the best concept, creativity, story, and imagination awards with their final presentation! I learned the value of perseverance even when circumstances aren't ideal and aiding students to look at the possibilities in problems.

Furthermore, the most rewarding aspect of mentoring is building relationships with students. As a mentor, I am responsible for making meaningful connections with students and guiding them to bond with each other. Relations with the students started with awkward stares, simple conversations, laughter, then bloomed into unforgettable friendships. I believe that teamwork and collaboration is an essential aspect of everyone's design thinking journey. I'm incredibly proud to see the camaraderie and sense of trust in each group.

This is just the beginning of my design thinking and mentorship journey, and I am looking forward to future workshops. It's truly inspiring the myriad of things you learn as a mentor. Not only am

I transforming my mindset on creativity, but I am also discovering more about myself. I am now unafraid to imagine and try out new things. I know that having an idea isn't enough; I need to put it into action. I believe everyone is born with creativity; we are just losing it as we grow older. Discovering creativity changed me, and I believe it can change you too.

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**About Darlene:** Darlene Simanungkalit lives in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is a passionate musician, mathlete, chorister, and is part of her school's newspaper team. You can find her finding new restaurants, socializing with friends, and watching comedy movies outside of school.

# 3

*"I had a lot of fun while doing so" - Elena*

My time as a mentor for the ITW-DTI workshop has truly been an experience that I will hold close to my heart due to the creative and innovative thinking skills that I will be able to take with me into the future. Throughout my academic journey, the stifling of creative and innovative imagination became more and more apparent within both myself as well as my peers. This was due to our growing tendency to think within the box rather than outside of it because of our awareness of societal ideals as to what was realistic and what wasn't.

I was unaware of how much this aspect of growing up actually affected me - until I began my journey as a mentor. As a mentor, not only was I able to assist the attending students in a positive way that I greatly enjoy, but I was also able to learn along with them. During the activities that were introduced throughout the workshop, I found myself actively participating in each one by brainstorming and asking questions along with the other students.

Moreover, through activities such as practicing divergent and convergent thinking, I was able to broaden my horizons regarding creativity. I especially enjoyed the activity of divergent and convergent thinking not only because it allowed for creativity, but also because it demonstrated how important creativity is in the process of innovation.

The introduction of divergent and convergent thinking paired with sustainable innovation is one that is very inspiring to me. While the activity stimulated my creative imagination, it channeled deeper thinking for sustainability as well, which I found to be deeply of importance for the future of our community and world.

As the students practiced divergent thinking, their ideas along with their passions for those ideas inspired me greatly. Being able to listen to their long lists of all different types of ideas taught me that every innovation was once just a single idea that one, or a few people came up with. Their bravery regarding presenting their ideas inspired me as well. Hearing all of the students have such open ended conversations with their group mates and putting out their unfiltered ideas motivated me to do the same in the future, and helped me gain confidence in my own ideas.

Being able to communicate with the students as a mentor was also highly enjoyable. Not only was I able to learn a lot from the workshop and the students, I had a lot of fun while doing so. It was especially satisfying being able to see all of their ideas come together and gradually become more developed as the workshop went on. The workshop also prompted a lot of teamwork, which was amazing to see. Being able to witness the students work together and work through difficulties together reminded me of how important teamwork is.

After my time as a mentor in the ITW-DTI 2021 workshop ended, I felt amazed at the amount of content that I, along with the students, have learned, as well as the progress in which the students have made throughout their ITW-DTI journey. From getting to know so many people from just their names and faces to their ideas and character, connecting with others from all the way across the globe was something that I didn't think I was able to do. I am truly so grateful to have been a part of the ITW-DTI workshop as a mentor to have been able to experience and learn all of the things I did.

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**About Elena:** Elena Peng currently lives in Cupertino, California in the United States. She has an interest in psychology and law. In her free time she enjoys listening to music, practicing creative writing, and creating art. She hopes to one day travel to as many countries as possible.

# 4

## *"The change I saw in myself" - Gautam*

Gautam, until recently, was just another teen among the millions. He did the same things: sleep, play and while away time. Fast forward to one year, he's unrecognisable, and has undergone a significant transformation in terms of his way of thinking, habits and attitude towards life.

I am Gautam, a participant of the YCISL ITW workshop and a mentor of the YCISL ITW DTI workshop under the guidance of Professor Colin.

Each experience under Professor Colin has been enriching with multifaceted learnings. I would like to try to put my experience as a mentor into words and hope to give the readers valuable insights. I have had the opportunity to participate as a mentor in two workshops, one hosted for a school in Barcelona and another in Jakarta. Though the basic framework was the same, both the workshops had different yet amazing outcomes.

Being a mentor has given me a completely new perspective, not many people get to be a part of the teaching/mentoring process at such a young age. I would like to say that I have been extremely lucky and privileged to play the role of a mentor. I gradually acquired several skills over the course of 2 weeks.

I felt the most prominent ones were leadership and accountability. As a mentor, I am responsible for the smooth conduct of the workshop, helping groups and clarifying doubts related to the process of design thinking. This highlights the importance of leadership, being a leader we need to take onus for our actions, help the groups and maintain the positive atmosphere. While doing this, teamwork is also evident as we the

mentors and the professor need to be in sync and make the transition smooth.

Another important skill that I learnt in the process is how to collaborate. Being in-charge of a team, we need to make sure everyone is working together, participating and getting their work done. We need to motivate and encourage the team members in such a way that none of them get discouraged or we are not too harsh. Working as a team with the group is extremely important here, being the mentor we have to make sure we handle all unprecedented situations well and do not let the team lose interest. While doing all this I learnt about how I need to get the work done without pushing too much and causing hurt, maximising effectiveness and making everyone participate.

The change I saw in myself after reading the above skills was quite astonishing. For me working in a group always meant just doing the absolute minimum and getting done with your own part. Being selfish in a certain way and only caring about how 'your' part goes. Over a period of time this mentality has changed, and this experience has also had its role. For me now group work is about all of us collaborating, playing along with our strengths and coming together with an amazing outcome. Apart from this, being a leader has helped me deal with people in a much calmer way. Instead of losing temper or getting edgy, my threshold has increased a lot. Everyone is different, I might understand something in a jiffy but the other might not and we need to take this into consideration.

When to be in a mode of divergent thinking and when to converge is something barely anyone thinks as important. However this workshop changed my way of thinking in terms of being open to any kinds of thoughts and choices, exploring various options before converging onto one particular one. This aspect is seen in our everyday lives, from what clothes to wear when we go out to what decision to make. While doing this, we should keep asking questions regardless of how basic they are. This is yet another valuable learning from this experience.

One experience during one of the workshops stuck out for me. A particular group was facing issues as there was barely any participation among the group, the mentors tried the best they could to get all of them talking, but it didn't work. This made the professor add another activity which directly involved everyone individually, and by doing this he hoped participation would be maximised. It gave a positive result. This was truly amazing as I learnt that you should always have a positive outlook no matter what, never give up on what you hope to achieve and lastly never be rigid, go with the flow and make changes if necessary regardless of how risky it is.

Talking a bit more about positivity, it was present throughout the workshop among the participants and organisers. I never heard anyone say we have a few days, we cannot do this. In fact, it was the other way round, all were engrossed in their projects and were positive about being done on time.

Positivity has always played a huge role in my life, it being present in the workshop also showed how important it is. I have read a few books and heard the tremendous power of positivity, about how just thinking in a positive way can affect your life in a way you would have never imagined. For example in this workshop just the thought of finishing on time changes everyone's attitude and increases the chances of success. I feel positivity is very taken for granted, thought of as impractical even though if one actually dwells upon it, it will lead to great insights.

Among the other learnings was about how a mentor is supposed to play his/her role. We are not supposed to spoon feed the answers; instead, we are supposed to promote organic growth. Hence, we give cues and take them into the direction of how they are supposed to think, but the majority of the work is done by the participants.

Promoting organic growth is very important and has played an essential role in my life. Everyone around me has never given me direct answers and has instead told me to look into it, or solve it myself. This makes stronger mental models and hence the skill/learning stays with me.



This is just the tip of the iceberg and my best attempt to portray the experience in words. This journey teaches something new to everyone who tries it. So I would recommend embarking on this journey by yourself because sometimes the grass is greener on the other side. Coming to an end, I would like to say that the skills and my thinking have been deeply influenced by the Design Thinking Workshops and not only did it affect me as a participant or mentor but what I learnt is a mindset and I will carry it for the rest of my life.

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**About Gautam:** Gautam Gupta is from Gurugram, India. He hopes to major in economics and maths in college. With his friend, he organizes and runs his school's fitness club. Also, he and his brother founded play4changenow which promotes healthy lifestyles among rural villagers through football. His hobbies include investing, football, music and reading.

# 5

## *"Contagious and revitalizing" - Jin*

My ties to ITW started when I was accepted as a mentee. It was an eye-opening experience, not just because it was one of my first workshops, but also as it guided me to discover my true creative self. As a student and an artist, this finding was personally precious and meaningful, and I was honored when I was contacted for mentoring the next ITW session.

To be honest, I had first gone into mentoring the session without expecting anything much other than one other 'unique' experience. However, when I actually started mentoring in the ITW sessions and communicating with the attendees, I felt even more enlightened as a mentor than I was as one of the students. My first ever experience with ITW as a mentee, of going through the curriculum and finishing a project by collaborating with new people, was enlightening, yes. But the experience of giving advices, to be on the giving side of the guidance as a mentor, I dare say, was even empowering. The entire workshop was a process of self-actualisation, and each minute an inspiration.

Inspirations and motivations were 'in the air'- I could almost taste it, despite space separating the attendees. And although the Virtual Design Thinker Faire, end phase of the workshop, does embody the essence of the hard work, I would say that one of the best inspiratory moments was at the developmental stage of project ideas. To be able to witness the team members step out of their comfort zones to collaborate, project their passion and gradually channel their inner innovators and express their love for their own works could be equated to watching an array of flowers bloom and fill a field with vibrancy.

Now that I have written about the general impressions I got from the workshop, I would also like to elaborate on the personal

meanings that it held to me. First and foremost, the feeling of satisfaction and pride coming from the act of being help to others and the sense of fulfilling mission were the strongest emotions that propelled me forward till the end of the session. The personal interactions and the synergy that I witnessed among the participants during the workshop was also a huge motivation. Their enthusiasm and passion were contagious and revitalizing. I was able to truly enjoy the entire process and the heart-warming moments, namely moments when the participants actively engaged in discussion and when they presented their final product ideas. I felt myself change into a better person with all the experiences I got from the sessions as stimulus driving me away from the mild melancholy of the social distancing and the current circumstances.

And once I felt the change, I wanted it for others as well. And that is why I am writing this after my second mentoring experience. Bring upon change in your life with your own hands and ideas. And I promise that although the impact or the form of that change may be different from person to person, everyone who takes it will learn to cherish it and the new tools added to your 'Innovator's Toolkit'.

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**About Jin:** Jin Yu is an aspiring artist from South Korea, who is in love with glitters and cats. She hopes to convey and communicate messages through stories using the power of Art. She also likes to immerse herself in the world of Music, Technology and Daydreaming.

# 6

## *"8 ways to succeed" - Lola*

I am going to use Richard St John's Ted Talk that Colin always showed us, as a metaphor for this writing. In this video Richard said that there were 8 ways to succeed: passion, work, good, focus, push, serve, ideas and persist. And with the experience of the ITW-DTI workshop, as a mentor and student, he has pushed me to learn to do the 8 things indirectly.

Passion: Colin always made us do everything with a smile on our face. The workshops were focused on things that we would enjoy, for example: making any room in our school technologically smart, but always with ideas that we were passionate about.

Work: clearly to get to the final product you had to work. And being a mentor you worked to make the sessions go as well as possible.

Good: in the workshop you were focused on improving your creativity, but you have to keep working to become good at it. Being a mentor has helped me improve my patience and be more attentive to others.

Focus: being a student and a mentor you always had to focus on one goal in order to achieve it: to get your final product or help students to get their final product.

Push: this word is the one I learned the most in the workshop. I have pushed myself every day to get up at 5am to do the workshop, no matter what. This is a great personal growth for me, growth that this experience has brought me.

Serve: as a mentor I had to serve Colin and the students. But what I have learned is to do it with passion, it was not an

effort to do it, I liked to do it, and I think it is a very big step for my future, because I will try to be comfortable serving anyone, without any problem.

Ideas: are the main theme of the workshop, and I think I have improved a lot in this area, as I was a very uncreative person, and thanks to Colin I have been able to learn many techniques to stimulate my brainstorming. The technique or game that marked me the most was the 30 circles, apart from the fact that I really enjoyed doing it.

And finally persist: I have persisted, but fighting against myself, against my desire to go out with my friends, since it is difficult to get up early on a summer day to work, against my tiredness. But it made me realize that it's hard to start and in the end it doesn't cost so much. Because you constantly remind yourself why you are doing it, and the goal you wanted to achieve. And so you push yourself day by day.

In conclusion, these two weeks at the workshop have changed me completely, not only personally but also professionally. I think it is a great privilege to be part of this experience, for everything I have learned, what I can learn in the future and for all the wonderful people I have met. Thank you very much.

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**About Lola:** Lola Hernandez lives in Sant Cugat, a town near Barcelona, Spain. She is a very happy person, enjoys meeting people, and is interested in biochemistry and programming. Her hobbies include socializing with friends, reading, listening to music, and training track and field. Her goal is to get an athletic scholarship for university.

# 7

## *"A world of optimism and hope" - Ritigya*

As Austin Kleon quotes and Dr. Colin puts it - "I have two desks in my office - one's analog and one's digital." Same way, as an ITW member, I once created as a participant and the next time mentored for others to initiate their own majestic creation. My journey with ITW starts in this year itself, 2021. This design thinking path I have come through is something which will always be engraved in my heart as I gained more than I could ask for.

If you would have asked me earlier what design thinking means to me. I would have actually put down a google pasted answer. However, now for me design thinking is a problem-solving approach where you brainstorm beyond the horizons, put down the problem statement, use divergent-convergent thinking to come up with a feature list and then iterate and refine till the time you think your idea is out of the box.

Working as a mentor made me realize how much I am growing up as my own person. I never thought that my perspective would gain a whole new positive side. I am extremely fortunate and grateful that I could take part as a mentor at this young age. I am able to take away all the skills I gradually learnt with me to the future.

Innovation and creation skills are definitely something I would like to mention. Assisting the participants, giving them advices were not the only ways how I learnt these key skills. The participants played an equally important role as well. As I went into their breakout rooms, I would see them discussing and planning out various ideas which enriched my knowledge and made me see stuff from not only their surface but beyond that. The divergent-convergent thinking was the best part as they came up

with so many ingenious ideas that there was no space for them to put all those down in the powerpoint slide.

This journey beginning as a participant and moving onto the role of mentor made me realize my worth. With that it resulted into learning leadership qualities. As a mentor, I knew my responsibilities, assisting the groups, encouraging group discussions, motivating them, clarifying their doubts. The major one being teamwork between the professor and the mentor team to conduct the workshop smoothly. All of these provide the highlights in leadership skills. And leadership to me is actually not being afraid to roll up your sleeves once in a while and putting in your abilities into work.

One thing I would like to see again is the smiles and cheers of the participants when they found what they were looking for was just profound and led me to believing that some things in the world are more powerful than a positive push. A smile. A world of optimism and hope. Witnessing them transform from shy, unsure participants to new confident leaders through the days of the course was a sight to forever remember.

Finally, I am clueless how I have put my experience into words but one thing that I am sure of is that the experience is much greater than my words. So, whoever is reading it right now, I highly recommend you bring forth such change in your life by trying it yourself. I have had a great mentor team by my side and an extremely inspiring and motivating professor, Dr. Colin who is ready to guide you at each step. This journey has had a profound impact on me in a very positive way and I am glad to carry it with me throughout my life.

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**About Ritigya:** Ritigya Agarwal lives in Yamunanagar, Haryana, India. She is really passionate towards the curriculums of art, dance and designing. She recently did a fundraiser for covid patients by selling her artwork. She likes hanging out with her friends, reading and exploring new places. Her goal is to make her own identity in this little world.

# 8

## *"My creative journey will continue" - Sun*

I first joined ITW as a participant in the year 2020. Right off the bat, I loved the ITW experience. The workshop introduced me to so many new concepts and perspectives regarding creativity, and in addition I got to share even more perspectives and ideas while networking with attendees my age from all over the world. It was a refreshing experience to collaborate and communicate with like-minded people amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, not to mention the brain-mind stimulation I got from the workshop sessions themselves.

The program encouraged us to come up with a creative project and present it to panelists and other attendees. I worked with my team members using a group chat, and presented our prized innovation with much anticipation. To do this, we had to step out of our comfort zones and explore new programs and designs, but not without the extensive help and guidance from our amazing mentor team. Our presentation was applauded for Best Teamwork, which I cherish to this day. I was also recognized for Best Storytelling :) Team Learn With Leaders extended an invite to mentor for the following ITW workshop, then ITW-DTI workshops in 2020 and 2021, which I gladly accepted.

Attending the creativity workshop was an eye-opening experience, but working behind the scenes as a mentor opened up whole new horizons for me. Not only did I get to be at the centre of action and be a part of all the work and passion that goes into creating the ITW sessions, but I also got even more opportunities to collaborate with others from various backgrounds, as well as opportunities to further explore my skills and take up responsibilities. My tasks included making tutorials for the ITW attendees, coordinating team communications and providing guidance to budding innovators attending the workshops. As a



mentor, I learnt a lot from the sheer passion and creativity of the workshop attendees themselves- this came across as a pleasant surprise since I had expected to be on the giving end of inspirations in these workshops. As I mentored for more and more workshops, I came across even more passionate minds, packed with innovative ideas and the drive to realize and present them to the world. I also met workshop attendees who thanked me for my insight, and those who inspired others. This is another thing that I love about the ITW/ ITW-DTI sessions: both the mentors and mentees exchange ideas and viewpoints, and both parties learn from these interactions. And this is where I decided to regularly mentor for the creativity workshops!

I've watched the ITW programs change and grow, and so have my perspectives on creativity and creative people. I know that participating in these workshops has left a lasting impact on both my skills and mindset. My creative journey will continue even when I sign off as a mentor in the far future. And I'm sure that the workshops have left an equally lasting impact on the minds of other participants and mentors, as well as Colin, our workshop director. Drawing from my time in the ITW workshop, I want to summarize the ITW workshop in three key features: networking, discussing and drawing inspiration from bright minds. With that, I would like to end my reflection on my experience as an ITW mentor.

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**About Sun:** Sun Yu is from Seoul, South Korea. She loves meeting new people and making new friends, and hopes to pursue Microbiology in the future. She enjoys a variety of hobbies, from painting to volleyball, to watching cat videos on Youtube. She also loves travelling abroad, and trying local cuisines.

## *EPILOGUE: A SENSE OF AUTONOMY*

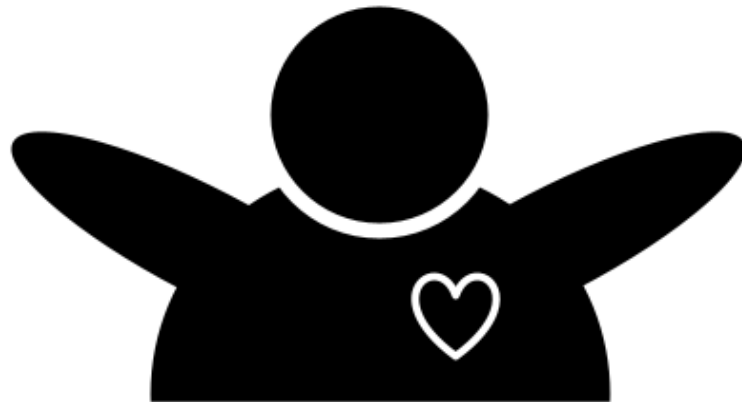
The preparation to step up as a YCISL creativity mentor involves getting comfortable with your sense of purpose and your sense of mastery. This includes alignment of your hopes and expectations with your confidence in your abilities. This is one's state of awareness and forms a baseline. The vertical rise in the mentor experience comes from your sense of autonomy. Figuratively, it's like getting to "stretch your wings" and taking control of your energy, actions and direction. This is one's state of management, action and connectivity. Autonomy makes the joy and success of mentoring that much sweeter.

Each reflective essay in this collection reveals a newborn mentor mindset and an enlightened state of mindfulness that flourished. Their stories describe their presence as mentors on the YCISL playground and linearly connect with their previous mentee disposition. Taken individually, each story shares a flow of vivid experiential details. Going from a low-level view of discrete stories to a high-level view of the collective, the picture changes and we find threads of inspirational growth messages and resonating life lessons that form a unified model for mentoring creative pursuits in an innovation-supportive domain. Simply put, mentoring puts us in a magical state of mind.

It's a challenging task - to be a YCISL mentor. No thinking or expecting otherwise. Our YCISL brand of mentoring aims for organic personal development which means traceability of all ideation to individual students or teams. The mentor focuses on vibrant group dynamics and ensures that the YCISL strategic methodologies are applied. I am grateful that our mentors are up to the challenge. They truly deserve the recognition that this essay collection presents.

**THE CREATIVITY MENTOR CHAIN REACTION**

**INTERACTION -> INSPIRATION -> CREATION**



“For first time mentors, the three action items for you to remember are:

- (1) make sure the teams practice the skills
- (2) are discussing with each other and being good active listeners
- (3) respond but do not insert; this means only provide thoughts and comments that refine the team’s questions and efforts, and guides them to our project objectives.”

*-excerpt from ITW-DTI Readiness email sent to mentors*

# Why read this e-book?



1. For a sense of enlightenment.
2. For a sense of empowerment.
3. For a sense of creative fulfillment.

## *About the Editor*

Colin Ong is the founder and director of the Youth Creativity, Innovation & Sustainable Leadership program at Stanford University where he is an Adjunct Professor specializing in youth creativity and sustainability design thinking. He has mentored in science fairs, sports and college readiness. His hobbies include web design, gardening and food blogging.

