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Critical Incident Learning Essay

Note: The length and focus of this example does not adhere to current requirements. See the [PLAR handbook](#) (page 19) for a current example.

My first career job after graduating from college was with a provincial department. On my second day in this position, I attended the annual meeting for all staff. I was sitting with my new boss and surrounded by about 60 people, many of them veteran public relations practitioners. I was the youngest person in the room and the newest to the department. When I heard that we would all be introducing ourselves and saying a few words about ourselves, I was horrified. I remember sitting, waiting my turn, rehearsing what I would say and becoming more anxious by the minute. I don't remember how I came across but I know I kept it very brief and I was probably red-faced.

It was something of a contradiction for me, who was always shy, to be working in a field that seemed to attract a higher than average number of highly extroverted people. Over the years, my learning related to why I was shy, how I could overcome it and the inherent related benefits are some of the most important learnings of my career and my life.

By about the age of 30, I realized that my introverted nature could impede my career in the long run. Although I was extremely successful in my position with the department, rising from an entry level position to a senior position in four years, I still lacked

confidence when asked to speak to groups such as management meetings. I was frustrated that my nervousness hadn't abated as I achieved career success.

My search for answers led me on a journey that included some intense workshops, five years with a women's support group, much reading and a long period of learning and personal growth. It was through this personal growth that I learned that my shyness was caused by a lack of self-esteem which I had the power to build, and my introspective nature was part of my personality and comes with certain benefits.

One of the benefits that most directly relates to my career is the ability to synthesize vast amounts of information into clear and concise statements, an ability that is extremely useful in my area of work. My first position with the department was in the area of education. I worked closely with its director of Career Services, producing resources for both youth and adults. I particularly enjoyed working on films, where I was the executive director, overseeing all aspects of the film production. The government at that time was encouraging entrepreneurialism and we created a half-hour television drama for high school students. I was asked by my manager to show the film to the Minister, for his approval.

I was extremely nervous about presenting our somewhat unusual approach to informing students of starting a business as a career option. After I introduced the film and we watched it, the Minister approved it and my client pulled me aside to tell me that she

thought I had done an excellent job of preparing the Minister and presenting a very persuasive rationale for our approach. I was surprised by her feedback because I thought my comments were unexceptional.

Over the years, I've received similar feedback, revealing to me that my analytical abilities are extremely beneficial and that my ability to capture the essence of a project or idea is not entirely common. I had a similar experience re-writing a series of booklets for a government agency when I was self-employed. I didn't understand much of the content, which was largely taken from the legislation. After interviewing several people, I wrote the booklets in plain language and was concerned my client might reject my simplistic approach. The client accepted the rewrite and the series won a communication award from the pensions industry. I learned to trust that my ability to clearly explain technical and complex information was a unique talent and that I did belong in the communications industry. I also learned that my natural tendency to listen carefully and gather information before speaking or writing is highly beneficial in the work I do. And I learned that most people love to share what they know and by simply asking the right questions, I could learn a great deal about almost any subject matter.