



I understand that, as a freshman in college, I have a lot yet to learn in life. Unimaginable experiences – both good and bad – await me. But, if some eager person were to ask me today for advice on what makes a difference in life, perhaps what I would tell them is that the greatest quality a person can hold, is the ability to embrace risk and to venture into the unknown. To attempt the uncertain and knowingly risk failure and embarrassment embodies this quality. People who can do this are those that impact the world and are remembered for their great accomplishments. They are the subject of books and movies, of intellectual conversations, and the pioneers of technological innovation. These people are successful because they are able to take a dive into a different pool than everyone else is already swimming in. Sigmund Freud was scolded for his psychodynamic theory. Yet, to this day, his models are fundamental in modern psychology. Thoreau completely alienated himself from society and was considered cowardly and insane by others. And, just two years ago, I read his essay “Civil Disobedience” for my English class in high school. Would the United States even exist today, if it weren’t for Thomas Paine’s bold publication of “Common Sense” to spark revolution against the British? All of these men ignored presumptive authority, stepped away from the social norm, and produced things that continue to impact our knowledge; these men were unafraid to take risk.

On a personal note, I had an incredible experience my senior year of high school that taught me this. I had been one to take caution when doing unfamiliar things. However, in my senior year of high school, I was able to step away from my usual behavior. After three years of doing so, I decided not to play basketball. As a result, my friends heavily pushed me to run cross-country and track for my school. Throughout high school, I had always thought that I would not be fast enough to compete. However, due to my friends’ persuasion, I decided to play the sports. I can say that I was more alive my senior year than at any other time in my life. The experiences I had during track and cross-country have forever changed my perspective on life, because I learned that taking a risk, and doing something you are unsure about, may lead you to something special. And that’s exactly what my senior year was – special. I qualified as a national elite for the 400 meter sprint and ran very competitively in cross-country races. The jokes, relationships, laughs, cries, hard-work, stress, competitiveness, and good times that accompanied me along the way have strongly influenced who I am today.