565 words

Max Word Count: around 500 words

UC Prompt: Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Staring at the options before me, I selected the pink starburst wrappers as my nerdiest earrings. I thought back to when I bought them at my 7th grade Entrepreneurial night from another young company presenting to venture capitalists. As a high school freshman, I felt removed from the girl I was when I attended the Girls’ Middle School. However, it felt right to bring the earrings back to their birthplace, returning to the Computer History Museum for the She’s Geeky unconference with my mom.

I entered the room and was awed. There was such a breadth of smart women socializing together: computer programmers, rocket scientists, gardening aficionados - more types of geeks than I could imagine. Somehow we all mingled and created meaningful connections and experiences despite our disparate backgrounds.

I breezed through the beginning of the day in sessions like “Geek Chic” fashions, and Balloon Animals taught by a professional fairy. I even mustered the confidence to lead my own session about books, which resulted in a great turnout and plenty of fantastic book discussions and suggestions.

Later in the day, my mom and I arrived at the specialized coding session she wanted to attend. I had some programming experience, so I thought the session would be interesting. However, I rapidly discovered that the material was far beyond my knowledge. I was lost. For a few minutes, I perched hopefully on the chair with my notebook and pen at the ready. Eventually, I gave up, and tentatively pulled my book out of my bag. As I was about to open it, I caught a glimpse of the hand-written sign on the wall, and remembered one of the only rules of She’s Geeky. The Law of Two Feet states that if you are not learning or contributing, it is your responsibility to respectfully find someplace that you are. This rule simmered in my head, and I realized in frustration that I was breaking it. In a gesture of strength, I slipped my book into my bag. I breathed through the apprehension collecting in my stomach and separated myself from comfortable predictability. I wandered conspicuously across the empty space over to the social media session.

I sat down and immersed myself in the advice of a savvy woman about how to use social media to your advantage. I listened raptly to the examples she gave of people sharing only the best or worst things about their lives, rather than the whole story. My pencil began to fly across my notebook page as I soaked in fascinating information.

Escaping from my comfort zone wasn’t easy, but it felt great to take charge of my own experience. I gain nothing from wallowing in the comfortable. I have the responsibility to take action on my own behalf in order to grow, learn and enjoy. I was proud to grasp the Law of Two Feet and take it to heart. It is not always appropriate to get up and leave if something is not intellectually stimulating, but I can always find a way to be engaged and challenge myself.

After Entrepreneurial Night, I was proud of being nerdy, which is still true. However, now I have a better sense of what that means to me. I understand the experience of learning deeply: the responsibility, the reward, the fun. Now I have a new outlook to go with my nerdy starburst earrings.