

Learn More,
Study Less!

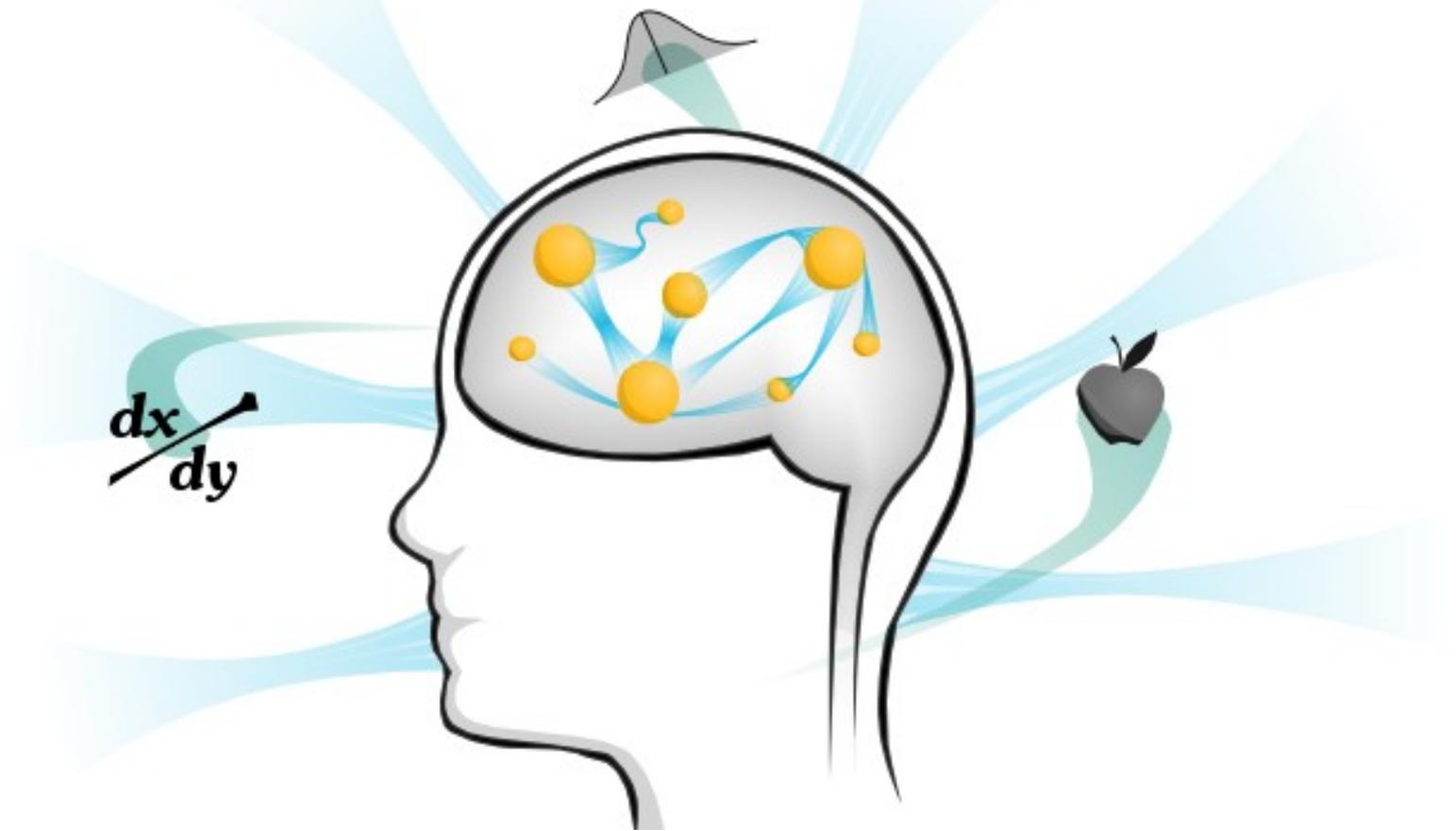


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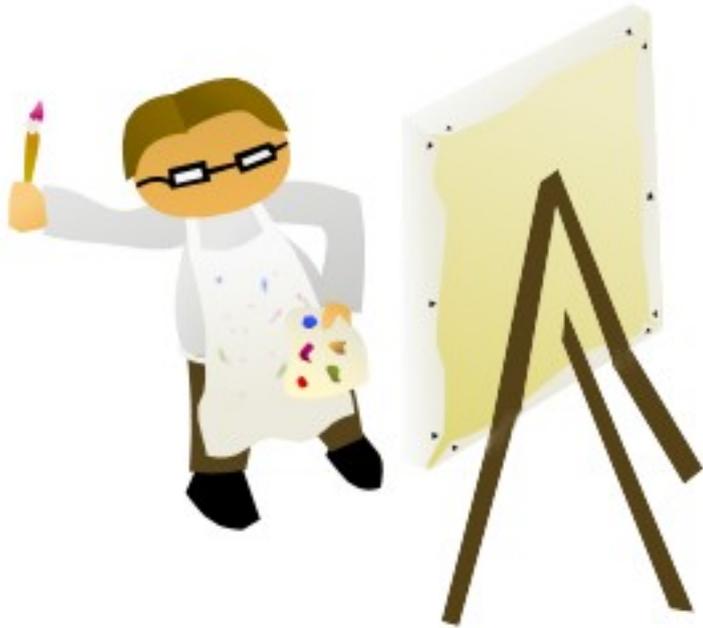
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Case Studies



Case Study #1 - Using Metaphors to Pass an Important Exam

Nayamot Ullah is a fantastic example of someone using the holistic learning methods in a concrete way, and resulting in a dramatic performance increase in a testing situation. Nayamot was a *Learning on Steroids* member and most of the quotes are from his forum postings there, or his follow-up emails with me as I tried to probe into his success in this excellent case study.

Nayamot Ullah began by describing his situation:

“I mentioned in my first post that I wasn’t doing so well in Chemistry, because on the first test I scored a 57, while the rest of the class average was the highest in 5 years. **I failed, and I was in a panic.**” [emphasis mine]

Nayamot’s situation isn’t that uncommon. A lousy grade on a difficult test can shatter our confidence and push up the anxiety. Liam Martin, friend and owner of a virtual tutoring company, tells me that this is often how his students meet him—

–overwhelmed with anxiety over a single bad test result.

The important thing to remember is not to panic. As Liam tells his students, “I remind them to start with 100% and work backward. If they got 60% on a midterm worth 30 points of their total grade, then they still have an 88 in total.”

It’s easy to get overwhelmed by a bad grade. But in that moment you have a choice. You can fall victim to the panic and switch to rote memorization and lousy study tactics. Or, you can devise an intelligent battle plan to take back your grade and efficiently remember the information in the future.

Nayamot is a great example because he chose the latter. “In an attempt to catch up with the material I started to feverishly read through the book, understand the material using the rapid learning techniques.”

Nayamot ultimately selected metaphors as his weapon of choice against his difficult subjects, Chemistry and Calculus. To accomplish this, he decided to set a 30-Day Trial to deliberately create metaphors every day.

By deliberately selecting a period of working on a rapid learning tactic every day, Nayamot was ensuring he wouldn't fall back to old study habits under pressure. Also, working on the skill every day for a short period made the goal achievable. It's often difficult to switch habits completely in one go, if you work on it one day at a time, it's more likely to become your default learning strategy.

So how did he use the metaphors? Here's one of his first examples he shared with us. "Here is one I made for limits a while ago. It doesn't explain everything about it, but it helped me quite a bit."

<<see on next page>>

What is a limit. REALLY?

A limit is like a stalker, forever getting close to the target. Forever trying to close the distance between it and the target, but rarely ever succeeds.



$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} 2x^2 + 4$$

But sometimes the stalking leads to trouble, but that can be cleared up as well with a little pain though.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 2} \frac{x-2}{x^2-4} = \lim_{x \rightarrow 2} \frac{(x/2)}{(x+2)(x/2)}$$

$$= \lim_{x \rightarrow 2} \frac{1}{x+2} = \frac{1}{4}$$

STALKING SUCCESS!!!

So now that you get in trouble, you are met with a restriction. you cannot be 2 meters ~~far~~ of your target.

Even from this one example there are a few lessons. First—the metaphor isn't serious. It's comical and funny. Those are precisely the kind of metaphors that get remembered. Many students trained on traditional study methods have had their creativity sucked from them. As a result, they claim they can't make a metaphor for a particular subject, but more likely it is simply that they are unconsciously rejecting all the interesting, and perhaps ridiculous metaphors, like Nayamot created.

Here's another one, this time from his chemistry class:

“Today I was reading through my Chemistry book and made a neat little metaphor. The chapter talks about gases and the gas laws. As I finished reading through the first few sections I am interrupted by my cousins and siblings who are constantly running around the house. So I thought how they were so similar to gases.

“They are always running around and never staying in one spot (gases are always in constant motion), they bump into things making them fall (when gases collide they transfer kinetic energy).

“I thought this was interesting since I was wondering ‘How am I supposed to use my life experiences to create metaphors?’ and then suddenly I made one.”

Another excellent example. Notice how Nayamot drew on what was immediately on his mind and integrated that into his studying. Often I’ll have lingering thoughts about a television show, video game or some other piece of trivia when I’m trying to learn. Those are often prime material to create metaphors with.

Nayamot didn’t just start at the surface, but worked actively to create deeper, and more meaningful metaphors. Here’s another example which he credits with his success:

“My most memorable use of metaphors on the exam was the one for the reaction of aqueous solutions.

“The metaphor goes something like this: The reaction of aqueous solutions is similar to trading spouses. It doesn't matter which, one of the spouses will swap with the other to form a new couple. If the newly formed couple does not get along, they will quarrel and ‘precipitate.’

“One of the questions where I used this is: Potassium chloride solution is mixed with lead(II) nitrate solution. Write the reaction equation.

“My Solution: $\text{KCl(aq)} + \text{Pb(NO}_3)_2\text{(aq)} \rightarrow \text{PbCl}_2\text{(s)} + 2\text{KNO}_3\text{(aq)}$ ”

As you get more skilled with metaphors, you can make more complicated ones, often integrated two or more elements. Nayamot began to do that while retaining the same fun, interesting simplicity of his original metaphors.

Great, you might say, but how does all this spouse-trading precipitations and limit-approaching stalkers translate into grades. Surely it can't beat regular studying?

“This time I took the exam with a bit more confidence and got my grades back with an 86. It may not seem like a huge improvement, but the class average was a failing grade. Another thing to note is that **I just did not simply catch up with my class, I finished the entire curriculum for the semester.**” [emphasis mine]

Nayamot entered into his exam with a failing grade, even as his classmates were scoring their highest in years. He refocuses his efforts onto a tactic that works, dedicated himself to its practice and is able to take the next exam with confidence, netting him a top mark for a difficult exam.