

Between art, photography, cooking, piano, and the occasional shirt-making, TJ Dubler explored just about every creative outlet available to him. “When did I get into art? I guess during quarantine, like March 2020. I was at home watching Bob Ross a lot because I had nothing else to do. I’m like, ‘I guess I’ll learn how to paint.’ So I learned everything from YouTube, starting with Bob Ross. I tried Bob Ross at first, and it was just a failure. It was just a mess. But I just kept on trying and doing different styles, just from YouTube. So I’ve never actually had an art teacher before. I like art because there’s no rules. And if I want to create something that I like, I can do it however I want. There’s things like color theory and painting techniques that exist, but there’s no one way you can do something. I don’t know why, but I get very satisfied when I’m done with the project because it’s like, ‘wow, I did that and I planned it, and it’s mine.’ I really don’t do it for anything else other than just me having fun,” Dubler said.

Dubler didn’t limit himself to one hobby, instead opting to try anything that struck his curiosity. “I like to do everything. If it’s something that exists and I’m curious enough to learn about it, I’ll do it. Right around the same time as I started learning how to paint, I also started learning how to play the piano, just because ‘why not? I have all this time being at home with nothing else to do. I’ll just learn how to do the piano.’ So I found myself a teacher, and I just started learning. Recently, I started doing voice lessons from my same piano teacher. It’s my senior year and I joined choir for the first time. Anywhere you want to be willing to learn, you probably can if you keep your eyes open. I’m really taking advantage of high school because it’s free education. I like cooking too. Also during quarantine, I learned how to perfect grilled cheese. I created my own recipe that I hope will last for many generations because it’s delicious. When I go to college, I want to have a Crockpot and be that kid instead of the party kid. So, I mean, anything I do in my daily life, I want to find a way to do it better or do it in a way [that] I haven’t done before.”

“I don’t think that you should sit around and wonder what you like to do, or not think about what you’d like to do. If you just dive headfirst into something, try it out and see how it is, the worst thing that can happen is you learn what you don’t like. I’ve learned a lot of things that I really don’t like. For example, when I’m at a restaurant, I’ll just put my finger on the menu and whatever it is I’ll just have it. I just want to do everything that I can. It’s more interesting to live that way instead of wondering what you could have done, or just not even knowing what can be done.”

Other than trying things that interested him, Dubler also believed in the importance of helping others find their passion. “I think it’s just important for me to try new things and encourage other people to try new things and understand the world around them. If people are just going to try everything and just dive into stuff, they’ll learn how the world works. So I guess it’s just important for people to be eclectic.” According to Dubler, the best way to go about life is to enjoy what you do. “It’s fun to be confident in everything that you do. Even if I’m not the best artist in the world or vocalist or pianist, if I’m confident and willing to make mistakes and learn, then they become happy accidents, as Bob Ross has taught me. So, whether it’s me dressing up like a grandpa for school, or writing a parody to a song from Frozen Two and singing that in a Valentine’s Day cabaret after being in choir for less than a year, if I can do it with confidence and encouragement, that’s what’s fun for me.”

“I’m actually going to go into architecture because there’s a lot of people that are better than me at math, and I’m fairly good at math. And there’s a lot of people that are more talented in art. So if I’m kind of good in both of those areas, I want to combine it and see what I can do with architecture. I have no idea how that’s going to go, but I’m going to approach learning architecture the same way I’ve approached learning anything else,” Dubler said.

Written by Ava Anderson and Aaron Zancosky