



FRESH THOUGHTS

A collection of
student writing
from first year
students

Fall 2023

 **LASELL**
UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

It is a pleasure to present this collection of essays to you as a celebration of the great writing that Lasell University students undertake in our WRT101 College Writing Course. What you have before you is a collection that represents some of the best of what our students have achieved, and like all good writing, it is the result of great creativity, careful revision, and above all else, strong passion.

Students entering into their first year of college are stepping into a new world of ideas, perspectives, and debates with which they are eager to engage. It is our pleasure as instructors to get to play a small role as the guides into that world and assist students in building and honing their skills across one or two semesters. This collection shows what that process can reveal: strong beliefs, stirring stories, and captivating language. All of these pieces were composed in students' first months, weeks, and even days as members of our community, and we celebrate them for the works of art they are and the bravery that it took to create them.

All first-year students who were enrolled in WRT 101 in the Fall of 2023 were invited to contribute to this volume. From the array of fantastic work submitted, we have curated this collection that shows the range of what our students produce in our classes. From this group, we have further selected four essays, listed first in this volume, to receive generous awards.

While this is first and foremost a celebration of student writing, these projects were all guided and nurtured by a set of compassionate and dedicated writing instructors. To that end, we would like to thank Michelle Niestepski, Annie Ou, Sara Large, Alex Saint-Widow, Debbie Mael, Staci Halt, Matt Boyle, and Emmaley Silva for their work. Our students are better for having spent time in your classrooms.

Now please, sit back, relax, and enjoy some writing that you won't soon forget.

Greg Cass
Director of the Writing Program

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Professor Diane M. Donatio who passed away unexpectedly during the summer of 2005. Professor Donatio, Diane to all who knew her, taught Writing and Communication courses at Lasell College for eleven years. She was an exceptionally talented teacher who dedicated herself to student success. Students loved her classes and were constantly trying to get into them even when they were full.

Although Diane loved teaching all of her courses, she particularly enjoyed Writing I and Writing II. She relished working with first-year students and constantly pushed her students to do their best. Because of Diane's belief and support, her students worked hard and felt proud of the essays they wrote and how their writing improved over the course of a semester.

Because of the generosity of Diane's family and friends, we are able to give awards to outstanding essays from Writing 101. Selecting the award winners is always a difficult task. As one faculty member said, "If Diane were here, she would have wanted to give every student an award because she would have found something great in every essay." We certainly know that Diane would have loved to read every essay in this book, and we hope that you enjoy it as much as she would have.

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Donatio Awards First Place Winner:
The Other Door

By
Kevin Qu

The atmosphere in the math classroom today was particularly solemn, mixed with a hint of excitement, unlike usual morning math classes, there was no yawning in today's class.

All of the attention in the room gravitated toward the whiteboard, which only had one equation written on it:

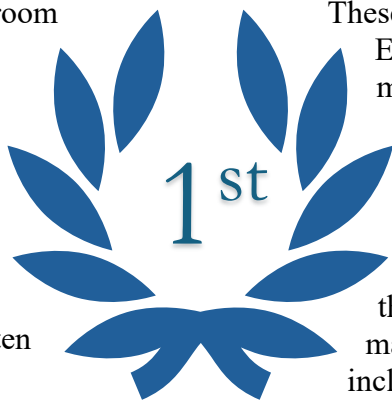
$$e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$$

It was under the natural spotlight of the sun as if nature knew the significance of this equation. Known as Euler's identity, it is widely considered the most beautiful equation in mathematics. "I am sure you guys have all seen this equation somewhere before" said Mr. S, our beloved math teacher, a graduate of the prestigious Cambridge University.

Leonhard Euler was born in 1707 Switzerland. Some of his more widely-used contributions that many of us would recognize include the notation of a mathematical function $f(x)$, the sigma notation of summation Σ and the notation of an imaginary unit:

$$i = \sqrt{-1}$$

NOTE: for those curious, the i in Euler's identity shown above is the same as the one shown here.



These are only a small subset of Euler's contributions to mathematics, in fact, his overall contributions to mathematics were unmatched by any other in the history of mathematics. Pierre-Simon Laplace - a famous French polymath in the 18th-19th century, whose mathematical contributions include pioneering the Laplace transform - describes Euler's unparalleled significance: "*Read Euler, read Euler, he is the master of us all.*" If you don't know Laplace, surely the name Carl Gauss would ring a bell. Gauss - often referred to as the prince of mathematics - comments on Euler's contributions: "*The study of Euler's works will remain the best school for the different fields of mathematics, and nothing else can replace it.*" Needless to say, such high praise from two of his most reputed predecessors more sufficiently demonstrates Euler's significance to the mathematical world.

Rewind back to a morning trip to Shenzhen Children's Hospital, not long after the launch of China's first moon orbiter: the Chang'e 1 orbiter. The whole of China bathed in the pride of their recent breakthrough in lunar discovery, except for my family; who were about to find out that I had lost most of my hearing, at the age of 5.

After some tests and conversations with my kindergarten teachers, it turned out that I had successfully camouflaged as a normal child through lip-reading. As kindergarteners

weren't expected to exactly follow any instructions beyond those for puppies, I got away for most of kindergarten by following what other kids were doing, until the final year of kindergarten, when it became increasingly obvious that I would be totally irresponsible to anyone talking to me from behind. This led to the suspicion that I may be having issues with my development, which caused me to ignore the adults around me.

"Let's go and get you some new toys!" my mother told me excitedly, completely out of the blue. Unlike other toy stores, this "store" was located in an office building, with displays of this strange yet sophisticated electronic device attached to a piece of plastic. The posters on the wall hinted that they were meant to be worn on your ears. These fascinating "toys" immediately drew all of the attention from my curious mind.

Little did I know, this pair of "toys" were my keys back to the long-lost world of sound—a world that I had been banished from years ago. "Kevin, can you hear us now?" my parents yell in excitement. It felt so familiar yet so strange, to perceive conversations through audio instead of the movements of the lips. While immersed in my fascinating new "toys," I couldn't help but notice tears running down my mother's smiling cheeks, even my father - the living definition of solemnity - grinned for the first time since I could remember.

After another 6 years snuck past, my mother and I decided to move across the planet to the land down under, a unique continent with exclusive flora and fauna that cannot be found elsewhere. But most importantly, Australia's secondary education system offered much more support for individuals with learning disabilities.

My first few years in Australia were far from the smooth sailing I had in mind. First and foremost, I had to break the language barrier; this was no easy task with profound hearing loss. I slowly realized that my English speech had this strange accent, a mixture of Chinese accent and the "deaf accent." For this, I was always that ripest fruit in the eyes of the bullies, constantly being picked off and emotionally bruised. Ranging from less-malicious pranks such as "talking" to me without making any sound (simply moving their lips only) to ridiculing the fact that I couldn't hear them, to the more vicious act of damaging my hearing aids while I showered. *Why did they have to pick on me, out of over 200 kids in this school?* I wasn't the only one that struggled with English, nor was I the only one that struggled with hearing. But I was the only one that had both of these struggles.

Over the next few years, I spent hours upon hours with a speech pathologist to improve my speech, and it effectively shifted my accent from a predominantly Chinese accent to a mostly Aussie one. However, my "deaf accent" refused to leave me alone and I was still considered a goldmine of sadistic pleasure by the bullies. My hatred against them grew into self-loathing as I wondered why the balance of life had tipped against me. I thought to myself. *Why am I being robbed of my right to hear when I have done nothing wrong? If I never lost my hearing, I wouldn't have to go through all this.* I thought of my minuscule existence in this cold and cruel world to be rather redundant. My self-loathing continued until my junior year of high school when I first discovered the inspiring life of Euler.

My discovery of Euler was not through any of his mathematical contributions. Instead, his portrait - which I discovered in my math textbook's "*Exponential form of complex*



numbers” section” –intrigued me, more specifically, his right eye.

After some basic internet research, I found out that the strange facial expression of Euler in this famous portrait was due to the blindness in his right eye, which had developed by the time this portrait was painted. Fascinated by this, I delved deeper into Euler’s story and was overwhelmed with inspiration. Euler’s experience became a motivation for me to succeed in my own life despite that life had been “unfair” to me. I may not be a genius like Euler, nor will I publish 866 papers without any sight, but Euler, through his experience, proved that suffering from a disability need not prevent one from reaching their potential. In fact, it could even be utilized in ways to help one achieve their goal.

Euler, through his exceptional ability to mentally compute mathematical equations, was able to negate the impact of blindness on his research. He embraced his impaired eyesight and used it to his advantage as it isolated him from any visual distraction. “Perhaps my hearing loss could be a blessing in disguise?” I wondered.

I stumbled upon the silver lining of hearing loss when my cochlear implants unexpectedly ran out of charge one evening while I was studying in the school library, isolating me from all the background chatter that had bothered me all afternoon. This

absence of noise began my most productive study session in the past year. This tactic of self-deafening also proved to be effective on other occasions, such as when my parents were yelling at me.

From then on, I accepted that my hearing is as it is whether I like it or not; it will always be a part of me. I no longer fear what others may think of my hearing loss and embrace it as a unique feature that distinguishes me from my peers, much like Euler’s nonchalant attitude when others ridiculed him for his eyesight.

As a math enthusiast, I admire Euler for his contributions to mathematics, but as a person, I admire him for his iron-willed perseverance and optimism that were integral to overcoming adversity. He reacted to his declining vision with “*Now I will have fewer distractions,*” and proved this statement true through his continued contributions from thereon. Euler’s story has since become an inspiration for me to overcome the challenges of hearing loss. As Hellen Keller once said, “*When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.*” Euler’s story was indeed a gentle reminder of the opened door.

Kevin Qu is an Applied Math major. He is from Sydney, Australia, and aspires to become a quantitative researcher.

Donatio Awards Second Place Winner:
At Crossed Roads, Sitting on Uncertainty
By
Jhulia Verdeiro

“Ugh, why doesn’t this look right?” I complained as I was on the verge of throwing my sketchbook out the window in what was supposed to be the easiest AP class of all AP classes. Even with the soft yellow Christmas lights hanging across the room, and the music posters, art books, and murals that covered the walls, as every day passed working and refining the same art piece this past week, my AP Studio Art class had grown to become my little asylum.

“Jhulia, that drawing looks amazing,” my friend Rheanna encouraged. “You gotta stop stressing about it.”

“No, the proportions are off and the value is not accurate to the reference photo,” I complained. I know the teachers grading my art probably don’t know or even care to know what the reference photo is. The greatest thing about AP Art is getting to do a sustained investigation, a collection of 15 different artworks that revolve around a theme or topic of my choice. It was the first time, I got to be in an art class where I didn’t have to blast the music in my headphones to block the stupid jokes my classmates say to the teacher every two minutes, not even putting effort into their work. Even though a three is considered a passing score most colleges accept for college credit, I wanted to achieve the highest score of them all: a five. I wanted to be like my favorite art influencers on Tik Tok who have all gotten fives for their introspective realistic artworks revolving around their experiences



with race, class, and identity that not even Da Vinci himself could’ve done at such a young age. My whole summer, I spent my breaks at work thinking of what topic I could do that could touch the hearts of the graders and my peers.

I loved entertainment culture and thought of doing the voyeurism of celebrity culture but drawing different female singers and actresses having a meltdown wouldn’t show any variety in my work. Identity seemed too vague of a topic that would probably earn me a three or four if I’m lucky, but not a five. I thought of doing consumerism, but I didn’t care for the topic as much as my friend Rose, who always wore patchwork or embroidered jeans that she made herself during the pandemic. Eventually, I came up with the idea of the transition from childhood to adulthood since I’m going to college within the following year. I invested all my breaks planning all the different pieces I could make connecting back to that theme. But here I am again, throwing another drawing away, either because the proportions were off, or I couldn’t match the colors right. Most days, I spend more time looking for references that match the ideas I had for my pieces than actually doing the piece itself. A month passed and now everyone is already working on their third piece for their sustained investigation while I was still stuck drawing the second.

“Ugh, I can’t do this anymore!” I whined as I threw my sketchbook and pencil aside, not being able to look at them anymore.

“You can’t just give up now,” Rheanna, who did her series on her discovering and acknowledging her Jamaican culture and history, heartened.

“It’s just not working out,” I rant. “I want to do something with a *meaning*. I mean you have your connection to your culture and how others view it. Maryana has her experience with different types of love. Lilileigh has her family’s history of addiction, and Rose has her thoughts on consumerism as a STEM major. Everyone has something that means something. I don’t even know what I have that I relate to and can draw 15 pieces on, and I can’t exactly be themeless right now. It’s too late for that.”

“Well,” Rheanna says hesitantly. “Unlike any of us, you’re a Brazilian woman who immigrated to the Cape of all places. There’s a lot you can say about that.”

“I don’t know,” I shrugged off. The topic of the U.S. actions toward immigration always lingered in the back of my mind. I can draw hours and hours about immigration, but as much as it is on the news, immigration wasn’t as prominent of an issue that people wanted to learn about and help improve the lives of my people. It’s like another immigrant has to be forcefully taken from their homes, maybe even brutally beaten or murdered, for people to care and listen, especially in Cape which is predominantly white and American. The fact that I’m pouring my vulnerability into one of the few things that bring me peace and help me communicate my thoughts to be graded makes me feel sick to my stomach. What if the grader doesn’t support the cause? What if my feelings don’t mean anything to

anyone? It’s just best if I focus on something else that’s not as controversial and people can relate to.

I finally snap out of my thoughts as my AP Art teacher, Mr. Kemp, makes an announcement. Despite being the head of the art department, he wore a navy blue North Face zip-up over his gingham button-up, and a pair of khakis. He always carried around a Snoopy mug in his right hand filled with coffee. Everyone knew him by the light that reflected off his bald head and his voice which sounded like he surfed on the California beaches for his whole life.

“We’re having a field trip Friday to 4C’s,” he announced. “Your second piece is still due on Monday, but an apprentice of mine just set up a show, and I think it’s a great opportunity to see how artworks can connect to a theme. Your presence for this trip counts towards your grade. And there’s background research on the artist that I want you to fill out.”

You’ve got to be kidding me. I have been to art museums 16 times already, and it’s the same old thing every single time. Ooo, look at this art piece. What do you think it means? How does it speak to you? Did you know this artist owned eight cats? And what about our sustained investigation? He wants the first five pieces done before November break, but we all had jobs and six other classes to catch up with. How does he expect this from us?

Three hours before we went on the field trip, I was crunching the 22 minutes when I should’ve been eating lunch to finish the research for the class in the library. The artist, Alejandra Cuadra Sanchez, is a Latin American immigrant just like me, who mainly does performative and sculpture art responding to immigration issues that are

currently happening right now. From what I read on her website describing some of the pieces in her show, she felt just how I did on immigration. Angry about how the government treats it and how our problems seem to be invisible to the rest of the world. I didn't know how the show would go at all, especially since everyone in my class wouldn't understand much she was talking about.

Luckily that day, Mr. Kemp allowed us to drive there. I didn't have my license at the time, so my friend Maryana who everyone in the Barnstable Public Schools District knew was going to get nominated for a Tony or Grammy in the next five years, got a lift from our rich but humble friend Mya. Unlike us, Mya didn't take AP Art, but she was in our Fine Arts class who were also coming along on the trip. Her car was stacked with CDs as the aux cord never worked on her car. After a lecture from Maryana on why we shouldn't listen to Kayne's *Graduation*, we put on Beyonce's *Renaissance*, but not even Queen Bey herself could break Mya's soul as much the construction signs preventing our the route to 4C's did.

"Are you fucking serious? I'm so done with this shit. Tell Ms. Fay I'm going back home," Mya yells.

"Yeah, let's go to Dunkin' and head back," said Maryana, who tuned out Mya's screams, still gushing over the drummer boy working alongside her in the *Addams Family Musical*.

"We're going to the museum—thing, guys," I scolded. "It's a grade."

"We're going to be the last ones there, Jhulia," Mya retorted.

Maryana's phone vibrated. It was Rose.

"Hey, Rose—oh everyone's waiting for us? Yeah, we're almost there," Maryana giggled. "Yeah, there's just a lot of construction work. Everyone's already there?"

"WHAT?" Mya and I screamed as we sharply turned our heads to meet Maryana's gaze.

"Shhh," Maryana whispers angrily. "OK, we'll be there in a minute. Ok, totes, bye." As she finally hung up the phone, Maryana blubbered, "Aww, everyone's waiting for us."

"Fuck this shit, I'm taking the long way," Mya snapped. "This is so embarrassing."

"Well, if you hadn't taken this route before, maybe we would be there," Maryana accused.

"Oh, just shut up," I snapped. "There's nothing we can do, it's just an extra couple of minutes. It's not like any of us haven't been to a museum before."

By the time Mya pulled up to the parking lot, everyone was standing next to the spot where she could park. We were screaming because we thought she would run them over, but to everyone's luck, no such thing happened.

"Sorry," we stuttered in unison. "Road work."

"Yeah, it's pretty bad right now," our Fine Arts teacher, Ms. Fay, said calmly. She had gold-rimmed Aviators on with the light blue jean jacket she always wore, and a black sundress she thrifted from Goodwill. She used to teach fashion design at BHS, but after a decade of nearly growing white hairs

from the students calling her name every five seconds, and her evolving distaste for fast fashion, she found someone else who took over the position and opted to teach Fine Arts instead, focusing on using recycled materials.

When we walked into the college, we were greeted by a petite Hispanic woman, with long thick black hair, and a black dress with butterflies printed all over.

“H-h-h-hi,” she stuttered. She had a heavy accent and a lisp. “My name is Alejandra Sanchez, but you can all call me Alejandra. Thank you all for coming to my show, *Longing for Belonging*. I know Mr. Kemp has told me so much about this class and how promising you all are, and I’m just really happy you are all here today. There are some snacks and drinks right behind you, so please feel free to take whatever.”

As Mya and I hogged the rest of the Kit Kats in our pockets, we followed our class into the exhibit. The first thing I saw when I came in was a giant kaleidoscope of orange paper cut-out butterflies, half of them dangling from the ceiling while the other was laid out scrunched together on the floor. To the left of them was a wall full of comments written in different colors responding to “What does it mean to belong?” As everyone in my class was writing their response, I was waiting for a well-thought-out response to pop into my brain. Where you feel comfortable? No, it seems too cliché. Where you can feel yourself? Nah, that also feels too cliché.

“Ready?” Mya asked with her keys wrapped tight in her hands.

“Yeah,” I shrugged off and left the wall without responding to the question. We walked around to the different installations

in the exhibit. Across the wall was a sculpture of three different women, one with red butterflies that warped around her body while the second had roses instead. The third reminded me of paintings of the Greek Goddess Hera that I’ve seen on Pinterest with a golden crown and a carving of a human heart under the bust. Together they represented Espereanza, Sol, and Milagro: Hope, Sun, and Miracle.

Then we walked to the next sculpture which was in the corner of the room. Displayed was a pile of dirt with a metal foot with a wire on its calf that connected to deteriorating metal parts coming up from the sides. Behind it was a projection of Alejandra walking on a beach trail, wearing what seemed to be newspapers like Superwoman’s cape. But what lured me more than any art piece at the museum could be the piece across from it. The entire wall was covered with papers I’d grown up my whole life seeing, hearing, and losing my sleep over some nights. There were three photos framed hanging in the middle. To the left was Alejandra walking at a crossroad. On the right was her walking by what seemed to be the rocks at Sandy Neck. In the middle was her sitting at a bench watching the waves. In all the photos, she was wearing that same newspaper cape which was a dress. Then as I looked closely, I realized that they weren’t newspapers at all. They were immigration documents.

“You seemed drawn to this piece, huh?” Alejandra questions with a smile on her face. I didn’t even realize she was next to me and that Mya had walked back to the entrance where Maryana was.

“Yeah, I’ve lived in a very big Brazilian community, so it’s hard not to see or know any of these documents,” I gulped. “I know them on the back of my hand.”

“Finally, someone who gets it,” Alejandra says relievedly. “Hard to find these days here, huh? Especially on the Cape.”

“Yeah,” I blurted bluntly. “No one talks about it at my school. My friend Maryana always goes to these diversity panels where they speak up for minorities, but anytime I try to tell her how a lot of immigrants have to have arranged marriages to random strangers like an episode of *The Bachelorette*, but you get a visa instead a rose, she just walked it over which...well, what can I do about it. It's like something drastic happen for people to care which sucks, but that's the world we live in, I guess.”

“For me, when all of this,” Alejandra explains certainly as she gestures to the papers on the wall, “gets so overwhelming and exhausting, I use my art to scream when I feel like no one's listening.”

“Yeah, that's a great way to cope with it,” I agreed quietly. I turned my gaze away from the wall and met her eyes. I smiled at her as I was trying to fight back the tears in my eyes because God forbid my face to become a complete tomato in front of my classmates. “A very undestructive way of coping unlike riots,” I laughed off.

Art can be destructive. It will make some people angry,” she said sorrowfully. “But that shouldn't stop you from speaking up about something important.”

Right before I could respond, Mr. Kemp tapped Alejandra's shoulder. “I'm sorry to cut the conversation short, but the school day is nearly about to end, and I don't want any of the students to miss their activities and stuff.”

“Of course,” Alejandra said, putting herself together. “Thank you so much for coming. It was so nice seeing you after all these years, and your students are lovely.”

She walked over to shake hands with Ms. Fay as Mr. Kemp gathered the class around, pointing to each of our heads making sure that no one strayed off. As he was assured that no one strayed off, we all finally said our thanks to Alejandra for letting us see her show. I joined Maryana and Mya who were near the entrance and had their eyes glued to the Dunkin' app on Maryana's phone, trying to figure out what to order.

“Thank *you* for all being here,” she beams. “I genuinely appreciate it.”

“Jhulia,” Maryana whispered. “Lemme guess, Pumpkin Spice and munchkins?”

“All the way,” I said.

“Basic,” she said.

“Aye, aye, aye,” I said defensively. “I don't appreciate this level of negativity here, right Mya?”

“Obviously,” Mya giggles. “Crawley is just not on our level.”

As we walked out with Maryana's defensiveness of her knowledge of culture being completely overshadowed by my and Mya's laughter, Alejandra silently walked over and tapped my shoulder. Mya and Maryana walk away, too caught up now arguing about who's the most cultured to notice that I stayed back.

“Excuse me, what's your name?” Alejandra asks.

“Jhulia,” I said, meeting her gaze.

“It was lovely meeting you, Jhulia,” she says nodding and smiling. “If you need anything or just someone to talk to, my email is on the pamphlet up front.”

“Thank you, I’ll take that offer,” I laughed awkwardly.

Before I headed out of the exhibit, I finally wrote my response to her question. To belong is to be somewhere you know, deep down where you’re supposed to be there, even if the way to it is hard, or if some don’t accept you.

As I finally made my way to Mya’s car, I scrounged around my backpack, finding any piece of paper I could.

“You good there?” Mya asked concernedly.

“Yeah, yeah, it’s just nothing,” I waved off as I finally laid my hands on a blank sheet of notebook paper and a pencil. I frantically sketched out Lady Liberty and Themis at different angles, writing at the top of the paper, “What is Freedom to Me?”

I finally knew what I was going to do for my sustained investigation.

Jhulia Leticia (Jhulia) Verdeiro is a Fashion Design & Production major. She was born in Minas Gerais, Brazil, but was raised in Hyannis, MA, and has participated in and made logos for her high school fashion show and painted two murals.

Donatio Awards Third Place Winner:
Genre Report
By
Angela Murray

With the rise of social media use among adolescents, many parents along with mental health professionals are concerned about how this could impact adolescent mental health. Because evidence in this field of study remains unclear, people continue to have mixed opinions on whether social media is helpful or harmful to young minds. To fully understand the depth and nuance of this topic, an individual can explore sources from different genres. One can then determine the credibility of those sources based on the rhetoric and conventions of those genres.

This report will look at four sources that are all written in different literary genres: an academic journal, a newspaper article, a magazine article, and a social media post. Each source focuses on the topic of social media and its relation to adolescent mental health. The academic journal is “Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” by Michelle O’Reilly. This article explains “[t]he good, the bad, and the ugly” (O’Reilly 2020) aspects of social media as discussed by adolescents and mental health practitioners in multiple focus groups. In other words, the article discusses the positive, negative, and most concerning aspects of social media in relation to the mental health of adolescents. The newspaper article is “Advisory Says Teens Face Risk on Social Sites” by Matt Richtel, Catherine Pearson, and Michael Levenson. This article gives an overview of a report by the United States surgeon



general on social media and its risk of harm to adolescent mental health. The magazine article is “Social Media Is a Public Health Crisis. Let’s Treat It Like One” by Helen Lee Bouygues. This article focuses on the negative effects of social media on adolescent mental health and why people need to “detoxify” (Bouygues 2021) from social media. The source from social media is an Instagram post titled, “The Social Dilemma: Social Media and Your Mental Health,” and it is by MindFriend. This post focuses on the science behind why social media is addictive, especially to adolescents, and it provides suggestions for how people can use social media in a healthier and more beneficial way.

The first literary genre that will be explored is an academic journal. Academic journals are articles written by experts in a particular area of study. “Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” is an academic journal that was published in *Journal of Mental Health* and written by Michelle O’Reilly. Michelle O’Reilly is an associate professor of communication in mental health and a chartered psychologist in health. Therefore, she has credibility in the field of mental health, and the article can be deemed credible. The author also includes a reference list at the bottom of her article, further establishing her credibility. Additionally, the article was published by Routledge. Because all the books published

through Routledge are reviewed by respected academic specialists, this further enforces the article's credibility.

The intended audience of academic journals consists of a specific type of research community. The intended audience for this article is mental health practitioners because the central argument is that mental health practitioners need to listen to adolescents to gain a better understanding of the relationship between social media and adolescent mental health (O'Reilly, 2020). The purpose of academic journals is to present information and discuss research. Some of the conventions of academic journals include, stating the main argument, using evidence, and addressing multiple perspectives. In this article, O'Reilly uses multiple conventions of academic journals that further emphasize the article's credibility. The article begins by providing the audience with background about the topic. The author then clearly states the purpose of the article by saying, "[t]his paper aims to illuminate the perspectives of adolescents and practitioners about social media and mental health" (O'Reilly 2020). Throughout the article, the author refers to a specific focus group study that she conducted. This focus group study includes both quantitative and qualitative data, strengthening the credibility of the argument. The author also addresses differing perspectives on social media and mental health between adolescents and mental health practitioners, and she then draws her own conclusion while considering those perspectives.

In terms of style, academic journals are meant to be unbiased and written in a formal manner. This article appears to be unbiased because the author does not simply impose her own feelings or opinions on the audience without any grounds. Instead, the author

provides quantitative and qualitative data which she then analyzes. The author also maintains a formal tone. This includes avoiding contractions except in quotations, not addressing the audience directly, and using proper grammar and terminology. Design elements that are used in academic journals are headings and subheadings. These are used to divide the content into easily manageable sections. This article has thirteen headings. Underneath the last heading, labelled, "[d]isclosure statement," (O'Reilly 2020) there is a subheading called "[r]eferences" (O'Reilly 2020). Each of these headings and subheadings breaks up the article and clearly states what the audience is about to read.

"Advisory Says Teens Face Risk on Social Sites" is a newspaper article written by Matt Richtel, Catherine Pearson, and Michael Levenson. The article was published by *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* is known for their high-quality journalism, so they are a credible source. The audience is adolescents and parents of adolescents in the United States who are not fully aware of the risks of social media. The purpose of this specific news article is to inform people of the report by Dr. Vivek Murthy, the United States surgeon general, on the risks social media poses to adolescent mental health. Three conventions of newspaper articles are an introduction that sets the scene and summarizes the main points of the article, body paragraphs that provide more detail about the event, and quotes from the event. In this news article, the authors set the scene by explaining the event and the main points that were covered in Dr. Vivek Murthy's advisory. The authors then go into more detail about the advisory, including quotes from the advisory.

Like academic journals, newspaper articles are also meant to be unbiased and written in

a mostly formal tone. This news article is unbiased because it simply explains the surgeon general's report by using language such as "the report included" and "the advisory noted," (Richtel, Pearson, & Levenson 2023) and the authors of the article do not include any of their own opinions. One design element that newspaper articles typically include is images related to the event. Therefore, this article includes a photo of Dr. Murthy. The article also contains short paragraphs to help the audience grasp the main idea of the story and retain enough detail to be interested in the story.

"Social Media Is a Public Health Crisis. Let's Treat It Like One" is a magazine article by Helen Lee Bouygues. The purposes of magazine articles could be to inform, entertain, or to persuade. Magazine articles could also aim to do all three. This article is an example of a magazine article that seeks to inform, entertain, and persuade. Because one of its purposes is to inform, it is important to consider whether the article is a credible source. The magazine article chosen for this report is from *U.S. News & World Report*. Because multiple sources agree that *U.S. News & World Report* is slightly biased, it may not be fully credible. This article in particular uses many powerful words that make the article appear less credible and more biased.

Because another purpose of the magazine article is to persuade, the author uses powerful words, such as "explosion [...] of misinformation," (Bouygues 2021) "deleterious" (Bouygues 2021), and "hazardous" (Bouygues 2021) to emphasize her point. The author also only focuses on the negative effects of social media because she is trying to argue that social media negatively affects adolescent mental health. However, by using strong words that have

negative connotations and failing to address the other side of the argument, the author presents a one-sided and biased view, making the article seem less credible. In addition to informing and persuading people, the magazine article also seeks to entertain people. Therefore, the article uses multiple design elements to make the article more visually pleasing. Like newspaper articles, magazine articles also consist of short paragraphs instead of long ones. This makes the article easier to read, and therefore, more enjoyable to read. However, magazine articles tend to have slightly longer paragraphs than newspaper articles. This is the case with the newspaper and magazine articles chosen for this report. The magazine article also contains multiple photographs to make the article more visually pleasing and more entertaining overall.

"The Social Dilemma: Social Media and Your Mental Health" is an Instagram post by MindFriend. MindFriend is an organization that seeks to educate people on issues regarding mental health by providing free, informative content and resources. They partner with licensed psychological professionals to ensure their audience has access to accurate and reliable information. This post is meant to inform social media users of the risks of social media and suggest ways they can use social media to their benefit. The audience for this post is social media users, particularly teens. Because entertainment is the main purpose of social media posts, this post uses bright colors and a drawing to catch people's attention. The post also simplifies ideas because the audience consists of people who are used to receiving immediate answers when quickly scrolling through Instagram.

The style of this Instagram post differs from all the other genres discussed in this report

because it addresses the audience directly by making statements such as “[t]here are accounts out there that will interest and excite you, and help you explore your passions” (MindFriend, 2023). This makes the post feel more personal, and it helps provide individuals with suggestions of what they can do.

Although the style of the Instagram post is more informal, it still appears to be a credible source of information. This is because it presents facts and includes the sources for those facts in the post’s caption. The sources that were used are credible because they were written by psychologists from Harvard and other reputable institutions. Therefore, the authors of the sources are qualified to provide information on the topic of social media’s impacts on adolescent mental health since their field of expertise is mental health. The authors of the Instagram post also establish credibility by putting a link to their website in their Instagram bio which contains a section about the people on their team. Since all the members of their team appear to have relevant credentials, this further enforces the source’s credibility. The post also includes suggestions of what individuals can do, and the suggestions do not appear to be bias because they do not state their opinions as facts.

The effect of social media on adolescent mental health is an area of study that is filled with uncertainty. When people do not know answers, sometimes they present opinions as facts or generalize their own experiences. In other words, people may spread misinformation when they are not fully informed on a topic. A source being written in a formal tone does not necessarily mean it is a credible source. Likewise, a source that is written in an informal tone with many visual components is not automatically

untrustworthy. This is because the style and design of a source are simply two aspects of their genre, and not all sources from that genre will be either credible or not credible. Therefore, to determine whether a source is credible, it is important to first distinguish elements of the source’s genre and elements of that specific source. For example, look at who wrote the source and whether they have relevant credentials and references. Research what biases the publisher may have. Also, pay attention to the author’s use of evidence and counterarguments. By identifying the rhetorical choices that each genre typically contains, readers can determine the credibility of a source based on its unique characteristics.

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Donatio Writing Awards Honorable Mention
On My Path to Find a Purpose
By
Stephany Miranda

A 13-year-old girl wearing jeans, a plaid shirt, and a pair of black vans, there I was on my way to find my first job. But who works at the age of 13? Well, I had to. Conquering my financial independence was something I dreamed of. I used to live in the downtown area of a big city that still had a small-town feeling, which encouraged me to use my resources from a young age.

When walking through the crooked sidewalks on my way to knock on some business doors, with the wind cutting up my hair, many thoughts were circulating in my head – “What do I say?”, “Where do I go first?”, “Am I wearing something appropriate?”

Overthinking. Something I’ve been doing since I can remember. After walking through the end of Concord Street in Framingham, I thought: “Why don’t I go to that expensive coffee place by the corner of my apartment that I walk by all the time?”

I walk in, and there is an awkward silence as I walk up to the register; with an affiliative smile, I ask: “Are you guys hiring?” Little did I know I was talking to the owner. A big, fat, Italian-looking man named Fred answers: “We are. Would you like to do an interview right now?” With another smile, I said, “Yes.”

I was not mentally prepared. Fred was very straightforward; he didn’t ask me any of the YouTube video questions I had searched at home, like “Why did you choose to apply here?” or “What are your values?”

The interview was a disaster. I felt my heart beating due to his intimidating presence. I barely got a word out when he said, “Do you know how to make coffee?” As my anxiety got the best of me and I began to overthink that he might not hire me, I shakily answered, “Yes!” in a cheerful, naïve tone, hoping the interview would be over soon. I would later discover that I did not know what I was getting myself into...

Looking back, I don’t think Fred cared much about the interview. He offered me a position on the spot. He could offer me ten dollars an hour, plus tips. I could work every day after school and during the weekends. I felt like the happiest person at that moment.

While others were shopping for floral dresses at Hollister, I was thinking about finally being able to afford my necessities like shampoo and conditioner. I thought ten dollars an hour was a lot of money, and I couldn’t wait to start on the path to my independence.

Fred told me to wear all black on my first day, but as I got home from school, I realized that I didn’t own an all-black outfit, and nobody was home to help me. The desperation hit me. I didn’t have a lot of time before my first shift. I immediately ordered an Uber to Target to look for a shirt and grabbed my floral coin jar, rushing to the car. As I counted every penny during the bumpy ride, I discovered I had about ten dollars to my name, and the cheapest shirt was eight dollars. I thought to myself, “I am now ready to go.”

Before anything else, I could not forget to eat my traditional Brazilian lunch—rice, beans, bife acebolado (steak with onions), and a refreshing lettuce and tomato salad. I wore my all-black outfit, tied my hair, put on my all-occasion vans, and went to my first big girl day.

I was going to be a barista.

My first day was just as bumpy as my Uber ride to Target. First, Fred asked another employee, Giovanna, to train me. I learned all the different ways of making coffee. From cappuccinos and lattes to americanos and mochas— I didn't even know there was a difference between a cappuccino and a latte.

Giovanna was polite at first but had a dismissive and condescending tone: “Go sweep. You're still a beginner.” she would say. She had me taste all the coffees to make sure I knew the difference. From the bitterness of medium roast to the sweetness of the mocha, I was initially excited to learn, although this was overwhelming. Clients were coming in and asking for coffee I wasn't confident making.

“Can I have an americano, please?” A client asked. The doubt struck me, and he noticed that I was new. He raised his voice: “Do you even know what an americano is?”

I rushed to ask Giovanna to help me, and she rolled her eyes and made the coffee for me while running through instructions. I felt defeated.

However, my hard work felt as if it paid off: two weeks flew by. I got my first paycheck in the blink of an eye. Wow! I was so excited! 283 dollars. Twenty-eight hours, one thousand six hundred and eighty minutes I worked. It was fantastic to get paid. I felt powerful; I could hold the world

in my hands. I spent my first paycheck on takeout. Two hundred eighty-three dollars mainly were spent on Domino's, Subway, and a Brazilian restaurant nearby. I was relieved to be able to afford my own meals.

Six months later, the coffee shop wasn't going as well as I expected. Fred was putting in hours I couldn't work, making me work until late, carrying heavy boxes, and, most importantly, not paying me on time. I was stressed but terrified. I'm usually shameless and will speak up if something bothers me. However, for the first time, I was petrified to speak up. I felt small and intimidated every time he looked at me. He scared me with his spaced-out eyes and angry face. I started to notice I was going home every day feeling suffocated and internally thinking:

“Is this what it means to have a job? An old guy demanding things outside my capabilities? I thought I was supposed to make coffee, not carry heavy boxes.”

It was mentally draining.

I had to quit. The last straw was when Fred screamed at me in front of customers for getting an order wrong. “Why are you so slow? Can't you make a simple coffee?” I remember crying nonstop like a baby and staring at his bright red face. I'd never been spoken to that way, and my dignity was lost. I didn't reply to what he said. I put my apron down the counter and left feeling defeated. I hate arrogant people. I didn't deserve to be treated that way. Walking by that coffee shop every day was brutal. I was disappointed; I thought it was my fault. I had lost my opportunity. I needed that job. Let's say I had to survive. I was struggling and felt that the 283 dollars biweekly was all I had.

I started my battle. I needed to find another job.

After the coffee shop, I had many different positions, constantly trying to find something I looked forward to. I had to pick my battles and put a mindset that I wouldn't settle for anything I didn't love doing. From the coffee shop to an insurance agency, to restaurants, to even Chuck E Cheese (I still have nightmares from that mascot and the happy birthday songs repeated daily). I know. It sounds like I was the problem. But these jobs in areas that are so different, they had one thing in common: I didn't love them. I was doing it merely for the money, and although it felt good to sustain myself, putting my happiness and values on the back burner wasn't worthwhile. I was settling.

So, there I was on Indeed, looking for a job again. My boyfriend at the time, now husband, had a cousin who worked at this immigration law firm. I texted her, "Anna, do you know if the place you work is hiring?"

She replied: "I don't think so, but email them your resume and cover letter, and I will let them know that I know you." I sent my application at the beginning of April. No answer. I emailed them again a month later and asked Anna to tell the HR Manager about me again. Finally, they called me.

Although, what a horrible time to call. I had taken out my four wisdom teeth. Hours after the surgery, I received the call. "Hi, is this Stephany?" I could barely talk. My mouth was numbed. Bleeding. Full of gauze. Either way, I answered the call. That was on a Tuesday. She asked, "Are you available for an interview on Thursday?" I muffledly replied, "Of course. Thank you. I look forward to meeting you."

There was no way I could do an interview.

Thursday arrived; I was still on antibiotics and analgesics; driving was impossible. I was drowsy because of the medications. However, I thought: "This is my first professional-grade job; I will take my chances."

I wanted the Legal Intake Specialist position. As a daughter of undocumented immigrants, I felt my purpose was to help people like my parents who came to this country looking for a better life, and this was a first step in that direction.

My cheeks were double the size they already are. I put a ton of makeup on. I wore my only formal outfit, a navy-blue suit from Ann Taylor I found at Savers, and my best shoes. Did my hair. However, nothing could fix my sparkly eyes and swollen face.

I went to the interview. I did as best as I could. At first, I was doing horribly. I was nervous, and I couldn't answer the questions. They were interchanging the questions between English, Portuguese, and Spanish, and I was not used to thinking on my feet in this manner. The manager was intimidating and asking questions, wanting a quick reply.

"Why do you want to work at the firm?" – In Spanish.

"What are your long-term goals?" – In Portuguese.

All the questions that my thirteen-year-old self-researched were resurfacing, and I felt as if the walls were closing in on me as the manager stared into my eyes. As they proceeded with more value-based questions, I shared my dreams of helping people whose stories align with my own and was able to

express my true essence. When I spoke about growing up as a first-generation immigrant, I instantly felt more at ease, like I belonged.

A few days later, they called me, offering me a position. I screamed! I was ecstatic, and nobody could take that moment away from me. I would be part of an incredible place that helps thousands of people conquer their documents to live in the United States. I could almost picture my headshot on their website already.

I remember preparing my first citizenship package. I reviewed the intake with the client multiple times and triple-checked every document. The attorney revised the package twice and told me, “Stephany, the package is now ready to go!” I still second-guessed, “Did I check mark one of the million questions wrong?” I made all paralegals check the form to ensure no questions were blank. I anxiously waited seven months to hear back from immigration, and ultimately, the client I helped is now a US Citizen. When I received a picture of his Naturalization certificate, I was thrilled for him and felt like he was my family member. Going forward, every green card I give to a client feels like my own victory.

Being in an academic environment has made me reflect again about what I want for my future. I want to become an attorney to help everyone who helps make America a good and safe place to live. This job is more than a job; it is my passion. Getting people their US citizenship and green cards and helping them in court is rewarding. Nobody should

ever fear for their livelihood, and in this position, I can advocate for those who share stories similar to those of my loved ones and those in my immediate surroundings.

The dignity of a job is about something other than the paycheck or what it gives me access to. Instead, it is more about achieving my higher purpose of making a difference in the community I grew up in. Every story is personal at my firm, and because of this, I can face the challenges with strength rather than running away from them. This job taught me to be better, put myself in other people’s shoes, and be grateful for my life. Even though I struggled many times and jumped from job to job, I could still overcome and find my true passion due to my personal connection.

The question was the same whether it was the coffee shop or the law firm: “Am I ready for this?” There is no answer to that other than giving my best self. If I didn’t have unfavorable experiences at the coffee shop, I wouldn’t know my standards for a future career, and I embrace this silver lining. While immigration has its challenges, I can always look at my experiences, both positive and negative, and hold close to my heart that what I am doing is improving the lives of others similar to myself in the long run. The journey is not over, but my thirteen-year-old self found what she desired— a purpose.

Stephany Miranda is a Criminal Justice major. She is from Framingham, MA, and has driven to Montreal, Canada, and returned the same day in her Volkswagen Beetle!

A Collection of Student Writing from WRT 101
Fall 2023

The red crayon in a box of blues

By
Sierra Berry

Opening a new box of crayons was always exciting to me as a kid. Seeing the brand-new crayons with all the different colors was one of my favorite things. Except when I got to first grade, I opened the box and it was all blue.

Blue.

Blue.

Blue.

Although there were different shades, they were all *blue*.

Red.

I was the color *red*.

Entering the first grade, I was a very excited kid. Seeing my brother get on the school bus made me extremely jealous, it was finally my turn. In kindergarten, it was all shapes and colors, but now, I would be doing actual schoolwork. Walking into the school I already felt different.

I was *red*.

Walking into the classroom, I could feel the darkness eat me. I felt like a lighthouse in the pitch-dark ocean. All eyes were on me.

***Who is the different-colored girl?
She does not belong here.***

I opened the box expecting different colors, yet I was the only different one there.

I did not belong in school. I had a major accent, thicker than Shakira's. However, I was the best in my class for ELA. I spoke fluent English, but the *blues* did not care.

What does it matter if you can speak a language if you have an accent? All they cared about was if I had an accent or not. They did not care how I was, what sport I played, or even acknowledge how smart I was.

Everything that came out of my mouth was *Spanish* to them.

I was speaking *English* the entire time.

Can you repeat that Dora?

I did not repeat anything, and my name was never Dora.

The *blues* got to my head. I started rethinking my entire well-being. One day, I decided to report the bullying I was facing. Walking into the principal's office, I could feel the darkness swallow me whole. The principal was *blue*.

Take a seat, Sierra.

I walked out of that office a different color. *Red BLUE.*

I was forced to take my accent away. I was not allowed to talk in Spanish. I was forced to be *blue*.

My skin color slowly changed, I got lighter as the years went on. I did not want to be in the sun more than I had to be, so I stayed inside. Life was easier this way. Sheltered off and becoming *blue*. The accent slowly

washed away, you could not even hear it by the time I got to 3rd grade. I became more liked as the years went on and the *bluer* I got. I could see the disappointment in my mom's eyes as she watched me wash my culture away.

Mija, you are not the same. What happened?

Nothing Mom, can you make me chicken tenders? I don't want to go to school with empanadas.

You love empanadas.

Not anymore.

K.

K.

The smell of my mom's Hispanic cooking made me feel safe, but I would do anything to fit in. Arepas were my comfort food, yet by the time I got to middle school, I refused to eat them. The saddest part is I did not care what my mom thought. She would never understand. This was a lie, my mom got her hair permanently straightened in high school just because of the bullying. I permanently straightened my hair, just like my mom. When I reached middle school, I was full *blue*. Everything they did, I did. Everything they wore, I wore. Everything they said, I said. I finally had friends and was no longer known as Dora.

The entire box was now *blue*.

Everything went smoothly until I hit high school. There was a transfer student from Colombia and she only spoke Spanish.

Do you speak Spanish?

I guess.

Can you help me translate?

No.

Why?

Why.

Why was my first language the hardest one to speak?

“Check off your ethnicity in the box below.”

I always put white, until the girl from Colombia questioned me. I'm not white enough, I'm not Hispanic enough, so what am I? Truthfully, I am mixed. I am Puerto Rican and Middle Eastern. So for once in my life, I checked off the box that said mixed.

So you are white and black?

No.

You are not mixed then.

Oh.

Check off your ethnicity in the box below:

White

Hispanic

Middle Eastern

Mixed

I still check off the white box when asked about my ethnicity, and I am not sure why. To this day, I still hide my accent. I am slowly healing and becoming the woman I want to be. Even though I have habits to break, I am slowly gaining my color back.

I AM RED.

Sierra Berry is a Fashion Media and Marketing student with a minor in photography. She is from Birdsboro, PA and created her high school's yearbook her senior year

Rhetorical Analysis: Should Teachers be Armed Inside the Classroom?

By
Luke Bullock

Schools across America are facing a staggering increase in mass shootings which should be avoided at all costs. Mass shootings are described as targeted attempts to kill or harm people, leading to three or more deaths in a single incident, according to the FBI. On the topic of arming teachers inside the classroom which can be considered as a sub-topic of mass shootings, Karrer's op-ed from the *Los Angeles Times* was the strongest argument. Karrer provided many rhetorical appeals, such as logos and pathos throughout the article, while also writing seamlessly for the audience which helped engage the audience more deeply. This being, it allows us to acknowledge a core American problem of gun violence in schools.

My first source is "Yes, it has come to this. It's time to arm teachers" from *The Washington Post* written by Kathleen Parker. This source argues in the affirmative of arming teachers. Parker emphasizes her debate of arming teachers in the classroom through her stories about her father's experience with guns, while she also states her profound opinion in arguing that "if I were [a teacher], I'd want to have ready access to a gun" (Parker, 2022).

On the flip side of the argument, my next source is "As a gun-owning former teacher, I can tell you: Arming teachers will only amplify our woes" from the *Los Angeles Times* written by Paul Karrer. Karrer argues against the idea of arming teachers in the classroom. This op-ed quite simply shares first-hand experiences and accounts that have caused in-school violence with guns.

Karrer's op-ed is the strongest argumentative source out of both sources because of its profound use of rhetorical strategies.

The Washington Post op-ed argues in favor of arming classroom teachers with a gun. Kathleen Parker begins this opinionated article with her family's history with the usage of guns. Her father was a lawyer and an avid gun collector which appeals us to in the form of logos. Logos is the appeal to logic, and in this case, addressing her father is logical in this situation and confirms her credentials when writing this op-ed, because of the knowledge her family has about the usage of guns in America. Appealing to logic to begin this argument was a solid decision in her rhetorical choices to help engage the audience right away. Although I don't have any family members with experience in the gun industry, it allows for those who do, a way to connect to this source right off the bat.

In addition, Parker emphasizes the legislation of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in a report from the *Gun Policy In America* site. Adding in a familiar name was a clever use of rhetorical strategy as it allows for another appeal to logos. When an author includes a familiar name, it allows a wider audience to read this source which can attract readers to the current issue at hand, which is the debate over arming teachers in the classroom.

Parker's purpose in writing this op-ed was to argue her opinions on arming teachers, especially with the background her father

and her family have with guns. When we acknowledge the language and style of this article, Parker did a decent job of writing overall. Parker writes in small paragraph chunks which are approximately two to four sentences long, it's easy terminology to understand and a seamless article to follow along with. Parker's simple writing and concise and easy-to-follow article allow for those of various reading levels to fully grasp the content and the opinion.

If I came into this argument without any formal opinion, I would argue that Parker's argument of yes, arming teachers was compelling. It was most compelling when she emphasized that "None of these policies *should* be necessary, but we're not doing enough. Until we can figure out broad, societal remedies short of cloning my father — a dicey proposition, I'll admit — I'd feel better knowing my grandchildren were in a school where someone knows how to stop a killer" (Parker, 2022). This quote quite simply sums up her argument and usage of rhetoric but again, appeals to logos. If we aren't going to do anything, then we must create immediate change and that is to arm teachers.

On the flip side, I found an op-ed from the *Los Angeles Times* that argues that we should not arm classroom teachers when it comes to school safety in America. Paul Karrer begins this article with a biography about himself, which allows the audience to understand his credibility and knowledge behind the mass shootings in school issues. This is an important piece of information because when the audience, which is intended to be the general public, reads this, they can further understand the value behind this argument. Karrer not only provides credit to himself with his background but allows for the introduction of outside sources, such as the National Rifle

Association (NRA). The NRA is an association that most Americans are well aware of, especially in times of crisis post-mass shootings. Addressing his credibility and the NRA in this source allows for a strong appeal to logos.

In addition to the usage of logos, Karrer does something where he quite simply throws out staggering incidents that can truly target the appeal to pathos. The appeal to pathos is an appeal to the emotional side of writing and in this case, Karrer does this phenomenally. For instance, he recounts incidents from the university level to the elementary school level. In paragraph eight, which is approximately the middle of this article, Karrer shares with us that a "Sixth-grade teacher Michelle Ferguson-Montgomery injured herself when her gun accidentally went off in the bathroom of a Utah school. An Idaho State University instructor accidentally fired his concealed gun in the middle of class and shot himself in the foot. Remember the teacher who a few years ago fired a gun into a California classroom ceiling?" (Karrer, 2022). These stories included in his argument against arming teachers, provide extreme value to this op-ed.

Karrer simply writes this op-ed, however, it's detailed, clear, and very thorough. When I read it, it felt like I was being asked many rhetorical questions that kept the audience engaged and actively interested. The language and word choice were very simple, and easy to understand, quite easy it could be interpreted easily by a middle schooler if needed. Along with the language, the length of the paragraphs and sections of the article was a little lengthier than Parker's; however, they were still easy to read and simple to follow when reading.

Both Parker and Karrer had compelling arguments when discussing their opinions about arming teachers in the classroom. To reiterate, Parker is in favor of arming teachers, while Karrer is against them. Although they both have different opinions when it comes to this topic, they both had excellent op-eds that I was able to analyze in this document.

Quite simply, both op-eds began their articles with a form of credibility right off the bat. Doing this, helps the audience feel confident and comfortable in reading something that has a form of credibility in its background. The credibility also connects back to the appeal to logic which is also known as logos. This brings me to my next point, the intended audience for most op-eds, but for these two is absolutely the general public trying to formulate their thoughts on this topic or understand other opinions. Finally, both Parker and Karrer used concise and simple formatting and wording in their op-eds which made them reader-friendly articles. While there were many similarities, the one main difference was the opinion but also the formatting of the articles. Parker had shorter and simpler paragraphs that were easy to follow, while Karrer did have easy-to-follow paragraphs but they were slightly longer. However, they were a perfect length to keep the audience actively engaged.

Between both arguments on the issue at hand, I will confidently say that Karrer's op-ed was better argued and written overall. It had a great way of connecting the audience to the paper. First, it had rhetorical questions and second, it appealed to us to our emotions multiple times when reminiscing on previous mass-shooting incidents or gun mishaps within schools. Most people are

deeply affected by the issue of mass shootings in American schools so using the appeal to pathos was a very clever and beneficial use.

After reading Karrer's and Parker's op-eds on the issue of arming classroom teachers, we can take away two very compelling argumentative articles. Both of which were written in a seamless, understandable manner. While just reading and hearing people's opinions won't create the change that we need to see, it can help lead us one step forward concerning the implementation of arming or not arming teachers.

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Poetic Voice

By
Cass

Walking down to the fire pit, surrounded by friends and assurance, I try to ignore my rising anxiety. I am grateful for the security this sanctuary fills me with as I breathe in the petrichor. The darkness of the night settles into the sky, and I can see the stars slowly coming to join us in our sentimental celebration. The teen retreat at Insight Meditation Society has been my escape for the last two summers, and with senior year in my rearview and college on the horizon, the sadness of this final night tightens in my chest. Companions I have shared air with these past few days—our collected breaths rising and falling with my thoughts in the meditation hall—walk beside me. We sit on rotting logs, moss scratching at our calloused feet, captivated by the dancing flames of the bonfire.

We were encouraged to share, and no place is as welcoming and accepting as the community I have found here. When asked if I would be participating and sharing something, my initial response was no way. But after giving it some thought, there was one poem I had written during my senior year, after the falling out with my first boyfriend. The poem is intense and dripping with passion and emotion, and it is my favorite I have ever written. So, I folded. I am terrified of sharing something so vulnerable and close to my heart, but I confess to myself I want to hear people's opinions, and I know someone will be able to relate.

The energy intensifies as drum and percussion performances compel people to dance. Stand-up comedy has us cringing, but then gut-curdling laughs echo throughout

the group. I never thought I would see an improv performance of a carton of skim milk getting married to a carton of 2% with a 70-year-old meditation leader as the marriage officiant, but I am now glad I can say I have. Performances like that are expected from a group of teenagers who have been meditating together six hours a day for the past week. Sitting around the fire, touching shoulders with fast friends, we laugh, sing, dance, and rejoice in the soon-to-be bittersweet memories.

At this point, I am second-guessing everything. *Why did I write my name down? I hate public speaking. I've never shared my poetry before. I should just run out right now to avoid the impending embarrassment I'm about to face.* I shift my position on the damp log, and the boulder in my stomach sits heavier. My heart flutters in my chest as I imagine the panic that will inevitably ensue when it is my turn to stand at the front of the group—at the mercy of their criticism or praise. The light from the amber antique lamp, which looks out of place amidst the grass and trees, sheds light on the woman stepping up to the podium.

“Next is...”

My heart beats faster in a frenzy.

“Wait, that's the wrong page,” she chuckles. I clasp my hands together to conceal the shaking and sweating.

“Okay, here it is,”

I beg for her to call my name and finally put an end to this irrepressible anxiety.

“Michael and James with another improv act.”

I cannot handle this anymore. Hands clammy, mouth dry, eyes darting around looking for an excuse. I suffer through another act, my laugh tainted with an anxious resonance that I hope my friends sitting beside me cannot hear.

They finally call my name. I exhale trepidation and make my way to the podium. Meticulously written pages held in shaky hands, I place them on the podium and adjust the lamp. While looking out at the company, waiting in anticipation for my performance, I think back to my most memorable attempt at public speaking. I have the same feeling I had that day I choked in front of my entire math class, as if I could feel my heart pulsating in every vessel in my body.

It was my freshman year of high school, the year I look back to with the most fondness despite the challenges I faced. My 15-year-old self was many things I am not today: idealistic, amongst others. Despite my less pessimistic outlook, I still battled the same crippling social anxiety from public speaking as I did the rest of my high school career. I was accustomed to shaky hands hidden under tables and deciding that any day a presentation was due was a day I was not. But that fateful day in geometry, my mind failed me, and I sauntered into class before realizing the nightmare into which I was walking.

While standing at the front of the classroom with my group after the teacher had called us up to the chopping block, the reality of the situation hit me. I was gravely unprepared for this assignment. I barely even glanced at what was expected of us, yet

now I was standing unsteadily in front of my peers—my group mates staring at me with apprehension—and I was dumbstruck. *I really should have walked out of class earlier.* I stared out at the sea of faces and beating eyes, and I tried to find words, but my brain had panicked and run out the door, and I only wished I could follow. I looked to my group mates for assistance, hoping one of them would recognize the panic behind my eyes and save me from the tragic plane crash, with no luck. I felt outside of my body, pointing and laughing at my shaken self and my utter defeat. My teacher interrupted, but it was too late because my bones were already broken and my self-confidence completely shattered. I immediately asked to excuse myself to the bathroom and dreaded the instant replay that would inevitably keep me from sleep.

Back in the green of the trees—the podium in front of me being the only thing keeping me standing—the flames of the bonfire dance and crackle, shifting the light that illuminates anticipating faces. The weight in my stomach drops as I stand isolated in front of the crowd. *Deep breath in, steady, deep breath out.*

“Your words are like sandpaper
and my decision tapers
off and on
between right and wrong
and I know”

My voice is shaky, and the rhythm’s off. I cannot seem to find the melody in my own composition.

“I know the wall around you is thick
and I know why
and I know that you had pulled me in to see
the other side
to meet your eyes
and still.”

The resentment and longing begin to build
in my voice. I try to grab hold of a sense of
calm, but passion is crimson in my cheeks.

“You refuse to rise onto your tiptoes and see
past your own arrogance
acting like you didn’t contribute
as if you didn’t distribute lines of
manipulation followed by a string of
compliments.”

Anger corrupts my words and takes hold of
my self-control. Confidence comes to meet
my apprehension.

“I had gotten used to the existence of
standing out without intent
and all I wanted was to stand in
I didn’t want loneliness as my companion.
I wanted a heartbeat and a hand to hold
but my hands were too busy picking up your
shortcomings and self-loathing
it was too late before I realized the
vulnerabilities I had been disclosing
and it scares me.”

The line is coming up next. The one I am
certain will resonate with every girl in the
audience. I try to lean into the feeling so it
does not hitch in my throat.

“So many stories you told
so many girls in white dresses then in your
room unclothed
and I knew from the start that I was next
another tick mark.”

I re-focus my attention to not allow my
thoughts to linger on the intense emotion
that initially caused me to write this poem.

“I fantasized salvation
And I avoided the realization that the
culmination of these relations was merely a
fixation

but it’s okay
because I know in this direction you will
cast yourself “the victim”
it’s easy to play a role when you have
blocked out all criticism.”

The words and prideful rhymes roll off my
tongue with ease.

“And I will admit I bit my tongue
I trained my brain to look the other way
to contort my morals and beliefs
all I wanted was relief
and I lost myself in you.”

With a deep breath, I let out the lasting
anxiety, the hatred, the regret. I sit back
down next to my friends and soak up their
praise, letting my muscles relax.

After the community share, we all walk
through the narrow corridor back to our
dorms. My heart is no longer hyperactive. I
am proud of myself. Then, a girl I hadn’t
talked to much stops me while others
continue down the hall. I recognize her
piercing green eyes and welcoming smile.
My height towers over her a bit, so I take a
step back to meet her eyes more
comfortably.

“I really liked your poem. Thank you for
sharing,” she said shyly.

“Yeah, I was so nervous, but I’m glad I did,”
I reply with a laugh.

“I am, too, I could really relate to that line
about the white dresses.” Her forest eyes
shifted down to her hands.

“Yeah, I wrote that poem about my ex-
boyfriend. Sadly, I feel a lot of girls can
relate,”

“Oh yeah, definitely,” she noted with a smile, but I could see something else hidden beneath it.

I gave her a smile back, and we continued down the hall to meet up with the others. As we walked, more and more people came up to me.

“Your poem was so good.”

“I really resonated with what you said.”

“That was so moving, I had goosebumps.”

Each time, I will my face to climb into a smile. With each anecdote, though, my heart grows heavier. *So many people resonate with what you shared. Resonate with the torment and regret. So many girls. Too many girls.* This was the reason that pushed me to face my fear, so others could feel less alone with their experiences. Despite the aching left in my heart, I fall asleep with a smile. I feel pride in my writing. Wholly empowered.

Since that fateful summer, I’ve been enticed to share my poetry with more close friends. Each time again, those same reactions are evoked: connection and shared sorrow. That heaviness in my heart returns each time a friend shares with me how my poem

summarized exactly how they had felt in past relationships. But that heaviness is lifted soon after by a feeling of gratitude. Gratitude for the mentors and friends I met at the retreat who pushed me to share my writing. Gratitude for my own inner strength, the strength to face my fear. And gratitude for my freshman self who struggled but also gifted me the ability to overcome. Just as my unsavory experience with past relationships bred the passion for this poem, my embarrassment that day in math class led me to the connections I made at the retreat. Art and writing and pain and sorrow and fear, they are all meant to be shared. Sharing a fragile or even shameful part of yourself, being vulnerable any way, is petrifying. And I know that my positive experience at the community share, with opening myself up to others, does not dismiss the anxiety that I experience with public speaking. However, I will carry the connections I made that summer with me, the connections that would not have existed if I didn’t challenge my fear. And every time I find myself back at the front of a crowd, with my heart racing and vision blurry, I will think back to that summer. I will take a deep breath, share and connect.

Nosferatu and the Importance of Genre

By
Tessa Davidson

As SpongeBob once said, “Nosferatu!”

Terrifying German audiences for the first time on the silver screen in 1922, *Nosferatu* was the cinematic debut of Halloween's favorite mythical mascot, vampires. Banned in Sweden for “excessive horror” until 1972 and just barely surviving a mass burning of tapes due to copyright infringement, this notorious symphony has quite the perplexing and fascinating history.

Being the first cinematic adaptation of *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* changed many of the names and key plot points in the novel, as it technically wasn't a proper adaptation and was not approved to be made. Bram Stoker, the infamous author of *Dracula* had the film destroyed for copyright infringement, ironic after the story of *Dracula* closely resembled that of a novel published 25 years prior. The key difference there was that while Count Dracula was a man preying after vulnerable young women, the countess Carmilla was a woman with the same victim profile. These homoerotic ties within vampire novels were not ignored in *Nosferatu*, as Count Orlok, the films equivalent to Dracula, went after men and women alike, likely in reference to the director's homosexuality.

The film was made with a crew consisting of mostly Jewish and left-wing actors and directed by a gay man only 11 years before Hitler was elected chancellor and Nazi influence in Germany was on the rise. The country itself was recovering from a terrible epidemic and thrust into an economic recession, all themes incredibly present in the film itself. Even without that historical context, *Nosferatu (1922)* is considered one of the most influential films of the silent

film era, utilizing techniques and shots previously never seen before. Not only did *Nosferatu (1922)* have a firm grasp over an era of film, but it still impacts pop culture in a way not a lot of films from that era did. All this is to say: cinematically and historically, *Nosferatu* holds a lot of influence.

This influence, of course, bleeds into the academics. Countless dissertations and academic journals have been written about *Nosferatu (1922)*, even more so during the pandemic and post-pandemic era. Even then, it is not just academics who write about the film, but reporters in newspaper columns as well as bloggers on online magazine publications. Examining each of these publications and their stance and rhetoric is an important aspect of the research process, made even more so by the vast differences in credibility by those who wish to write about a topic that won't be taken seriously any time of the year other than October, such as vampires. By researching and reading content regarding *Nosferatu (1922)*, we learn a lot about the cinematic beginnings of a pop culture phenomenon as well as pandemic protocols eerily like those we lived through. When examining the film, genre and the sources we look at is extremely important, especially considering each will have its own strong stance in bias and audience.

‘Nosferatu’s Cats, or: The Birth of the Cinematic Pandemic Vampire’, a peer-reviewed research article written in 2021 by Dr. Peter Gözl, PhD., and published in the Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov is one example of an academic publication pertaining to *Nosferatu (1922)*. In addition to his PhD., Gözl credentials list

one of his areas of expertise as “vampires,” crowning him as a professional in this field. ‘Nosferatu’s Cats, or: The Birth of the Cinematic Pandemic Vampire’ begins like any professionally written research article: with a title page. Here we can see where the article was originally posted, the author and page numbers, lending an air of professionalism to the paper and one following proper research paper format. We are also given a summary of the article below the title before jumping right into the introduction. It is clear from this that the article aims to attract a more academically focused audience. While the reader does not need to know a lot about vampiric lore or its cinematic past, being a proper research article, one would need to be a bit academically inclined to appreciate this article for its full intent. Gölz (2021) explains that the film “presents an anti-Dracula, a very different kind of vampire, one that is specifically cinematic, undead and unreal, part of the land of phantoms and pandemics. Unlike Stoker’s Dracula who could only exist on the printed page, Nosferatu self-reflexively celebrates life on celluloid” (p. 1). His usage of words clearly indicates prestige and intellect, suggesting this article is best read by students and graduates.

Gözl’s formality is not the only standout of this article, but the formatting and usage of citations is particularly interesting. Being an academic article, it is important for all facts presented to be cited and present proper sources to avoid misinformation or simply factually incorrect statements; sections are cited and whole portions of the referenced text are formatted differently to provide a visual clue that the information we are getting is directly from the source material. All references to the historical or events in the past that helped inspire the film or deviated from its novel counterpart are dated

and backed up with cited quotations from historians to further clarify the historical context as being fact and not fiction. This usage of citations is one particular to the genre of research articles and papers but also lends much more credibility to the author's claims and statements with evidence to back it up.

With 10½ pages of content and two pages of sources, the academic paper spaces things in an easily digestible manner and brings up its topics in smooth succession of one another without the need for intense topic changes or new headings. Context is thoroughly explained with little bias as fact and there is no underlying opinion piece, rather a cinematic analysis as guided by countless other sources. Each topic is touched upon with care but not stretched out to seemingly reach a page requirement, instead reaching a natural transition to the next. Despite its length, it reads shorter partially due to the sections of script used when referencing imagery and scenes. This paper lacks the rambling seen in other forms of media and instead relies on facts and evidence to reach its conclusion. As a piece explaining the cinematic and literary parallels between one scene of each Nosferatu adaptation and its relation to the plagues and pandemics of the times, this article is extremely successful in its presentation of information.

‘NOSFERATU CREEPS INTO RENEWED RELEVANCE’ is a newspaper article published in Bergen County, NJ’s local newspaper, *The Record*, in 2020 by Jim Beckerman, a pop culture and entertainment journalist with none of the same credentials seen in the academic paper. Being an entertainment article in a local newspaper, the column itself is formatted with its title at the top and the author information at the very end of the article. The title, being in all capital letters to grab newspaper readers'

attention, is short and sweet. References within the column itself are dated and the average newspaper audience is much older than the intended audience of something seen in a magazine or a blog. Lacking any summary or the complexity of APA formatting, the article gets right to what it wants to say. One notable feature of newspaper articles, particularly those in opinionated or biased columns, is the first-person way they write. “‘Nosferatu’ (1922) was always one of my favorite films. As a kid, I had an 8mm print -- remember 8mm? - - and I always found it weird, spooky, and spellbinding.” (Beckerman, 2020, n.p) Beckerman contains a noticeably clear voice in his writing and a very casual tone of talking to the audience, as if he were speaking with close friends his age.

Notably, Beckerman does not include citations or sources in his work. Part of this could be due to the article's clearly opinionated and biased nature, but the lack of an academic setting would play a large factor in this decision. Dates are used when referencing movies and time periods but when an author is quoted only their name is used. The article itself is mostly a summary of *Nosferatu (1922)* with historical references, opinions and similarities to the Covid-19 pandemic pointed out. Despite the lack of citations and sources listed, this article has a lot to offer as it was written shortly after the lockdowns began and in the height of the 2020 pandemic, making its relations to the movie more poignant. When the article was written, Beckerman was experiencing all the similarities referenced in *Nosferatu (1922)*. “In “Nosferatu,” there are quarantines, funerals, stay-at-home orders: all the things that are so familiar right now. There is also -- significantly -- rumor-mongering, and scapegoating.” (Beckerman, 2020) Despite the bias present, the analysis during this time of crisis

relating to cinema now over 100 years old is extremely insightful and relevant.

The column itself seems condensed and rushed. Its conclusion is only a sentence long and seems to come out of nowhere. No references are examined in as much depth as the academic paper and there seem to be quite a few ideas brought up that are not expanded upon. For example, the case of Brahm Stoker’s widow and *Nosferatu (1922)* becoming lost media for many years due to copyright is touched upon a few times but not explained in detail. References to current events are glossed over, potentially to avoid controversy or conflict in the paper itself considering older audiences tend to be extremely opinionated on the matter of Covid-19. Its short but informative nature does not feel as intended as the academic paper and instead a lot of information is placed into a short article. With a topic that could easily be turned into a 200-page paper, I understand Beckerman's difficulty in condensing it. As a newspaper article, I would consider this to be a successful piece of work, but it does not hold the same value in the academic field as it would in the entertainment journalism field.

Comparing this source with the literary and scholarly expertise of Gözl article shows a difference in audience and biases in the two articles. While one is significantly more academically inclined and based on information, the other bases itself in interpretation and emotion. Examining the difference between these sources shows us that not every source chosen for research will have the same contents or basis.

The last article to be examined, ‘Are vampires real? Scientists have linked diseases and decomposition to all the historical tropes of *Nosferatu*,’ published in October of 2023 is very different from the

previous two. This one is a blog on an online magazine. With a page full of pop-up ads barely relevant to the topic at hand, the site itself is full of distractions from the article itself. Even then, the article seems to have two different titles, the one the site and article itself is tagged as vs. what is at the top of the page in bold. Clearly aimed at younger, more tech savvy audiences, this distraction filled article is the longest of the three, perhaps in part due to the massive text size chosen. The informal presentation of the article contrasts the contents, which claim to contain scientific and historical analysis of vampire mythos and *Nosferatu (1922)*'s impact on them.

Citations are included in the article, although not at first glance. Taking advantage of the lack of physical text this article has, the citations are instead formed as links within the words. When a fact or quote is mentioned, a few key words form as a link to the article and section in which they were found. This is only seen in the text itself, as the article contains a large assortment of photos that relate to whatever that section in the article is speaking about. These photos contain a small description of them beneath, followed by a citation on where the photo was sourced. This lack of visible citations in text makes the article look a little less credible when compared to the bare text of a research paper. Despite this, the article carries itself as a very credible source. Jenny McGrath (2023) writes "Dracula embodied many of the hallmarks of vampires that now seem cliché: He was pale, charming, and dressed in black, 'with peculiarly sharp white teeth.' [advertisement] While sunlight sapped the count's powers, it was not until the 1922 film 'Nosferatu' that the sun's rays killed vampires." Her writing formality is broken by an advertisement dampening the paragraph's impact.

Being a lengthy article, McGrath chooses to break her work into sections separated by large bold titles pertaining to the next topic. Unlike the previous two which were solely written on *Nosferatu*, this article jumps topics and speak about a lot of things in shorter paragraphs that follow a larger overarching theme within the article. This ties into the sporadic nature of the advertisements that pop out all over the page; your attention is being fought for by the shorter segments of the articles and the advertisements all over the page. Despite the constant fight for attention, the shorter segments do an excellent job of separating the information into bite sized pieces. This article could be considered successful as an online blog but would not hold the same weight as a printed article or in a newspaper; it is a formatting that can only be done and pulled off in an online setting.

Firmly different from newspaper and research articles, online articles seem to present themselves more on grabbing attention with imagery, titles, and page breaks. When compared to the academic work of Götz and commentary of Beckerman, this article feels as though it is trying to say a lot and be taken seriously as an academic paper would despite its lack of credibility.

Genre is important when delving into the depths of an article as niche and complex as *Nosferatu (1922)* and there is much we can learn from each form of writing encountered while compiling sources for your research. We can learn a lot from the analysis and biases present, be it academic or journalistic. Media from hundreds of years ago can be just as poignant in the present day as it was when it first came out and those willing to talk about it despite it not being "relevant" anymore deserve to have their work read and understood.

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My Arduous and Continuous Journey of Finding Friendship

By
Brie Goldberg

I had friends once. Real friends. Ones that I cared about, and that (I thought) cared about me. Ones that would text me when they were worried about me and ones that I could talk to when I needed support. Then something happened. A global pandemic happened. In the first couple of weeks of being home, we kept in touch through a group chat, which eventually dwindled out as the lockdown progressed. I continued to stay in touch with most of them over text, but even those communications deteriorated over time. Eventually all communications I had with my friends from school were all but gone.

I do not exactly recall the next couple of months, and the memories have become a jumbled blur of much of the same, every day. What I can say is the following few truths: that I had very little contact with anyone outside my own house; that my existing social anxiety got exponentially worse, amplified by my fear of covid, which in turn increased any idea of not wanting to interact with anyone; that this fear of covid is primarily what led to me deciding to go to school remotely for my sophomore year, which only served to heighten my social anxiety by blocking off the potential for getting more comfortable with social interaction; that my depression and anxiety were both worsened by a new realization of my gender identity that decided to awaken at the worst possible moment; and that all of this was so bad that at one point during the summer after sophomore year (I believe, again the memories are jumbled), I got a job at Stop and Shop and promptly quit three days later (which, to this day, is the closest thing I have ever had to a job). Then, I

would say, was one of my lowest points, and although things started to get better after that, I would hardly say that things went uphill from there.

By the time I went back into school in person for my junior year, it seemed most of my friends had forgotten about me. If I waved my hand in greeting to them while passing them in the hallway, it would usually be met with blank expressions; no smile, no acknowledgement in their eyes, nothing. Sometimes one would wave back, or even initiate a handwave or a smile, maybe even a word of hello would cross their lips, but that became increasingly rare as the days passed. This certainly didn't help with the anxiety I already had about returning to school after a year of remote learning. And it definitely didn't help with my floor-level-and-continually-dropping levels of self confidence. There were a few times where my friends would seemingly remember I existed and talk to me for a bit, but that hardly served to rekindle our friendship as after that, things would go back to how they were, back to hardly talking to them at all, outside having a calculus class with one of them who talked to me during class (I suppose as any classmate would) but seemingly ignored me outside of it.

Before long, I rarely talked with another person aside from asking a question to a teacher or a forced interaction with a student next to me in a class to talk about my weekend in French or to discuss the problem projected on the board, which made me incredibly anxious, just as any interaction made me. I started eating lunch in the corner

of the cafeteria, sitting on the ledge by the window, because there was no table to sit at, as they were all full of students talking and laughing to each other, a sound that filled the room and rattled in my ears as my brain told me they were laughing at me, because I was sitting alone, practically on the cold, dirty, floor.

Most days I could count on my fingers the words that came out of my mouth. I went home and locked myself in my room; my shades pulled shut, blotting out the dwindling sunlight as fall turned into winter. I would write out a text to my friends every now and then, too anxious to try to approach them in person. Some of them would respond, and we would exchange a few meaningless words that eventually fell to silence. Others would not respond at all, leaving me wondering for months whether I did something to deserve this silence. My parents asked me at dinner if I had talked to any of my friends recently. The answer was always no, except for the days where I tried to lie, tried to avoid their disappointed gaze and their questions. I fell deeper and deeper into this black hole of loneliness, egged on by the anxiety, by the racing of my heart, by the trembling in my body, and by the clamminess of my hands, that I faced every time I tried to talk to someone or be in public at all.

Then something happened. Something good this time, don't worry. After seeing me in distress for multiple years at this point, me being well into my junior year of high school, my parents finally (and I say that with no judgment, however the word may sound) decided enough was enough and it was time for them to step in, and contacted a school counselor, who I had previously been in contact with for my mental health, and with them, set in motion a solution. Actually, there were a few plans on the table, and yet

again my memory fails me as to the order of them being carried out, but I will try to the best of my ability to explain them in chronological order.

The first of these was setting me up with a therapist. I had seen a therapist before; multiple, actually; but all of these didn't end up working for me. The first constantly doubted my anxiety and continually tried to convince me that anxiety is just the fear response being activated for no reason, and that if I was feeling anxious in social settings, I just had to convince myself that everything is ok and I am not in danger (and to this day I have no idea who let that man be a therapist). This resulted in me being confused and having a lot of self doubt, thinking there was something wrong with me, as I wasn't supposed to be feeling anxious. The second was consistently late, sometimes coming in 20 minutes later and saying that he overslept (mind you, most of these appointments were at 11 or 12 in the morning), sometimes missing the appointment altogether. This was incredibly frustrating as it meant that a lot of the time I wouldn't be able to talk to my therapist, who was one of the only people I felt the slightest bit comfortable talking to, when I was expecting to. The third was fine, I just wasn't making progress with her and decided to stop seeing her for therapy. At this point, I wasn't sure about seeing another therapist (and understandably so, I hope), but I gave it a chance nevertheless. By the end of the first appointment with her I had already shared with her my thoughts about my gender identity, with her being the first person I had ever spoken to about it, and that appointment being the first time I had ever said the words out loud (though that isn't really relevant to the story).

Within the first couple of months with my therapist, we had made good progress, and

by then it was time for phase 2 of my parents' plan.

In my high school, there was (and still is) a program called Lighthouse (which was run by the school counselor I mentioned earlier). Lighthouse was a place where lots of different students could go for a variety of reasons, ranging from needing help with academics due to a prolonged absence, all the way to people like me, who was put in there as an attempt to remedy my escalating loneliness, as well as provide a space with less social stimulation where I could go if my social anxiety was getting overwhelming. It sounds great on the surface, but junior year me was not having any of it. What was supposed to be a place to help with my anxiety and loneliness instead served only to amplify those feelings. For a while I ran away from the things, from the people that were trying to help me. I avoided Lighthouse at all costs, even avoided that part of the hallway, or took alternate paths if I saw a Lighthouse staff member coming, knowing they would drag me into the place I hated.

Eventually the counselor organized a meeting to discuss how things were going, bringing me in with my parents, my guidance counselor, and another Lighthouse staff member. In this first meeting, they told me that I should try to go in more often. I didn't listen. Weeks later, another meeting was called to discuss a solution to my absence. The counselor told me to go to Lighthouse in the mornings, to test the waters, to get more comfortable with the place, and then eventually start going during the day. In the mornings, before school started, Lighthouse was open, and there were a lot less people, usually just a staff member and a few students. It feels too simple, too cheap, to say, but: it worked. Before I knew it, I was going during most of

my free time at school, as it was a nice study environment and just a chill place to be around chill people.

I wish I could say I made friends in there; I didn't. There was this one person in Lighthouse that, if I had been in high school longer, I probably would have been friends with. Let's call her Mary. I had a chemistry class with Mary in my junior year, which started before I joined Lighthouse. I didn't really know her and she didn't know me. When I was brought in to see Lighthouse, she saw me. Because I was brought in, I missed the beginning of chemistry class. When I got there late, Mary handed me the papers that were passed out before I got there. A very simple gesture, one that she probably forgets, but incredibly meaningful to me nonetheless. Later on in the year, when we were told to choose our lab groups in chemistry, and I didn't have a group to join (as I didn't have friends), Mary invited me to join hers. Over the course of the end of my junior year and my senior year, I grew more comfortable with the people in Lighthouse, but never truly made any friends. I got close, but by the time I ever made significant progress in that department, it was approaching the end of my senior year of high school.

Let me rewind a little, back towards the end of my junior year. There is one more piece of my parents' intervention that I have yet to mention. One day, while I was eating lunch on the floor like usual, someone I had never seen before approached me. She introduced herself as a school psychologist and asked me to follow her to her office. She explained to me that she would conduct a psychological evaluation for me. I met with her once a week for a couple of weeks, completing a variety of tests, including tests of memory, social skills, problem solving, and some questionnaires, among other

things. After a few weeks of that, I was told that the testing was done, and that there would be a meeting to discuss the results and put together an IEP. I did not attend the meeting, as there were a lot of people there; my teachers, some counselors, my parents, the school psychologist; and they would all be discussing me. After the fact I was told the results of my evaluation. I am on the autism spectrum. I didn't entirely know what that meant then, and to be honest, I don't entirely understand it now, but what I did understand is this: autism affects social interaction and communication skills. And while this in some ways provided a lens to understanding my difficulty in these domains, I would say it very much resulted in giving me more questions than answers.

Even when my parents tried to help me, I constantly avoided anything that was good for me, running away from Lighthouse, avoiding social interactions, struggling with therapy, hiding myself from the public, even when people wanted to help. It's been a long road, trying to not run away, to not hide, to try to move forward. I would be lying if I

said that I had everything figured out, that after all this time I finally have friends, or that I don't constantly want to hide, want to run, want to close my shades again and not talk to anyone. I still struggle with it every day. But I have learned from my mistakes in the past. I know what running leads to, I know that hiding won't help me. As I am entering college, I am starting to try my best to be open to meeting people, trying to handle my anxiety enough to have conversations with people in my classes, be more comfortable around people, and try to start building friendships. It won't be easy, but one of the most important lessons I have learned has been that there are people out there who care, people out there that want to help, or want to be friends; I just have to look.

Brie Goldberg is an undeclared major. They are from Maynard, MA and have two dogs named Bob and Lexi.

Becoming A Survivor

By
Olivia Goodick

Content Warning: The following narrative contains content related to sexual assault

I lay in my cloudlike bed, consumed by the warmth of my pillows surrounding me, falling into a deep thought. I sit up, hearing the squeak of the springs in my mattress below me, and the thought of *you* comes rushing into my head. This reminds me of what my hands felt like sticking to the wrinkly leather seat in the cold, dark, hell like room, which *you* call your personal office. It reeks of a deep citrusy scent, a territory claimed by *you*, in what seems to feel like your personal dungeon of despair. I sit up from my bed shaking off these thoughts and my head is still going a million miles a minute. I think to myself, is this what other 4th graders think about when their uncle comes over to visit? Is this normal? My head once again sinks deep into thought and I ponder, is what *you* do to me normal?

Stepping away from these thoughts, I walk to my desk and begin to write, attempting to take my mind off the thought of *you*. I feel my dry, anxious hands rub against the white lined paper as I create a to-do list of homework. In the distance I hear the creaking of the wooden steps as someone ascends up them. I drop the mechanical pencil onto the white lined paper, and stress about who it could possibly be walking towards my bedroom. The shadow of feet stops in front of my door and the knob turns. It's my mother. She doesn't realize the state of panic my body was in, but instead informs me that dinner was ready. To my 4th grade mind, this only meant one thing. *You* are here. I pick myself up and remind myself that I am not alone with *you* tonight, and that we are going to be around other people, so

what could possibly happen? Stepping into my slippers I walk towards her. We descend together, and I count the steps going down, slowly getting closer to *you*. On the 9th step I smell your cologne. I turn the corner and I see your tan dark skin and midnight hair.

You sense my reticence to get closer, so *you* take this opportunity to walk over. The sound of your dirty work boots echo throughout the house as they hit the floor, leaving trails of mulch wherever *you* step. *You* lean in to hug me and your aura pops my personal bubble; your scruff scratches my skin leaving battle wounds behind, and your breath hits my face, burning me like flames. I feel as if I have been put into a coma, and I am having an out of body experience. I am frozen, trapped in your chains, and I don't know what to do. *You* finally pull away, and I slowly walk towards the dinner table to get away from *you*. I sit in the farthest seat from *you* and I think to myself again. Am I a victim? Do I even know what that word means? Maybe. The smell of the pizza is invading my senses and the flavorful first bite pulls me away from all that is happening around me. I eat dinner as fast as I can to get away from this scene, but there are conversations being thrown across the dinner table and all I can think of is escaping back to my room. I find my room to be the only place I can be myself. I am able to express myself in different ways, and not put on a fake smile. This is the one place where I can accept the fact that my innocence at such a young age was taken, where I can be my own therapist and talk through the emotions that are running through my veins.

My bedroom has become my sanctuary where I question whether what he does to me defines who I am, and what I will grow into. The faded pink walls of my childhood bedroom have become a comfort to my young mind, and I am constantly worrying when I will have to go back to his house. His office. His hell.

You are considered my *uncle*, my dad's *best friend* since childhood, and my *babysitter*. *You* have had the privilege of watching me and my younger sister, Sophie, since we were each ages 4 and 1, and *this* is how *you* take authority over me? Your narcissistic aura is leaking into our home as I sit here and fester over the thought of *you*, and no one realizes it besides me. I do not blame my parents for what he does to me on a weekly basis, but it makes me question once again, should I tell someone about what he does to me? Or is he right when he says to not tell anyone because I could get in trouble too? Am I in the wrong? I feel suffocated by the control *you* have over me, and it affects my everyday life.

My mother comes back into my room, saying "Liv, honey, why did you leave dinner so quick? What's wrong?" and all I can do is sit here in silence and blame it on a headache, knowing that that is not what is bothering me at all. I think that she can tell I am not telling the truth but does not push me any further. I have always blamed not wanting to be around *you*, as a headache, but no one has ever noticed, so they brush it off. The thought comes to mind to tell her what I am having an internal battle about, but I am unsure of the response that she may have.

During my middle school years, I attempted to push what *you* did to me away from the forefront of my mind, but I found myself unable to do so. Instead, I spent it knowing that I was the only one in my classes that

had to grow up in such a way at the ripe age of 7, and it terrified me. Constantly, I was worrying about saying something that may sound too sophisticated for a young teenager. I did not want to expose myself to the questions that someone might ask and force myself to talk about the traumatic history *you* put me through. Middle school ultimately felt like a blur and I would bury myself in sports and school to forget about *you*, and because of that I did not get to fully experience being a child the way I was supposed to, and not have to worry about going over to a man's house that I knew was going to continuously abuse me mentally and physically. You stole my innocence. You destroyed my young naive mind and body, and I am left to pick up the broken pieces and attempt to put them back together, feeling as if the puzzle pieces no longer fit, leaving me to build new ones.

Fast forward to my freshman year of high school and the weight of *you* still sits on my shoulders. On a cold fall day my mind was made up. I am going to tell someone about the hell that *you* put me through at the young ages of 7, 8, and 9. That night I sat on the couch with my boyfriend and the tears were boiling behind my eyes. I explained to him how *you*, my *uncle* and *babysitter* had sexually abused me for years. I explain the gory details of what I endured, and how in just the room over my little sister and his children played, not with the slightest bit of knowledge as to what was happening behind that closed office door. We decided to tell my mother and father about everything, and everything changed from there on out.

Moving through the years waiting for the evidence to be captured, and for *you* to be arrested took a mental toll on me. I had to constantly go into the Abington police department to give them more and more details, giving a piece of me away with it

every time. I was put into therapy to talk about everything, but I still think, is it supposed to heal me completely? Am I supposed to feel as if it never happened? No. I used to cry myself to sleep, debating this thought that I might never be the same person because of *you*, but I never even got to develop into a being without trauma as my backbone. I grew with it like it was a malignant tumor that couldn't be excised, and it was slowly killing me. *You* are suffocating me to feel better about yourself, and it is mentally and physically tiring.

It's now the year 2021, and the case is finally brought to trial. This is just months after getting surgery for a condition known to be created through sexual abuse, and the days I miss school are adding up, all because of *you*. Two weeks of reliving everything you did to me and crying on the stand in front of what felt like thousands of people finally pass, and I get to present myself to the court, giving them my final impact statement, hoping that the evidence found on *you* and my testimony will finally bring me justice. As I walk up to the podium in the courtroom with my mother and cousin by my side, I shake with nerves knowing that *you* are just 5 feet away from me. The tears come running down my face before my first words even come out. I push through, flipping all 5 of the crisp and freshly printed paper that goes into detail of all of the traumatic experiences you put me through, now has sweat stains from my hands. I thank the judge and the jury after my speech, and my knees feel weak as I walk away, realizing that I finally got my point across to *you*. Even though *you* had lied through your testimony, and had others defend you, we both know who is telling the truth, and that's all that matters to me.

A few days pass and it is time to go back to the courthouse to hear the verdict. The car

ride felt like a million years had passed, nevertheless we got there and found our seats. You only have a few family members there to support you, but I have an army. The foreperson of the jury begins to read the verdicts, "On count 1 we find the defendant...Guilty, On count 2...Guilty, On count 3...Guilty", I burst into happy tears. *You* were found on all 12 charges, Guilty. Even with the peace of knowing that you will be in jail for 18 years, I still have struggles mentally.

I have moments where I pass one in the hall wearing a similar scent as your citrusy cologne and it consumes me. My father can no longer go without shaving his face to get rid of the scruff that could potentially bring me into an episode reminding me of your scruff that would constantly be scratching my face. At times it feels as if people have to tip-toe around me thinking that they could cause me pain, but I know that I am the woman today because of everything that *you* put me through, and I am strong because of that. I am no longer scared to say that I endured this pain and want to help those who may have experienced or been subjected to such abuse as well. I will use my trauma as a drive through helping citizens in a medical profession. I will get my Masters in health sciences and get my 2-year radiology program certificate, and help advocate for those who may feel as if their trauma will hold them back from getting help. All that *you* have done to me has only driven me more to make every voice heard that has experienced the pain that *you* have put me through, or the pain of a different form of assault.

You have affected everyone and everything around me in my day-to-day life, but this does not make me a victim, it makes me a survivor. A survivor of *you*.

Olivia Goodick is a Health Sciences Major. She is from Weymouth, MA and has a profound interest in creating a voice for women who have been sexually assaulted

through the telling of her own story, and has ventured to Hawaii.

Goodbye
By
Kiera Gorassi

The room was shrouded in darkness, except for the faint glow of the digital clock on the nightstand, which reads 3:23 AM. I am cuddled in my blankets sleeping peacefully. Suddenly, the door creaks open, and a figure steps into the room. It's Mark, my stepfather. He looks haggard, his face etched with worry lines, as he approaches my bedside.

Mark (whispering urgently) "Kiera... Kiera please, wake up."

I feel his cold hands against my shoulders shaking me. I stirred, eyes fluttering open. I squinted at him as the light from the hallway blinded me, struggling to comprehend if it was real or a dream.

That's weird, I thought to myself. I didn't know he was here.

"What's going on, Mark?" (I come off as aggressive, confused, tired).

Mark takes a deep breath, trying to find the right words.

"It's Mom, Kiera. Her detox isn't going well. They've rushed her to the ICU."

My eyes widen with alarm. I am still confused; I couldn't tell if it was real. I didn't sit up but now I turned around to face him. This man I have known nearly all my life, with an expression I don't think I have ever seen him make. My heart was pounding, eyes barely able to stay open.

"What? ICU? Is she okay? What happened?"

He sits on the edge of the bed, his expression heavy with concern.

"They're doing everything they can, but it's not looking good. Don't worry about it too much right now, but tomorrow I will need you to find a way to the hospital, I am going now." He left the room, closing the door as quietly as possible and I watched as his footsteps created shadows underneath my bedroom door, until they disappeared.

I nod, mind racing with a whirlwind of emotions. I don't think this state of confusion is describable, in seconds I am asleep. Almost as if none of it had happened.

As the first rays of dawn began to seep through my uncurtained window; I groggily reached for my phone on the nightstand. The device was swarmed with notifications, and I squinted at the screen to see a list of long texts from Mark. The urgency in his messages was unmissable, the length of each message in itself was not something I could ignore. In my morning haze, I almost thought the interaction was a dream again, yet as I read text after text from Mark those feelings of confusion and sorrow from the night before raced back.

Mark: Kiera, please let me know when you wake up. Mom needs you at the hospital. It's really serious. Call me as soon as you read this. I need you to get here, I know you're not that comfortable with your driving but we need you here, I can find you a ride if necessary.

My heart raced, and the sleepiness dissipated in an instant. My confusion was replaced by a deep sense of dread. I hastily

dialed Mark's number, praying he would answer.

Mark picked up on the first ring, his voice strained and shaky. "Kiera, you have to come to the hospital. It's bad. I can't explain over the phone. Just get here as soon as you can."

I could hear the panic in his voice, and it sent shivers down my spine. I didn't know what to say; I was in denial. I was supposed to have my first shift at my new job today, the gelato place in town. I had never heard Mark speak like this, in the past few years he had grown more accepting and loving toward me; however, I never knew him to be emotional.

After a quick shower to wake me up, I emerged from the bathroom with a towel wrapped around me, still trembling with fear and confusion. My mind was racing as I thought about my mom's condition. She'd struggled with addiction for so long, but this was the worst news I'd ever heard. She never wanted to stress me and my older brother, Kerin, with the urgency of her addiction to drinking. We all knew that she drank but in the past when she had explained it to us it was never an uncontrollable issue.

As I was getting dressed, I heard a knock at the front door. I assumed it was Mark, but I was surprised to find Kim, one of Mark's close friends whom I had not seen in years, standing there when I opened the door. Kim looked at me with a mix of sympathy and concern.

"Kiera, we need to get to the hospital now. Mark told me to come and pick you up. He's already there." She smiled at me with a comforting face I remembered from my childhood when we first met Mark and

started getting introduced to our new town in Connecticut.

I nodded, my throat constricting with concern, I turned back to my room and grabbed my phone and my bag. "Yeah, I'm ready. Let's go."

While I was grabbing my bags, she went back out to her car waiting, tapping her foot anxiously. I remember looking out my bedroom window that conveniently looked over the driveway to see her switch between biting her nails and checking her phone. I walked out to Kim's car, and as we drove to the hospital, which was about 30 minutes away, I felt I was in her car for hours. I couldn't shake the feeling of impending disaster. Kim tried to make small talk, but I was lost in my thoughts. I responded as best I could while updating her on my life since I had not seen her in so long. The realization hit me hard that the situation must be incredibly dire for Mark to involve one of his friends. But at this point I was still shaking off my worries, as I knew my mom had problems, still beyond my 17-year-old comprehension, that would often lead her to hospital visits.

When we arrived at the hospital, Mark was waiting in the lobby. His eyes were red-rimmed, and he looked utterly exhausted. He rushed to my side as I checked into the hospital visitors' desk, using my driver's license and stating my reason for visiting. I told the woman working: "My name is Kiera Gorrasi, I am here to visit my mother, Kerry Gorrasi: who is in the ICU." The words repeated in my head while I waited for the woman to return my ID and tell me which room and floor to go to.

"Kiera, I'm so glad you're here," Mark said with his voice cracking.

We followed Mark to the elevator, and then through the sterile corridors of the hospital. Looking back I can reflect on the ignorant state I was trapped in, shaking this off as another minor issue that led to a hospital visit like all those times before.

I waited in the waiting room, which had nothing but a couple of chairs, a box of tissues, and a TV playing a news channel that seemed to cover nothing but the most depressing stories you could imagine. I felt so alone and confused, I was still unsure how to feel at this point, but I knew deep inside of me that I should call Kerin.

Kerin was older than me by three years, and already in college at this point. I called him, and he answered immediately as he always did. My heart broke the second he answered I tried to explain to him how confused I was. I reminded him of how Mom told us she was checking herself in for a detox. A chance to get better! I explained to him how she was moved into the ICU, and that I was waiting to go see her but I was so confused and so sad. I told him every detail that Mark had explained to me as best he could. Even without a visual description, he assured me he would be home in the next few days.

To see a patient, I had to pick up the phone in the small, depressing room in the ICU and dial the number listed on the paper next to it. I called, and they answered. I told the nurse my mother's name, Kerry Gorrasi. She told me the room number and to walk out of the waiting room and approach the two large automatic doors that led to the ICU.

The doors to the ICU slid open, after what felt like a lifetime standing outside of them, I entered a world that felt like a surreal nightmare. The entire area smelled of sterilization to the point it almost made me feel sick. The entire floor was bustling with

activity, medical staff in scrubs hurried moving from one machine to another. The continuous beep of monitors and the soft hum of machines filled the air. I had never been in a place like this, and the overwhelming atmosphere of urgency and anxiety made it hard to breathe.

Mark led me to a small corner of the room. There, lying in a hospital bed, was my mommy. Her face was pale, her chest barely rising and falling as the ventilator did most of the work for her. Her skin was as yellow as a banana. I remembered how when I was born, I was premature and had jaundice, somehow I recognized this in her without even needing to be told that her liver was failing, I knew. Her eyes and skin have been appearing to me this way for weeks, yet I was too distracted to notice. Tubes and wires snaked from her motionless body, connecting her to various monitors and IV bags. She was entirely paralyzed and in a coma, her eyes closed as if she were lost in a deep, dreamless slumber.

I felt my heart drop, and tears welled up in my eyes. This was not the mother I remembered. The woman who had always been there for me, the one who made my childhood special, was now reduced to this helpless state. It was as if life had been sucked out of her, leaving only a fragile shell behind. I began to bawl my eyes out, standing still over her bed.

Mark stood beside me, his hand resting on my shoulder for support. "Kiera," he began, his voice quivering, "the doctors are doing everything they can, but it's a critical situation. They said she's been like this since early last night. They're still trying to figure out what went wrong."

I couldn't take my eyes off my mother. The guilt welled up in me as I remembered all

the times I had been frustrated with her struggles. I wished I had done more, known more, and understood more about her addiction. I wished I had been there for her when she needed me the most.

I reached out and gently held my mother's cold, lifeless hand. It was a stark contrast to the warm, nurturing hands that had once comforted me in times of need. I couldn't speak. I had thoughts racing through my mind as I stared at this beautiful, strong woman whom I knew so well, better than anybody else. We had spent two years living alone together at this point, with Kerin at college and Mark spending most of his time in Florida with his mom. Although we fought more frequently, I think we learned more about each other then, than ever. All of these emotions were now shared between our lifeless bodies, all I could do was look.

I heard mumbles throughout the room, coming from the nurse, Mark, and Kim. I could not comprehend a word spoken to me. I could not respond. Instead, I just looked. Every couple of seconds somebody would reach out a hand or hug to me, but I stood unresponsive, unsure of how to react. I stood still staring with a horrified look, not only on my face but with my entire being. I don't know how much time had passed but eventually, I broke down. I began to panic.

Through my mind rushed every memory we shared: all of our fights, every time I would walk into the kitchen to her listening to our favorite songs and we would join hands and slow dance together, every time we would cry together, all the times we would enjoy girl time together.

The room remained somber, filled with the beeping of machines and the murmurs of medical staff. Mark and I sat by her bedside,

offering silent support and hope as we waited for any sign of improvement.

As the day turned into evening, and evening into night, I never left my mother's side. Mark would never go home to get some rest, neither of us could manage to leave her side. I held her hand, talked to her, and told her about my life, hoping that somehow, my words would reach her. I still had work and high school to attend which I would do my best to show up for, and after every day I would return to the hospital to visit her, which I promised her extensively.

Over the weeks that followed, I visited my mother every day without fail. The routine was both comforting and agonizing. I would sit by her bedside, talk to her, and share stories of my life. I would apply to all of my colleges and talk to her about each time I submitted my application to each school we had visited together just months before. The nurses and doctors were impressed with my dedication, but deep inside, I was driven by the hope that one day, she would respond.

As time went on, my conversations with Mom became more intimate. I shared my dreams, my fears, and my achievements. I told her about my job at the gelato place, my struggles with college applications, and how much I missed her presence in my life. The room filled with the sound of my voice, a constant presence that I hoped would reach through her unconsciousness. Nurses would walk into the room as I was on my knees next to her bed, hands grasping her, begging for a response, crying harder than I ever have.

One day, as I was talking to her about my plans for the future, I noticed something different. A flicker of movement, a subtle twitch in her fingers. I leaned in closer, my heart pounding with anticipation. Could it

be? I kept talking, desperately hoping for another sign. Yet terrified at the same. And then, it happened. Her eyelids fluttered, and her eyes began to open. It was a slow, deliberate process as if she was emerging from a deep slumber. Her gaze was unfocused, but it was there, and that alone was a miracle to me.

"Mom," I whispered, tears streaming down my face. "It's me, Kiera. Can you hear me?" Her lips quivered, and she tried to form words, but only faint, unintelligible moans came out due to the tube down her throat that gave her oxygen and life's breath. It was a struggle for her, but she was trying to communicate.

Overwhelmed with joy and relief, I called for a nurse to come in and witness this incredible moment. I was so anxious I begged the nurses to please help me and make sure everything was okay. The nurses rushed in and checked Mom's vitals, confirming that she was indeed showing signs of responsiveness. Days turned into weeks, and Mom's progress was slow, it never really improved but at least she was awake.

I continued to visit her daily, now with the hope of seeing further improvements. We developed a silent connection, a bond that didn't rely on words alone. I could see the determination in her eyes, the fight to reclaim her life and be a part of my world once again. I knew from the moment she first blinked at me that she was trying to tell me something. I knew from that moment that it was her fighting to be able to share this moment with me, at least one last time if that was all that was possible. She knew I always thought I was lesser than Kerin in her eyes, but this was the moment I realized that she put pressure on me because of how much of herself she saw in me.

One day, as I was holding her hand, she managed to whisper, "I love you." It was the most beautiful sound I had ever heard, a simple phrase filled with a depth of emotion that words alone couldn't express. Tears welled up in my eyes, and I replied, "I love you too, Mom." She then proceeded to look down at my neck. I was wearing a necklace my brother and I had gifted to her for Mother's Day many years ago. "Oh so that's yours now?" she asked. I laughed and assured her I was taking good care of it until she could wear it again herself.

Her parents came in and out as much as they could. They were old and had lower mobility, but still able to manage to drive up from New York to Connecticut. Grandma led me through a lot of my anxious moments in the first few weeks. My mom had woken up from the coma, as she was confused and on all the drugs the doctors had infested her with to try and help.

Over the following days, I cherished the moments I had with my mother as she showed signs of responsiveness. I always thought she was getting better and would hold out hope that everyone else in the family would be willing to do the same. We would communicate in short, fragmented conversations, and each word she spoke was a treasure to me. Her progress was slow and marred by the effects of her long struggle with addiction, but she was determined to bridge the gap between us.

Although her sentences were always short, out of order, and often confusing, I encouraged her to speak as much as possible. Most of the things she said made little to no sense, I would still engage. I assured her that I forgave her, that I had always loved her.

As the weeks went by, she became increasingly lucid. Her eyes, once distant and unfocused, now held a spark of life and recognition. The bond between us grew stronger with each passing day, and I treasured every moment we had together. However, her health remained precarious. The effects of her addiction and the damage done by her years of substance abuse had taken a heavy toll on her body. Despite her best efforts to communicate and connect with me, her condition worsened.

One day, I walked into her room, and the atmosphere felt different. The beeping of machines was more insistent, the murmurs of nurses more frantic. My heart sank as I saw the medical staff surrounding her bed. Although they assured me she could feel no pain, I felt as if her eyes were pleading for help.

The doctors explained that her condition had deteriorated rapidly. Her organs were failing, and there was little they could do to save her. It was as if the hope that had briefly flickered to life in her eyes was now fading, and the darkness was creeping back in. As the days passed, her condition worsened and the decision was made to transfer her to the hospice floor. It was a difficult choice, but it was clear that there was no hope for her recovery. I battled against my brother, father, and my mother's parents; but they told me it was hopeless.

At this time, I understood finally that all the things she had ever done were to protect me and that she genuinely did want the best for me in any and everything. I began to understand how similar we were, and that much of the time we spent fighting was over unnecessary issues.

After she moved into hospice and was taken off of all the machines, and medication they

kept her on to avoid pain and complications, it was only a short matter of time before her words became more incoherent and she began to lose function. It was hard to see her like this but from the day I first arrived, I promised I would come see her every day even if nobody else did.

I sat by her bedside, holding her hand and whispering words of comfort. I could see the fear in her eyes, the realization that the end was near. She tried to speak, but the words were lost in the chaos of the medical procedures and alarms. All I could do was squeeze her hand and let her know I was there, that I would always be there for her. I let her keep all my favorite childhood stuffed animals with her every day since I first saw her, and I would leave them on her every night as I left.

When I arrived on the 25th of October, it seemed the clouds polluted the window with worry, and it set shade throughout the room. A sense of quiet plagued the air. My mother was placed in a comfortable bed, almost completely silent and motionless, except for the occasional movement or widening of her eyes. The machines and beeping were replaced by the soft hum of the air conditioner, and a feeling of peace settled over the room. I sat by her side, holding her hand, as I had done so many times before. Although her eyes were almost entirely shut at this point I could still feel her gratitude.

"I love you, Mommy."

And with those final words, I kissed her forehead; and I told Mark that I had to go home in time to be able to finish my homework. I hugged him, made sure my mom was snuggled in her blanket and was close to my stuffed animals, then left the room.

I wiped my tears as I walked to the elevator on the ICU floor. I got onto the elevator, which took me to the ground floor where my car was parked outside. I gave my entry pass to the security guard in front of the door before I exited the building which felt like I had done a million times before at this point. I walked to my car and as I turned the key I was overtaken with emotion. I fell to my knees and cried out to my mom. I looked into the window on the floor where she was staying while holding the driver-side handle of the car we had forever that she had given to me to be my first car.

“I love you forever and always.” I said, head in my hands, pressed against my car.

I pulled myself together and drove home from the hospital. As I pulled up and parked in my driveway I saw the family of deer that lived in the woods behind our house, that mom loved so much. I remembered how

often I would come outside to find her having a smoke and talking to them. I walked back into the apartment that was once a place just for me and my mom but was now filled by my dad and brother. I brushed past them and headed straight to my room to set my bag and phone down and got in bed.

I was in bed for maybe 10 minutes before my dad knocked on my door to tell me she was gone. I knew from that day on that she had felt our connection and waited to be able to have our goodbye.

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What Makes A Father?

By
Catrina Hans

Content Warning: The following narrative contains content related to domestic violence

The smell of turkey and my mom's butternut squash filled the freshly painted kitchen. He used the red oven mitt to take the boiling hot pan out of the oven and placed it in the middle of the dinner table. Silver cutlery and bright white platters were set out on the dinner table where my mom was conversing with the family. The dark granite countertop was covered with decadent desserts. I continued to fantasize about the mouthwatering apple pie my mom had made the evening before. I could sense something was off about him, his face was as red as a tomato and I could nearly see steam coming out of his ears. Knowing it was a holiday, I was hoping he wouldn't let out the wrath of his anger in front of the family.

The sun was going down and the air was crisp. Leaves filled the entirety of my trampoline. My cousins and I bounced in the backyard until we got told to come inside for dinner. Our laughter echoing off the wind chimes hanging on the big dogwood tree. I excitedly sat down at the dinner table with my heaping pile of mashed potatoes and turkey doused in a gallon of gravy. Each chair is filled at the dining room table, he sat in his chair quietly listening to the conversations between the rest of the family and staring into his untouched plate of food. I looked up at him and watched as he looked down at his plate.

It felt almost uncomfortable to even touch my own food seeing how unpleasant he was looking at his. He was always the first one to finish his meal, yet he did not even touch it. He gathered the plates to take them to the sink to be washed, scrubbing each plate angrily. All the plates were wiped clean

except his. He was in such deep thought about something but I had no idea what. What was making him so angry?

I sat on the brown leather couch in front of the TV in the living room, my brother and cousins were in the basement playing Wii. My mom's phone sat in her old black leather purse on the cushioned bench in the kitchen. I watched him from the couch as he peered into the purse and took the phone, stuffing it into his pocket. He stormed out of the kitchen and marched up the stairs with his fists clenched, heading straight for their bedroom, for what everyone else thought was to cool down, but I knew what was going to come next. I heard the slam of the bedroom door shutting behind him.

I laid on the couch snuggled into my purple fleece baby blanket pondering what could've upset him. I watched as my mom got up from her seat at the dinner table, I heard her slowly walk up the stairs to the bedroom. I knew how he could get. I knew something was coming. I began to get up from the couch where the imprint of my body was left under me, I grabbed my blanket and wrapped myself up, everyone in the kitchen gossiping over what was going on upstairs. "I wonder what his problem is," my uncle questioned from the far end of the dinner table. My grandma was swaying in the rocking chair and asked me to come sit on her lap. She held me so gently. "It's all going to be okay," she whispered into my dainty ear.

The bedroom door whipped open. Running down the stairs came my mother, him following behind her. Her phone was in his

hand. I quickly got up off my grandmother's lap and watched as he screamed in my mother's face.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” he shouted straight into her ear with pure rage.

Why was he so angry with her? My uncle got up from his chair and told him to calm down, but he didn't have much luck. He grabbed her face and placed it between the opening of the thick wooden cabinet, slamming the door on her head repeatedly until my uncle went over and pulled him away from her. I stood at the end of the countertop; my jaw had dropped down to my chin. I stayed completely silent. What did my entire family and I just witness? Tears were rolling down my mother's soft dimpled cheeks. He stormed out the back door, slamming it behind him. I felt immovable, my feet stuck like super glue to the hardwood floor. My grandma rushed past me into the kitchen grabbing my mom. Their hug seemed to last an eternity. My lip started to quiver. Is that who he is? Is he not who I thought he was?

A piece of my innocence was stripped away. I thought he was supposed to be my hero. I find myself grieving the man he once was, the man that would take me out of my car seat to carry me inside to my bed when I fell asleep in the car, the man who used to make me chocolate chip pancakes every Sunday morning, and the man who used to take me out to the Hearth and Kettle, my favorite restaurant, sitting at my favorite booth, just him and I. He used to ask me about my day, ask about school and my friends.

Now he knows nothing about me, because now he doesn't care to ask. I now know it must've been all a show. He revealed his true colors that night at Thanksgiving. To this day all I can picture when I look into his

hazel brown eyes is his hands on my mother, bashing her face over and over again. Looks can be so deceiving. The bruises he left on her supple soft face, all shades of purples and blues. I will never get that image out of my head. After the court hearings and the divorce was settled, I was now forced to see him again. I wanted nothing to do with him.

Now, years later I barely talk to him, I barely see him, and I barely hear from him unless he needs something from me. He uses me to look better in front of his girlfriends, attempting to look somewhat like a father. Little do they know the person they are getting into bed with ruined their little girl's purity. At least I'm no longer being fooled by him. I see through his facade. He has ruined my ability to trust in men, he has created a monster inside me. I'm no longer able to open up, to be vulnerable, to love, to accept love.

I look in the mirror and all I can see is his god-awful nose, carbon copied directly onto my face and his rage running through my veins. “You're just like him.” The worst thing anyone could say to me. I want nothing to do with him. I want to be able to look at myself and not see him looking back at me. He's tried to buy his forgiveness, knowing the trauma he put his 10 year old little girl through. However, he holds everything above my head, hoping that in return I allow him back in. . He bought me my first iPhone when I was 14 years old and threatened me that if I did not go visit him he would take it away. At 16 years old, he bought me a pair of shoes for back to school.

The first thing he said was, “If you don't come to dinner with me, I will take those new shoes away.” At the ripe age of 18 he bought me a 2018 Ford Escape and regularly uses it as a clutch, threatening me constantly that if I want to have the car then I have to

abide by him and his rules. He is no longer a father; instead, he is just a thoughtless man who occasionally decides to come and go from my life at his own convenience.

“I love you.” Such a simple phrase, yet so much meaning behind it. Saying I love you means “I’m here for you” and “you matter to me.” He used to tell me this countless times and I used to believe it; somehow it meant nothing to him. He abandoned me so easily, with no second thought. How can anyone else say “I love you” and genuinely mean it if he can say it so casually, without any thought behind it? Despite how much it hurts, I feel like I have grown from this experience. Had I not gone through this and discovered who he truly is, I would not be

who I am today. Yes, I have my flaws that I have picked up from him, but at least I recognize them as flaws. He never will.

Although it can be very difficult at times, I am learning to love and let my guard down. Everything happens for a reason, as my mother has always said, and I firmly believe that. I would not be the person I am, or where I am today if not for the trauma he caused.

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knots.
By
Gianna Lipka

Blame. I blame my mother for a lot of things.

When I was six years old, my parents told me they were getting divorced. You may be thinking to yourself, “Gianna, about 50% of all marriages end in divorce, is this really something that affected you that significantly?” Well it's not just that, the divorce is the first piece of the puzzle, the tip of the iceberg, and other stupid cliches.

One night, my mom and I were sitting at dinner, arguing (which is very common for us). We were talking about her past relationships and boyfriends. I asked her about her divorce with my dad. She told me he was “sick,” and she didn't even try to help him. She let him suffer and drown in his own depression and mental illness. She cheated. I felt sick. I clenched my fist, stared straight ahead and avoided eye contact. I was crying. She asked if I blame her, I said yes. We never talked about it again. I blame my mom for my issues with how I perceive healthy relationships, for how I view my body, as well as my self-esteem issues in general. This is why.

Boyfriends. Ever since I was seven, I could never really remember a point where my mom was single for more than just a few months. There was always a boyfriend in the house, that was normal to me. Even when she would claim to be single, I knew it was a lie. She'd lay on the couch, I'd stand right in front of her, begging for her attention. I kept trying to talk to her. “Mom... mom? Moooooom. Mom, guess what? TERRY.”

No response. She was too wrapped in texting to notice I was there. I'd eventually

give up and go to my room. Drowning in loneliness. She was always on the phone, talking and laughing at dinner. I sat within my own silence, fidgeting with my necklace. I just wanted someone to talk to. For four years she had a live-in boyfriend that I hated. She knew I hated him too, which made her hate me. Because she thought he was perfect and kind, she loved him and he made her happy. But he made me feel uncomfortable, with some things he would say to me. When I voiced the fact that I felt uncomfortable and unsafe in my house and room, she said it was a “me issue” and that I needed to get over it. I didn't understand.

She's my mom. How was she putting the blame on me? She picked him over me, constantly. I was never good enough for her, and I just had to accept it. There were a few months where he wasn't working. I'd be on the bus going home from school. The closer we got, the tighter the knot in my stomach would form. I feel sick. I feel sick. I'm scared. I never knew what kind of mood he would be in when I would get home. Would I get yelled at for something as simple as listening to music, or would I get ignored. My mom let me live in an environment where I could never feel okay, and for that I can never forgive her.

Body. “I wish I looked like you.” That's what she tells me. It should be a compliment, but it's not. “If I had a body like you, I would wear more revealing clothes.” “I WISH I could wear clothes like that”, “If I was skinny like you, I'd always show off my body.” A knot forms in my stomach. I feel sick. Why couldn't she leave me alone? I came home from the doctors with my sister, Megan, one day. I showed

her the little paper he gave me that shows my updated weight. She told me I was getting fat, to lay off the carbs, and eat less snacks. She said I'd look like her eventually, and that she didn't want that for me. I didn't understand. My whole life everyone's constantly told me I was too skinny, that I had chicken legs, was like a stick, too weak. Even my own sister would compare me to a newborn giraffe and a stick bug. But now I'm fat. That's what I started telling myself. I was about fourteen or fifteen. Why does she put so much worth on my weight and body? Now I focus on my weight a little too much.

Thank you. The only thing she cares about. She buys us things, gives us things. She feeds off that. She'll get so angry if you don't say thank you, even for the smallest things. While of course, I always try my best to use my manners. She doesn't do things because she cares, she does it because she thrives off of feeling appreciated and wants that attention. She texts me constantly now that I'm at school. I usually avoid answering her messages for a few hours. "I miss you," "I love you," "I can't wait to see you." I can hear her forcing the excitement through her teeth. I feel nothing. I don't wanna go home. If she cared about that much, she wouldn't have tried so hard to drive me away.

Unwanted. I was nine years old. It was cold outside, a small dusting of snow on the ground, I was wearing a vibrant purple winter coat. My mom and I were arguing on the walk to the bus stop, I was further ahead of her. My face was red and burnt, partially from the harsh winds and partially from my tears. She's screaming. As I approached the bus, she yelled out one last remark. "Why don't you go live with your dad then?" Oh. My mom hated me; she didn't want me. I sobbed the whole way to school. I could see the pity in the eyes of the girl next to me.

Emotions. My junior year, I had a really bad day and wanted to talk to my mom about it. I couldn't stop crying. She told me I was being dramatic, that it wasn't a big deal, I was overreacting, and it could've been a lot worse. I felt nothing. It's like she tries her best to hurt me. When I was fifteen, I tried coming out to my mom. I was sitting on my bed crying as I tried to find the right words. She just stares at me. "Gianna, do you like girls?" she finally asked. Yes, I told her, as weak as a mouse. She asked if I was still a girl. I told her yes because I was scared and unsure of my answer. "Good, because you'll always be my little girl no matter what."

She meant to comfort me, but I just feel sick again. When I told my mom that I didn't wanna go to college, she yelled at me and told me she's disappointed. She said I had to go to college, so I wouldn't regret it like she did. She tells me to be a criminal justice major like she wanted to be. Living vicariously through me. I told her I didn't wanna work in criminal justice. She was mad at me. That same heavy knot formed in my stomach as she yelled. I eventually decided to go to college, partially because I wanted to please her, and partially because I wanted to escape.

Escape. The easiest escape from my mother always used to be going to my dad's house. It was great when I was younger. We would go hiking, biking, canoeing, swimming, to the beach, to tag sales and many other adventures. I was too young to see that my dad was suffering. Being with my sister and I was the only time he was happy. Over the years, only seeing us one day a week took a toll on him. His mental health began to decline rapidly. It was to the point where I could see the pain in his eyes. I watched him lose himself. He would never clean, the house was always a mess. He would drink seven cups of coffee a day, but still slept

almost the entire time I was at his house. He didn't wanna go out or do anything. The fun outdoor adventures we used to have turned into me sitting on the couch in silence for hours while he slept. So now, for the past few years, I've felt like I had nowhere to go. Being at school was better than anything else. In the summer, I miss being at school. It was the only place I could be myself.

Just like you. I watch my weight, just like you. You got bangs, just like me. I hate myself, just like you. You dyed your hair red, just like me. I let people treat me like shit, just like you. You got long false eyelashes, and long fake nails just like Megan. You want me to be a criminal justice major just like you would've been. You're trying to force a connection between us and relate to me. When I do everything I can to prevent it. It kills me when people tell me I'm just like you. Especially when dad says it, because all he does is complain about you. Sometimes it makes me wonder if I am like you. Am I destined to become this horrible person?

Resilience? I kept all of this inside, for years. It wasn't until the past two years or so that my sister, Megan and I got close. While talking about it won't solve anything, it makes me feel like I'm not alone. I don't know what caused this experience. I'll never understand why my mom doesn't like me. I've always wondered if it was something I did. Maybe she would treat me how she's supposed to if I was better. But what does it really mean to be better? She has been treating me like this for as long as I can remember. I see how close my best friend is with her mom. It makes my stomach turn, but at the same time, I still feel happy for

them. I wish I had that. But I really don't know if I would prevent her actions. It's caused me so much pain. But seeing how my mom truly is, I don't think I would wanna have a relationship with someone like her. I don't really remember anything from before my mom started treating me like this.

For a while, I didn't really understand. But the older I got, I would just feel a tight knot in my stomach a lot of the times I'd talk to my mom. Now I just feel like I can't connect with her. At this point, she's just a person in my life, not my mom. I'm unsure if these experiences affected how I present myself to others or not. But it has made me very insecure and second guess every decision. I am always terrified of backlash, getting in trouble, someone getting mad at me. I typically hide my feelings and suppress my emotions, because I've always been too scared to have feelings around my mom.

Now I just bury all my emotions and over time, they've just been slowly consuming me. Even if I'm telling someone about something that really upset me, I always tell them that it's not a big deal, and I'm just being dramatic because that's what I always heard. I'm hoping now that I'm not living at home, I can break that tie between my mother and I. I don't wanna feel forced to have some sort of connection with her. I just want to feel free and be able to love myself.

Gianna Lipka is a psychology major at Lasell University. She is from East Haven, CT and wants to be a child therapist when she's older.

Transgender Athletes in Women's Sports

By
Annalee Messina

While the LGBTQ+ movement is more widely accepted than in the past, a strong point of contention is the inclusion of trans athletes in the category of their choosing, with more emphasis on male-to-female transitioners. A huge divide has emerged surrounding the question: Is it fair for athletes to compete with their gender identity when they could already have a biological leg up on their competition? Some claim that because the biological differences between men and women cannot be changed with hormonal therapy such as bone density, heart size, lung size, muscle mass, and more, trans athletes have an unfair advantage over cis-gender women. Those who argue the contrary say that because of the large loss of testosterone, a performance-enhancing hormone that is typically higher in male bodies, trans women lose a significant amount of their advantage when they undergo hormone therapy for over a year and even more so if the transition happened before puberty.

In the article "Professional transgender athletes: when "Inclusivity" goes too far" written by retired attorney and professor of legal studies, Daniel Shannon, the author cites multiple examples of trans women who beat out their cisgender competitors as well as biological evidence showing the advantages that trans athletes may have. Differing from Shannon's views, Erica Sullivan, an Olympic-winning swimmer, details her opinion experiences with trans athletes in "Why I'm Proud to Support Trans Athletes like Lia Thomas." Sullivan speaks on how every athlete has advantages unique to themselves but no one speaks up when a cis athlete has a biological edge over their competition. Based on argumentative

rhetorical analysis, Shannon's argument is stronger because his opinions are backed up by specific evidence that supports his claim while Sullivan cites her own experiences.

Research on Shannon and Sullivan's credentials is necessary to help the reader understand where they're coming from and the way they write. As previously said, Sullivan is an Olympic athlete and therefore very qualified to discuss the experiences female athletes may face with the inclusion of trans women. She is also a member of the LGBTQ+ community which could explain her reasons for advocating. Sullivan writes, "I feel incredibly grateful that coming out as gay never kept me from being able to participate in the sport I love" (Sullivan, 2021). Contrasting with Sullivan, Shannon is not an athlete, and it's unclear if he ever was. Shannon was a successful lawyer specializing in taxation who went on to teach at the University of Providence. Since Shannon is not a well-known columnist, it was difficult to find information that could explain what influenced his views on this topic.

Using this information, Sullivan has stronger credentials to inform and influence readers. As an athlete, the inclusion of trans athletes would directly impact her and her work while Shannon's life would likely continue undisturbed. Her opinion illustrates what some of the supposed "victims" believe is the best course of action which should always be considered when discussing a decision to revolutionize any industry. However, one person's feelings are not enough to convince readers' minds. Argumentative evidence is necessary to

provide strong reasons why or why not to support an issue.

Another difference between Shannon and Sullivan's arguments was their use of the 3 persuasive rhetorics: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. Sullivan's argument focused on Ethos which appeals to the speaker's status or authority, in this case, her authority as a successful athlete, making the audience more likely to trust her. In the opening sentence of her op-ed Sullivan writes, "This year at the Tokyo Olympics, I saw my wildest dreams come true as I stood on the podium, an out gay silver medalist ..." (Sullivan, 2021). This sentence subtly establishes her expertise as an athlete and gets the reader to understand that she is qualified to discuss this topic. She continues by writing, "I have been given a platform to advocate for my community..." (Sullivan, 2021). Again she emphasizes her position of authority in the athletic community as a way to get the audience to trust her opinion. Contrasting with Sullivan, Shannon uses Logos in his persuasive writing. Logos appeal to the audience's reason, building up logical arguments often with evidence. Shannon provides several real-world examples of transgender women who transformed from average to extraordinary athletes post-transition. Shannon explains, "In 2019, ... [Lia] Thomas held no university records; ...had yet to reach the top of the podium at the NCAA Swimming Meet,... in November 2021, Thomas dominated the competition, winning three events, setting Meet and University records while recording the fastest NCAA collegiate times in all three events..." (Shannon, 2022). Shannon is stating facts to support his argument that athletes like Thomas should not be allowed to compete against cis women.

Shannon's persuasive technique is stronger because it doesn't rely on who he is but rather on the proof that he found while researching. He presents this evidence before diving into his opinion which allows the reader to develop their first reactions without Shannon's beliefs clouding their decision-making. Sullivan's argument is strong because she is someone who would be affected; however, if she paired this with evidence to back up her claims, her writing would undoubtedly be strengthened.

The purpose behind Sullivan and Shannon's articles can also contribute to the strength of their writing and ultimately their stance on this issue. Based on the title alone, "Why I'm Proud to Support Trans Athletes like Lia Thomas," one could gather that Sullivan's purpose is to display support and her allyship for the trans-athlete community. Sullivan then describes a display of support she participated in, "I'm proud to be one of more than 300 NCAA, Team USA and Olympic swimmers who signed an open letter... in support of Lia [Thomas] and all transgender and nonbinary swimmers" (Sullivan, 2021). Sullivan wants to show her support and use her name to provide evidence that the readers should as well. Shannon however, aims to convince the audience that trans women have an innate biological advantage over ciswomen and thus, should be excluded from women's sports. Shannon writes, "... If you are already 6-foot-3 with oversized hands, feet, and huge muscular frame, you will still be 6-foot-3 with oversized hands and feet with a slightly less muscular frame a year after testosterone suppression and, 2) The NCAA admits ... that it doesn't actually know if only one year of suppression is sufficient for every transgender woman, especially when they start with such a higher level of testosterone..." (Shannon, 2022). Shannon's

purpose is argumentative with a basis in facts while Sullivan's is a show of allyship.

It's difficult to compare Sullivan and Shannon's purposes because each is a very different type of writing from the other. However, based on the ability to argue their point while maintaining their purpose, Shannon's purpose is stronger. Sullivan relies on her personal experiences, which can be helpful when trying to garner support but does not help her argue the point that trans women should be included. Shannon argues using evidence from multiple sources which strengthens his purpose significantly.

Shannon makes a stronger case because he provides specific facts to support his claims, whereas Sullivan only draws from personal experience. Throughout this project, it became evident that evidence is crucial in creating and supporting an opinion as it relies on fact instead of feeling. Public debate on this topic can be very messy. It's very personal and emotional to many people as it deals with the inclusion of a historically discriminated group of individuals. However, it's important to have these debates to come to a better consensus that could provide a satisfying solution for this complicated issue.

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Is There a Purpose?

By

Caroline A. Morrell

Content Warning: The narrative contains content related to self-harm and suicide.

It's time to say goodbye. Wrapped in a blanket and strapped down to the stretcher, you're going to a better place, they say. The ambulance doors opened just enough space for one and that one was fifteen-year-old me. Frightened by what was to come next, all my memories flourished through my brain.

By chance, everyone in life is entitled to their own purpose, something to keep their life worth living. Some sought change and some sought forgiveness but I always found my purpose too complex to find. "What would make me whole?" I questioned this constantly and yet no answer was found. Questions are what keeps my mind content but, my curiosity always got the best of me. I'd find myself inquiring about everything and anything specifically when it came to myself and the problems I've faced. I suddenly stopped searching for the answers and started drowning, everything seemed hopeless. For over a year, I drowned in my insecurities, anxiety, and fear that I'll never float again. My future became obsolete as my desire to strive plummeted, but my struggles were beyond discrete which caused my family to be blindsided by my final straw. Feeling suffocated by nothing but emotion became mentally and physically draining. The thought of being relieved of all this weight was intriguing but I'd never act on an irrational thought— until I did.

Christmas was just around the corner, the essence of cinnamon was everywhere, and hot cocoa was the season's specialty drink. Families were whole and children were

flushed with joy, except for me. Dreading the holiday season is unheard of, but I was never inclined to feel the warmth of them. If anything, holidays used to be tiresome and provoked sadness considering I never knew my extended family like others did. It was always just my siblings, parents, and I—to make it worse my sister was born on Christmas so it wasn't really anyone's day but hers. My little sister Madeline always and still loves Christmas and its ambiance. Her lists were always extraneous along with the smile she had while making them. My holiday spirit was stripped from me the night someone took advantage of me while being unconscious. I've always been fixated on dates and December 29th, 2019 will forever stick with me as it forced me to lose my purpose, motivation, and will to live. When Christmas of 2020 came around, that date would ricochet throughout my brain, always coming and going until I had enough. One night, around 2 a.m. I succumbed to my darkest side with peace knowing all my suffering shall end, until I woke up.

While taken away, all I could see were the neighborhoods I was leaving behind. The windows were lengthy and narrow but circular and only I could see out no one could see in. Fortunately, Chee— my mother's friend— is a paramedic and by fate was assigned to my ambulance. She looked at me with great sorrow and watery eyes, "I'm so sorry my love," she stuttered and the rest of the ride was silent. While the doors opened, a huge yellow saying reading,

“Fuller Hospital,” appeared with a medic approaching me.

“Welcome! Just stay calm; we’ll bring you straight to the designated floor,” this assurance partially worked but being thrown into new experiences was never a strength of mine. I looked around, everything was secure; doors locked, alarms armed, and staff equipped. Newcomers were strip searched and for women, pregnancy tests were enforced. This system wasn’t only degrading but unnecessary considering to get here, all our personals were seized prior to entering. I’ve never felt so alone in such a crowded space.

After my search, I finally changed out of these crispy blue baggy scrubs and into a wrinkly nightgown—apparently my clothes had to be rummaged through before I got my “clothing privileges” back. Through time, I realized some of the others weren’t ever permitted to get theirs back as they’d strut around in their own shaggy nightgowns. It wasn’t even an hour after my arrival when one girl—with an appearance scarily similar to mine—was detained and brought to the back for “calming” remedies, while the others sat at group therapy. Screaming and crying echoed throughout the hallways but everyone was still. I quickly learned with the help of my roommate, that anything “bad” was normalized to the point where no one even bats an eye at the screaming or fighting.

The one thing I didn’t think I’d learn was that privacy was no longer a right but a privilege. Five-minute checks were enforced and using the bathroom was only allowed if one got permission to do so. At this moment, I realized how much I valued my independence and despised those who threatened that. Though, I was still allowed to do my own laundry after regaining

privileges—how nice of them right? I also wasn’t allowed to sleep alone, instead I was assigned a roommate, Alana. We were instructed to aid in “surveilling” and “caring” for each other. Thankfully, tolerating my roommate wasn’t even in question as we clicked instantly. My hands were trembling, my wounds were apparent, but still she accepted me so I did the same in return. Whenever fights broke out, she’d grab me by the hand and whisper, “We don’t have to see this, let’s go in our room.” She was the type to always wear long sleeves and knee-high socks for only she could see what lies beneath them. Alana had been in and out of inpatients since she was ten and was at Fuller four months before my arrival. Still, the confidence within her enlightened my hope considering I knew she was struggling and yet she’d never let that affect her treatment towards others.

Throughout my five-day stay, when alone, I observed the weather and its effect on those around me. Yes, it was peculiar but so was the difference between morning and night; and snow and sun. Most were content during the day—minus the few incidents—but it was after-hours when chaos arose. Unfortunately, most nights were tiresome, but thankfully none were as bad as the third. I was introduced to an unfamiliar community but somehow, we all found resonance with each other. We didn’t know anyone but could still acknowledge that we all hit rock bottom for us to be here, which was enough to feel comfortable. For the longest time, I put my curiosity on hold but here, I let all questions and observations skyrocket. My brain would go from, “Why are they here?” “What makes them tick the way they do?” “Will they ever get out.” I became fixated on my surroundings as they were too chaotic to be ignored. I learned increasingly about each of my fellow

patients which finally provoked my purpose to come to light.

Everyone here came with extraneous trauma, including my fifteen-year-old self. By listening to their stories and watching their self-damaging actions that ranged from minor to beyond severe, I could see through their pain and only admired their resilience and bravery. Though, not everyone had a happy conclusion, and in the environment we were forced into, no one had control. Alana had endured inpatients throughout her whole life and was at Fuller four months before my arrival. During after-hours some girls would sit in their doorway to talk to the others across the hall, I never was inclined to do so until my third night there. Even today, I still regret the fun I had; girls were flaunting their past and present relationships, others like me just observed, but we all laughed. The type of laughter I know I missed, when your stomach aches but in the best way possible. One of the girls, with thick dark brunette hair like charcoal framing her face and more beautiful than ever joked, "Yeah my boyfriend called me so many times today," we all listened even though every one of us had witnessed her flirtatious acts with the other males in the unit. Another confronted her, "You do know we all only get five minutes on the phone since you hog it with your fifteen boyfriends?" We all harmoniously laughed. With all the talk and temporary happiness, I quickly became blind to my own roommate's suffering until I heard the loudest gasp.

Seeing this type of damage inflicted on another was something I've never witnessed before and would never wish my worst enemy to see. I don't think anyone really understands the complexity of fight or flight responses and always forgets about the freeze. An inability to even speak or move is

temporarily paralyzing and forever haunting. The mental image fails to escape my mind as it was truly an out of body experience. Thankfully though, my initial turn around and delayed scream was alarming enough for the officials to take care of the situation. I have never seen Alana since then, but I will forever wish for her safety and mental resolution.

After that horrid night, I prayed constantly that I'd make it home in time for Christmas, not for me, but for my family. The thought of being the nuisance that destroys Christmas was unfathomable, I didn't want to play that role. Therefore, I tried to get better by joining group therapy, eating all three meals a day, and simply being more attentive so the workers could witness my improvements whether it was false or not.

The time finally came where I was seen as "mentally stable enough" to go back into the real world and reconnect with my family again. The jealousy from the others was surprising. One girl even whispered to another, "How is it fair she gets to go home when I've been here longer than she?" I understood their frustrations though being detained against their will, so I just brushed their comments off. While being escorted out of the unit I couldn't help but cry, I was leaving the few friends I made behind and I'd have to explain to my family and friends what'd happen to me. My anxiety was almost escalating per second until I saw my mom. Usually, I lack all sentiment but at this moment, I ran up to her and hugged her so hard she could have fallen. My stay was over and yet three years later, all my memories from Fuller Hospital remain intact.

These cruelties pushing actual children over the edge became my motivation. I acknowledged that one day, having the

authority to prevent and serve justice to those who can't even speak for themselves is a necessity of mine. Too many people with instances like mine go unaccounted for, it was time for that to end along with the stigma behind these instances. The human brain and its behavior always intrigued me, but I figured psychology wasn't enough to satisfy me. I must take it a step further and join the field of law. Having been one who's endured and observed injustice, I know it's the only way for me to fulfill my purpose.

The end result is finally great enough for me to continue pushing forward but I'll never forget my past, instead I use it to my advantage as it broadened my perspective and forced me to find my drive in life.

Caroline Morrell is a Law & Public Affairs major. She is from Abington, MA and has a miniature dachshund.

Puppet on a String

By
Colleen Newcomb

“You, my friend, are a puppet on a string.”

My muscles quaked with the effort to stay centered on the little boxes of the pointe shoes attached to my toes. My teacher approached me and steadied my frame with a gentle but firm touch. She placed her arm around my back, and with the other hand, she pinched her fingers together. and I watched my reflection as she placed her fingers on top of my head and raised them up to the ceiling. Her tall frame seemed to tower over me, and the muscular build of her body was both menacing and graceful; her long hair tied into a tight bun at the back of her head.

“This is your string.” she stated matter-of-factly, in her light voice, “Use it to your advantage; it will guide you through your movements.” I nodded vigorously and watched as she released me. I tried to feel my string, but it seemed not to exist.

Looking up, I imagined the string, and in the process, my body slipped to the side, and I crashed back to earth. My teacher glanced back at me with a smile, “It will take some time for your string to strengthen.”

I gazed back at the barre, looking at all the other girls. Most were like me and had not become in tune with their puppeteer yet, but others seemed to float in the room, their string almost visible with how ramrod straight they were. The illusion did not break as they completed the exercise either. My feet ached, but they looked as fresh as a field of flowers, with no aches or pains marring their faces into distorted images. I felt myself yearning to be as they were, strong and graceful, everything a ballerina should

be, not half-broken and weak as I seemed to be.

Time dragged on in that class, seemingly endless drills exemplifying my elephant-like gracefulness. To be completely honest, I felt like a fish flopping on the end of a line, not like I had a string connecting me to the heavens. The class ended, and as I made my way out, I was stopped by the weight of my teacher’s hand on my shoulder. “I wanted to tell you that I know you are trying, and I’m going to tell you to try harder. Do not give up on that string; it will guide you to the best you can be.” All I managed was a small nod, and my face twisted into a semblance of a smile. My feet hurt, and the desire to speed home and cry about how horrifically that practice had gone consumed me. My face must have betrayed me because my teacher pulled me into a hug. “Don’t be upset. It took me years to find my string; yours will come to you soon because you are determined.”

The image of my teacher not being the definition of graceful ballet walking was hard to picture. She was always so perfect; her posture was straight, and her legs strong; balancing appeared second nature to her. She held her body in perfect control at all times. How could she have possibly struggled like I am? The question ate at me as time went on.

Weeks went on, and I felt like I was constantly fighting to keep myself from becoming a pile of mush on the floor. Slowly, I started to realize that the seconds I balanced were longer, the jumps I did were higher, and the turns I did were faster and more controlled. Every day, I pushed myself

to be better. I worked to strengthen my core and pushed my muscles until they shook. Everything I did, I wanted to be my best.

Myself and my string were becoming more in tune, and I gradually noticed the way I could control my body better than before. I was becoming one with my string.

The months until the recital began to tick down. The clock of what I felt to be my imminent doom was closing down on what would surely destroy me as a person. The heart palpitations I felt when it was mentioned were painful.

The recital had always left a sour taste in my mouth; it made me anxious about how perfect I felt I had to be, but now that I was with the advanced ballerinas, the stress seemed paramount. I studied the calendar as my teacher methodically pointed out the dates and times of extra rehearsals. It always mounted up during crunch time. Everyone became more tense and afraid to make mistakes, not from fear of our teacher but from embarrassment of failing in front of each other.

Every practice was incredible; we were coming together as a class, movements becoming synchronized, and our bond as dancers grew. We were more comfortable with one another and able to guide each other through movements. An excellent performance seemed attainable. I felt that I could actually succeed as a dancer. I was spending more time in the studio, and I was a different dancer than at the start of the year. My teacher was a constant reassurance guiding me, helping me fortify my string. I loved that I was becoming better; balancing on your toes for three hours can be very unpleasant, and my increased skills seemed to help soothe aching feet. I watched the lead ballerina and felt my body sway as I

watched her perfect form. Her string suspended her perfectly, and she was sure of its ability to always catch her.

The evening of the first performance drew near; the tension seemed to hang in the air like a thick fog. It suffocated you and made you feel as if the air was crushed from your lungs. Doubt began to set in for everyone; faces that bore smiles in days past looked haggard and worn, and the collective heart rate of everyone in the room increased; movements were sloppier than before. Our production of the Nutcracker would close the first half of the show, and if it did not go smoothly, there was a very real chance that people would not return for the second half unless obligated to by relatives. We were made aware of this fact almost constantly by our studio owner whenever she saw us. Our teacher was quick to reassure us if we felt uncomfortable after the owner's quips. "Girls," she would remind us, "this is just a recital, have fun! Do not stress!"

At this point in time, I felt confident in my ability to control my body, and my string and I were on the best of terms. I rarely had difficulty holding balances for long periods of time, and when my teacher saw this, she always took the time to make sure I knew that she was proud of me. She worked the night shift at the hospital, but she would always stay late to help me with anything I needed. Hugs were given after good days and tissues after bad ones. Her presence ensured that I could take a deep breath before doing something and allow the thoughts to run smoothly in my mind. Before it always felt as if someone had shot a missile through my brain, causing chaos and havoc, forcing my body into shambles barely resembling the movement intended by the teacher, but I felt I had cracked the code, finally being the dancer I wanted to be so badly.

The night of the performance was here sooner than any of us expected, but the excitement was visible in the bouncing movements of the dancers as they ran to the dressing rooms. Faces lit up when the blue decorations hanging in the doorways greeted us. Balloons floated around the room almost as if they were running from the little children who chased them. Performances usually resulted in the best of moods as our hard work paid off, compliments from parents and teachers fueling our desire to succeed. The smell of hairspray and the glitter of costumes always separate the dancers from the non-dancers. Trails of sequins litter the ground, leaving a festive feel to the bland lobby of the auditorium. The mood had been set; the audience expected a show.

Backstage, I wanted to disappear into a dark, silent room. The migraine split across my head like a jackhammer on old asphalt. I kept repeating to myself that I could do this. The music from the stage blared obnoxiously loud as I waited to make my entrance. Shaking from the pain, I made the final adjustments to my pointe shoes and tutu before I was mandated to appear before the audience. Cold tendrils of fear and anxiety wrapped around me, clawing at my muscles and making me tense. I tried to push them away, but it was too late; I was supposed to be out in 4...3...2...1.

I hit the music perfectly, the smile on my face feeling as authentic as a zero-dollar bill. I could not find my string; in my haste, I felt I had forgotten to connect it. How could I be so stupid? The thoughts raced through me as I landed rather awkwardly out of a turn. Panic swelled in my chest; I could not do this without my puppeteer.

Spinning around with the choreography, my body slipped off kilter. My feet seemed to

move like boulders were attached to them, and my arms seemed to have become cooked spaghetti, flopping about with no control. The epitome of horrible moments occurred when I felt the earth slide alarmingly off-kilter as I landed from my grand jeté. But I did land, I realized; at the very least, I had not fallen completely. The thought encouraged me, and with the final beats of the music, I regained the composure I was sure I had packed into the wrong suitcase. I hit the triple-turn with grace I had never before exemplified. The moment hit me, and I landed with a smile I had actually meant. The worst was over. It seemed I had lost my string but discovered myself; I was my own puppet master.

Watching the performance back, I was a disaster through three-quarters of it, but it is still my favorite dance to watch. I see myself discovering the true meaning of the string: not a safety net, but a part of me. I was no puppet on a string; my limbs were tied to me, not some invisible puppeteer in the sky. My teacher spoke to me after that performance; her face almost lit up when she saw me, "I'm so proud of you!" As she crushed me to her chest, I could smell the perfume she wore on special occasions; it was comforting. Her face grew serious after a moment, mouth setting into her signature firm line, "You figured out what I meant at the beginning of the year, yes?" I nodded with confidence.

"Good." Her eyes shone with unshed tears as she emphasized this word, and a smile reclaimed her features. It was simple, really: I needed the string to understand my value, and without her confidence, I would still have remained a shell of the dancer I became. All because of a simple invisible string.

Colleen Newcomb is a Journalism major and is hoping to minor in photography. Her hometown is New Bedford, MA. She has

driven over 9,000 miles across the country on a month-long trip.

To Lose is to Love

By

Karna O'Garro

Throughout my life I have had many experiences that shaped me into the young woman I am today. Many of these experiences were life changing and changed my perspective on how I saw the world, the society around me, my family, and lastly myself.

One thing that life taught me young is that there is no age limit for grief. My first encounter with grief was when I was five. I was told that my cousin and his mother had passed. During the mid 2000s, gun violence was at an all-time high in Boston and sadly the ones I loved became victims to it.

Growing up as a young black girl, the adults around me attempted to shelter me because they believed children were too young to understand heavy topics. My shelter was ruined, leaving me exposed to the real truths of the world. Grief had grabbed ahold of my hand and walked with me on my way through chaos. Experiencing death that young made me realize that the world is a lot colder than what adults allow you to see. Now as a five-year-old, I believed that the world we are born into owes us nothing. The people in real life are not as kind as the ones in the cartoons and everyone is not to be trusted. Going through this at such a young age made me mature, it made me stronger.

Looking back now, I shouldn't have had to be strong. I was supposed to be a child and everyone else was supposed to be strong for me, not the other way around. It's hard being told to wipe your tears and to hold your head high because no one else around you could. It's hard having to wrap my small arms around the base of my mother's body reminding her that even though grief is

screaming that she is alone, I am right here. I had come to realize that death isn't something you get over; it's something you learn to live with.

After two long years of countless trials and court cases, my family had finally received justice for the two lives that were lost. Receiving justice didn't fix much though and over time my family had grown apart. Death either brings people together or tears them apart. We happened to get the bad end of the stick. This was my first lesson. It's hard to sit in a room where grief drowns you. As a seven-year-old, I had to realize that my family didn't love each other any less, we just didn't know how to address the pain. I wish someone had told me that death is not a plague and that once it passes I'm still allowed to talk about it. For a long time I kept all my thoughts and questions to myself, afraid that I would reopen wounds that were on their way to healing but who said we had to put a limit on our grief? Why is it that one moment we are screaming, but the next we're silent? Who created all these unwritten rules and why did I follow them?

As I grew older, I thought I had gotten over the loss of my loved ones. The thoughts of how I could have saved them became less frequent and the heavy feeling of betrayal from God seemed to lighten. I thought I was finally done grieving but grief doesn't shrink or go away. We just learn to coexist with it. You think you're over something until you're face to face with it again. Leaving you to realize that it's easier to run from your past until it becomes your present again. Life has a weird way of teaching you lessons that you've tried to ignore or haven't completely grasped.

On December 24th, I was woken up to news that my god-brother had passed away the previous night. My first reaction was “Why does God take all my favorite people?” Michael, also known as Mikey, is not my biological brother nor are we actually related. Our parents grew up with each other so when he was born my dad was blessed with being his godfather. Regardless of us not being related, we treated each other like siblings. Our bond meant a lot to me because not only was he my brother, but he was also a friend. He made it known that he’d love me while he was here and even once he was gone.

Death at eighteen is a lot different than experiencing it at five. My world got a lot darker. I felt like there was a cloud above my head following me everywhere I went letting everyone know that the storms were winning. I had lost my spark. My bright pink hair turned black and the smile that I always had on my face fell flat. The weeks leading up to his burial bled together. Death made me lose all sense of time. Everyday played out just like the one before it. I felt so stuck. The fact that I had lost my brother never really registered to me until the day of his funeral. My second lesson. Grief is just love with nowhere to go. Being surrounded by grieving people is a blessing. To be surrounded by so much love. My brother had believed that not many people loved him but everyone who came out that day proved him wrong. I just wish he had been able to experience that love while he was here. You don’t cry for the things you don’t love. I don’t think I’ve ever seen so many people in despair but they had only felt that way because of love. Lesson number three. To love means you are okay with losing what was once yours. I know I sound extremely poetic right now but this wasn’t always my mindset. It took a lot of confusion and misunderstanding before I got

to this place. I was angry, bitter, confused and a lot of the time I still am. It's hard to accept that someone you love can be here and with a blink of an eye gone the next.

At five, death didn't make any sense but now at eighteen it's the only thing I can think of. We're living on borrowed time and losing the ones around us is a vivid reminder. For the following months I felt like I watched my life fly before my eyes. I felt like what I was feeling was never ending until I learned that “All wounds heal with time and if it doesn't, you name them something other than wounds and allow them to stay.”

Lesson number four. With time the pain passes. I had let my pain fester inside of me like an infection. I let my pain turn me into something I wasn't. I was destroying myself as a way to show my love. How could I continue on like normal with his absence ? This mindset sent me down a dark hole. Lesson number five. You don't have to allow pain to make you into something you're not. It seems a lot easier to fall into temptation or to sulk around until you realize that the person in the mirror is not the person you once loved.

As I continued my journey through grief I felt isolated and as if no one understood what I was going through. While everyone's lives seemed to be progressing I was still stuck in December. I was still trying to wrap my head around the truth. I was still fighting to accept my reality. In hopes of finding a middle ground I turned to multiple different outlets. I wrote more, listened to more music, I read, and I even fell in love with poetry again. Words turned into my bestfriend, whether they were someone else's or my own. People I had never met were putting my feelings into words. It made me feel seen, I felt heard. Lesson number six. Sometimes you have to be stripped to

your core to find your purpose again. I wrote about the pain death brought me and I shared it with others. What I thought I was only feeling, others were too. I am constantly learning that beauty is rooted in pain and to appreciate the things we love we have to experience loss.

Kaena O'Garro is an exercise science major. She is from Boston, MA and has been writing poetry since she was 12.

The Beautiful Smell of Blueberry Pancakes

By
Mia Pineault

The sweet smell of blueberry pancakes took over my nose as soon as I entered the door. It had been way too long since I had eaten my grandma's famous blueberry pancakes. My dad's side of the family lives in New Jersey, while my family lives in Connecticut, so I don't get to see them as much as my mom's side of the family. With school, sports, and work, making that hour car ride only happened a couple of times a year. No matter the time and distance between me and my grandma, the connection did not change.

As I entered the front door, I was excited to finally be able to talk in person. We were directed to come upstairs and eat before the pancakes got cold. The second I ripped my old, dirty, Nike sneakers off and threw them onto the ground, I sprinted up the carpeted stairs on all fours. I sat in my usual seat around the wooden round table. Although the wooden seats weren't very comfortable without cushions, I felt in place. A stack of three large, fluffy blueberry pancakes was placed in front of me. There was no way my eleven-year-old self could finish all of these. To make the pancakes perfect, I drowned the pancakes in maple syrup. I picked up my fork in my right hand and stabbed the pancakes. I was never really good with cutting my food so I would just skip that step. As soon as I took a bite of the pancakes, it immediately started to melt in my mouth. All of the sweet and warm flavors mixing in my mouth were coming together. My grandma and her amazing blueberry pancakes were exactly what I needed on a 58-degree, rainy, Saturday morning.

As great as my blueberry pancakes were, my grandma was that much better. She had a playful personality and always seemed to stay positive despite everything that may have been going on. She might've lived alone in her small apartment, but her love was unmatched. She cared for everyone and everything like no other. She supported all of her children and grandchildren no matter how close and how far she was from us. On rare occasions, I was lucky enough to have her cheering for me on the sideline of my soccer games. Every minute I was able to spend with her, I always found myself learning something new. We would do arts and crafts, bake, and even do laundry, which was one of her favorite activities. It didn't matter what we did as long as we did it together. She loved to bring me places, especially to her favorite store, Dollar Tree, where we would always spend so much money. She was a problem solver and always came up with a creative solution to any big or small issue. Her positivity and openness to anything rubbed off on me more and more as I hung out with her.

Two years later, I wasn't sure what to expect after she moved into the nursing home. My eyes opened quickly as I felt the car make a sharp turn. After a one-and-a-half-hour car ride, we were finally here. Through the front window, I could make out a weirdly shaped white blob. As we drove closer, the blob turned into a big building that stretched pretty far back on the property. White fences hugged the perimeter of the property and I could see some metal tables and chairs placed to the left side of the building. I pulled my face off against the window leaving a little fog where my nose was

meeting the glass. When the car stopped, I quickly jumped out and slammed the door behind me. I ran up to the handicap button so I could beat my brother to press it. At the same time, the huge automatic doors slowly opened up towards me. One foot in front of the other, I entered into this new world. I was in awe. I had never been to a place like this before. People were relaxing on couches, drinking coffee and tea, and some were even taking naps in the big, red chairs.

My eyes kept moving from left to right, not sure what to focus on. I was instructed to walk down this hallway towards the back of the building, not sure if it was going to ever end. My anxiety grew stronger with each step that I took. The rest of the walk I fidgeted with my necklace. I finally stopped in front of another large white door, but it wasn't automatic this time.

I put my weight into the handle and pushed forward. My eyes opened wide, but I was surprised to see it was nothing like the room I had entered earlier. My head turned back and forth a couple of times until they were drawn to the tags wrapped around people's ankles. They remind me of a carnival wristband but a bit bigger and bulkier. A nice lady showed us to a small, but comfortable bedroom in the way back of the building. The second I took a step into the room, I saw her. I smiled, and said, "Hi Grandma". She looked right into my eyes and gave me a confused look. With no response, my smile quickly turned around.

I did not think that something like this would ever happen until I experienced it myself firsthand. I heard about people who lost their memory, but maybe I didn't believe it could happen to someone so close to me. I felt like it was just the other day she was in her kitchen making blueberry pancakes for me and my brother. Now, she

was locked away in a nursing home unable to even remember who and where she was. This sounds like a horrible nightmare that no one should have to experience. I was optimistic that her personality may still be lingering within her, but at times I wasn't so sure. My mind was confused, wondering if it would ever be the same again. I believed that only time could tell, but in reality I knew that this was not how dementia worked.

I thought it was weird that we were sitting at a random wooden kitchen table at the end of the hallway. Stuffed away in a corner, I felt trapped just like all of the patients trapped behind the large white door. Even though I was on the other side of the building, away from the cafeteria, my nose was still being taken over by the oddly smelling food. The mixed smell of the cleaning products and cafeteria food lingered around the whole building. I wondered if the patients got used to this because I don't know how much longer my nose could take it. My father, my grandma's son, pulled out a puzzle from the board game shelf and dumped it onto the table. The large pieces fell from the box, hitting the table, and covering most of the area. I picked up a piece that fell on the floor. I turned it over and there was a blob of color on it. I was not able to make out what it was. Looking down at the animals presented on the pieces reminded me of the puzzles I was doing at 5 years old. I felt too old to be doing a puzzle this easy, so I observed quietly. Watching my grandma have so much fun putting this simple puzzle together didn't make sense to me. One piece at a time, the puzzle was slowly coming together. Seeing the complete puzzle made me realize something, it helped me to put my own pieces together. The realization is that sometimes as you get older, you also get younger at the same time. Unable to be independent anymore. Relying on others to

care for you. Confused about your environment and not exactly sure who everyone in your life is. In a way, you're hopeless. However, you may not know it, but you have your family in support. They are always by your side to be with you and take care of you no matter what. One thing I never thought is that we would have to treat a 76-year-old woman as a little girl.

I have always been someone with so many thoughts and so many unanswered questions. I am always worried about what is going to happen next, instead of living in the moment. I get so worked up on if I am doing the right thing at the right time, that I didn't know how to enjoy it as it was happening. I tend to need something to look forward to to keep me going, but it also makes me anxious at the same time. Watching my grandma go through this life-changing experience has allowed me to step back and look at life from a different perspective. Every day, we go about our lives, thinking about our future and what our plans are for the weekend. Instead of worrying about what's to come next, it is important to take in all the time you have and enjoy every day that is given to you. Watching my grandma change from enjoying her own life and family to not being able to remember who she was, I learned that it is extremely important to not take the time you do have for granted. You

never know what will happen because anything is possible. You never know what the next day will bring, so it is important to stay positive and enjoy every second you have with you and your loved ones.

Sometimes I wish that I ate my blueberry pancakes a little slower and savored that special moment because I wasn't sure that it was going to be the last time I had the chance to eat them. I always think maybe my grandma's life moved so fast for me because I wasn't able to see her very often, but I was glad that she always made hanging out with her a great experience. I hope to continue this mindset and enjoy every second that my life brings. I want to be able to turn all the bad days into something positive so that I never waste the time I have. Once in a while, my family and I bring up those special memories we shared with my grandma, especially the ones that make us laugh. Even though my grandma is not with us today, everything she taught me and the positivity she brought into our family still lives on.

Mia Pineault is a Sports Management major. She is from Danbury, Connecticut, and is on the Women's soccer team at Lasell University.

The Hurdle Incident

By

Ka'lah Rucker

As I waited for the call of confirmation, the sunny, 75-degree weather started to feel like 98 degrees the way the sweat was forming on my face, dripping onto my hands. There were no clouds in sight or even a slight breeze to give me the satisfaction of cooling down. My braids down to my back started to feel heavier than usual as if it was starting to weigh me down. My mind was scrambled, it was telling me to back away but my body couldn't move until I heard the loud shot of the starting pistol go off. I was down on my hands, each hand had two fingers at the white line in front of me marking my starting position. My left foot was under my hip, knee to my stomach and my right a little further back on my tippy toes. I lifted my head as I saw the 400-meter track, split up into eight lanes. As I hovered over lane three, I would've never imagined that just running down the straightaway only 100 meters long would frighten me this much. Ten hurdles stood almost as tall as me. As someone who is five feet and two inches jumping over a literal obstacle in my way ten times had me trembling in my stance. As I waited in anticipation for the referee to yell to get ready, my heart was beating faster than a cheetah's run waiting to start a race I had no hope of winning.

I officially joined track my freshman year in high school just because my friend wanted someone to go to practice with. That freshman year led to my sophomore and now my junior year of high school. Three years of track where I was known for my jumping skills. For someone of my height, I had a pretty good long jump and with practice, over the years those skills developed my love of the triple jump. The idea of a long jump is to move back as far as

comfortable on the pavement and when ready you run towards the sandpit at the end, sprinting to your full capacity. When you reach the sandpit, you have to jump over a whiteboard without your feet touching it and landing as far as possible in the pit. The furthest I ever jumped was a little over average for girls in the city championship, 16 feet and 4 inches.

The triple jump has a similar setup to the long jump. The only difference is when you run, there is a certain white line (a mark) instead of a board where you are supposed to jump. As you run to the mark you have three jumps to get into the pit landing both feet into the sand. As I jump my arms reach over my head into a parallel position trying to stick my landing without falling. The longest I ever jumped there was 32 feet. That would get me to place in the top three every time.

Since those were the two events I was good at, it happened to be the same two events off to the side of the stadium away from the audience's point of view during track meets. I get a few observers here and there, but all the main events, such as running the 1 mile to the 100-meter dash and so on, were on the large track directly in front of the audience. I would hear everyone's screams of encouragement telling them to "Keep going, don't give up" or "Fight it until you make it!" I would only get encouragement from the few people who participated in my events as my audience and a few bystanders here and there. However, it wasn't anything as big or as loud as the other events were. It felt as if I wasn't doing something as grand as them even though I placed top three most

of the time. I was on the sidelines and encouraged myself to do good for the team.

Most of my practices consist of practicing my jumping skills. Although after a regular school day, track practice started as usual until my name was screamed at the top of my coach's lungs, "Ka'lah!" My face scrunched thinking somehow I was in trouble. The scream echoed across the track surrounding the huge football field covered in the fake low-cut grass behind the school. The scream that was directed towards me sent chills down my back. I ran across the track dashing towards my coach, Coach White.

"Yes, Coach you called me?" I stuttered wondering what was going on.

"Please try the hurdles for me. We have no girl hurdlers and just to get some points in that event for the school, I need you to try at city championships."

I froze in place. The boys that did hurdles on my team were all 5 foot 7 or taller and the hurdles they practiced over were at least to their chest they had to jump over. I only stood at 5 '2 and knew I had no hope of jumping over an obstacle almost my height. I could only imagine what women's hurdles heights are. "Yeah, I can't do that for you Coach, those hurdles are the same height as me. I would be jumping over another me! That's terrifying!" I announced.

"Drop down and give me 10 pushups," he demanded. All because I said I couldn't do something. I huffed as I got down in the pushup position and counted every time I got up from the ground out loud. When I finished my punishment, he pointed towards the hurdles and directed me to train with the hurdle coach and not to complain anymore.

I stood in front of an enemy no girl on my team wanted to face, and I'm starting to see why. The hurdles were upright in front of me and brought down to the lowest height possible. It was about vertical to my waist, and the anticipation of having to jump over one flooded my mind. *What if my foot gets caught and I fall? This is not even the height they use at City Championships, if I can't jump over this what hope do I have?* This obstacle was going to be the death of me and my mental state. On the other hand, I didn't take myself as a quitter and I had to at least try for the team.

Two weeks until the big city championship meet against all the schools in the district and I was the only representative of the O'Bryant girls hurdlers for my school. I knew I had to do it. In the first practice, I did warm-ups, my right leg was on the ground next to the hurdle and my left was cycled over the low hurdle repeatedly. The challenge was after. Standing in front of one and being able to leap over something that is lowered to half of my height. With the Long and Triple jump, nothing stood in my way and I had no worries about falling. This was completely different. I needed to jump off my left leg a few inches from the hurdle while running up towards it. When I jump my right lead leg needs to fully extend in front of me forcing my body to lean about parallel to my leg. My right arm needs to be 90 degrees up and my left arm should trail behind my left leg as I jump. So much to remember and try to attempt, left me still in a state of shock to even run towards the hurdle. It was my turn in line behind the boy hurdlers to run and jump. I snapped out of it and ran slowly, about 40% of my speed, while trying to remember how to correctly jump over the hurdle.

“Slam!” That was the sound of me going face first to the track made of asphalt almost taking a bite of it.

“Clank!” Following behind me slamming myself into the ground the hurdle trailed behind me with my foot caught pinning me down. The boys ran to check on me and made sure I was alright with a few scratches.

Shockingly I wanted to go again, the adrenaline in me had no fear when I faced the hurdle even though I face-planted. *One more time* I preached to myself. I ran up to the hurdle again and successfully jumped over it mindlessly going with the flow. It may not have been the technique but wildly swinging my legs over the hurdle as I jumped, I still did it. I was one of the best jumpers on the team. I was not going to let an obstacle stop me from succeeding. I was still shaking, hesitant before each jump, and did not want everyone to pity me again for falling as if I was a baby first learning to walk. I was going to successfully do this.

Two weeks had passed by faster than I would've hoped. The track meet was here, the biggest one of the year; no one would want to miss this, including the news channels who were broadcasting. As if I didn't already want to make a fool of myself, being on the main track in front of the whole stadium was something new to me. I was always doing the long and triple jump off the side but now probably thousands of people would see me compete this time, especially my teammates. It did excite me a little bit, being in front of everyone, having all these eyes on me watching what I could do gave me the rush I'd been missing out on.

As the staff was setting up the hurdles, the loudness of chitter chatter filled my ears as I stood in my lane vertically jumping up and

down to stay loose. My field of view was different here standing on the track then back there in the corner with the sandpits and other jumpers. There were thousands of people filling the stands to the point you couldn't see the silver benches that shone off from the blazing hot sun. The cameras from every angle I looked at were getting athletes from all over, warming up and getting ready for their events. Although mine was just about to begin. Before I knew it, I stared at the infinite void of the 10 hurdles that looked never-ending trailing down to the 100-meter finish line. Three girls to my right and two to my left, all from different schools I'm up against. They were all moving around trying to keep their muscles in motion ready for the race, I just knew they specialized in this event. The track started to become clear from the staff setting up the hurdles. My first race was about to begin.

As I got down in the starting position the referee shouted “Get ready,” and everyone stopped moving. “Get set”, every racer jolted there but in the air in the starting position, “Bang!” The shooting pistol went off and so did we. About 10 feet from my first hurdle, I was neck to neck with the five other girls. *Stride, extend my right and bend my left leg, lean down, and land together.* As I repeated the sequence in my head I managed to make it over the first hurdle. Only nine more to go. I landed on my feet and kept pushing forward, surprisingly keeping up. The second one approaching I'm losing speed, starting to become hesitant but if I did it once I could do it again, and so I did. Girls in lanes one and two left me in their shadow.

“Go Ka'lah you got this!” my team screams. “Keep going Ka'lah, don't stop!” my coach yells. I'm running out of breath but my team is yelling for me! They are noticing what I'm doing in real time. I keep

pushing as their comments fly through my ears motivating me to let go of my fears and push through. Although in doing so, I “Bang” slam into the ground, *deja vu*.

“Oooooo ” filled the stadium, losing my place against the others, but I didn’t let that affect me, my team was still screaming for me to keep going. I scraped my leg and I felt the burn on my shin, but I kept going no stopping in sight and the last six of the hurdles felt like a breeze as if I’d been doing this my whole life. Trying to catch up to fifth place at the last hurdle was my only chance to fly over it and gain a little more speed to the finish line. She was right in front of me looking back making sure I wasn’t catching up. Little did she know I came up right next to her and crossed the finish line 0.8 seconds before she did.

“Yes, nice job Ka’lah!” my coach screamed from the stands. I fell onto the track after

crossing the line, huffing and puffing, the rapid rise and fall of my chest trying to process what happened. I didn’t think it was going to be this enjoyable. The screaming fans are directly on the track with a new view of everything and a new exciting event. I did it and I want to do it again but even better than before!

Ka’lah Rucker is from Boston, Massachusetts. She is a freshman majoring in Fashion Merchandising and Management and during her high school years she created a dance club named Caribbean Culture Club, to get her community more involved in the Caribbean culture and different styles of dance. All while being captain of the Royal Tigers dance team at her high school and a jumper on the track team.

Identity Theft of a Middle School Girl

By
Isabella Schlim

“Obama has truly been the greatest president we could wish for in the States. I wish he could run for president every year I'm alive! Hillary will be the next best option, though. Not that self-centered prick, Trump,” my Mimi said with a scowl and roll of her eyes.

My Mimi was very persistent in her political beliefs. Obama was her hero, meaning Hillary was her pick for the upcoming 2016 election. I didn't have a real opinion on who I wanted to win because I had never really thought about politics, but seeing the face my Mimi made every time she heard the name “Trump” made me understand, you choose a side.

“Mom, please. Bella is here. We don't need to be discussing politics right now. Neither option this year is that good,” my mom sighed towards my Mimi as she gave her the mom look we all know too well. My dad just ignored the conversation altogether as he had no interest in arguing with my Mimi over a matter where he knew they wouldn't agree.

“Please, Samantha. She doesn't care! And so what? This is important stuff my little girl should be hearing,” my Mimi argued back with a wave of her hands. It's a Mimi thing: using her hands a lot when she talks. She was correct too; I didn't care about what they were talking about. My parents always found it funny how engaged my Mimi is. My dad is an Independent, while my mom is a Democrat who wishes she was an Independent. Neither of them like to argue about politics and tend to keep to themselves about who they are rooting for. I guess my parents are open-minded people when it comes to political views. They have a

Regina George and Janice Ian relationship with my Mimi in the aspect of opposites. I may have thought that my Mimi was engaged in politics, but then I made it to middle school and realized it could be worse.

Standing outside of my school, waiting to be let in for homeroom, is where I learned that politics could truly create distance. I stood there with my best friends out in the cold, crisp New England air under a tree. The leaves were orange, red, yellow, brown, and I heard a crunch with every step I took. We weren't all there under that tree, though. I remember listening to one of my friends gossiping about our other friend, Riley. Riley, the girl who grew up in a very Republican household, and who also happened to be a Republican. Before I even knew her political views, she was just the 4'11, blonde-haired, horseback-riding, four-wheeling-loving, girl.

“She's voting for Trump! She doesn't know any better because her family are Trump supporters. Disgusting,” my friend Lily spat out.

Lily and I met in fourth grade out at recess. I was standing in the four-square line, waiting for my turn. Recess was a simpler time back then, as there weren't any cliques. You could play with whoever you wanted. I remember looking at the other kids playing with me, not recognizing any of them. There was this one girl wearing a pink Hello Kitty hat. She had brown hair, glasses, and was dressed in very bright colors. I turned to her and complimented her on her hat. She said a simple “thanks,” and that was the end of that conversation. The expected results of two

shy elementary students. Well, at least until the next year, when we were placed in the same class. I learned that the Hello Kitty hat girl was named Lily and that she was from Massachusetts. Pretty cool for a New Hampshire classroom. From fifth grade on, Lily became one of my best friends. In elementary school, we never discussed politics, so hearing her so adamant about who should win the election in sixth grade surprised me.

“My mom says that if Trump wins, we are moving to Canada,” my other friend from North Dakota agreed with Lily. Little sixth grader me stood there with my hands in my pockets, hoping that no one would ask me for my opinion. Luck didn’t go my way as one of my friends turned to me and said, “Right, Bella?”

“Oh, yeah, definitely. I don’t know what I’ll do if Trump wins.”

And there it was: I had chosen my political stance for the first time in the sixth grade. My Mimi, my friends—everyone seemed to love Hilary. It’s not like I was secretly rooting for Trump. I simply hadn’t been exposed to the political world. Trump, Hilary—I didn’t know anything about them other than that Hilary is amazing and apparently friends with Obama.

I did, however, find it strange that we were choosing our friends based on our political views. Why did we have to break off a friendship purely because of an opinion someone has? It’s not like they tried to push me off a cliff like Scar and Mufasa. But who am I to judge? I didn’t know anything about politics, and I wasn’t about to lose my only friends.

After the 2016 election, Trump came out victorious. My Mimi and my friends were not thrilled; let’s just say that.

“I need a one-way plane ticket to Canada. Anyone want my house here because I’m not coming back!” One of my friends sighed dramatically.

I, however, still didn’t really care. I was more focused on the way politics can create such distance. I had only ever broken off a friendship due to falling out of touch. I’m not an argumentative person, but hey, maybe that’s just me.

“I texted her about all the bad things Trump has done, and she actually seemed to listen! Her family are such bad influences on her. I think that maybe I’m getting through to her though!” It was now 2018, and my friends still hadn’t backed down on their political opinions. I now knew a lot more about politics. More so, what was going on in the world at that time. I had finally developed my own opinions on the current political world, but I still wasn’t about to go around and break off friendships if someone disagreed with me. Lily, on the other hand, was still trying her best to change our friend Riley’s views.

I knew all this time that she grew up in a Republican household, but that didn’t change the fact that she was still the same girl with whom I shared a common interest of horseback riding. She and I still loved to joke around, whether it was about boys or the latest episode of *The Bachelor*. Nothing was going to change that fact. After learning about her political views, those same characteristics of hers didn’t change. She was still the same girl to me. Lily didn’t seem to think the same way.

“We cannot be friends with her if she won’t change her political views! She supports someone who is crazy!” I understood some of her reasoning as to why we shouldn’t be friends with her, but it’s not like Riley was trying to push her views onto us. She never even spoke about politics. If she went around yelling about her political views, then I would understand breaking off our friendship, but that wasn’t the case.

This situation of breaking off friendships purely because of political views stuck with me for a while. I could never figure out if I was in the right or the wrong. Was I being too nice, or was it normal to break off friendships because of these differences? I finally found the answer when I got my first job in my sophomore year of high school.

Working as a host in a restaurant meant that I had to deal with many different people. The restaurant I got my first job at was Mexican-themed. The walls were bright yellow and red, with a tiled floor. Chili string lights were hung around with fun Mexican themed décor everywhere. When you first walked in you were greeted by the bar. Bright colors lit up the place, and Super Bowl Championship posters were all over the walls. If you have ever been to New England, you know that we don’t joke around about our sports, specifically, the Patriots and Tom Brady. You were also greeted by the sound of Jimmy Buffet playing 24/7 on the radio, because this wasn’t a truly authentic Mexican restaurant.

I guess you were half in a fake Mexican restaurant and half in Margaritaville when stepping into my restaurant. I loved my job here nonetheless, but mainly because of the people. My coworkers were amazing, and

the regulars never failed to make me laugh. We called each other family, and we truly were. So, when I found out that one of the waitresses was the mom of my old friend Riley, I was reminded of my time in middle school. I remembered how my friends wanted to break off their friendship with Riley due to her different political views, and how I could never understand why. I never understood if that was normal or weird? Finally, I was able to come to the conclusion that it was up to the person. But I did not roll like that.

The thought of breaking off my relationship with my coworker purely because she supports someone I don’t was strange to me. I would never want to lose a friendship over something like that. All this time I felt the same way: why are some people so close-minded that they must break off friendships due to one difference? I decided that I’m glad I am the way that I am. I like being able to be friends with anyone. I’m not a judgmental person in general. Even if we have our differences, as long as I enjoy hanging out with someone, I don’t care about their political views! Well, as long as they don’t support someone absolutely horrible, let’s be real. If an opinion someone has isn’t affecting me directly, then I will continue to base my opinion of them on how they treat me. I no longer allow myself to make decisions that don’t one hundred percent stay true to my personal values. I hold this characteristic close to me.

Isabella Schlim is a secondary education English major. She is from Milford, NH, and once waited in the rain for nine hours to meet Jaylen Brown.

It Starts Within Yourself

By

Lataya Simmons

Falling in love with something or someone can come with a roller coaster of emotions, and it won't always be sunshine and rainbows; at times it might be gray skies and hail. Specifically big chunks of hail that hurt when it hits you over and over. That's how I would describe the pain I endured.

I fell in love with soccer at the age of eight. Soccer is my escape from reality. I step on the field and none of my problems can bother me until I step off the field again. I thought that as I got older playing soccer would become easier, and my passion would grow bigger. However, I was wrong, I learned that this was quite different from the reality I faced. Simply because there was a portion of my soccer career where I stepped on the field and found myself facing the problem of wanting to quit.

My freshman year of high school. I thought things were going to be better than they ever had been with soccer. I was so excited to be on a team with new people and prove to everyone that I deserved to play varsity. Tryouts came and I went through all four days Monday through Thursday. Friday morning the results were released, so I skipped breakfast and rushed to the girls locker room. I anxiously looked for my name and there it was under the varsity column. I started jumping up and down and quickly called my mom and dad. I told them the news, and they were both so happy. I was so happy that I wore the biggest smile around campus all day.

Little did I know that the happiness was temporary. The first three games I found myself sitting on the bench. Which was really disheartening because I had worked so

hard to be on the team. I think I played a good three, maybe four games, my freshman year. However, it wasn't because there was an upperclassmen goalkeeper, because the other goalkeeper happened to be my best friend in the same grade as me. The answer was simple: favorites. The coach simply had her favorites and I was not one of them.

So I found myself sitting on the bench my freshman, sophomore, and junior year. It only made me hate the sport more. I did not know what I was doing wrong. I put the extra hours of training in, I went on runs, I went to the gym, I came early to practice, I stayed after practice, and just none of it was enough. By my junior year I was quite tired of not feeling good enough to play. I could not mentally or physically take it anymore. I was tired of putting in so much extra work and tiring my body just to not play. I really struggled my junior year. It was the hardest for me academically, as well as athletically. I was mentally stressed, drained, and I started having panic attacks.

I spoke to my mom and let her know how bad things were getting. She did not understand at first though. She did not realize that I was asking for professional help and just not her help. I stressed to her every day that I needed therapy because I was just so lost and had no sense of self-worth or that I would ever be good enough for anyone or anything. I even pointed out to her that I skipped dinner every night to go to my room and cry. After telling her this, she finally got me the help I had been begging for. At first, I was anxious about it because what if the therapist thought my reasons were stupid and that there was no solution, or that I was a waste of their time. I put all

of that aside though because in order for me to get help; I needed to try. I went to my first appointment with my psychiatrist, Noel, and I got diagnosed with severe anxiety and then that's when the pieces start connecting. It's not that I was being dramatic, it's that I was already struggling with a disorder.

I got prescribed medication and scheduled my first therapy appointment, with a guy named Chris. At the appointment I explained to Chris how I was feeling. Chris listened at first without interrupting and then he would give me advice and a different perspective. Saying everything I needed to felt as if a huge brick was lifted off my chest. The appointments repeated weekly while I was also taking my medication daily. The medications calmed me and made me feel more mellow. I was a bit more groggy, but I liked it better than constantly worrying about everything. Within a couple weeks I started to see an increase in my confidence, my motivation to do daily things, and my drive and determination starting to get stronger. There is one thing that Chris said that stuck with me "Anyone can believe in you but if you don't believe in yourself how are you ever going to reach your goals when you are constantly telling yourself that you can't do it". That has stuck with me until this day. That was the switch that needed to be flipped, and I was the only one who could flip it.

The switch was flipped during the summer going into my senior year of high school, the summer of 2022. During this time, I realized I wanted to play and started believing in myself that I would play. It was my senior year and it was the year where I needed to be seen by colleges in order to live up to my dream of playing college soccer. I dug deep down and realized that I could not let that little eight-year-old girl, who loved soccer with everything in her, down. I spent my

summer doing two high school courses, criminal justice and economics & financial literacy, my schedule was busy because of these classes. Every day of summer I found myself waking up to do my school work, then going to planet fitness to workout and put some muscles on before the upcoming season, and then going to training. I did this five times a week and spent the weekends with family, friends, or doing my homework. I was really determined my senior year to have the starting position on my varsity team at school and nothing was going to stand in the way.

High school season came around my senior year and I made varsity yet again. However, the difference from this year and the previous years was that I knew it was my time to show the coaches and team that I deserved to be on the field. So at tryouts and practice I gave 110% no matter how I felt that day. The hard work and passion became apparent to my coaches and I ended up starting and playing just about every game. I started getting noticed by colleges through my hard work and dedication. However, it wasn't until my very last game, our state game, that I played the game of my life. That really secured my college spot at Lasell University, which I committed to in January 2023. Once high school season was over I was on to my next biggest achievement in life: college.

The day I had been waiting for was finally here: signing day. I opened my eyes that morning to check my phone and realized I woke up ten minutes before my alarm was set to go off. Instead of going back to sleep I jumped out of bed to get ready for one of the most important days in my life. I went to the bathroom to do my morning routine of self care and hygiene. Which includes brushing my teeth, washing my face, doing my hair, applying deodorant, putting on lotion and

perfume. After that I went to my room and threw on my light blue Lasell crewneck with a white pair of jeans and my Nike Air Force One's. This outfit was planned probably a week in advance because anytime I thought about this day my face lit up and I had butterflies in my stomach. After I got dressed I was off to school. The school day felt so very long but that is because I was eagerly waiting until the clock hit 12:50 p.m. That was when the athletes who were signing that day got released from class to go to the auditorium for their signing. The school day is mainly a blur but I remember the announcement at exactly 12:50 p.m.

“Excuse me, teachers and staff, you may release the athletes who are signing today at this time, thank you.” As soon as that announcement came on, I quickly put my notebook and computer in my bag and rushed out the class while my class was telling me congratulations. I walked to the auditorium and when I walked in my team and my family were all there. Some time went by and I was anxiously sitting there wondering what athlete is going to go first

as my leg is shaking at 100 mph and my palms are drenched in sweat. All of a sudden my name was called and everything from that moment felt surreal. I don't remember much of what my athletic director was saying when I was signing because I was just feeling so many emotions. After he finished talking, my parents, my coaches, and my team all got a picture with me. After that I walked back to my seat with a smile that would never go away. All I could think about was the fact that I did it. I lived up to my dream of playing college soccer ever since I was eight. Despite the people who didn't believe in me, I realized that all it took was for me to believe in myself. Now here I am at Lasell University sitting in my writing 101 class at 11:38 in the morning with that same smile on my face, all because I believed in myself. I finally realized that it starts within yourself.

Lataya Simmons is a Criminal Justice major. She is from Cape Coral, Florida and has been to 11 states but plans to visit all 50 by the age of 40.

Shitty Work Day

By
Reina Spearin

“Go away!” He shouted, stomping his foot like a toddler.

“Ian, I can’t leave you alone like this,” I pleaded. “It’s unsafe.”

“I hate you,” he sputtered.

It was the third week of summer camp, but I spent my Sunday night planning an *Amazing Race* event for Monday. My campers were fourth and fifth graders, so I was confident in their ability to complete the tasks. The group would be split into two teams, competing for first place. However, kids do not understand the concept of competition until they are about thirteen, so everyone would win a prize at the end of the day. Everyone would be happy, or should be, at the very least. I planned activities such as “make the best mural in under five minutes” and “keep the balloon off the ground for the longest without the use of your hands.” It took me hours of unpaid work to schedule the day best for my group. My boss often encouraged the counselors to create these elaborate activities, with minimal access to resources. I had to buy my own balloons for the one activity, despite needing two at the most. I should have known she was a weak support system for when something goes awry.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. I rubbed my eyes and glared at my blaring alarm.

“Shut up,” I groaned, smacking the snooze button. “Just five more minutes.”

I rolled over, curling up into a small ball. My eyelids drooped down until I saw

darkness. A loud banging erupted from my door, which shook with every hit.

“Reina, we’ve gotta go!” my sister yelled through the door.

“Huh?” I glanced at my phone, feeling my heart sink to the bottom of my stomach. “Oh shit.” I pushed my blankets off and rushed into my uniform. I swiped my activity plans off my desk and shoved them into my backpack. I ran into the car, tying my unbrushed hair into a knot on the top of my head. I looked at my sister to see her staring at me, rather than flooring it to work.

“What?”

“Your shirt’s on backwards.” She snickered.

“Oh yeah, because that’s totally something I would do. Good one.” My sister loves to play small practical jokes on me, but when I looked down, I learned she was not lying. I pulled my arms inside of the shirt and twisted it around my body. I sighed in defeat. “Just drive.”

We arrived at the camp mid-morning meeting. Every single day we had a meeting at 7:30 sharp, where my boss droned on and on about the same topics. She admitted to us every meeting that she liked to talk, and she could do so for hours. The worst part was that her squeaky voice sucked your soul out, despite it being only thirty minutes a day. I pulled the crumpled activity plans out of my bag, smoothing them against the edge of the table. I was confident in my plan and that my campers would have fun with it. The past two weeks the kids were active and loved doing massive arts and crafts

activities, which I incorporated into our *Amazing Race*. I set up my clipboard with every activity in the order of how we were completing them, with the "Sign In" sheet attached on the front. I recognized most of their names, which was good, since the day was majorly scheduled around my past campers' interests. However, there was one name I didn't recognize from previous weeks. Ian.

8 am struck and every counselor quickly gathered their things. If we stayed for a minute longer, we would be trapped in a conversation with our boss, then our co-counselor had to converse with parents (or guardians) dropping off and watch a group of kids. We don't actually have eyes in the backs of our heads, nor should we be expected to. I saw a parent anxiously waiting with their arms crossed. My backpack loosely hung off one arm and I balanced my clipboard on the other, as I trudged toward the table. A little boy sat on the bench next to a bright orange backpack. He impatiently kicked his legs against the dirt, slightly frowning. His hair was a bright blonde, filled with curly tendrils. He had shiny bright eyes showing excitement for his first week of camp.

"Hi, I'm Miss Reina. It's nice to meet you," I gave my best smile and handed his mom the clipboard.

"Hi, nice to meet you," she quickly scribbled on Ian's name, then pushed the clipboard into my hands. "This is Ian, and now I have to sign his siblings in." She quickly hugged her son before rushing toward a different tent.

"Hi Ian. Are you excited for your first day of camp?"

"I guess," he shrugged. "That was my mom. She has to sign in my siblings." He slightly smiled.

"Do you have a lot?"

"Yeah, like seven," he shrugged again. My eyes widened a bit. I couldn't imagine having so many. "Are we gonna do anything fun today?"

"I planned this *Amazing Race* activity, you'll learn more about it soon." He groaned, but I turned away to sign in more kids with parents. Does he want to be here or not?

"Alright, if you can hear me clap once." A few claps erupted from my fourth and fifth graders. "If you can hear me clap twice." I scanned the group to see who was listening. "Clap three times." They all looked forward and clapped three times. I sighed in relief. Finally. "We are going to be doing an all-day *Amazing Race* schedule. There's gonna be different activities and competitions between two different teams. I'm gonna count you off one, two, one, two. Don't forget your number. Once you're in your group you guys will choose a team name together." I counted the kids off and they all got in their groups. Beside one. Ian sat still on the bench staring up at me.

"What's up Ian? Why aren't you going with your group?" I crouched down beside him, hoping to make myself less intimidating. He pouted and avoided eye contact. "Do you like coloring? We're about to make murals on our group names." He slightly nodded, then walked toward his group hanging his head down. I walked toward my co-counselor and handed him the clipboard.

"Do you wanna announce the next one? The mural thingy," I asked. "Also, I don't know

what's going on, but the new kid Ian is pouting. Did something happen?" I whispered to make sure none of the kids heard.

"Not that I know of," he shrugged. He introduced the next activity as I laid down the massive white paper on the picnic tables. I grabbed a handful of markers and threw them on top of the tables, making sure there was at least one of every color.

"Woah! These are beautiful!" I exclaimed. The kids drew wonderful murals, drawing pictures based on their team names. One group claimed the "Orange Tigers" and the other chose the "Purple Penguins," so their murals represented this.

"You guys did a really, really nice job."

Their faces lit up with the compliment, as I taped their murals down. "Our next activity is kind of far away, so stay with the group as we walk there," my co-counselor announced. He stood at the front of the line, and I went to the back. The next activity was at the basketball courts, a good five-minute walk away.

"Stop!" I shouted. "There is a Challenge Question we have to answer as a group before we can get to our next activity." I dramatically grabbed the piece of paper and flicked it open. "Hmm. Oh, this is an interesting one. Are you guys ready?"

"Yes!" They erupted, with a few groaning "no's" since they're pre-teens too cool to play games at camp.

"Alright, what is the best frozen treat? Decide with the entire group."

"Oh, ice cream!"

"Fro-yo!"

"No, no, popsicles are the best!"

"Let's take a vote. Raise your hand for ice cream," I paused to count thirteen hands. "Okay, that's majority already. Ice cream wins!" One of the kids screeched so loud it caused a ringing in my ears. "Okay, okay, please don't scream like that so we can head onto the activity."

We continued toward the basketball court. The two teams were told to sit in a straight line, while holding hands and a counselor would sit at the end of the lines. The goal was to pass a squeeze between each hand with their eyes shut. The fastest hand squeeze passed along wins. We had a third counselor monitor the hand squeezes and the timers for each team. Everyone sat as instructed until I heard shouting.

"Move! I wanted to sit there," Ian yelled toward another camper.

"I wanna sit here, my friend's right there. We don't even know you," the camper exasperated, looking Ian up and down.

"Alright, alright," I paused looking between them. "I'm sure there's some way we can come to an agreement. How about some rock, paper, scissors shoot? Winner gets to sit there." They begrudgingly started to play, but the other camper ended up being the winner, sitting in the spot Ian wanted. Ian threw down his foot like a toddler, before turning around and sprinting. My heart dropped and I gave my co-workers a wide-eyed stare.

"Can you walkie that he just did that?" I asked, shoving the activity papers into his hands. I ran in the direction Ian sprinted toward.

“Ian!” I waited a few seconds for a response. “Ian! Where are you?” My throat felt hoarse from shouting already. “Please, we can talk about what happened.” The world spun around me and my heart raced. I thought about how he could get lost, hurt, or even worse. My hands started sweating and my fears got worse and worse with the lack of response. “Ian!”

“Down here,” he muttered.

I was standing on an asphalt hill, directly next to thick, vegetated woods on my right side. There was a small spot with fewer bushes and trees, but the ground was covered in mushy mud. Ian was sitting criss-cross apple sauced, stabbing the muddy ground with a stick. My chest loosened when I saw him.

“Ian, I’ve been looking all over for you. Did you hear me?” I sat on the side of the road looking down at him. “Can you come out of there so we can talk?” He shook his head no and I realized I had to climb in to convince him to climb out. It was a drop, so I sat, then scooted down until my feet touched the ground. As I squatted next to him, scared to get myself too dirty, he buried his face between his arms. Suddenly, a rotting smell filled my nose. I looked behind Ian, and there was a tube about four times bigger than him. I lifted my shirt up and covered my nose, trying to prevent the smell from piercing my nostrils further. His hiding spot was a sewage and drainage pipe connected to the public bathroom on the other side of the hill.

I stood up to see if my boss was coming toward us yet. There was no sign of her. I walked again.

“Can I get some help near the basketball court?” Nothing.

Are you kidding me? I had no idea what to do. Every word I spoke caused Ian to scooch further inside of the pipe. Legally, I can’t touch him or try and pull him out of the pipe, but inside was a major health hazard. I stared at my what-were white shoes, covered in brown mud. At least, I hope it was mud. Suddenly, Ian stood up and chucked a stick right past my face.

“Ian-”

“Go away!” He shouted, stomping his foot like a toddler.

“Ian, I can’t leave you alone like this,” I pleaded. “It’s unsafe.”

“I hate you,” he sputtered, tears pouring from his eyes.

I felt tears swell in my eyes and I sighed. I looked toward the blue sky and the fluffy white clouds, grasping for some form of comfort. He sat back down, hiding his face between his legs.

“Did the game upset you? Or did the frozen treat challenge question?” If I couldn’t get him to rejoin the group, then maybe I could figure out what was wrong. He sobbed louder.

“No one was listening to me when I said what treat I wanted,” he cried out. “I just want to be heard.” He took big gasps of breath between each word.

“I understand, that can be very frustrating,” I took a seat next to him, and rubbed his back hoping to provide some sort of comfort. “Well, what kind of frozen treats do you like?” He took his head out from between his legs and sniffled.

“I love slushies. I think it should’ve been slushies. I don’t like ice cream or popsicles

as much as I like slushies.” He had a sudden burst of energy, and a small smile came to his face.

“Ohhhh, that’s a good one. I didn’t even consider slushies. How about this,” I paused. “We can talk all about our day, but I need to climb out of this hole. The sewage smell is really starting to get to me.” I made a stink face and he timidly nodded his head in agreement. As he started to climb out of the sewage hole, my boss showed up to help, reaching her hand out to pull him up. They walked toward the main camp area, and I dragged myself up onto the asphalt.

I sat criss-cross applesauce and stared up at the bright blue sky. Deep breath in. Deep breath out. I closed my eyes, fighting back tears which so desperately wanted to flood

out. Deep breath in. Deep breath out. *Did Ian actually hate me? Am I cut out to work with kids? Should I have known better? Or is there something more going on?* I dropped my head down to see brown splotches on my black biker shorts and prayed it was merely dirt. I tried to brush it off, but it wouldn’t budge. *I hope he’s okay. I did try, but I’m a kid too. At the very least, I managed to get him out of one shitty situation.*

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How to Make Friends the Hard Way

By
Mariah Vanegas

I never liked change. The mistakes, the anxiety, and the fact that I don't know what's to come torments me. So when I moved halfway across the country to Texas in 9th grade, I wasn't particularly thrilled. A new school, new teachers, and making new friends sounded less than ideal. When I stepped onto the campus, it felt different. The empty gray architecture mirrored a prison. On top of that, the large turf outside instead of grass made everything feel even more artificial. The inside was worse. Stale walls painted a hellish neon red and white, creating an eyesore I'll never forget.

I wandered down the halls into my first class of the day, and this was where I met Alley Bartlett. We bonded over our mutual love of theater and I officially made my first friend. At lunch she introduced me to her friend group. Sofia, a shy, easy-going girl, who had an obsession with eccentric earrings; Dax, who had a severe ego for someone who wore sweater vests and already had a receding hairline; and Jayden, a tall, skinny boy with long mangled hair who unironically listened to Radiohead.

Now, if I could go back in time and tell myself to listen to the unnerving feeling that was saying "Don't do it, turn back now." I without doubt would. However, the desperate need to have friends loomed over me. The group felt typical for the first year. Occasional weekend hangouts, talking to each other in the school hallways, and giving each other the answers to homework.

The unexpected issue with them is that every so often they would make jokes at my expense. It caught me off guard the first time it happened, "Wow, pick a struggle

Mariah, you can't be gay and ugly." I was stunned, but eventually joined in on the laughing. It was just a joke right? Making other friends throughout the school year would become easier, and I eventually extended my social circle with more people.

My sophomore year I met the loveliest person I had ever known. I was sitting in the library studying when a girl tapped me on the shoulder, "I like your earrings." A smile slowly spread across my face when I noticed she was wearing an identical pair to mine. "I like yours too. What's your name?" She grinned and replied, "Ella."

We quickly became best friends, and I was at my happiest when she was around. We would spend hours giggling over the most mindless of topics, do each other's makeup at the latest hours of the AM, or bake cookies until there were no more ingredients. Sure, we had our differences, but no matter how upset we would get with each other we would always circle back. She reminded me of warm sun rays and lavender tea. She was kind to me even when I thought I didn't deserve it. I began to realize there was a reason my heart fluttered when she came to mind. I liked Ella. Not just as a friend. The kind of like where you don't want to leave her side. The kind that is gentle and new.

The kind where you question whether it is right or wrong. The kind that even if you wanted to stop you couldn't. But there was one problem: she had a boyfriend. So to spare my fragile heart, I buried my feelings deep down, far enough to still feel them lingering. For many long months, I

suppressed the feelings of my unrequited love for my best friend.

One Sunday night at the beginning of junior year, when I found my head buried among mountains of algebra problems, I heard a small buzz beside me. It was a text message from Jayden. “Can we meet up at school tomorrow? I have something to ask you,” it read. The next day, I was once again surrounded by the squeaking of sneakers, slamming of lockers, and the smell of inedible school lunches-romantic. Across from me Jayden stood with a cocky smile on his face, holding out a single red rose. “Do you want to go out with me?” I was surprised to say the least. Everyone in the friend group knew I was a lesbian so I was confused on why he—a boy—would ask me out.

I opted for a polite “No, I’m sorry...I’m gay.” and his face distorted into a perplexed look, “Are you sure? I’ve seen the looks you’ve been giving me, the signs, I mean you’re always flirting with me.”

I shook my head, “What are you talking about? I’ve never done that before.” Maybe it was the hug I had given him after he passed his test on Tuesday, perhaps somewhere in between the endless video games we would play, or it could have been walking home together after school because we lived nearby; but for some reason he thought that I liked him.

“Whatever, it’s fine.” he huffed and I was left in the middle of the hallway speechless as he stormed away.

That’s when it all started. The rumors, the lies, and the belittling. One by one, he turned my own friends against me. He instilled in them the idea that I was a horrible, selfish person. That I toyed and

manipulated his feelings. Every degrading word that came out of his mouth stuck with me. I started eating alone in the theater classroom to hide from them, with only the sounds of distant chatter to keep me company. I never addressed it. I never defended myself. I just hid. I hid because I was scared of what he was making me out to be. Though it was cowardly, I would have been a fool to stay friends with people who treated me like they did. Hence, why I learned that sometimes you do need to instill change in your life to make it better.

However, there was one person that stayed by my side. Never believed the rumors, let me plead my side of the story, and would wipe away tears when I needed her to: Ella.

When I would look into her forest green eyes, I was reminded that I was not to blame, and that meant everything to me. She was what got me to the end of the year, and I was beyond happy to start summer. I could spend my days lounging around without care while hanging out with Ella. There was nothing I wanted more, but those days were short-lived.

Several weeks into the summer and my attempts to make plans with her had come to no avail. Only receiving a few short texts blowing me off. One evening, the cool breeze blew calmly through my open window as I attempted to sleep, and my peace was interrupted by my phone buzzing.

I groggily turned over to read the notification and was stunned by what I saw.

“I never want to speak to you again” Ella, 11:48 pm. My brows furrowed in confusion and my breath started to quicken. I frantically replied to her message in hopes of a response. But in the darkness of the room, a green hue lit up my face. Why was

the text green? The realization hit me. My best friend had blocked me. My hands anxiously shook, a lump started to form in my throat, and my sight became blurry as tears filled my eyes. This can't be happening. This *wasn't* happening. The one person I had put my trust in over the past couple years, spent every waking hour with, and even started to develop romantic feelings for, had left me. Had left out of nowhere, no communication, no explanation, and no way to fix what *I* had broken.

I started to believe the words they had been telling me. Was I actually a bad person? Was it my fault? The sorrow, though something I had felt time and time again, still punctured a hole in my heart. I continued to find myself lying in bed, clinging to my pillow, wishing it wasn't true. I tossed and turned for hours, trying to come up with a reason on why she would leave so suddenly. My hitched breaths slowly turned into soft snores, and as the sun peeked through my curtains the next morning, I pleaded with myself to erase the memories of her in my head. That she wasn't worth the aggravation and that I had to start new.

Fortunately, I was given that opportunity when my parents told me that we were moving back to Maine. I was relieved to go back to my hometown, where I could replant my roots.

A unique sense of comfort and familiarity that washed over me as I reacquainted myself with the streets I grew up on and the extended family that I missed. Finding contentment over the summer by going on walks by the beach and searching for seashells in the sand. The waves crashing in the distance and smelling the sea salt air reminded me that at least I was home.

I started senior year online, got a job, and started to spend time by myself. My days became a blur; work, school, sleep. Due to this schedule, I had grown to like my own company. I would fill my off days with my favorite activity: thrifting. The racks of never ending polyester between my fingers, the smell of old musty wool, and shelves of tarnished antiques became my new home. However, no matter how comfortable I grew, there was something still empty about it. As I graduated I only felt like I was missing out even more. My diploma had come as a PDF in an email, there was no senior sunset, no senior prom, no underclassmen wanting me to stay; it felt like I had gone through four years of hell with no reward. This is when I started to feel like I needed a change.

When I started university to say I was scared was an understatement. I didn't want to relive what I had just been through and be away from the familiarity of home. But when I met the people I'm friends with today I didn't realize how much of an impact they would make on me.

I'm happier than I've ever been. I found refuge in the laughter of jokes at the lunch table; the stories we tell each other at night when we should be sleeping; and the walks that end up in a game of red light green light. I felt like I had known these people my whole life, and it feels like that emptiness has been filled. I've been spending my days with the company of my friends, and I realized for the first time I didn't feel alone. Their empathy and support provided a safe haven that erased my fears and the questions I had doubted myself with when I was at my lowest had now been disproven. The weight of my past hardships appears to lessen with each shared moment and is replaced by a profound sense of hope and belonging. I had never liked change before but, I now believe that it can be good.

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Genre Characterization Report: The Role of Knitting in Mental Health Care

By
Jenna Wildman

Activities and hobbies can be useful in mental health care because they are often relaxing and can serve as a good distraction for those struggling. Knitting is a mindful activity that often helps people relax and detach from their problems. This is a useful tool for people receiving care for mental health issues, including addiction and grief.

Texts written in different genres often have key differences, even if the content is similar. Genres such as academic journals, magazines, and newspapers are all written for different audiences and for different purposes. An academic journal may be geared towards an audience that already has knowledge of the subject. Researchers write about their specialties for the purpose of educating others and advancing knowledge of the topic. Readers may already be used to reading academic-style texts. Someone looking to read an academic journal has specifically searched for that text, meaning they are likely interested in the topic. The goal of an academic journal is not to make money, but rather to inform. Magazines are typically written for the public, with the purpose of informing the reader about something that will likely interest them. These are designed to get as many readers as possible, since the goal is to sell copies and make money. Articles in a magazine are written for an audience interested in light, casual reading. Magazines are often sold or readily available in high traffic areas where people are likely to be bored, such as waiting rooms and salons. A newspaper is also written for the general public, but with a focus on current events and relevant news. Someone reading a newspaper has likely

bought it and is interested in reading the news. The goal of a newspaper is to make money, but also to inform the public about news. The differences in motives and writing styles between these genres can cause some to be more credible than others. This report will examine the characteristics of three sources, one from each of these genres, all of which pertain to the topic of the role knitting can play in mental health care.

Because an academic journal's target audience already has a base knowledge of the topic, advanced language, technical terms, and phrases related to the topic are often used. This can make an academic journal difficult for someone new to the subject to understand. However, a person reading an academic journal has likely specifically searched for it, and knows what they are getting into. "Knitting Through Recovery One Stitch at a Time: Knitting as an Experiential Teaching Method for Affect Management in Group Therapy," by Kathryn Duffy, explains the success that the Interim House in Philadelphia has had with implementing a knitting program into their clients' recovery plans. The purpose of this journal is to support the idea that knitting helps in client's recovery journeys and reintegration into society, and to prove that the program is successful.

There is a possibility for bias in this article due to the fact that the author is the woman who started the knitting program. This means that the perspective of this article could be very one-sided. The author likely wants to make the program sound good due

to the hard work that has probably been invested into it.

This journal uses many sources, including books and other academic journals. This helps with the credibility of the journal because it shows that the author has done sufficient research to support the claims being made. One of these sources is Alcoholics Anonymous, a well-known organization, which adds to the credibility of the journal. Including this source adds a name for the reader to recognize, creating the sense of the article being trustworthy. It also allows the reader to relate to the article more, because they have likely heard of Alcoholics Anonymous before.

Despite this being an academic journal written for experienced audiences, the language and writing style of this particular text is relatable and easily interpreted. This allows for the text to be better understood by a wider audience, which helps spread knowledge of this topic. This deviation from the usual academic writing style of an academic journal reflects that this is a topic for the general public, so it should be made easy to understand. The people reading this topic may be interested in knitting, mental health, or addiction recovery. They probably are not looking for a detailed scientific journal that could be tedious and frustrating to read. The traditional characteristics of an academic journal can be slightly changed depending on the topic and the specific target audience.

A magazine article is written for the general public and is designed to be understood easily and quickly. The language is often basic or even conversational, and the format could be blocked by advertisements or paywalls. Magazines are not news-based, so instead of focusing on current events they often discuss topics chosen specifically to

interest their target audience. This article titled “Knitting the Stress Away,” by Henry Reyes from the magazine *American Jails*, is a perfect example of this. The article is about a jail in Texas that has implemented a program where inmates knit items for homeless veterans. The topic will obviously interest the readers, because someone reading *American Jails* is likely curious about new programs being used to better the inmates’ learning experiences and reintegration into society. This article does not have a source list, but it does include one in-text citation from the *New York Times*, as well as statistics listed from other sources that are not cited. This lessens the credibility of the article due to the fact that there was likely limited research done and the viewpoint of only the author is included. This also creates potential for bias, because the author’s opinions can easily influence the writing when there are no other sources to interfere.

A newspaper article is written with current events in mind, but also considering that it will be read by the general public. They are often short and to-the-point, with quotes from relevant people who were interviewed for the article. This article, titled “Knitting gave me peace when I lost my son - now I want the nation to knit for mental health,” by Madeleine Howell from *The Telegraph* is about a woman who started a knitting movement after using knitting to cope with her grief that followed the loss of her son. The article has no sources listed or cited other than quotes from Jane George and her family, the founders of the movement, who were interviewed for the piece. This creates potential for bias from both the founders and the author, because no other sources were used to gain viewpoints or statistics. The article loses credibility from this, because there are no data or facts to support the

opinions of the author and those interviewed.

This newspaper article heavily employs pathos to make the reader empathize with the family. Right at the beginning the piece includes a quote from Jane, the mother, about her overwhelming grief: “It’s a continuous barrage in your mind. Why didn’t I see it? Why didn’t he say? Those thoughts can be all of every day,” (Howell, 2021). Using emotional elements and quotes instantly makes the reader feel a connection with the writing and prompts them to read more. This is similar to the magazine, which doesn’t have as much strong emotional writing, but uses pictures from the knitting program to show the reader what is happening and create emotion. However, the academic journal does the opposite. This piece uses facts and experience to accurately tell the reader what the situation is and let them form opinions while also proving a point.

Another key difference between the texts is the number of sources used. The academic journal includes almost one and a half pages of references cited. This makes it clear that the author has done her research and the information is likely accurate. Having many references is also expected of an academic journal, because the reader assumes the text is factual and trustworthy. The magazine article cites the *New York Times* as a source once, and also includes statistics from the U.S. Department of Housing. The use of this source is only in relation to the amount of homeless veterans there are on a given day. The source is not actually used in the context of the topic, which does not help add credibility to the article. This is typical of a magazine, because readers are usually not looking for hard facts, but rather a story that interests them. The newspaper article has no sources used or cited. This discredits the

article a bit due to the fact that those reading a newspaper are likely looking for news, which needs cross-checking to be totally accurate.

A similarity between all three sources is the use of logos to support the claims being made in each text. This quote, “By watching others struggle in their early attempts to learn and then become more skilled, clients can see that success often takes persistence,” (Duffy, 2007) from the academic journal shows the reader a logical and relatable connection. A reader can easily picture this situation, which helps further their understanding of the topic. This quote from the magazine, “Princeton’s Dr. Barry Jacobs has attributed the repetitive actions of activities like knitting to lowering stress levels and increasing feelings of relaxation, much like that achieved through meditation,” (Reyes, 2018) also makes a logical point about the positive effects knitting can have on a person. This is relatable to the reader because they have likely experienced something similar to this, or have heard of the concept before. Finally, this quote from the newspaper, “While I was knitting, I didn’t think of anything except the pattern, which gave me peace,” (Howell, 2021) makes a point similar to the magazine, and allows the reader to see the reasoning behind the claims being made about the effects of knitting.

Different genres of writing have different characteristics to serve their individual purposes. This can be seen in these example texts about the role of knitting in mental health care. The academic journal is clearly designed for informational purposes. The language, writing style, and information content reflects the research that went into writing the journal. It is tailored for an audience that is already familiar with the topic. The goal of a magazine is to sell the

most amount of copies, and therefore is written for an audience interested in a casual, quick read on a specific topic. Similarly, newspapers also try to get the most amount of sales, but are written with a focus on current news. While these genres are all different, they share similarities, such as the use of logos, to most accurately report the information.

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Waves By Jordan Willis

As I'm driving down the Garden State Parkway headed to the beach in Lavalette, New Jersey, I click shuffle on my latest Spotify playlist, and turn the radio up. The song "Waves" by Kanye West comes on. When I think of waves, I immediately think of my experience going into college. I think of how nervous I was, starting a new chapter of my life. I would always question myself: Is this school the right choice? Should I have stayed home in New Jersey? I couldn't escape the nerves. My feelings would wash over me in waves. One day I would be extra nervous, but the next day I was calm, and had a glimpse of hope in me, wanting my year to be great. I would listen deeper into the lyrics, "Bird can't fly in a cage" and "Waves don't die." I realized that all these emotions I am experiencing are normal, and things will flow just the way they are supposed to. I will never give up, and I will face all my fears with grace.

My friends are a very important part of me. I see them almost every day when we are all back home from college, whether it be to drop off their favorite Starbucks drink, or to sit down with them and give advice during their hardest times. We are always there for each other, and always one call away. The summer right before my freshman year at URI, my friends and I acted as if it was the end of the world. Every time we would hang out, we would count down the days until it was our time to leave. We would try to make the most out of every moment together, but it always ended up in one of us saying "Promise you won't forget about me when you go to school right?" We would then sob and hug each other, as if we were moving away forever.

Music is a huge part of our relationships. Lindsay loves country, Brian loves rap, and I love almost anything that the two of them put on. The one song we all love is "Waves" by Kanye West. We would say that it was our "song of the summer" and always had it on repeat. When we were sad, we played that song. When we had a burst of energy, we played that song. When we were driving to the beach, we played that song. There wasn't a time over the summer that "Waves" by Kanye West did not play. We loved it. The way that it describes all of our experiences with life, and how each one of us have different waves that we are currently riding, makes us all feel connected, even when we are miles apart at school.

Finally, the time comes. The end of August hit. Brian started talking about school. He was super excited, unlike me. He had a year full of fun ahead of him, playing volleyball for his college team. I loved listening to him speak about school. He made all my worries flow away, much like how waves come and go. He would always talk about how he loved his teammates, and how his coach was a huge mentor to him. Brian would say he already found his "home away from home" and he didn't even officially move in yet. He knew he found the place for him. It gave me hope that maybe college will be meant for me, and that I am worrying for nothing. My friend Lindsay, on the other hand, was the first to officially leave. I remember she came over to say goodbye, and I was already crying before she stepped in the door. She walked into my house and gave me a huge hug. Then, she moved on to my parents.

They said their goodbyes and gave the good old "parent speech." They told her, "Don't

take anything from anyone, don't drink and drive, always make sure you stay in groups, don't be stupid and end up on the news!" We all laughed. As Lindsay and I walked up my stairs into my room, "Waves" came blasting across my speaker. We collapsed to the floor. She was laughing. I was crying.

She wrapped her arms around me and told me, "Jordan, remember waves don't die." We cried some more, laughed some more, and finally said goodbye. Little did we know what we had ahead of us. Much like waves, things could get super choppy, and we had no idea how hard college was going to get.

I sat and thought to myself what that lyric meant. To me, it meant that everything flows. You should not give up just because you are uncomfortable with something. The change going into college is huge, but being nervous was a good thing. I was excited to go off on my own for the first time. Being in a new place with new people, experiences, and opportunities was something I always wanted to do. Once I got to college though, I quickly realized that this might not be for me. I didn't make as many friends as I thought I would, I often sat in my room every chance I got due to my anxiety being at an all-time high. The only time I left was for class and to eat. When I felt upset, and missing home, I turned to music. "Waves" by Kanye West was always my comfort song.

Being at URI, I battled a lot of mental health struggles. I fell into a deep depression with lots of anxiety. Being at school was nothing like home. Much like my struggles with mental health, Kanye West, the artist who

sang "Waves" had his own struggles. He recently opened up with his struggle dealing with bipolar disorder. Seeing artists as big as Kanye come out about what they are dealing with on the inside makes me feel less alone and more inclined to come out and ask for help. In a lot of Kanye West's songs, he raps about Mental Health and what he has gone through from childhood to recent years. The death of his mother had a huge impact on him, and a lot of his music has been centered around that. When I listen to his music, it brings me hope in a sense that other people understand me, and exactly my feelings. He puts his struggles into words that make a lot of sense, and knows what to say and how to say it.

In the future, I hope more artists like Kanye West open up about their mental health struggles, to bring comfort to others like me, transitioning into college. I also hope that the song "Waves" still brings me the same comfort I experience when hearing it today. 10 years from now I want to play this song for my future family. I will tell them about college, and how it is okay to feel nervous, it is okay to transfer schools, and the feelings that come along with this change are valid. Life is like a wave. Experiences may knock you down, but you have to get back up and keep trying. Emotions will rise up high, and come calmly back down, like high tide and low tide. Change is okay, and change is necessary.

Jordan Willis is an exercise science major. She is from Nutley, New Jersey, and has been a competitive cheerleader for 9 years.

How Much Does a Memory Cost?

By
Thomas Zurkan

“Time is money.” We spend time, save time, we lose it, we invest time, things cost us time, and we even buy ourselves time. It is the strongest force there is. It’s entirely unchangeable, and almost uncontrollable. We cannot move it forward or back, slow it or accelerate it, not to say that we don’t try. Our only ability to control time comes in how we spend it. Like money, when we spend it we receive something. Experiences, and from experiences we receive the only proof that we lived at all in the form of memories. Fleeting things that fade and change with age like old cloth. This is what we pay for with our time. After all is said and done, memories are all we have left.

My uncle named Thomas, though everyone calls him Tom, has had cancer for more years than I’ve been alive. He is a stoic, and quiet person, but is also very clever and funny. His wife Laurie, my aunt, is a gregarious bubbly woman, and the complete opposite of him. When he was first diagnosed they paid for a plethora of doctors, treatments, tests, and faced the many trials that come with such a condition. Now, many years later the cancer has returned and he has decided to go into hospice. The melanoma he has made its way into his brain, out of his skull, and it’s unclear how much longer he will be alive. The time he bought is coming to an end, and he has decided not to attempt to buy more. They did not have children, instead opting to travel the world. They’ve been on more cruises than I can count, and to every continent save Antarctica at least twice. Was his time well spent? The death of someone allows for a reflection, and appreciation for the life they led. It also calls

for reflection upon our own lives, both on how we’ve lived, and how we will live. As he passes, I question my own life in the past, present, and future. How will I make use of the time that I am being given? Have I used it as effectively as I should?

When I was younger, we traveled from our home in Maine to a family home on Cape Cod once or twice a year. That place had a fantasticalness to it, at least to a child. I think it had that same element for the adults too, as anyone’s childhood home would, but over time it morphed into something different. Memories can be burdensome. It was where my grandmother and her two brothers, Thomas and Allen grew up. When they grew up and moved out, my great grandparents continued to live there. After my great grandmother passed away and my great grandfather suffered a stroke, having lost most control over the left half of his body, Allen returned to take care of him. After he died Allen cared for the house itself.

I’d often spend my days there doing what most kids like to do. Playing outside, inside, exploring, or crafting elaborate stories for my own amusement. Often, my grandmother and I would draw. We’d be at the table for hours with a stack of paper while the sound of two pencils pressed against paper. Being quite young I was not a skilled drawer, and so it became my grandmother’s job to help me illustrate pictures for my stories. Making drawings alongside her, I requested all manner of things from diamond rings to grizzly bears and more. Despite never pursuing art, or practicing regularly, she was able to draw anything and have it be

recognizable immediately. It made for some excellent tales. When the drawings were complete, I would cut them out, and play with them on the table.

When I wasn't drawing, I'd be exploring the lively backyard. From the back door of the house was a brick patio with wooden Adirondacks painted white. The property was level at first, but then dipped off steeply into a foliage that was so dense hardly any sunlight passed through. There was only a single path that descended through it, and I remember looking within and shivering at the lurking unknown. Quite honestly, I was so scared of it back then that I wouldn't go past the second row of gardens out of fear. The land was right by the water, overlooking the harbor. From the Adirondacks one could sit, and watch small boats and ships sail in just above the tree line below. The yard seemed huge to me back then, but when you're little everything seems big. It did, however, house an incredible garden. The garden was split into four beds arranged in a square, and within each bed were various flowers that had been carefully tended to by my grandmother. We'd visit in spring and summer when the flora grew its most robust. The colors of the rainbow sprouted from the dirt, some high and some low, and the whole yard smelt of grass and sweet scents. Being so close to the sea, the floral scent would mix with the crisp salty air creating a sublime aroma. I'd explore the yard for hours, looking for strange insects, playing pretend, and listening to my family talk on the porch.

One of the years we went there we stayed not at the house above, but at the beach house below. To get there meant going through the towering wall of vines, and trees that created the impenetrable canopy that only slivers of sunlight peeked through. Yet somehow, on the ground within there was a

seemingly endless number of short, dark green leafed plants growing throughout. When I stepped forth into the verdure, I was immediately met with roughly carved stone steps that went down, and down. It opened out into a hollow, and where you'd expect to see foliage like a forest all around you it was only on the ground and spread about. As though walking through that wall of leaves brought me into a huge foyer covered in, or made of, plants. I remember thinking how lush, and jungly it was.

Continuing farther down the steps they ended at a short dirt path, and as the jungle abated it gave way to a little beach in the harbor. A dock stretched out from the dirt path, over the sand of the little beach, and into the deep water. A small two-person sailboat that Allen owned, was tied to the dock. It had not been used in sometime. The sun showed once again, and the sound of the harbor rang out. Nestled at this transition between the two sat a small pale yellow house, with white accents. Only big enough for my mother and I, we slept there for several nights. In the day we'd go up the stone steps through the jungle and enjoy the house above. When the sun set, we'd make our way back down, and fall asleep to the sounds of boats tied up creaking as the waves tickled them.

The first boat I was ever on, or at least which I could remember was the Sea Taxi. Belonging to Laurie and Tom, I believe it was 20 feet or so, but as I've said; in the eyes of a child everything is larger. They would sail the Sea Taxi through the bay, with Tom at the helm and Laurie sitting in the back, to the dock by the beach house. There I would be excitedly waiting, waving to them as they approached, and pulled the boat close to the dock so that I could board. Being helped onto the slightly tipsy boat by Laurie, I would then be promptly swallowed

by my life jacket. My mother would crawl abroad with Tom's arm to steady her, and with that we would sail to their house across the water, a short distance no more than twenty minutes away.

Occasionally, and when I was deemed ready, I had the opportunity to drive the Sea Taxi myself. Tom was an excellent sailor. Before he retired he built ships; sailing and the sea had been a significant part of his life. He would show me how to work the boat's steering wheel, and while he did so he would control its speed. All the while over the dull roar of the engine, he would explain what the various sea vessels that docked and cruised through the bay were, pointing to buoys and flags telling me what each one meant. Behind the wheel of the boat was an exhilarating feeling, that I can only imagine is similar to flying. The sea winds can undoubtedly be harsh and raw, but on warm summer and spring days like when I was there they take on a different tone. They become almost soft, and whip around you with embracement. Sailing into those winds made my younger self feel powerful and volant. I'd sail through the bay with joyousness, and a shot of adrenaline coursing through me all the way to Tom and Laurie's house where Tom would then take the reins to dock the Sea Taxi.

After we docked, my mother, Laurie, and Tom would sit up on their porch. It overlooked the greenest lawn I've ever seen. The lawn immediately dropped off several feet where it then became a soft, sandy beach. All of this could be seen from their house, along with the bustling harbor full of ships. While they sat there I would do as I did in the yard back at the family home, exploring, combing the beach, wading in the brisk New England salt water. The beach here was full of treasures. With my plastic shovels, sand rakes, and sifters I would dig

the sand and find all sorts of things within. Small crabs, and hermit crabs would crawl out of holes disturbed by me unearthing their domains. Like most humans when they see an animal they are fond of, I wanted to keep them. I would put them in buckets of sand and water and keep them for a time, watching as they crawled about, maybe even struggling to escape the confines of their plastic prison. Unable to keep the creatures indefinitely however, I operated under a strict catch and release policy, and so by the end of the day when the sun set and I had to leave the beach, everything I had caught would be returned to the sea.

The creature that stood out to me the most though, would be just beyond the shore listlessly being pulled back and forth with the tide. The small soft round balls would drift in droves. Their clear bodies littered the water, and as I stepped into the sea, wincing at the temperature till I became more accustomed to it, with a reach of my hand I would scoop one up and hold it. I had no idea what they were, at first thinking them to be some fish. Looking at them, the skin on the back of my hand looked warped and magnified, but still visible through its clear body. I showed them to my Aunt who told me that they were, in fact, jellyfish. Moon jellyfish. They fascinated me, with their texture unlike anything I'd felt before, and an animal like this to be alive was a marvel to me. Plucking these jellyfish from the ocean, simply to see them, and feel them in my hands became a staple of my trips to Cape Cod, and something I always looked forward to.

One of the years that I spent there, I encountered something I'd never seen before. Like we had many times before, we cruised across the water on the Sea Taxi to my Aunt and Uncle's house. When we arrived the usual routine ensued. Already in

my bathing suit, and still wearing my life jacket, I ran up the dock, and jumped off into the coarse dry sand. The rest of my family made their way to the porch overlooking the beach.

Right away I saw something on the beach, only a blob lying there. I approached it, curious about what new... creature? Rock? Plant? I had just found. Getting a better look at the blob, it was a deep red with a bright pink center at the top. It was a vague shape of a dome although sitting here on the sand it looked mostly formless. I prodded it with my feet gingerly, feeling its slimy, soft texture. Then I delivered a forceful punt in its gelatinous body. When my feet made contact with it it felt like something entirely new; A mass of slime that somehow held itself together but had a weight to it. Like raw meat in a garbage bag. Its rubbery body conformed around my foot with each kick as it sloppily rolled over the sand to the edge of the coast with each kick.

Despite the initial intrigue and suspense as to what this was, since no further information could be gained from its lifeless body, I quickly grew bored of it. I never ran up to the deck to ask what it was, or to show anyone else my strange find; thus I continued to comb the beach as I did last year, looking for crabs, fish, and anything else that could pique my interest once more.

The perception of time as a child is warped and abstract. Twenty minutes, ten minutes, an hour later maybe, I became acutely aware of a tingling, stinging sensation in my legs. Unsure of what or why this was happening, but not yet in complete discomfort I sat with the feeling briefly. My attitude quickly changed though, as it started to hurt more. A burning pain crept up my legs, my skin prickled with itchiness. I raced to the deck, interrupting whatever conversation my

family was having. In the best way a child can, explained that my legs hurt, itched, stung, for no reason whatsoever, and that I'd like it to stop.

My family was perplexed as to why until through the complaining, wincing, and scratching, I eventually said that I had been playing with some blob. By then the skin on my legs had turned a bright red; my aunt connected the dots that I had been playing with a dead jellyfish. The jellyfish I was used to were, as the name suggests, soft clear balls of jelly you could hold in your hand. They were not brightly colored shapeless blobs that could inflict pain on contact. Thus, we filled a large bucket with vinegar and water that I stepped into. I stood inside there for as long as it took for my fiery legs to return to normal. Standing in one place while in pain as a kid although it was less than half an hour, felt like an eternity. When the feeling finally began to subside I was relieved, and although the sun hadn't yet set I didn't go down to the beach again; Opting to stay on the deck, play in the yard or the house. Having seen how cruel the sea's creatures can be, I became more wary of them, and the power they held.

The last few years we spent at the house took a different tune. The second to last year we were there my mother and I both became violently ill. Intending to stay there a week, and our second day in, we began to feel strange. We had deep, raspy coughs that lingered in your throat no matter how much you cleared it. Our noses were clogged making our voices sickly nasal. Choked up to seasonal allergies, the following day it became clear something else was amiss. An intense fatigue bound us to our beds, and the coughing worsened. It grew so bad in fact, that my mother and I coughed up blood. A frightening symptom that signaled our immediate departure from the house. The

both of us, still groggy and worn from sickness, left on only our fourth day, having suffered enough. Upon returning to our home in Maine the symptoms that plagued us subsided quickly. We deduced that what happened at the cape must've been caused by something in the house itself. Later, suspicions would be confirmed when it was sold and it was found that there was a significant amount of mold throughout the house.

The last year that we visited was colored by the same air of decay. The four flower beds that once brimmed with life were now only mounds of soil with small weeds, and miscellaneous sprouts no more than an inch tall that hadn't been planted by my grandmother. The last little bits of life in a place that, unbeknownst to me at the time, would no longer be cared for by my family. The great cavern of foliage leading to the beach house and the bay now revealed a beach diametric to the one I knew before. The dry white sand that once slipped between my toes was now a sickening dark gray, and green wet muck that squelched between them. The air this close to the harbor no longer smelt salty, replaced by the perpetual stench of rotting fish and low tide. Most disturbingly, the beach was littered with pieces and corpses of fish that had been captured, and then gutted before being hurled back into the bay where they would wash up here. I remember seeing a large decomposing fish head sitting in the muck. The discolored spine extending out the back of it, the gaping hollow holes where its eyes had rotted away to nothing, its mouth hanging open in a mournful pout. It was the antithesis of everything I remembered this place for previously.

The house was sold after, for significantly less than its true value. Had my family held out only a bit longer, they could've gotten

much more. But, considering the state of the place, it's no wonder. Thinking back to how it was when I first saw it, to how it was when we sold it, it's no wonder why they let go of it. The property was collectively owned by my grandmother, Tom, and Allen. My grandmother struggled with letting go of something that had been in our family for so long and had so much time invested in it. Selling it perhaps felt like selling the physical proof of those memories. Allen had cared for the place and lived there most of his life. He was glad to be rid of it. Tom, in his typical stoic fashion, seemed to know that it had to be done, and his feelings on the matter were hard to discern. By selling the house were they giving up some portion of the memories they made there? Or were they setting a price on their memories in some way? We assign meaning, value, and memories to many things in this world, and letting go of things that hold great meaning, value, or memories can be hard to do. It feels akin to giving away the memory itself.

Tom passed away in late September. Hearing about it brought about a melancholy feeling in me. I didn't know him well enough to be utterly distraught, but it is terribly sad nonetheless. The timing of this, along with reliving memories of my past, and entering this new chapter in my life as I start college, all feels too coincidental in a way. His death has made me contemplate my future, the present, and my past. Had I known that my time at that house would end, would I have spent my time differently? Rose tinted glasses make us see the past with such adoration. I don't think it would have bothered me in the slightest to know that my time there was fleeting, and I wouldn't change a thing. I'm older now, more careful and aware of how I spend my time. I hope that how I spend it now will pay off in the way that it did when I was younger.

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