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Finding Myself in College



Written by Taylor Henderson.

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I don't know who I am. For my entire life, I've relied solely on what other people defined me as. In elementary school, I was creative, loud, and outgoing. In middle school, I was weird, nerdy, and edgy. In high school, I was funny, sporty, and smart. I defined myself by my groups: soccer team, cheer squad, mock trial. Until I started college, I had never had to question who I was. Starting college was especially hard for me because it was the first time in my entire life that I had complete control of my actions, how I presented myself to the world, and what to do with my free time. So, naturally, I tried to find belonging in the familiar. I explored clubs and groups and attempted to find the best fit. Information session after information session proved to be disappointing. I did the meet and greets, I did the socials, I even joined a few things and no matter what, I couldn't help but feel like I didn't mesh with these people. As the semester passed, I began to end old relationships. I quickly became completely disconnected from the person I once was, and was at a loss as to who I was becoming.

Discovering who I was was the most challenging situation I have ever encountered. At the beginning, it weighed heavily on me. I began to live a life in which I was a slave to the opinions of others. I would stand in the mirror, feeling like I was looking at a complete stranger. The only thing I knew about myself was that I didn't like me. I didn't like living for others' approval and, most of all, I didn't like the overwhelming feeling of meaninglessness that came with my non-existent personality.

To get over the hollow feeling inside, I began trying new things – things I had always thought I hated, things that scared me. At the same time, I began spending most of my time alone. It was scary and lonely at first. I was afraid that I would always feel empty and that I would spend the rest of my days alone. That feeling lasted for a while. It took year to find the first person I genuinely connected with, and even after that it took several more months to solidify our friendship. It took even longer to find out which activities bring me joy.

Now, three years after my initial existential crisis, I am surrounded by people I love, doing things I love. Although I still find it hard to fill in those “About me” sections on online profiles, I am beginning to discover myself. Every day, I get the chance to surprise myself and fall in love with the person I am becoming. I allow myself to change and grow in ways that I never thought possible. I still can’t say for sure who I am, but with each day, I get closer to who I aspire to be.



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