TEMPO IS A STUDENT PRODUCED PUBLICATION THAT EMBODIES THE CULTURE THAT IS COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY THROUGH EACH PAGE.
A note to our readers,

There were moments throughout the year that the completion of this magazine appeared impossible, yet to overcome the impossible is a rebirth in and of itself. We started the Fall with a journey from the past into the present, highlighting the struggles that forge us into the people we are today. Spring is all about the next step of that journey, the completion of the cycle, where we start with who we are and move onward to who we will become. Now, as a whole, Tempo represents our retreat from the past and our stride into the future. Rebirth is never an easy task to undertake, it is a dying star, rising flood waters, a forest fire—if you are without strife your journey is yet to be finished.

We are born and reborn in moments of great reverence. It is the perseverance that lies beneath our skin, the fight and fire that forges our bones, the promise we hold on baited breath that things will get better. We have this potential in our souls, without a doubt, to change ourselves. You are not the same self you were a year ago, a month ago, even a day ago. In a hectic world of ignorance and resistance, you are the power to create a new life for yourself. We are born and reborn in moments of great reverence. It is the perseverance that lies beneath our skin, the fight and fire that forges our bones, the promise we hold on baited breath that things will get better. We have this potential in our souls, without a doubt, to change ourselves. You are not the same self you were a year ago, a month ago, even a day ago. In a hectic world of ignorance and resistance, you are the power to create a new life for yourself.

We are in celebration of our award-winning Fall issue. This honor proves that through persistence, great things await us. We hope that you are mindful of your impact, aware of your mutability, and calm in the face of adversity. Walk through life with your head high knowing that this is only the beginning of your transformation.

Nothing ends. Tomorrow is always another moment to start again, to try one more time, to be reborn.

Thank you for taking part of our rebirth. And always remember that you are never alone in the journey.

--- Anne M. Kelley ---

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I grew up very “anti-social,” or should I say, “socially selective.” I found solace in reading and writing poems to express the emotions and thoughts I struggled to verbalize. I try to refrain from making myself sound like a victim. I never wanted empathy, but I desired to be understood. The conflict in that is that it took me years to understand myself. I could not find the beauty in me that most young girls saw in themselves. I can remember the times I quietly cried myself to sleep; hating myself, my appearance, and my existence. This was because at the age of 11 I was diagnosed with the skin disease Hidradenitis Suppurativa.

HS creates painful cystic pimples that appears in places like the armpits, groin, really anywhere where hair grows. This caused my life to take an unexpected turn. A turn that forced me to be stronger than I was the day before.

I fell into a silent depression. I had shut away my true feelings from my family, too embarrassed to say what was really bothering me. October 13th 2009, I wrote out my own obituary. I was not suicidal, but I was prepared for death.

Every summer I prayed the same prayer that my condition would be better and go away so that I would not have to deal with the same pain I did the school year before. That particular prayer was never answered, at least not in the way I was hoping for. Instead, my skin condition worsened. Some days the pain was so unbearable that I knew it was going to be the death of me. Both of my armpits by this time were completely covered with cysts that drained throughout the day. I could not wear sleeveless or white shirts because of it. Ironically though, the days that I felt the worst were the days I dressed my best.
“Never look like what you’re going through.” This has been my motto since I was 13 years old. I realized that what was happening to me was out of my control but what was in my control is how I dealt with it. In order to truly heal one must reshape their mind and their perspective. I engrained this thought into my mind until it seeped into my heart. I would not say that I had to be reborn, but I will say that I had to reevaluate myself and my attitude towards life. This didn’t put an end to the physical pain I often experienced, but being strong-minded enhanced my endurance of that pain.

July 1st, 2014 was the day of my first surgery. 7 years had already gone by already since my diagnosis. This surgery was the beginning of my journey, a journey that challenged me mentally, physically, and spiritually. On that day, I wore a t-shirt that said “pain is weakness leaving the body.” I did not know how meaningful that quote would be to me until I was discharged from the hospital two days later. When I looked in the mirror and saw what was done to me, I cried like a baby. Both arms were so swollen that I could not place them flat by my sides. There were four drainage tubes inserted in me—two on each side of my breasts. But what really broke me down was when I saw the long scars on my back that made look like I was an angel whose wings were severed. The confidence that took me so long to gain diminished with every glance in the mirror.

I was informed by my surgeon that I would no longer be able to participate in any physical activities for at least six months. This meant I could not return to work, I could not be on the school’s drumline, I could not drive, I could not do the things I enjoyed. I felt like I was being stripped away from my senior high school experience. Despite the severe condition that I was in I was determined not to let it hold me back: I never had before and I wasn’t going to start. I guess being resilient goes hand in hand with being “hard-headed,” because everything I was instructed not to do, I did anyways, and did well.

“My misfortunes added value to my existence.”
When I got to Coastal, I thought that the college experience would be my revelation: That I would be redeemed of all the things I had endured prior to my first day stepping on campus. I was determined to live the best life I felt was owed to me. I dressed myself up and did my makeup every day so that I would not look like what I was feeling. I performed an act of comfort, though I was uncomfortable.

I went into college not knowing the true responsibility of being a college student. I relied on my intelligence to “get me by” like it had in middle and high school. I had to learn the hard way that I could not call my mom to come down to the school to talk to the professors to straighten things out. I had a number of absences because either had a painful flare up that morning, or I had one too many drinks the night before at a party. I did not know the impact this would have on my grades and my GPA. This resulted in losing two scholarships that I regretfully took for granted. It was at that moment I realized that I’d be held accountable academically and financially. This brought on another load of stress onto me and my parents. I was overwhelmed with the obstacles life labored me. I was frustrated with God for allowing these things to happen. I was tired of being optimistic only to still be faced with opposition. I felt... hopeless.

Nonetheless, I still applied my motto to my every day routine. Wake up, do my hair and makeup—lights, camera, action! I somehow maintained an impressive appearance while being depressed. I somehow found the courage to treat life like a stage and the people I encountered like the audience. This act of being “alright” even had myself fooled. That was until May of 2017. I was scheduled to have my third cosmetic surgery in relation to the initial first surgery I had in 2014. During my recovery process, there were days I took pain killers not just to take away the pain but to also numb my thoughts and emotions.

Sophomore year was supposed to be my year of academic and financial redemption. I picked up a job at a local retail store and worked at McDonalds in Georgetown on the weekends. I forced myself to study every night and minimize the amount of time I spent with friends. Between work, school, and my social life, I was physically and mentally drained.

I made a pledge to myself that I would make a change in my behavior and priorities by any means necessary.
A few weeks after surgery, I began to feel ill one morning. I figured it was a minor cold until it progressively got worse that same night. My mom took me to the ER to have tests and blood work done. I had reached a fever of 105 degrees, a few degrees short from brain damage. I was admitted into the hospital with a viral infection that could have killed me if I waited any longer. At that moment, I realized that although I questioned God what I did wrong for Him to punish me like this, I knew that if I could get through this, I could get through anything.

I stopped asking “Why me,” and asked, “Why not me?” Who would I be today if I had not gone through the obstacles that I did? How would I view life? How would I treat others? How would I treat myself? I reached a point of appreciating my struggles. I no longer thought of them as punishments, but instead as preparation for a life full of moments that would challenge my will and to do what I desired. My misfortunes added value to my existence.

I am now 22 years old, meaning that I have lived 11 years longer than I expected. I am an aspiring fashion icon, model, poet, activist, and college graduate. Everything that I have gone through—good, bad, and ugly—has developed my character and provided me with life lessons that was especially ordained for me. I realize that I have a lot more to be thankful for, and I am thankful for this rollercoaster ride of a life.

“Pain is weakness leaving the body,” and today I am stronger than I have ever been. And tomorrow I will be stronger than I am today.
Growing up in a Caribbean household, I am no stranger to superstitions. It felt like I was constantly being scolded by my grandmother when I was younger.

“Stop swinging your feet,” she’d warn in her thick accent, “you’re going to get bad luck.” With her warnings, she always looked at me with so much concern in her eyes that it scared me into stopping whatever it was that I was doing. There was no way I was going to leave anything to chance.

Throughout the years, I learned that along with swinging your feet, walking around a table, black cats, and broken mirrors also led to a period of misfortune. My mom was so adamant in her superstitious nature that when my dad came home with a black kitten for my sister and I, she made him take it back and swore the cat would have sent our lives into turmoil.

In high school, I learned that a twitching right eye meant that something bad was going to happen. I’d be on edge for the whole day if my eye twitched, patiently waiting for the bad news or for something to go wrong. On the other hand, if my left eye twitched then I knew I was in for a good day. An itchy hand always gets me excited, as my mom always says that an itch on your palm is an indication that money is coming your way.

All of these superstitions may seem silly, but my childhood encouraged me to be as cautious as I am today. My grandma still makes a point to stop my little brother from doing the same things that I did. Sometimes I wonder if she only said some of these things to scare us into acting accordingly, but at some point, I decided that it would be better to be safe than sorry.
Molten lava nacho cheese sauce swirled into elbow pasta, plopped on top of a burger patty snuggled between two soft, yet toasty buns. What if I told you this meal can be made without meat or dairy? This isn’t even a fraction of the booming industry that is plant-based food. There are festivals full of vendors that create insane vegan creations, from pizza topped with loaded french-fries, to fried “chicken” bagel sandwiches. There are plant-based restaurants popping up all over the US. It’s clear that anything can be recreated with the right vegetables and spices. The fantastic part about it is, any of the ingredients for these dishes can be found in grocery stores around the country. This is what helped make my personal experience of switching from a diet of meat and dairy to one consisting of fully plant-based so easy. I watched a documentary about the links between diet and overall health and it opened my mind, something inside of me clicked. Before the plate of veggies hit the table, I had a preconceived idea of what they tasted like: disgusting. I learned that taking a bite with that mindset would prevent me from ever enjoying food, so the only thing left for me was to change my mindset.

After watching the documentary, What the Health, and hearing the incredible impact between diet and disease, I realized food should be more than just tasty. It should be rich with nutrients, and delicious. Eating a more plant-based diet is a great way to avoid health issues and to help the environment.

Our ecosystem is affected by every meal the world eats. According to researchers from the Water Footprint Network, one pound of cheese takes over 395 gallons of water to produce. A pound of cheese takes 665 gallons to create. A pound of milk takes about 122 gallons of water, and there are 8.3 pounds in every 1 gallon, so that’s 929.6 gallons of water to produce a single gallon of milk. Overall, the animal agriculture industry alone goes through trillions of gallons of water a year. Studies from Oxford University, revealed that eating plant-based (or, Vegan) saves around a thousand gallons of water per day, reduces a person’s carbon footprint from food by 73 percent, and combats against world hunger. These studies show that there’s enough grain produced in the US to feed the world. The problem is that the majority of it is for farm animals. To break it down further, the USDA found that 75 percent of all soybeans and 36 percent of all corn produced in the United States is fed to farm animals. We could feed 800 million people with all that grain. Avoiding meat—or even just eating less of it—lessens the extreme demand for farms, and leaves more food for humans.

I found that introducing more vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and whole grains into your diet is a great way to transition into being herbivorous. The more plant-based ingredients on the plate, the better. They contain a lot of vital nutrients like protein, iron, vitamin C, and calcium. It’s a common misconception that a plant-based diet lacks protein. The truth is, any diet can lack the right nutrients without the proper attention to food intake. Foods like tofu, tempeh, lentils, nuts, seeds, and quinoa are all full of protein, and can be manipulated to mimic a meat-based food. From research, we can now see that those meat and dairy food groups are not required when eating a balanced nutritious diet.
The beauty of eating Vegan is how versatile the ingredients are. Any breakfast, snack, lunch, dinner, or dessert from any culture can be recreated to fit the plant-based diet. You can decide to slowly cut out meat consumption and eventually transition to pescatarian, a plant-based diet with the exception of fish; then vegetarian, a plant-based diet with the exception of dairy and eggs. By subtracting the overall amount of meat consumption in your diet, you’ll increase personal health while helping the environment.

In fact, here’s an easy plant-based cheese recipe: Blend together boiled potatoes, carrots, and soaked cashews. Add in some nutritional yeast, salt, pepper and turmeric. Mix into pasta to create a tasty mac and cheese dish. It’s amazing how I’m able to recreate this same experience with plant-based, nutritious ingredients. With a simple decision to lessen the overall consumption of meat and dairy, society can increase their overall health by decreasing risks for cardiac related diseases and diabetes. It will also help tremendously in the fight to end world hunger and save our planet.

Eating directly relates to how the body feels externally and internally. “You are what you eat,” isn’t just a saying. Food is fuel, and plants help you feel good. Plant-based alternatives, restaurants, and brands are becoming increasingly available by the day. If you’re confused about what’s Vegan versus what isn’t, a great habit to get into is checking the nutrition facts on the foods you buy. If you don’t want to change your diet completely, make it a gradual glide—eat a handful of nuts every day, choose a vegetarian meal when you’re eating out instead of your usual meal, ask about Vegan options in your favorite restaurant just to learn what’s available. Take a moment to dwell on your impact and ask yourself if you’re willing to try something new. The most important part of my transition from meat-eater to Vegan was realizing that it’s possible for anyone. And, if it can happen for me, it can happen for you, too.
Growing up in the U.S. Virgin Islands, there were many superstitions I’ve encountered as a young man. A lot of them I don’t believe now, of course, but I was fooled into believing many of them from members of my family and friends as I grew up.

Many of the superstitions always made me wonder because they never seemed to truly happen. Three superstitions I’ve heard about, continuously, would be “If you sweep over someone’s feet, they will never get married;” “If the palm of your hand is itching, that means you’re about to win money;” and “If you drop something out of nowhere, someone is watching you.” These were the famous superstitions my family, mostly my grandmother, mother, or aunts, would tell me. They made sure that I was aware of what these actions meant when they are seen or done.

Other superstitions are that if you can’t sleep at night, it is believed that someone is dreaming about you, and if you see a brown grasshopper in your home, you will get money. Surprisingly, I always thought the latter was true because I saw them at the entrance of my house all the time.

One that scared me was, “Always turn your back to the inside of the house when opening the door at night, that way the spirits that have followed you home will see your face and will not enter.” I was 17 when my friend first told me this superstition. It spooked me even though I don’t believe in spirits or ghosts. I can’t pinpoint it, but something in the heaviness and the truth with which he told me stuck with me and still sends shivers run down my spine.

Superstitions play a major role in the lives of the older generation back in the Virgin Islands, so a lot of the older folk still take these beliefs seriously. Because of that, these stories are passed down to people like me. You can see where I pick and choose what to believe, but the elders of my home take them to heart. It makes me wonder if they were all true at one point. Regardless of this, I still keep my back to the center of the house at night… just in case.
Myrtle Beach’s very own Julie Fisher tells us about her experience as a beekeeper and Operations Manager for Mountain Man Honey and Goods, a local raw honey merchant based in Downtown Conway. Her father, known as “The Mountain Man,” is a popular figure among Conway and Myrtle Beach residents. Marik Castro and Anne Kelley sat down with Julie Fisher to talk about beekeeping, dangerous environmental factors, the true power of a queen bee, what it means to be a part of this community, and the stereotypes surrounding honey bees.

It’s a pleasure to meet someone with such a cool occupation. Would you be able to walk us through your daily beekeeping routine?

“Well, the routine varies from day to day based on the time of the year, and the kind of care the bees need for that particular day. In the Spring, when we are starting up, it’s complicated because we are finishing up the honey that was created during the Winter. So, you’re bringing in your older hives to its completed status. You’re also deciding based on the health of each colony if you want to split that hive.”

What does it mean to split a hive?

“If you have a hive that’s extremely healthy, you can make the decision as a beekeeper to separate the boxes. You break the boxes down into separate hives and mail order a new queen. Then you offer that queen to the other set of bees to create two colonies. This way the bees won’t swarm.”
Would you be able to run us through the components of the hive?

“Absolutely. So, coming out of Winter and going into Spring, you address the health of your hive. That’s how you decide if you’re going to make your splits. You do that by looking through your hive. At the bottom of the box is called the ‘bottom board,’ and this basically supports the bottom of the hive.

The next part is called a deep—it is the deepest part of the hive where the queen keeps her brood, the babies. That’s where she lays the majority of her eggs.

Once there is a good balance of pollen and brood (larvae), then you put on an excluder, which is a screen that the queen can’t get through to lay eggs in the honey because her thorax is larger than the other bees. This part of the hive is what is called a super. And that is where our honey comes from. You’re not disrupting the family, the colony. You’re not even bothering the bees.

Depending on which property I’m working, we choose which size box we put on top of the deep. We decide this based on how quickly the queen is reproducing. We don’t want them to get overpopulated and swarm. We want them to be comfortable.

By offering them a deep, we are giving them more space. Now, when these are full, and the bees are happy, you are following the bloom calendar and you’re watching what is going on around you. We specialize in wildflower honey so I am watching the wildflowers and the trees.”

What would happen if the bees get unhappy with their hive situation?

“They could swarm, which means they just leave the box and you never see them again. Sometimes the bees re-queen by themselves if they decide to swarm or think something is wrong with their queen. If she’s sick or not performing well, the worker bees will kill her and then they will make themselves another queen. The bees decide who their queen will be.”

So would one of the worker bees just starts producing eggs like a queen?

“When the egg is laid [by the queen], if within the first three days the female egg is fed something called royal jelly [by a worker bee], then they will have the potential to be a queen.”

That’s extremely interesting.

“It is interesting when you’ve got forty thousand bees trying to decide what to do! It gets really fascinating because they will hide that royal cell where they think the queen won’t find it because they don’t want her to know that they are making a new cell. If she finds it, she will try to kill it. And if that second queen is born then they will fight, and well… may the best queen win.”

When that happens, how long do the queens live?

“Queens can live up to seven years. The typical lifespan in South Carolina is about five years. A female bee—the worker bee—has a lifespan of about 5 weeks, and a drone lives 3 weeks. Drones are males and they don’t have much of a job other than to impregnate the queen and keep the hive clean.”

Some people wonder why you need to smoke the bees? Does it hurt them?

“I only do this for their well-being, never mine. A misconception is that the smoke puts the bees to sleep when actually it just masks the queen’s instructions to the hive. We smoke the bees because the queen puts out a very strong pheromone to keep her family together. When she emits that pheromone, you can have the hive all together and you can move them around like musical chairs. The bees have been out foraging all day and all the hives look the same, but they can find always their way home because they know what their mom smells like. If you smoke them, then everyone calms down because the pheromone that she puts out when she is super-agitated is masked.”
While getting stereotypes out of the way, it seems like most people are afraid of bees or even hate them because they sting.

“A bee will not sting you unless they absolutely fear for their life. It is the only time a honey bee will sting you, otherwise they have no interest. A worker bee will die if they sting you. A queen can sting you over and over again, but a queen is not inclined to sting because it is not in her DNA, and she hardly leaves the hive. The workers will do it for her, but only if absolutely necessary since their guts are pulled out of their body with their stinger.”

Those who know about honey can’t get enough of it. What are some of the health benefits of honey?

“Yes, honey has every mineral your body needs. It’s an anti-microbial, anti-fungal, antibacterial, and antiviral all in one. Plus, it never ever expires. It’s also good to note that if you consume wildflower honey from the area you live in, your body will be absorbing parts of the flora, then when it comes time for pollen season, your body will be more used to it. Bees and their honey help us in so many ways.”

So how do environmental factors in the area affect the hive?

“They affect it greatly. Hurricane Florence was awful. We got a phone call when we had water two inches away from entering several of our hives. We had a massive rescue effort and I called every beekeeper that I knew I could trust—since our hives are hidden due to vandalism in the past. We had to rush to move those hives. We saved every single one of them. We anchored them down. It was ridiculous what we did to keep these hives safe the best we could. I’m talking cinder blocks and tie wraps, and thousands of dollars going into keeping the hives safe.”

I don’t think people thought about bee keeping during these hurricanes. What happened after the water receded?

“When the county had to spray for mosquitos afterwards, so many phone calls went back and forth with the county and with the property owners to tent and tarp the hives. We [the beekeepers] have a contract with the county that says we are in a no-spray zone, ground or aerial. But they were spraying pesticides anyway. So when the property owners heard the planes, they ran out and were holding tarps over the hives. I’ve shed so many tears of gratitude because we had property owners and friends helping us for days on end to protect them.”
That really shows how important your community is in trying times like hurricanes. Is there a large community that is centered around beekeeping in this area?

“There is definitely a good amount of beekeepers in Horry County. I know about five other beekeepers that are actively keeping thousands and thousands of bees for retail purposes, but that doesn’t count all the people who are keeping bees for their own purposes.”

To close, what’s your main motivation for staying in the business?

“Actually, the way that it all started was that my dad back in Colorado just decided that he wanted to sell honey, y’know? He was taking care of bees, and he was retired. He had this nickname of ‘Mountain Man’ because he did mountain-man rendezvous. The name ‘The Mountain Man’ just stuck, and we would joke that it ‘stuck’ because of the honey.

“For us, honey was always just something my family did. So my dad came home one day and he said to my mom, ‘Jude, I’m just gonna keep on doing this thing,’ and she was like, ‘Okay, whatever, just don’t make my kitchen sticky.’ So he kept selling honey on the mountain, and kept more and more bees, and getting more involved. I got bored with regular honey, so I created the spun honey that we sell in the shop.

“When my youngest got sick, we moved to the Myrtle Beach area because he had to be at sea-level. I called my dad and said, ‘Daddy, I really need a job.’ He said, ‘Sell some honey!’ I told him, ‘All I have is Colorado honey.’ He paused and said, ‘So what? Sell some Colorado honey!’ So here I sat at this little flea market in Myrtle Beach selling Colorado honey. It was enough to keep me going while I started up some hives here.

“The very first hives I started were in Socastee. I made some good friends that needed someone to take care of their hives. I called my dad and told him that we were okay and he said, ‘Your mother and I are moving out there.’ Next thing I know, mom and dad come out and now we have Mountain Man Honey. My brother continues the business in Colorado.

It was more about being a family than caring about the bees, and also caring about the community. Over time it was about getting to know the community and realizing that this was almost like a ministry at times. The experience of people more than bees has kept us going. The bees are just a perk.”
“THE EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE MORE THAN BEES HAS KEPT US GOING. THE BEES ARE JUST A PERK.”
y como la flor
con tanto dolor—
grasping onto the
thorns,
cutting into the
flesh and blood,
exposing the
bones of your body,
those which build
a bridge of two cultures.
a mixture of brown and white
with a little extra white to
make you wear
a skin of an olive glow
speckled with brown flakes
peeking through.
Faintly there,
pero eres guerrita.
ay, que bonita.
as I walk by—
thank you!
I yell back,
smiling to
shocked eyes,
a man
stumbling over the
cobblestone roads
my father scraped his
six-year-old
knees on.
no sabes que entiendo español?
soy más que una guerrita bonita.
this language is my home.
calledita te ves más bonita
tripping over my tongue
to move more like
abuelita—
her sparkling eyes,
open but silent
mouth a
constant reminder of our
disconnect,
the barrier between
hola y hello,
meeting “mi niña preciosa,
como estas?” with
“I’m good, how are you? … oh”—
creating those
sparkling eyes and that
silent smile
full of love
stained with
sadness, a longing
only existent due to the
rubble
stuck in my
throat.
I reach in,
crushing the cobblestone
between my fingers as they
dig and grasp onto the
roots, mis raíces
deep within my
chest,
displaying the
red of my blood,
a mosaic of two flags,
tinges of green and blue,
an eagle clenching the
serpent,
stars scattered
across the map
within
myself.
leaving barreras
in the dust
transcending
invisible borders,
leading me to what it
means to
be
mexican-american
You’re musing about what a terrible day—no, week—life?—it’s been when the realization of just how unhappy you are fully sinks in. What do you do now? Talking to friends and family helps, but it doesn’t ease the ache you feel when lying awake at night, alone and unsettled. There’s a weight that has made a home in your chest, and you’ve simply learned to carry it around. Out of ideas, you turn to the Internet.

“Make some tea and let in the sunlight!” chirps one faceless user. Another suggests, “Baking and dancing always lifts my spirits.” Thread after thread, the resounding answer is this: focus on light, love, and happiness, and the rest will follow. Though well-intentioned, this idealistic ideology falls flat at the first sign of conflict. Our modern world prioritizes quick fixes and easy solutions, so today’s self-care tactics typically function as forms of escapism. Ideas like, “Just put a facial mask on and relax!” are Band-Aids we slap over our ugly feelings. However, there is a reason we feel stress on the body, whether it manifests through constant headaches or a tenderness in the chest: pain demands to be acknowledged. Catchy tunes and new candles will always have an exciting place in our lives, but they alone cannot bridge the gap between what Carl Jung would call our shadow selves (that which is repressed), and our egos (the main component of our recognizable personalities). This is where shadow work comes in.

The term “shadow work,” also referred to as “shadow therapy,” was coined by Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1875-1961). Jung—who shared a fascination for the collective human unconscious with his mentor, Sigmund Freud—eventually developed his own theories on layers of identity. Believing Freud’s definition of the shadow self was pessimistic and limited, Jung emphasized the idea that the shadow is instead comprised of treasures that are only waiting to be unlocked and used. Why should we listen to Jung? Well, he also dismissed Freud’s notion of the Oedipal complex, which is a promising start.

To do shadow work is to drag your less desirable qualities into the light of consciousness, where true transformation occurs. Conversing with the shadow self is not an easy task—after all, those traits have been buried into your subconscious for a reason. Therefore, it is a practice that must be handled with the utmost honesty and gentleness. A prerequisite to shadow work is understanding that you, the individual, are not your thoughts; how you interpret these thoughts and extend them out into the world through your actions is a closer representation of what defines you as a person.

There is no specific or ‘correct’ practice in the line of shadow work, though there are some basic guidelines. As with any creative or spiritual endeavor, it is up to the individual to forge a meaningful path towards understanding of the self.

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"To become conscious of [one’s shadow] involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge."

-Carl Jung, Aion (1951)
1. Observe Your Emotions

Emotions are never inherently bad, for they light the world with potential and excitement. Imagine a culture with no inventions, art, debates, or thrills—indeed, no culture at all. It is only when we allow our emotions to overwhelm us, with no intent to understand from where they originate, that passion may become harmful. One of the most challenging aspects of shadow work is rising above powerful emotions that might otherwise engulf you, but distance is necessary in order to pinpoint exactly what you’re feeling and why.

Pay attention to how your body expresses emotional reactions. Anger and guilt, for instance, are not felt in the same way. Over time, you may begin to recognize patterns between your emotions and their triggers, which in turn gives you more power over both yourself and your environment. If you notice that your jaw tenses when you’re around a certain person, try to dig into the why. The obvious solution might be to limit your interactions with that individual, but consider this: Does a particular trait of theirs repulse you because you have been taught to bury those exact characteristics?

Repression creates resentment, which is then left to brew in the darkness of the subconscious until released in sudden, violent bursts of emotion. Whatever these trigger traits might be—talkativeness, femininity, certain types of humor, etc.—pondering why these mannerisms cause such a strong personal reaction will lead you to discover valuable insight about your own attitudes. Does a certain word evoke an unusual response from you? Explore your relationship with that word and its meaning. What is the underlying tie here?

The best question to ask yourself as you begin the labor of shadow work is none other than the child’s favorite: Why? Why? Why? This process of open-minded inquiry will lead the path into your subconscious, where your repressed energies have been locked away.

2. Talk to Your Shadow

There’s a reason why we have the stereotype of the alcoholic novelist, or the insane painter: Art allows us to tap into our shadow selves to produce compelling, genuine articulations of the human experience. Rarely is great art ever created without exploring the darker, painful traits we have buried beneath our outward personalities. Many psychologists incorporate art expression into therapy sessions; Carl Jung himself was noted for using mandalas in his own shadow work.

You don’t have to identify as a “creative type” in order to benefit from creative expressionism. Many of us perform shadow work without even realizing it—painting, drawing, dancing, singing, running, meditating, and writing are all examples of activities that let you connect to a deeper sense of self (yes, exercise can be creative!). It’s worth trying out different techniques to see what speaks to you. There is no right or wrong way to perform shadow work, so long as you keep an open mind and accept that the answers might not come right away.

Having journaled nearly all my life, I can trace my self-development over the years through written entries. These records make pattern-recognition easier. I can identify what events or areas of my life triggered outbursts of emotion, and then use this knowledge during similar future incidents to stay calm and merely observe the feelings that surface. My shadow work can appear as doodles in the margins of my papers (why did I draw this chaotic spiral?), or even the way I affect my posture while walking (why do I normally slouch?). In these instances, small as they may be, I feel a connection to a deeper side of myself that rarely gets to experience the light of acknowledgement. Even if you are unable to articulate what exactly it is you feel, that undeniable pull within your gut suggests you are on the right track.
Self-discovery takes persistence and a whole lot of effort that may often leave you drained or upset. Therefore, it cannot be overstated how vital it is to practice compassion to yourself. This self-kindness will seep into your work and help you see from a new, potentially enlightening perspective. For instance, once I realized that the years-deep anger I directed towards myself stemmed from an even greater shadow—fear—I could begin the work of pulling this thread to understand why fear resides so deep within me, and how I can incorporate this emotion into productive means of being. Journaling reflected a change in my state of mind, as self-sabotaging assessments gave way to reflective meditations in which I strove to understand the nature of this fear. In a sense, I “spoke” to it—recognizing what purpose fear has in my life, and why I have allowed it thus far to take the reigns, albeit subconsciously.

When I say to be kind to yourself, I mean also to be kind to your shadow aspects. As is usually the case, these disquieting emotions are actually serving as defense mechanisms to protect you, not hurt you. Ponder these implications; talk to your shadows. Don’t judge them, simply bring them out from the darkness and into the spotlight and watch how, and when, they squirm. It is only after we identify our hidden qualities that we can work on transforming them into positive traits and, in the process, learn more about what makes us tick. In doing so, we also reap the rewards of creativity, inner peace, clearer perception, better communications, improved physical health and energy—the list goes on.
Returning to my original point about self-care, I would like to make clear that there is absolutely nothing wrong with drawing back the curtains, putting on dance music, and losing yourself in “good vibes” for a bit—in fact, that’s a great idea. Unfortunately, too many people are quick to reject their darker natures in favor of embracing the light, which only leads to further repression and ignorance of the self. Duality provides balance. There is no yin without yang, no action without reception, and there is no complexity worth exploring in ourselves if we choose to deny half of our very beings.

Remember, you can’t outrun your demons; you can only make peace with them.

I REALIZED THAT THE YEARS-DEEP ANGER I DIRECTED TOWARDS MYSELF STEMMED FROM AN EVEN GREATER SHADOW.
my wrists are bound at your feet
my throat choked up from those vibrant feelings you inflicted onto my soul
we were once symphonies of sound we created eternal echoes with our laughter we could dream in rare frequencies we were electric magnetic halves but it all grew old the leaves fell in the summer one by one into piles of decaying grey matter we died and grew into the earth to be reborn into separate trees

In a world overpopulated by ambition and dreams, cynicism and critiques, I find myself lacking the very thing I need.

In a class plagued by the desire of necessity, worn out by rebuttals of insincerity, I find myself begging for reciprocity.

In seminars preaching the excellence of ebony and the resistance to ivory, I find myself clinging to credibility,

On highways embellished with brown notoriety.

My shade is pleasing to a white society.

Beauty that comes with an absence of light.

But my oppression seems out-of-mind out-of-sight.

I’ve plugged my heart with pages doused in reassurance.

I licked the tears of doubt with copper precedence.

White changed the lines in books of ways to resist, to color, “you don’t exist”.

We petitioned and practically begged for utter relevance only to get one month hushed by their resentment.

February, black.

November brown. But white gets my attention all year around.

They get mad and complain when you “throw in the race card,” but they’ve never lived a life even half this hard.

My country was bred by the strength my red skin produced, wisdom my black skin infused, and one common thread we all chose to refuse
They'dies and Gentlethem, if there's one thing we can agree on, let it be that the infrastructure holding up this country is a hierarchy of oppression.

For centuries now, America has been dividing itself into sides of opposition for people to immorally function in. Divides such as the two-party political system, the economic classes, and civilians with unmovable beliefs continue to perpetuate the separation of the individual and the minority. Then, those in power widen the area of no man’s land between the warring trenches of racial and religious inequalities and what it means to be a citizen. Over and over again, the margins are slowly shifting.

As of late—and by “late,” I mean the past several decades—America as an entity has taken those divides, and made them a full-blown identity crisis for itself and those in marginalized groups.

In 2016, North Carolina’s state legislature passed House Bill 2, which required transgender people to use restrooms in public buildings that correspond to their assigned gender at birth; in 2017, there was a replacement law passed to “quell fears” that rose from HB2, but it only heightened the confusion surrounding accessibility, while also prohibiting local governments from enacting new nondiscrimination ordinances for workplaces, hotels, and restaurants until 2020. In 2019, the Supreme Court granted the Trump administration’s request to allow the barring of most transgender people from serving in the military, therefore effectively reversing a 2016 decision by the Obama administration to open the military to all transgender people who wish to serve.

When the marginalized speak up, they are assuaged—temporarily seen, but accompanied by backlash. This fight for basic human rights and equality is anything but new. We have been witness to this cycle of oppression for centuries as the dehumanizing discussions for the rights of the marginalized never ended. Now we see it happening again through the discourse over the validity of transgender lives.

There seems to be a divide between the views and standpoints of the people, even as the nation attempts to politicize transgenderness and force their way into the clothes of strangers. America is notorious for being comprised of many various climates with differing political and social attitudes. There’s a common conception that the North is very accepting of people of every ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity, while the South is suspended in old tradition, still harboring more of the bad –isms than anywhere else.

Stacy Jackson, a student at Coastal Carolina University, agrees that “the North does have its issues along with the South, but I think the thing with the North is that it’s a lot more accepting, and if there are people against [transness or queerness], they typically just move on with their lives.” But when speaking about the South, her outlook dims: “I’m afraid if I keep living in the Deep South, some shit’s gonna happen,
because it’s just a matter of statistics, really. And I want to be like, ”I AM NOT A STATISTIC”… but there’s a reason they exist. Mostly, I’m just worried about getting killed.” In a study done by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the average age of Trans homicide victims is 35 years old.

“I feel comfortable in my own skin the same way a raccoon feels comfortable digging through trash,” says singer/songwriter, internet sensation, and Seattle resident Left At London (also called Nat). While the awareness of merely existing in public as a trans woman in our current social climate translates from North to South, the extremes still differ: “You know how Checkers and Chess have the same game board, but they have different rules? It’s like that. Right now I’m playing Checkers; it’s a fairly basic game, but it still involves strategy and constant thought. But Chess is a much more complex game with more structural differences, even though [it’s] being played on the same board.”

Non-cisgendered people have always struggled with being themselves in public, and performing their chosen gender the way they want to without targeted prejudice and violence. What started this? What pushed us out of our innate humanity? The answer isn’t black and white. Being that this country is, again, founded and built off the backs of the marginalized, the only reasonable answer would be that it’s just always been like this. There’s a belief that somebody has to be othered for there to be a society. That belief is one that Donald Trump underhandedly serves to the public every day.

“Trump is probably one of the worst things to happen to the United States when it comes to modern day LGBT rights.” Stacy speaks on the rhetoric he pushes: “He actively makes policies that opposes the trans community. People have spouted hate in his name. Even though Trump will never see me, he still affects me. I think people have always been prejudiced, but he has given them an outlet to really speak their minds. He gives an inch, and people go a mile—spreading a lot of racist, xenophobic, transphobic hate.”

Left At London knows that “Donald Trump is not an end result. He is a symptom. And this country has always been very sick.” She adds that the true sickness of America is, to put it bluntly, capitalism, as the self-serving institution itself is founded on the backs of oppressed yearning to breathe. “We are just part of the many marginalized groups it wants to take advantage of.”

Though the two have similar opinions on the modern-day ring leader of bigotry, they have very different views about how it should be handled. Stacy preaches for everyone to unite and spark a collective action across political borders: “We need to have riots, hands down. If we don’t, then people are really gonna think we’re pushovers. Politics-wise, I think that’s also why the very far-right conservatives have made so many advances. They’re
banking on the Dems and liberals to compromise. But it's time to stop. We keep compromising and I’m still in danger, and they still win.”

Meanwhile, across the country, Nat feels that the national debates and focus on trans issues only highlight the trauma of genderqueer and gender nonconforming people, forming clumps of a generalized, tragic entity, and not recognizing that there are individual people being methodically hurt. Instead, she chooses to combat this rhetoric in a more peaceful way by using her unique platform to bond the divide, and promote a more realistic narrative: “I feel like my role in the community as a musician/comedian is to help put transpeople into a different light than just our politicized selves—to put them into the same perspective that cis people can put themselves in, like growing from tragedy and happiness, and whatever comes into your life. I really want my career to be about my own personal growth, and growth for the trans community, both by having the trans community listen to me and understand that there is a better life for us. Having the cis community listen to my comedy and music creates an understanding that the main narrative of transpeople disregards our joy.”

Among the differences in debate of what steps need to be taken next, we all three agree that these “issues” of transness in the country might be fixed if we tackle the root of our problems. Right now, there is a spotlight on transness as national debate continues to be pushed to the media and congressional forefront. But should it be? If anything, this national illumination serves as a beacon to expose more of the dirty nature of the way society has viewed anything other than the “normal” (or, privileged). Yes, trans issues are human rights issues, but we cannot pretend that they can be solved until the other, more pressing socioeconomic issues are cured as well.

“This could all be fixed if capitalism was gone, but if I had to rid myself of that constant argument, I would say anti-blackness relates back to almost everything,” Nat continues: “The removal of black rights has always been the blueprint for taking away anybody else’s rights.”

Could the recent focus on transness just be a guise enacted by higher-ups to blur our peripheral visions of true equality, by shifting our gaze to another marginalized group? How can we find peace in bathroom stalls when ICE is torturing the children they’re trying to protect? How can trans individuals feel safe while walking the streets at night when people of color have never felt that way? How can we form a country of inclusivity when the people running it believe in anything but?
In South Africa, there is a popular superstition regarding the tokoloshe, which is a small water sprite that causes mischief everywhere that it goes. It is believed that when the tokoloshe drinks water, it becomes invisible, so nobody can see it during its antics. Many people in South Africa raise their beds up with bricks or wood so that the tokoloshe can pass through and not stop to bother them.

The tokoloshe superstition came about long ago when people used to sleep on straw mats with fire in their huts, causing them to die from carbon monoxide poisoning. People who survived these circumstances were the ones who slept on raised beds or platforms, thus bringing about the popular tale that sleeping on beds with some leverage will keep them safe from the tokoloshe. They believed that, because they were above the ground, the short water sprite could not climb up to kill them while they sleep.

In modern-day South Africa, the tokoloshe is still prevalent. People who believe in the tokoloshe say that he can be summoned by someone’s jealousy, or if they want something bad to happen to them. The small sprite will bother a targeted person, sometimes even killing them. There is a belief that it is only malevolent when under the control of an evil witch, otherwise it is just a nuisance to everyone—and scary to children.

Small shops in South Africa sell products that are supposed to protect a person from this sprite, and they are said to be made from tokoloshe fat. The tokoloshe is viewed as a monster of jealousy, both back when his existence first came about, and even now, after his origin story was debunked by mere carbon monoxide poisoning. Personally, I do not believe in this creature, but when its name was whispered to me as a child, I did everything I could to be good enough for the tokoloshe to not get me.
Graduating in 2016, I thought I had it all together. I was going to college, figuring out my major, and being as successful as possible in the next four years. Little did I know I’d instead be hit with a brick wall. Although my first two years of college had enjoyable moments, I look back and realize I was completely unfulfilled. I wasn’t necessarily “spiraling,” but I wasn’t doing too great either. After spending my entire youth mostly focusing on academic success, I failed to pay attention to the weights placed on my mental state as I dealt with family illnesses, loss, and the stress of transitioning from a high school graduate, to a first-generation college student.

Going into college, I was lost. I had no idea what I was doing, and I had no idea what I wanted to do. I jumped from one major to the next, and I filled my free time doing trivial things like being on social media. I suddenly forgot my passions, I replaced music with sleep, reading and writing for enjoyment turned into watching Netflix. My high school dream of going to college and getting involved diminished into spending every day looking forward to going back to my dorm.

Things became monotonous. I forgot about the things I loved the most, and depression and anxiety were partly to blame. What started as feeling a little stuck, transformed into spending two years trying to grasp onto reality without really being proactive about it. That is, until I realized the brick wall wasn’t a brick wall after all. There were missing pieces, semblances of an image a little damaged and not quite put together. What I faced wasn’t a wall, but instead, a puzzle.

Fast forward to junior year when I recognized the necessity of rediscovering myself. I spent so much time trying to redefine and reinvent who I was but I failed to realize that I was there all along, begging to return to what I had always loved. The bricks were now building blocks—puzzle pieces, and my inner-child was simply waiting for me to remember the pattern. The things forgotten were some of my first and truest passions; my native Spanish language and Hispanic culture, writing, reading, music... How could I spend two years of my life erasing the pieces of myself
that I had always loved? I still don’t have a great answer for that, but I know it is extremely easy to fall into a cyclical routine of just going through the motions.

It’s like, you see this puzzle on the shelf, but you leave it. It’s too much work. I’ll do it one day. It’s pretty, but it’ll take forever. It isn’t until the walls and floors begin to rumble so heavily that the box falls, and puzzle pieces scatter around your feet forcing you to make a decision: You either shove the pieces back in the box, or you finally sit down and put it together. What did I do? I fell to my knees, touched the pieces, and searched. Testing a piece here and there, trying to match shapes and colors, and getting frustrated with each failed attempt. I swept away the dust and started putting pieces together—matching and matching until I could finally see a fragmented reflection of myself in the picture before me.

Although I haven’t spoken Spanish very much since I was a child, it was my first language. Growing up and moving from the community close to our Hispanic family friends, I lost touch of speaking the language I had first fallen in love with. I was taught English for school, and because I was white-passing in a new area, none of the other Hispanic kids realized I was one of them. So what did I do? I kept speaking English, not only at school, but at home too. I left Spanish alone. That is, until I was home, and I was watching my favorite Hispanic TV channel or listening to my favorite artists like Selena or Prince Royce. I never quite lost touch with this piece of myself. I kept it nearby, listening to the music or watching a show, but when times would get hard, I’d completely forget that connection.

I didn’t practice my native language, and because of that, I now have trouble speaking it even though I can completely understand it. Carrying this with me meant carrying a sense of shame, but now I finally see how important it is to cast that shame aside and replace it with determination to reclaim what has always been there. Speaking it means communicating better with my family in Mexico, feeling more connected to the Latino community and culture, being reminded of the strength within that history I carry, and feeling more confident with a fuller version of myself. Surrounding myself with more Spanish, overcoming my fears of being judged or ridiculed, and stepping out of my comfort zone has been and will continue to be some of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences I have.

If I had to pick an early true love, I’d have to say music. For as long as I can remember, music has been there while I was dancing, tapping, singing, or playing along. In middle school, I joined band and chorus, and because my mom was sick with cancer, I poured myself into it as an outlet. I listened to music through some of my hardest times, and I would listen to it as I did work or wrote my poetry. This love was something I carried with me everywhere: sneaking MP3 players onto the school bus,
controlling the radio, practicing trumpet
day and night, singing for fun, using it
for inspiration, and ultimately, using it for
healing. Getting into college, I lost sight
of something that had helped me through
some of my hardest times, something that
had always been a light. Finally realizing
this missing piece means having access to
a constant friend, something for inspiration
or comfort or fun, something to remind me
of my ability to keep going.

From the time I was in elementary school,
I went to writing poetry or blog-like posts
for fun and self-expression. I would read
for an escape, and these were some of my
other earliest and truest loves. Two years
ago, I stopped writing. I stopped reading
unless it was for class. Netflix was easier.
Sleeping kinda just… happened. I lost
sight of late nights watching poetry slams
on YouTube, or freewriting when I was
upset. I forgot about one of the most
natural things that had ever come to
me; my love for writing, and for studying
English.

Junior year, I finally declared myself as
an English major, and it’s like a weight
has been lifted off my shoulders. It settles
right into place, and I feel a fulfillment
and motivation like never before to keep
writing, to catch up on what I haven’t let
out, to share, to strive, to be more open.
In writing and studying this subject, I’ve
found the most genuine part of myself,
and unlocked an outlet that has helped
me through my darkest times, impossible
losses, and the experiences I never thought
I’d heal from. I’ve unlocked the piece that
I’ve been glancing over for years but that
which has been the most significant one in
rocket-launching my ease to find familiar
parts of myself I’d forgotten had existed.

Suddenly, when the pieces fit, you feel
a little foolish because they were there
all along, right in front of you. But isn’t it
so fun when you finally get it? Isn’t there
a sense of pride when you look at your
puzzle and there’s only a few pieces left?
It’s pretty cool when you finally get to
smother it in mod podge and hang it on
the wall as a reminder that you finished
something brilliant.

I’m still working on pieces. I’m still figuring
out what goes where and how much time
I should spend on certain things. In that
sense, it’s a never-ending puzzle. Rather
than letting my mind convince myself that
because it’s never-ending, it’s worthless to
invest time into it—I remind myself of how
important it is to return to it daily, even if
for only one piece. This is my reference
point. This is my work in progress. It may
not be complete, but God is it fun to have
a challenge. Sure, it’s frustrating at times,
but the rewards are so much deeper.
Looking at the pieces coming together,
forming who you are and what you have
always been, receiving guidance from those
who are more put together, and radiating
an image of perseverance and possibilities,
you realize that it’s okay if it’s not quite
finished. That’s the entire point.
In Poland, most superstitions come from folk tales from the past where the Polish transfer their habits from one generation to the next. I believe in many of them, but I do not even remember who I have learned them from. People in general want to believe in something, and superstitions help them explain the good and bad luck in their lives. Sometimes I find it silly to explain events in my life with some supernatural power, but on the other hand, I do not really want to provoke fate and destiny.

One of the superstitions which I’m careful about is to never walk under a ladder. Walking under brings you enormous bad luck. The most popular explanation derives from old beliefs saying that everyone has a guardian angel above your head, and passing under a ladder may knock them down. This is when the misfortune comes after you.

Another superstition which Polish people treat seriously is greeting a visitor by the threshold in the doorway. The threshold is a symbol of a boundary separating a safe house from an evil and dangerous outside world. When two people pass their hands through the threshold, there is a risk that bad powers from outside will be moved into your home.

We believe that meeting a chimney-sweep is lucky. All you have to do is grab any button, make a wish on it, and your dreams will come true. If you are getting married in Poland, remember to set your special date in a month with a letter ‘r’ in the name. In Polish: March is “marsz,” June is “czerwiec,” August is “sierpień,” September is “wrzesień,” October is “październik,” and December is “grudzień.” The letter ‘r’ is a symbol of family in Poland, in Polish “Family” is “Rodzina,” and it is supposed to bring luck and happiness in marriage.

I personally believe in some of these superstitions, especially if your lucky days seem temporality behind you. However, you can never forget that you have the power to influence your destiny and happiness in life, superstitious or not.
I grew up taking family trips to see cousins, exploring the east coast with my Yaya, going on weekend getaways, and accompanying road trips for sporting events. Nothing extravagant, but enough to whet my appetite. With these small trips, my longing to go to other continents grew—traveling can be addicting in this way. Throughout grade school I fascinated myself with far away cultures, and the rituals and cuisine embedded within them. My preconceived notions about travel shifted from it being a pass time, to a reality check. Travel uproots routines—forcing new activities. Travel shocks the senses by introducing new foods and humanities. This immersion started at the age of eight, when two generations above me, Mama and Yaya, took me on a week stay in Ixtapan de la Sal, Mexico. As each woman is an experienced world traveler, they were not content with staying at lodging. Instead, we explored cobblestone streets, bought flowers from local vendors, sampled authentic cuisine from quaint, open-air food stops, and conversed with as many people as possible; longing to soak up the spirit of Ixtapan de la Sal. Mexico taught me the significance of exploration and growth in ways that didn’t reveal me as a tourist, but instead, a traveler.
Travel is an inherently privileged opportunity, but I contend it is a must, and can be accomplished on a budget. The occasional weekend getaway is delightful, but traveling entails complete cultural immersion through careful mental and physical preparation. It means making whatever sacrifices needed to get on the plane. Travel connects us to something bigger, something outside of ourselves. While it can be limited by funds and tangible means, it also beckons and pleads with us to not be the occasional tourist; stopping in to check a location off a bucket list and leaving—but to feel the rhythm of a place, and make its essence part of who we are.

I recently interviewed a millennial who, at the age of fourteen, claimed his desire to visit all seven continents. Jay didn’t want to simply tour a place, or vacation to a resort; he longed for extended stays of at least thirty days in each continent. This immersion would allow him to fully appreciate the spirit of each continental location. Over twenty years later, Jay has fulfilled his fourteen-year-old desire. He made this yearning into reality by being self-aware of his wants, forward in planning, and passionate about turning an idea into a reality. Jay flies back from a month’s stay in South America—the final continent on his list—in March of 2019, and offered this advice to those preparing for a journey, no matter what continent. He tells me in a calm voice, “Stay in small towns and find trustworthy locals. Represent the United States well. Be an ambassador. Make friends fast. If you don’t know the language, hire someone who does. Be sociable. And, participate in local community activities.” Jay also donated to a local orphanage during his stay in Ecuador. By investing, both emotionally and financially, Jay became part of that country.

As an explorer by nature, I sought out another traveler for insight; this time a Baby Boomer. Barbara started our conversation by defining the difference between travel and tourism by quoting Google: “Tourism is ‘the commercial organization and operation of vacations and places of interest’ and travel is ‘making a journey, typically of some length or abroad.’” Having visited twenty-seven countries, she considers herself somewhat of an expert. Not only in planning and cultivating exciting journeys, but also in creating magical experiences while on a budget. As a financially-challenged college student, Barbara’s phrase “on a budget,” means “maybe possible after all” to me.

Barbara’s advice: 1) get an app and watch flights constantly — Cheapoair is a go-to, 2) secure lodging through Hostelworld, VRBO, and Airbnb, 3) research points of
interest through Frommers and Rick Steves’ books, and finally 4) know that there will be hiccups along the way, but that these will be the spice of your trip.

Travel changed my life by giving me experiences I couldn’t possibly have gained in a classroom. Both Jay and Barbara share stories about being adventurers, and while these stories don’t align with the social image of white sand, umbrellas, and crystal water, they make my eyes crave new sights, my feet long for new ground, and my palate desire never before tasted cuisine.

Being a tourist is not in the definition of adventure and it certainly doesn’t have to mean going into debt. Barbara’s interview concluded with seasoned explorer advice: “Travel taught me to be flexible—to push beyond my areas of comfort, to approach life from a more expansive world view. And most of all, to thrive wherever you are.” While she has had times in her life when she couldn’t technically “afford” to travel, she did it anyway, sighting that it is as essential as food or shelter when striving to live your best life.

After researching and talking to anyone who would listen regarding travel and exploration, I’m planning toward a fifteen-day European tour of five countries this summer—London, Paris, Rome, Barcelona, and Amsterdam. And I am going the budget route, carrying only a backpack, staying in hostels, using budget European airlines—Vueling and Ryanair (my flight from Rome to Barcelona was 30 Euros). I am searching out local markets where cheese and wine can be purchased at a fraction of the cost of dining in restaurants. By not always stopping for lengthy dining experiences, this quick unconventional fare also allows for more sight-seeing along the way. As I research, Mama reminds me of her college travel experiences, when she and Yaya traveled for a week in Rome and lived on nothing but baguettes, wine, and cheese—with the occasional pasta treat. I think her eyes twinkle a little as she recalls this as one of her favorite memories.

The memories survive past a trip’s return date. They can help get you through difficult days and bring a smile when you need a pick-me-up. They can solidify a mood, or bring a twinge of longing or curiosity. And remember, it’s the hiccups that create the most vivid memories. Happy traveling!
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