

In the summer leading into my senior year I had an immediate assumption that I would know where I was— and by that I don't mean just a physical sense— but an ounce of clarity of who I am. For the entire year I lived with 10 girls, or women I should say. Every time I mention my living situation to someone I usually receive a scuffle with a comment like, “How is that enjoyable?” or “Do you ever have alone time?” What I learned from these conversations was that being alone is not as much physical as it is mental and the creation of your mentality comes from your utter truth.

Loneliness derived from an urge to excel.

I began the summer of my senior year proud. In January I had an out-of-character epiphany that made me want to soar into who I was capable of becoming. I signed up for an internship, 6 summer classes, and a full time job. As a note to self and a note to my audience, your capabilities do not need to be your limit.

Each morning around 7, my drowsy eyes were quickly cured by some overpriced eye cream and my fogged brain was distracted by an 8 a.m meeting. I was working for an entertainment firm that pushed responsibilities onto you from the ripe hours to the end of your work session.

After sitting on a computer for what felt like an eternity and a constant state of imposter syndrome, it was time to switch to school work. And then when my brain essentially felt as if it were going to cave and snap, I had to put on my service smile and go work closing down a bar.

Loneliness derived from the lack of care I had for what I actually wanted.

When time had settled and this robust schedule became my new norm— I had little time to focus on the fillers which we all need to be, well, human. I began waking up with a different headspace. My excitement to succeed turned to snoozing my alarm consecutively, my urge to be better turned to a longing for my 10 women, and my pride turned into self disrespect. Instead of what should have felt like flying colors, it felt like muted gray and the only person who could paint colors was me.

But I continued to work. I continued to do it all. And I continued to do it without asking for help.

And I went to work and always had a smile— whether fake or true, there were pearly whites showing to the audience. I was playing a character that I was too scared to break.

A familiar face of someone I loved murmured to me, “ You look like shit.”

I don't know if it were the bluntness of the brutal truth that resonated with me more, but what I did know was that I felt like shit as well. And in that moment, my body began to give up on me. My brain moved slowly, my anxiety lurked through my trembling fingers, and my character began to break.

I went home from that shift and decided to book a flight back to the place I was rooted, Chicago. The next week later I was on a five hour flight and I felt honest again. I saw my family which reminded me that I was the same person I thought I buried.

Loneliness derived from an absence of my originality.

The trip consisted of genuine laughter and reminiscing which reminded me that my work can pay off– but be true to who I am.

I ended up extending what I thought was going to be a week-long hiatus to a month-long recovery. And when I got back on the plane to come back to my chaos, I realized it is okay to ask for help– and it is okay to be sufficient with the most that you can do.

The ironic part of this story is that my words are hypocritical. I am in five classes and still working that bar job four nights a week. But I think the reason that I am able to type this is because the truth is, I am not alone. Not physically, not mentally.

To my chaotic house filled with 10 roommates and to my ability to work as hard as I can, I thank them. There would never be sun with a little rain.