

## College Blues

It started in a dorm room at Pennsylvania State University main campus during my first semester at college. It was the most difficult, yet most influential, time of my life. I was never a social person, and was convinced I was strong enough on my own to handle anything with minimal help. This belief was crushed very quickly as I struggled through my life at college and had to come to terms with being truly on my own for the first time. I faced many challenging firsts. My roommate decided not to come to the university which left me all by myself in a big dorm, in a big building, at a massive university of over forty thousand students. For a socially anxious person like myself, finding social support, to say the least, appeared to me like an impossible task, and being alone only made me grow more anxious, which made my education suffer. I was an amazing student in high school with not a single demerit, who got straight A's and few B's, and was even a strong member of my school's band as I played the clarinet since middle school. That is why it was a horrible sickening when I started to realize I was failing three out of my five classes half way through the semester. I skipped classes to play games online or watch TV as a way of coping, and I gave up the second I saw something that seemed too complex to understand in my textbooks. This wasn't me, but when put under the stress of trying to find your place, not to mention yourself, at such a large institution, I couldn't help but fall under the pressure. The more I struggled in social and educational pursuits, the more I gave up, and the more I gave up, the more stress and anxiety I accumulated. Eventually I broke, and started to suffer from panic attacks. My heart would so beat fast it would hurt my whole body, I'd end up shaking all over often, I'd feel so sick in the stomach I'd feel the need to make myself throw up, I lost 30 pounds in just months, and finally, in November of 2011, when I could take it anymore called my parents and withdrew from the university.

I went to my doctor many times in hopes of healing my ailments, but it wasn't long before I realized this was all mental, and I needed to face it myself. I refused to take any form of drugs recommended to me, and by the spring, I decided I had to try college again or I'd just fall deeper into this. I transferred to Penn State Brandywine, and continuously pushed through despite my difficult mental state and having to remove my gallbladder. It was a difficult first year of college, and I didn't do as well as I would have liked. That being said day by day I fought and grew. Now I no longer suffer from the same issues, and my grades went from failing to over a 3.0 gpa. Not only that but I got a job and have gained some very strong social skills by working and dealing with children. This is how I came to declare my major as both Psychology and English. My mental suffering sparked my interest in understanding helping others to come to terms with their own psyches, and I wanted to study English because I wanted to learn how to properly communicate my feelings to others through, speaking or writing so that I can become a more socially open person. I now see the seeking help is not a weakness, and that giving up is not an option, and I would never give up that first year of college for anything.