

between
me and
you,

FOR

TRUMAN PORTS,
ANNA DEL SAVIO,
AND
CAITLIN DULLAHAN-BATES

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A LETTER FROM THE WRITER.

“Self care” is homemade face masks, ten new yoga poses to try this week to “de-tox” your body, clean eating, and doing whatever it takes to give yourself a ridiculous amount of self love. As these self care tips crop up all over the internet, I can’t help but question what exactly is necessitating the “self care” that publications and social media influencers preach. We know we feel bad and need to take care of ourselves. But are these actions enough to make us feel better?

If something is actually wrong, I will still be upset after applying a DIY face mask. Taking care of yourself goes beyond materialistic means. While it’s important to prioritize activities that will help you to go on with your daily activities, it’s also important to prioritize checking in with yourself.

I’m writing this from a relative place of content. Somehow, in my little world, everything is fine and dandy. A part of me is asking, *Why are you writing this, you asshole? All your problems come from some sort of place of privilege*

Another part is telling me, *You have a hella unhealthy fear of coming face to face with your feelings and you’re way too good at hiding them behind high functioning anxiety.*

I'm writing this because I see the people I love in my life struggling to get through their day. They've walked out on dinner dates, they've been skipping meals, they've been crying in the middle of the day, they've gone M.I.A., they've convinced themselves that they're not doing enough. They've somehow found this space between reality and despondence to be the new normal. I'm writing this because watching them go through things I cannot relate to or help with leaves me feeling useless, and sad.

There is value in vulnerability. To be able to acknowledge that you are not okay and to unpack why you are not okay is horrifying. For me, it's also embarrassing. It's a huge step in understanding yourself, where you come from, and where you can go from there. It's helped me realize where I need to go.

- A. L.

under pressure

I used to be friends with someone who told me that if I didn't continue publishing stories, I wasn't a legitimate journalist. If I didn't shed blood, sweat, and tears on a regular basis, I was automatically failing. They made similar comments on nearly every aspect of my life.

"You're not actually a runner. You only run, like, once a week. You're not that much of a healthy eater, I saw you eat a bagel the other day."

My success isn't dependent on the amount of bylines that pop up when my name is searched. I'm not fake if I decide I want to cheat a plant based diet for a bomb-ass bagel. My love for the sport isn't dependent on how many times I hit the pavement every week

There is pressure that if you are not pursuing your passion 100% of the time, then you aren't true to your craft. Apparently, your craft should consume you. If you want to be legitimate, you must suffer from it. If not, you're not a real writer, a real musician, a real athlete, a real anything. I reject this.

Your relationship between you and your craft is like any other relationship in your life. You don't love your friends any less when you part ways after a lunch date. You don't spend every waking moment with your family. The love and integrity inherent in your relationships doesn't waver when you step away.

Putting this kind of pressure on yourself only leads to guilt. You can't be true to your craft if your heart isn't in it.

Falling in and out of love with your craft is okay. It'll be there when you're ready to come back. It's easy romanticize your craft and become reckless. It's easy to give into impatience. It's hard as hell to be patient with yourself and your craft. Especially when there are intrusions keeping you from it.

A year ago, when I was in what I thought was the worst shape of my life, I put too much pressure on myself to get back into my physical routine and ended up with a physical injury.

I had a quarter life crisis. I felt like I was failing at what I wanted to do with my life. I took an unpaid internship at a fashion magazine where I spent more time getting cold pressed juices for the editor-in-chief than I did at the intern table. I had the most useless bylines. I find myself praying that the piece I wrote about Kim Kardashian's makeup collaboration with Pat McGrath doesn't pop up when you search my name.

Good work can't come from guilt. Good work is defined by your standards. You have to work yourself up to your standards.

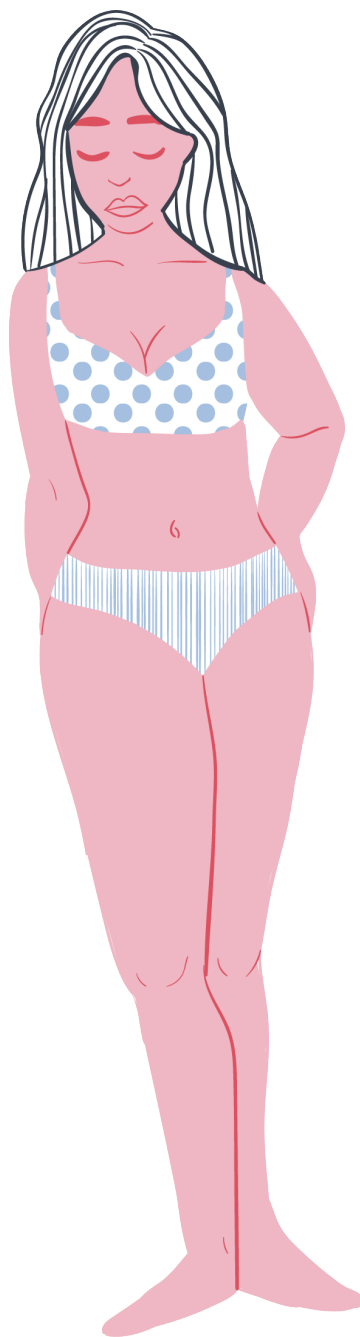
It comes from your will and decision to realize that maybe where you were, or where you want to be isn't where you are now. You need to know that you can get yourself there.



body talk

On the first day of fifth grade, a boy in my class came up to me and said, “Whoa, Alice. You’ve lost... a lot of weight.” Growing up in my house, my physical appearance was always acknowledged as being between fat and skinny. There was no talk about how your body changes as you grow up, and a lot of pressure to go on a diet.

Until sophomore year of high school, girls shorter than 5’7 wouldn’t get picked for varsity or junior varsity volleyball. Standing at a full 5 feet and 3 inches, I was no jumping shrimp. There’s no way my vertical could compete with a girl who was 5”10. Instead, I tried out for tennis and ended up in junior varsity. It was fine. It was more of a mental game for me. Therapeutic. Also a bonus were the lower chances of getting in the face by a ball the size of my head. But it wasn’t enough for me -- shuffling side to side, running back and forth a few meters. I couldn’t fall in love with tennis because I wasn’t really good at it. I was just okay. I decided to start taking high intensity interval training classes, which led me to crazy barbell and kettlebell workouts. I liked the aggression.



I put myself under more pressure. I counted every calorie. I counted every gram of fat and what type of fat, sugars. There was no such thing as bread, dairy, added sugars, or grains.

My body went through a lot of changes when I was 17. I had no idea I'd have such little control over these changes.

I joined the cross country team once I came to college. Running was my weak point. Through running, I've learned a lot about myself. There's no simpler way to put it. Running made me feel powerful in my own body. Somehow, between who I thought I was and how I presented myself, there was another instinctual, animalistic Alice. She was competitive, diligent, and learned how to push her limits no matter how horrified she was. I went from my death bed after a 5k to running 30 to 45 miles a week. What I ate didn't matter anymore because I needed to carb-load. Bread came back into my life, and, like, wow. I witnessed my teammate eat 250 chicken wings after a sub-four mile. I met my best friend when she pulled an unwrapped Pop Tart out of her coat pocket (her mom brings me pop-tarts every time she visits the city).

Maybe it was because I had left a home where my body was under constant scrutiny. During this time, I paid no attention my body. That's not what the sport is about. I was on a constant runner's high: cloud nine. When I went home for winter break, my mother

commented on my physical changes, "You're not fat anymore," she said, "but you're not thin. Very muscular." I was furious, but another part of me was relieved that the word "fat" was no longer thrown in my direction.

As school continued, it was too difficult to maintain a normal running routine, nor could I afford to feed the metabolism that came with it. Eventually, I started to fall out of shape between seasons. Every fall, it was more of a challenge to hit the pavement. I ended up feeling guilty. I felt guilty for not being able to wake up at 5 A.M. for a run. I felt even worse when my times slowed and track workouts got harder. I decided that if I couldn't keep up with the old workout plans, I should at least eat a clean diet. My guilt grew. A 350 calorie smoothie meant a four mile run at a 9:30 pace. Food turned into calorie count, calorie count turned into mile count, miles turned into pace. Somehow, I had guilted myself into quitting a sport that I fell in love with.

How did you let yourself fall out of this? How could you let this body happen? You were doing so well.

The lowest point was when I came home after a track workout and stole a chocolate covered pretzel from my roommate's shelf in the pantry. Fifteen minutes later I was crying in the shower. I went to bed without eating dinner that night.

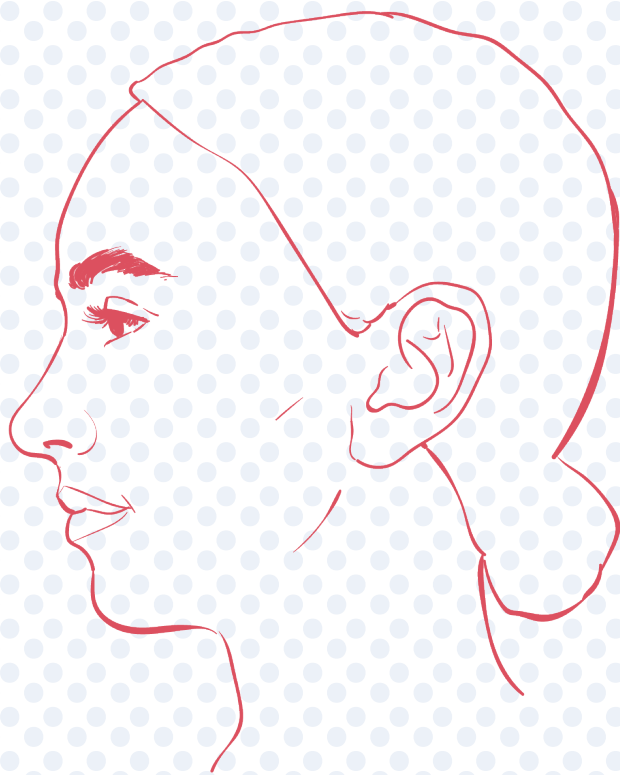
Sometime while falling in and out of this sport and my war with what I ate, this anxiety became a regular rabbit hole. How could I let this happen to my body? I could keep torturing myself, or I could unpack my feelings and have a brief self reflection before the anxiety could sweep in. Why do I feel like this? What's causing it? What can I do to feel better?

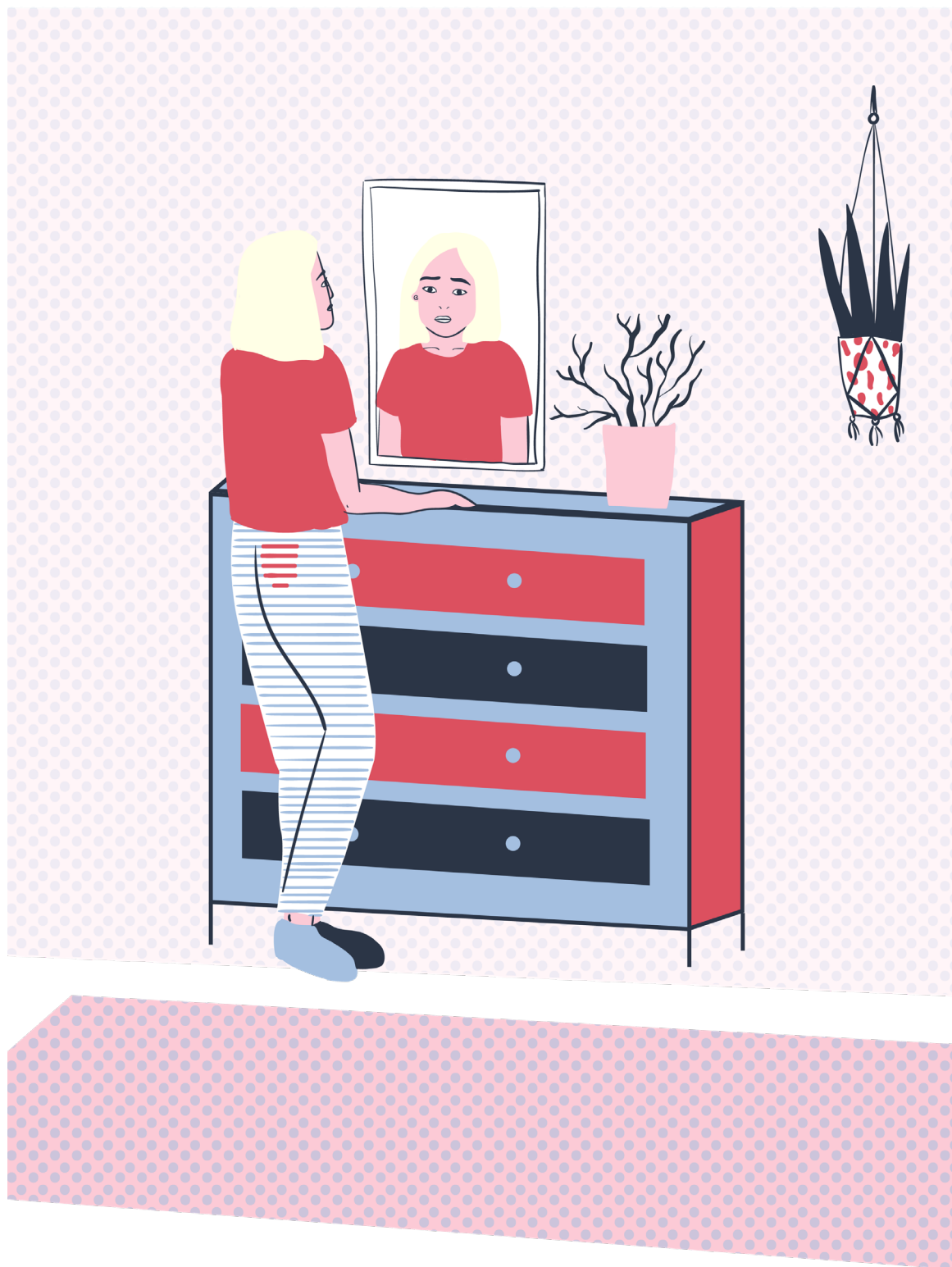
All I've done is stress my body and lose some toenails during runs. It's greedy to ask my body to do things it's not in the shape to do.

Coach Pat taught me that strength was built in suffering. Coach Julia taught me poetry in the motions of the body. Daniel pushed me to believe the impossible was possible. Coach Cerise taught me how to be patient.

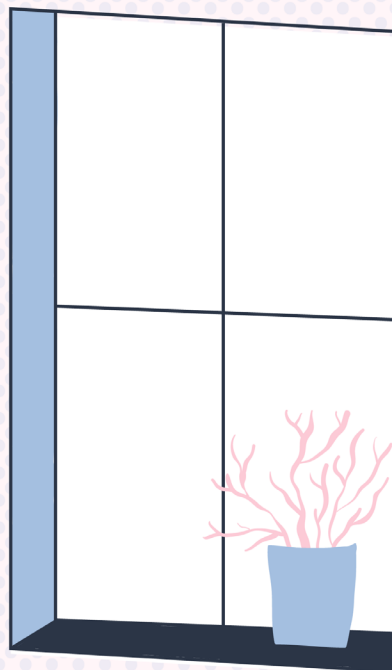
My body doesn't care about what it once did, it cares about what it can do. How much work is it going to take? How much love is going to go into it?

YOU ARE HERE
TODAY.





YOU'LL BE
EVEN BETTER
TOMORROW.



hooked up

For a hot minute in my college years, I was a fuck girl -- the one and only time I've been a fuck girl. I used to hook up with this guy, who we will refer to as "Ben." I met Ben while on a date with his friend. We ran into Ben while leaving dinner, and he invited us to have a seat for a drink.

My physical relationship with Ben resembled a field of landmines.

Ben was a designer who only decorated his apartment with furniture, art, and appliances he made, down to the knives in his kitchen (I swear he's not a psychopath, just an industrial designer): a red flag. Our first date was gallery hopping in Chelsea, to which he was late, so we missed all the openings: a red flag.

We had sex after watching *The Shining*: a red flag. For the next year I slept with Ben, I was always kicked out afterwards: a red flag. I was too ashamed to tell my friends about Ben because I knew he treated me like disposable waste: a red flag. I was never introduced to his friends when we were spotted out in public: a red flag.

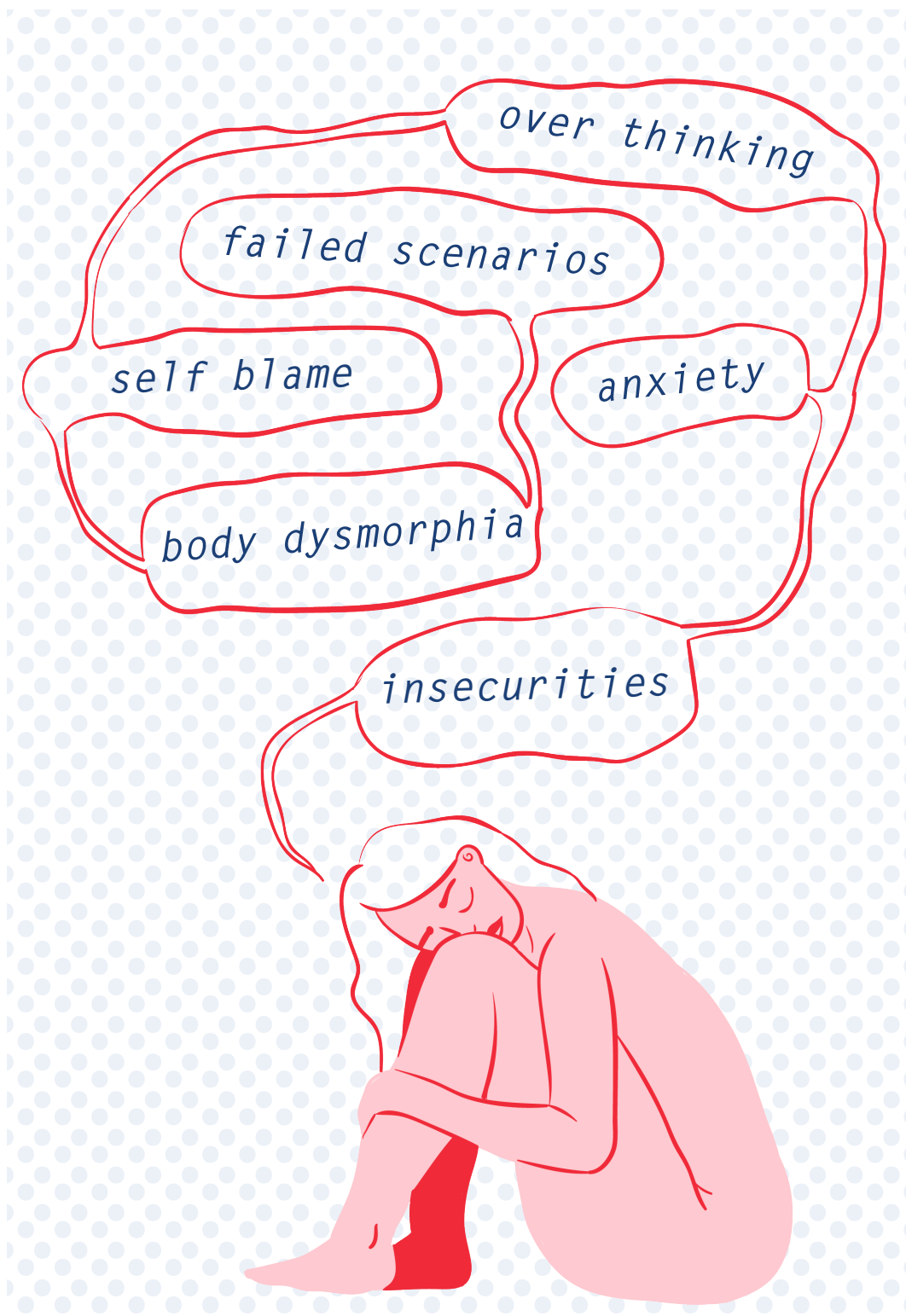
I kept up an intense workout regime to keep up with an intense sex life: a red flag. I hated kissing him: a red flag. I thought everything was wrong with me because he would ghost me to sleep with other girls: a red flag.

Ben made a lot of racially charged comments about my body in the middle of sex: a red flag. There were too many times when Ben got too rough, and too carried away, and kept going when I told him to stop: a red flag. Ben stressed how important consent and communication were to him and did not mean it: a red flag.

I faked that orgasm and the next one so I could go home: a red flag. If I hadn't said yes to coming over that night, he wouldn't have done that, so it's my fault: a red flag.

Every night I came home at 4 A.M. from Ben's apartment I would have a panic attack until I fell asleep: a red flag.

I had enough and broke things off over a two minute phone call. We haven't been in contact since. Every now and then, I get the internet itch. I could know all about where he's having dinner, who he's spending time with. I don't want to humanize him. He doesn't deserve that.



there are
more than
words.