There I was, staring blankly at my monitor, eyeing the green bar, at 99%. Hands on my keyboard by habit, the air conditioners’ cold gust of wind periodically chilling my back every few seconds. It didn’t feel like reality, the past 2 years or so were the same. But what could I do? COVID was still a lethal threat. I stared outside my white-framed window, scattered birds chirping on the powerlines, the old oak trees, dancing with the wind, the now rusty, old playground around the corner. It was then, for the first time in a year that I would realize my surroundings. In disgust I would think about the now feculent environment. It shocked me, bringing consciousness to my situation, a break from my recurrent reality, of boredom and sleep for the past 2 years. “Would I ever escape?” I asked myself, “Or would my life stay as uneventful for the unforeseeable future?”

The next few months were hopeless, the same repetitive lifestyle, convincing myself I would change it everyday. However, following through was difficult, facing the reality of COVID. The thrill of online games, which felt like a privilege to play, deteriorated by the day. Resulting in the common occurrence of contemplation. Contemplation whether my psychological well-being was still normal, contemplation on whether I would go the extra mile for a certain assignment, or whether I would decide to get some exercise. Realization on how being able to travel, or meet up with friends was such a privilege before this wrenching pandemic, where limited contact was calls and zoom meetings. No exposure to the outside world and the local community induced a sense of ignorance towards myself.

Eventually, the intuition of engagement and commitment activated, having faced the inevitable ending of the pandemic, I decided to attend a camp to build a school for less fortunate children. Consisting of the entire process, from planning, to fundraising, to actually painting the school and performing for the children. A feeling of accomplishment, towards the ability to grant less fortunate individuals better opportunities felt amazing. Hardships of putting 3 coats of paint throughout a building under the blazing heat of the sun was nullified by chattering with friends. Despite the eventual contact with friends after prolonged periods of time, the highlights of the camp were interaction with the students. Seeing how grateful they were both before and after the construction and beautification of their new school was mind-blowing.

Coming home from the 4 days of camp, physically and emotionally drained I thought about the drastic change of lifestyle. I felt as if I had accomplished more in 4 days than I had throughout the entire quarantine, a gist of how much I was able to accomplish through perseverance and motivation was mind-boggling, especially when I never engaged in serious responsibilities. This excitement led me to a better lifestyle, being more occupied with helping the community, from donating to orphanages, helping out at elderly care centers, and visiting dog shelters. This journey was indeed a breakthrough to my realization, and a positive path for me to develop and grow as a person.

Hi Jeremy!

Good work coming up with a draft for the Common App. I assume you’re writing this for the prompt on personal growth. While I definitely see a change in your attitude throughout the story, I believe the climax needs to shift. The prompt is asking about your personal growth and what you learned about yourself from this experience, so your epiphany should be in the middle of the essay.

I would also love to see more reflection around the camp experience that you had. What did you see in the kids or in yourself that motivated you to do more community service? How did you change as a person afterwards – are you now someone who finds joy and motivation from serving the community?

Good luck on your revisions!

Chiara  
ALL-in Essay Editor