

Anastasia, 20 years old, has been studying International Business at SRH University Heidelberg since October 2022, with the help of a scholarship. She is from Odesa, a coastal city in Ukraine. Anastasia had to flee her home country because of the war. She moved to Germany on 25 February 2022, leaving her parents behind. She spent two weeks in Ukraine over Easter this year, enabling her to get to know her younger brother, who is now six months old. Today, she answers our questions about herself, and her hopes and dreams.

As you may know, we are conducting a series of interviews with strong women at our university. What makes you a strong woman?

It is the fact that I fled from the war and got a scholarship here in Germany. I began a whole new life here and have made a really good job of starting somewhere new.

I imagine it took you a lot of strength to do this. What helped you through this hard time? And how do you deal with all those memories?

My German boyfriend helped me a lot mentally. We had already been together for three years when the war started. Also, I try not to look at old photos very often because it is painful to see your previous life, with all your friends and family, or life in general before war, so I do my best to avoid that. During the exam period, for example, I avoid watching the news or listening to anything bad. Not always though, because sometimes you need to feel the pain and to allow yourself to be sad. Otherwise you would have a burn-out.

How did you feel about spending time in Ukraine recently, and getting to know your little brother a bit?

I spent the Easter holidays in Ukraine with my parents and brother. I felt both happy and sad simultaneously when I was at home. It's an amazing feeling to see your family again after such a long time apart, knowing that they are constantly in danger. People in Ukraine are fantastic, they continue living their lives, building businesses, going out, helping each other, sharing, and donating money to each other and to the army. But, of course, it is painful to see all the destroyed buildings, and it is very scary to hear explosions both at night and during the day.

What makes you never lose hope?

The mentality of the Ukrainian people. I really believe in our society; we are strong and brave people, and this is what inspires me to keep going.

What are your wishes for the future?

Of course, I hope for an end to the war. But I also wish that life in Ukraine would improve – economically, politically and culturally. In Germany, you have so many options, especially for young people in their free time. You can learn about things in museums, have fun at parties and festivals, and go to art exhibitions. You have so many opportunities and possibilities! I hope that we will have that in Ukraine someday, too.

How have you developed personally compared to when you first came here?

All the problems have changed me completely as a person. I have become smarter and stronger, but more importantly: I have become kinder. I have learned about the importance of not judging people, because you never know what somebody may have been through.

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