

#5

Tylan Parkinson

Mrs. Cannon


Period 1/2

5/15/23

### The Comfort Cube

In my mind, it's three meters cubed, with a cute little door, plush lining on the inside, stocked with a rainbow of sweets and treats, bordered with a gaming center so that I can triple my already copious Minecraft playtime, along with the most Goldielocks bed you can get, all carefully guarded by my brain. This is my comfort cube. My brain reported no problems, living contently in this blissful little cube until some moron (a.k.a. me) decided he wanted to leave it. It was my seventh-grade year. I don't recall this, but my mom says that I actually hated Maeser for my first while here. Eventually, Maeser, in its curious quality, invited me out of this comfort cube as it provided opportunities to push myself while still being in a safe place. This didn't mean the discomfort was removed, but it meant that excursions from my cube were also met with a supportive community. I discovered this particularly when I was invited to ask someone to prom as a sophomore. Immediately my brain, hyperventilating, screamed to reject the offer because that would cause me to leave the cube more profoundly in a social situation. With a date. And talk to people. And then I would be judged and then I would surely die. I chose to take the leap of faith, and to accept. My brain gave the biggest evil smile possible as I headed into a two-day-long panic attack. "See?" my brain squeaked, shakingly pointing a finger at my tv static heart rate, "That's why you never leave!"

I went to Prom with my PrintComm friends and had an absolute blast. I was in a social situation, and I did talk to people, but most of all, I wasn't judged and publicly executed because



they supported me. Worst of all for my brain's defenses, I noticed how much staying in the comfort cube was damaging to me. So, I covertly began sneaking out of the cube, past my brain dreaming of punching blocky trees. I started being more open to friends, actually hanging out outside of school, and developing close relationships. Junior year, I was invited by my friends to do Shakespeare. "NOOOOOOO!" wailed my brain, repeating its passionate doom spiral about how I would be an anxious failure and die. Yes, I dealt with anxiety, yes, I encountered failure, and when I caught covid before the competition, I dealt with disappointment. All were uncomfortable experiences; however, I also found new friends, a new activity I enjoy, and a place to practice being uncomfortable and discover growth. When I did Shakespeare again the next year, in the face of the worry of repeating disappointment, the discomfort was rewarded with our trio scene placing third.

I've also had leadership positions in PrintComm and became the captain of the robotics team. Insert my brain's disastrous thoughts about judgment, inadequacy, and failure here. And yet, I was rewarded by being able to mentor, lead, connect with others in a new way, and have amazing results from our communal projects. The robot did, in fact, go brrrrr.

I decided to senior send it this year by doing Track, and in that, doing hurdles. My brain was not happy about this, citing that this time there was not just emotional discomfort ahead but physical as well. Self-confidence was needed more than ever as it is everything in track. I tripped over the last hurdle at my first meet and fell to the ground, my brain and body screaming to stop, but I got up and finished the race. My brain wanted to use that as evidence to never do anything again and retreat into the cube, but instead I pushed through the searing shin splints and the healing wound, and went at it again, flying over that last hurdle. My brain went silent.

Maeser pushed me to be uncomfortable. It challenged my ideas and built up new ones. It encouraged me to try new activities and provided support through hard things with the amazing teachers and community fostering learning. I may not always be the best at going outside the comfort cube, but I know now how important it is because being uncomfortable is what builds us, and Maeser makes that gap of discomfort easier to bridge. So, take the leap from the comfort cube.