

alpha phi omega

week of 10/25/16

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alpha pi term
Fall 2016
Recent Chi Chapter
highlights

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DO GOOD FEEL GOOD FEEL GOOD DO GOOD

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service connects you to others.

service is good
for your mind and body.

service can advance your career.

service brings fun
and fulfillment to your life.



on mental health & community

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the art of breaking down.

-ryan pineda



There is an indescribable pain that accompanies breaking down. It is both a cathartic and crippling feeling. Acknowledging the pain leaves you paralyzed in a hell of your own making, but it also gives you clarity of mind. For a generation in perpetual forward motion, the most difficult lesson I learned is that it is OK to stop moving. You cannot bury the past, but you can work through the lingering demons.

Two years have passed since I was raped. The emotional fallout I endured shattered any sense of safety I felt. He was my peer, my friend, and a constant source of anger and fear. As many victims do, I put up a façade to hide the pain and force myself to move on with my life. I was misguided in thinking that healing could be that simple.

The aftermath of the assault insidiously took over my life. The fresh start I hoped to have at UCLA turned into a fight to salvage my sense of self. I withdrew from my social circle, ditched class in favor of holing up in my dorm room, and considered leaving UCLA altogether. To the people around me, I had become a stranger. I felt empty.

As I sunk deeper into my depression, I started to wonder if things would ever get better.

The hardest reality to accept was that I had become someone unrecognizable from two years ago. I felt weak and incapable of living up to my own expectations. I fed into my own frustration and blamed the rape for all the changes that followed in its wake. Above all, I was consumed by the need to answer one question: "Why me?"

On the surface, my life had stabilized. Below the surface, the suppressed emotions reached an apex. I finally cracked under the pressure I put on myself to be whole when in reality I was broken.

I remember the strange sense of anxiousness followed by the sudden pounding in my chest. I would walk calmly into the bathroom, lock the door, turn on the fan and sink to the floor and cry. For the most part, I didn't know why I was crying, but I knew that I hated the pain that came with it. The lump in my throat that made it hard to breath, the feel of my whole body heaving and giving in to the release of all that pent up anger and sadness. It hurt. I hurt.

Breaking down is, often times, a solitary act. Getting better involves many shoulders to lean on, and a desire to rediscover what being happy feels like. From joining Alpha Phi Omega, I gained many shoulders to lean on. I was gifted a strength that I myself was unable to find at that moment. When I had lost the strength to keep moving forward, I found myself surrounded by people who reminded me why I shouldn't give up.

"You are kinder than you know. You have an incredible strength to shoulder this burden all on your own. You are not alone. You are loved, by all of us"

Alpha Phi Omega became my home away from home when I felt isolated from the only support I had. The brothers that became some of my closest friends made me realize that there was something worth living for. That there were people who cared unconditionally about the others around them.

Thank you, to the brothers who pushed me to see myself in a different light; to be kinder to myself; and to take pride in the person that I am, regardless of what others say. I cannot imagine my life without any of you in it.

Almost two and a half years later, I can safely say that my life has changed for the better. From The spontaneous midnight boba runs to the struggle to finish twenty interviews in one week, my life has been filled with laughter and happiness. Genuine happiness. I truly never thought I would reach this point.

My life may not be the most exciting or adventurous, but it does make me happy. That is what matters most in the end. When I smile, it is with genuine joy that I do so. When I laugh, I surprise myself. When was the last time I laughed that hard?

I am finally enjoying life again.

