

Left, Right, Left

“How are we ever going to make it out?” I grunted with frustration. Earlier that morning my kayaking trip glided on the calm waters of the San Juan Islands. Turning the corner of John’s Island, I felt a tug on my boat. In front of our pod of kayaks was an ocean of white waves. Before anyone had any idea of what was happening we were being pulled right back where we started.

Everybody’s paddles were vigorously digging in the sea then bursting out. Right, left, right, left, I kept repeating in my head. We weren’t going anywhere!

The rapid waters crashing against the kayak. The sun frying my skin. The salt water spraying my eyes. The vomit in my stomach from the ups and downs and sways side to side. I lost almost all hope. In over two hours my kayak moved less than twelve feet.

I needed to be positive. I needed to believe I could make it. But I couldn’t. I kept my eye on the tip of Speiden, but no matter how hard and fast my group of fellow kayakers paddled, we were getting no closer. It was hopeless, but I couldn’t stop trying. I couldn’t let my group down. So I paddled and paddled my heart out.

Then I had a flashback of all the times I kayaked before. I remember going to Catalina and staying on my grandparents’ boat. My mom and dad would take us out on the kayaks you pedal with your feet. I would sit in the front and see all the fish. Especially the garibaldi. I would laugh and splish and splash in the water.

I said to myself, “I am not going to let this moment ruin kayaking for me.”

“You got this Izzie, you have what it takes,” My counselor Ava told me, bringing me out of my trance.

Those words motivated me to keep going and not give up. Trying to stay in sync with my paddle partner. Right. Left. Right! Left! Each stroke getting more and more difficult to scoop the salty ocean. I was sweating in my long sleeve T-shirt. I could barely keep a hold on the paddle with my hands rubbed raw with blisters. I felt like I was in a labyrinth, trying to escape, with no way out.

**Izzie Freiburg**