Batyr

2015 would have been my final year of my six year combined, electrical engineering and finance undergraduate degree at UTS.

It all started off after a fairly typical day of work. I had soccer training with my under 23s team and we played a trial game against another team at my local club. Being quite a competitive person, I had really put in during training and was physically sore afterward. Back home, I was feeling a bit queasy in my stomach and rushed to the bathroom. I threw up before I could make it inside. I don’t usually throw up after intense exercise, on reflection, this should have set off more alarms that something was wrong. My parents saw me and asked if I was ok. I said I was and attributed it to training and said that I would sleep it off and went to bed.

I was eventually woken by my younger sister over 50 hours later. She urged me to wake up and eat something as I’d had no nourishment in two days. During sleep, my blanket was pulled over my face and despite minimal ambient lighting, keeping my eyes open was excruciating when I lowered it. The queasiness after soccer training returned but there was also a searing pain in my head. I said to my parents, “I need to see a doctor”. So on Easter Friday, we drove immediately to Westmead hospital emergency. Hearing my symptoms, the medical staff took me to have a CT scan. After the scan, the doctor read out the findings. “Your results show that you have a cerebral aneurysm causing bleeding on your brain. We will admit you and closely monitor your condition”

I was pleading the medical staff “What has happened to me? What might have caused this? How long will I stay? I have travel plans to Hong Kong and the US in a few months, will I still get to go?” but these were not questions that could easily be answered. “You just need to rest for now. We will keep you in the ward and then assess the options after six weeks” Six weeks of lying in a bed, doing close to nothing. It sounds like a dream, but I was living a nightmare.

My first week was spent in intensive care where I was tended to and looked after by nurses almost hourly. This was the loneliest I have ever felt. My parents would visit me twice daily: breakfast and dinner time making sure I continued eating whilst on strong medication. Every visit they would ask how I was. I would tell them that my pain was under control. I could not bring myself to tell them about my mental health. They were already tremendously worried about my condition and hospitalisation as it was. I could not imagine how or what it felt for them from the outside looking in. I felt like an insignificant and useless speck in a huge world. I began contemplating suicide and these thoughts stayed with me for much of my hospital stay.

Moving out of intensive care and into the ward I was able to use my laptop and phone.

Trying to find an outlet for something social, I logged onto Facebook. My news screen had photos of my friend’s album from their holiday overseas and of course the status bar: “What’s on your mind?’ I felt angry and betrayed. It was as if Facebook had deliberately conspired to mock my situation. I immediately deactivated my account.

Still looking for contact with friends, I started thinking about my phone contacts and tried to make a shortlist of people that might reply soonest. I made a shortlist but then I had to figure out what to write. “Has anyone even noticed my inactivity? How do I explain to people what I am going through physically and mentally? How much would anyone care?” When I switched on my phone, it buzzed for a minute with notifications I had missed. Astonishingly, during my first week without my phone, my parents had answered most of the calls and had explained to my closer friends and work my neurological condition and hospital admission. My message box had many messages of support. I was most amazed by the ones that read “thinking of you Ankit” and “here for you mate”

I have been incredibly lucky to have had such tremendous support network. They weren’t able to prevent my physical or mental problems. Just being there through my darkest hours have meant the world to me.

Since coming out of hospital, I have had regular contact with what has become a team of appointed psychologists and councillors. UTS also offers a class in mindfulness which I have attended and have been able to use when times get tough