Dear Diary,

It’s crazy how quickly the mind and emotional well being can deteriorate when physical well being is also deteriorating. The beginning of this week was amazing. It was just as any other week, but even better. Valentine’s day happened and I felt like I was finally becoming the best person that I can be. I decided to take some time away from smoking weed this week. I hadn’t had it at all in a few days and I was feeling more mentally aware and more physically capable during water polo practice. I was actually a little bit bummed that I was seeing such a stark difference. Not because I didn’t like doing well and feeling good, but because it proved to me that weed really wasn’t a beneficial part of my health. It was actually making me realize how detrimental it has been to me.

I know that weed has helped me through a lot of things, it’s also taken me out of my shell in many circumstances, and it’s helped me develop new and different ways of thought that I will forever take with me. But, whether it is all in my head or actually reality, I can definitely tell a big difference when I’m not taking it. I was surprised that I wasn’t having any difficulties falling asleep. I was basically over my night fears, I didn’t have to keep the lights on at night any more (which is a crazy huge improvement in a small amount of time), and my throat was feeling much better. On top of that, my thoughts felt more clear, and my memory was feeling more crisp. Again I don’t know if this is all subjective and it was in my head, or if it was really turning around that quickly for me, but either way it was bringing up some scary thoughts.

What if I have been numbing myself far too much? Was I that addicted to weed? Have I missed out on so many opportunities to actually have meaningful connections with people because all of those late night conversations I had with them I can’t even remember anymore since I was in such a fog from the weed? But would I have had those conversations or connections in the first place without smoking with them? On top of that, when I had been off of weed for about four days, I started to notice some bad side effects.

I was feeling really shitty. I had developed a cough, but that was most likely from stress. I was having weird heart palpitations similar to Wesley’s vasovagal experiences as a child. I was feeling dizzy, and distant, and physically incapable of doing anything. On top of that, I was incredibly emotionally distraught. I had to get out in the middle of practice because I could feel myself about to pass out from a weird slowed heart beat. I wasn’t sure what was happening to me. I cried in the bathroom to myself for a long time. A few people tried to see if I was okay but I didn’t want them to see me like that so I asked if they could leave me alone. I left practice. I found a happy place next to the business building where there is a small waterfall structure and some benches in a secluded area. It was freezing outside and I was sick so it may not have been the best idea, but I needed to clear my head. I layed there for hours and cried to myself. I tried to make sense of everything that was happening to me. I was worried that the weed had been masking the side effects of something much worse happening to my body and now that I wasn’t smoking anymore, those side effects were all coming back at once. I was worried that there was no one I could go to and tell them that I have an addiction to weed and I need help. I was worried that I was panicking and there was nowhere to go where I felt safe talking about my feelings. I was worried that I had wasted so much time in my life and so many brain cells that I could never reach the potential I used to be able to. I was freaking out and I was not okay.

I eventually started to feel better though. It was lightly raining. I could hear the water rushing next to me. I told myself I needed just five minutes and I wasn’t allowed to think about anything small. I wasn’t allowed to think about the team and how people are unhappy with the way that it has been run lately. I wasn’t allowed to think about how behind I am in school or in my classes. I wasn’t allowed to think about how much time and effort I am putting into everything school related and how I am not getting the results I feel I deserve. I wasn’t allowed to think about how behind I am with planning things for WISH and how I just want to be able to put more time and thought into the club. I wasn’t allowed to think about how some of my relationships with certain friends are ending. I wasn’t allowed to think about how stressed I am or how sad I was or how lonely I’ve felt. I just needed to sit, and feel.

I listened to the water. I counted to the number thirteen a lot. I looked at the outline of the willow-like tree above me. I thought about how beautiful nature is and how amazing the world is that it can generate such intricate life out of things that we can’t even begin to understand. I thought about the great things that happen in the world. I didn’t think about my life. I thought about others. But I didn’t think about the bad things in life. I didn’t think about the sad things in life. I just sat. I just listened. I looked at the clock, ten minutes had passed. When a bad thought or stressful thought came into my brain I allowed it to come in, and then gently coaxed it away. I didn’t need that thought at the moment. It was counterproductive to my mental healing. I felt so much better afterwards. I still felt emotionally distraught and knew that it was going to take some time to feel better, but I felt at least a little more grounded and I knew I had made it through my panic attack.

I called Maxwell, he talked me through a few things I could do to feel better. He expressed the same feelings that I have about emotional distress and why it’s so hard to deal with sometimes when you feel so insignificant compared to other major stresses and bad things in the world. He made me remember how important I am. He made me remember that all I have in life is the current moment that I am living in. All I can do is try to make the moment I have and the moments I will have as best as they can be. I need to keep others in mind, but I need to do what is best for me.

I started walking home in the rain. I still wasn’t feeling myself yet, but I was definitely better. The next day I didn’t get in the water at practice. I was feeling mentally better until my heart started acting weird again. I left halfway through practice and cried the entire walk home. I calmed myself down the same way as the night before, but this time I made a warm bath and dipped my feet in it in my apartment so that I was at least warm. I tried going to bed at 9:30 but I couldn’t fall asleep fully until about 2 am because I had a terrible fever that was keeping me up. After taking some tylenol though, I was finally able to sleep. It turns out I just have a flu or something of that nature. So I have no clue what symptoms are from not smoking (and also not having coffee the past few days) and what symptoms are from this flu I’m trying to kick.

Overall, I think this week has been a big learning experience for me. There’s so many things I could continue to say, but I just don’t know how to say them yet. Claudia is such a great friend. She brought me a ton of food after my first breakdown and offered to drop her ski trip so I could talk through all of this with her. I think I want to tell her about my addiction problems, and possibly how it runs in the family and open up about how my mom was addicted to alcohol for some time and how that affected me. I want to tell her my worries about my health and my past and everything that I’ve said here. But I’m not sure if I can or not. We will see.

I’ve really learned how big of a support system I have here though. I know that so many of my friends would be here for me in a heartbeat if they could be or if I need them. It feels so good to know that. I’m so lucky to be surrounded by so many amazing people. I recently bought a book about the mind and the psychological effects of healing the body, and how healing the mind can sometimes heal the body as well. I really hope I have time to read it so that I can learn about that, I’m so interested in the subject. Plus then I can talk to my mom about it, since I was finally able to catch up with her today for the first time in what feels like forever and she was telling me about how she’s been really into this podcast about mental health.

I’m just so lucky to have been given the life that I have. I love that every day is a new opportunity for me to be a better person and to do what I can to improve myself mentally, emotionally, and physically. I hope that I can continue to do this for the rest of my life. I know that there are going to be so many hardships, and I know this is only the first of many road blocks. But I am so proud of myself and everything that I’m doing.

More soon.

Jessie J. Smith