\*From iPhone at 2:19 am\*

Talked with Derek about being ready to leave slo behind, even if I love that place. Talked about family and life and the future and being present.

Got to see everyone one last time,

Said goodbye to everyone.

Smoked lots of weed.

Probably ate too much.

Oh, SLO.

Lost a bit of who I was on the island. Wasn’t doing things for me or my health anymore... need to reflect on what caused the change in me.

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Dear Diary,

Happy half birthday to me! I didn’t realize that until I started typing in this entry.

On this day of being officially 22 and ½, where each continuous day will bring me closer to 23 and further from 22, I think it is the perfect opportunity for some extended reflection.

I am currently sitting at the big table in Wesley’s apartment at Venice Beach. It is 8:14 am and I thought I’d try to start off my day being productive, maybe to make up for my time in SLO.

Not that I wasn’t productive in SLO, I think I actually did quite a bit there… especially given it was my first extended time without access to my laptop.

Really, the biggest thing that I am trying to wrap my head around for my time in SLO was how quickly it brought me back to the headspace that I was in this past year.

I was sneaking smoking weed by the time I left.

I was smoking during the day, during the evening, at night, and part of me even wanted to in the morning the last few days.

I was eating more than I have in a few months, and CRAVING sugary foods and processed foods.

I wasn’t able to stay consistent with any of my tapas, and although I was practicing radical acceptance for myself, I found a lot of negative self talk coming up - especially while I looked in the mirror…

Even now, I am constantly looking at photos/videos of myself, and looking at my social media accounts with such scrutiny.

I even binged once during my time in SLO. It was the first time that has happened in a long time.

So, what fundamentally changed between my last few months, and even my time here in Venice versus my time back in SLO?

* First and foremost, spending time with Sam makes me feel like I am not completely in control of my decisions. Not that that is a bad thing, I feel that way a bit when I am traveling with others regardless of how controlling they are. I think the difference here is that when Sam is in charge, I am reprimanded for being spiritual and healthy, and I am rewarded for being unhealthy. That messes up my psychological rewards system, and in order to please my friend I feel like I have to sacrifice my own well-being. Even for just a small reward. This isn’t a healthy exchange and going forward I have a feeling I’ll have to bring it up with Sam so that I don’t have to worry about this constantly happening when I spend a lot of time with him.
* The binging and the smoking was definitely unexpected. I am going to go into full detox mode from here on out if that is possible, and not just to prepare for Utah or while I’m at home, but indefinitely. I felt like I was on the top of my game about a week and a half ago, maybe closer to two weeks ago. Like I was the best version of me that I have ever been. Healthy, clean (not physically but metaphorically), sober, mentally clear, with a great memory, self loving, not looking at my reflection often, nice and kind to others, practicing consistent yoga, and truly fully CONFIDENT.
  + Not that I’ve lost all of that necessarily, it’s mostly still here I just need to work hard to maintain these things.
* Honestly, the biggest beneficiary from my time in SLO was probably how much patience I gained. Both for myself and those around me. It was really great to be in a place that harbored so much stress and anxiety for years in my life, and be able to just breathe and relax knowing that there was nothing I needed to do at any point in time during the day.

Most of my major shifts in life come with a shifting lifestyle change - which makes perfect sense. I think the thing that scared me the most about my lifestyle shift in SLO was that I was so negatively reverting back to an older self… and I was in an educational environment. That concept scares me a bit because I am supposedly going to be in a similar kind of environment for the next 5+ years.. And if I don’t figure out how to positively handle some of the emotions and stressors that will come after me, I might be in trouble to repeat some of these negative habits.

Of course things will be very different in Boulder, I am making my own tribe so there isn’t much risk of me falling into a group of boys that plays video games more frequently than going outside.

That being said, I will still be dealing very much with school stress and anxiety and I’ll have to really find ways to utilize my mental toolbox in order to battle what gets sent my way.

A few decisions that I’ve made for the next few months:

* I am going to try to travel to South America with only a small red backpack. I want to test my minimalism.
* I am basically out of money but I will try to continue traveling in South America until at least mid-July in order to push myself to learn Spanish and to accomplish a big goal that I’ve had since I was little
* I am going to spend the first semester of college entirely sober. I want to see what I am capable of.

I am definitely in an interesting headspace being here in Venice knowing that I’ll be coming home to Utah in a few days. I am going to need to cultivate quite a bit of radical acceptance, openness, patience, and kindness in order to prepare for my time there.

I am ready to try and hold space for my family and my parents.

I am ready to stay strong with my own beliefs and opinions.

I am strong enough to help those in need.

I am strong enough to be there for myself.

I am strong.

I am kind.

I am beautiful.

I am loving.

I am caring.

I am intelligent.

I am passionate.

I am deep.

I am thoughtful.

I am MINDFUL.

It’s crazy when I look back at journal entries written on almost exactly the same day a year ago and I hear myself saying the same things:

I am **STRONG.**

I am **resilient as fuck.**

I am **capable of manifesting my best life and my best self.**

I have switched from someone who feels lost in the world who sees glimpses of a better self and a fulfilling life to the following:

Someone who lives a life to the fullest, feels constantly fulfilled, and *is* my best self all the time - who sees glimpses of an old self that may still linger under drugs, stress, and uncontrollable situations or environments.

This past year has been such a big year for growth.

It’s crazy to me that I keep telling myself that the last month or year has been the biggest growing experience of my life… and then I keep telling myself that again.

It’s pretty great to be so consistently working to be my best self and to manifest my biggest dreams so that I can create a reality that makes me happy and wanting to live in it. I can sense quite a few big things coming on in my life.

I am capable of accomplishing so many huge things in this life.

I will accomplish so many huge things in this life.

It’s so interesting to me that even in times of extreme depression and doubt, I always had a somewhat positive outlook on my life or the future in these journal entries. Throughout the worst of my depression last winter, I was still finding some sliver of silver lining in every entry that I wrote. Even if that lining was just to mention that I was going to find a way out of my darkness.. This optimism is something that I don’t want to take for granted. Not everyone has it. I think it’s a unique skill to be able to be so positive about everything around me and what I am going through in life.

As long as I’ve got myself and my love, that’s all I need to be consistently pushing forward.

I can’t say that I’ve always had that in the past. My relationship with myself is so new and blossoming right now. It was at its best in Thailand, and we’ve been hitting some rough patches since returning to the states - but overall I still know that it has transformed. I’ve reached a level of self love that can’t be run back into the ground under any circumstances. I love everything about myself, I accept everything about myself with love, and I will always be here to support myself and to love myself.

I wonder if I sound different than I used to? Sure, I’m trying to write a bit more eloquently than I would if I were blazed out of my mind at midnight… but I also think that I’ve grown up a bit in the last few months.

Being in SLO and surrounded by college students for the week made me feel pretty old. Not old in a bad way either. But rather, much more mature.

I definitely enjoy spending time with people who are a bit older than myself now. I think that the maturity gap between myself and those around my age is so stark now that I struggle to maintain my own sense of self when I hang out with people like that. I did a pretty good job while camping in SLO, but as soon as we were back in a dark, messy living room with nothing but weed, video games, and junk food - I reverted into a self that fit into that mold….

Environment is *SO* important!

The people I choose to spend my time with are *SO* important!

I control my environment.

I control my reality.

I control my actions.

I control my response to my thoughts.

I control my self love.

I control my life.

I feel like I sound different than I used to. I don’t want to come across as a brainwashed yogi who doesn’t have a genuine sentence to say. That’s definitely not the case. I think that sometimes simplicity is the easiest way to get ideas across… I *am* a changed person, so I’m *not* going to sound like I have in the past.

I don’t consider myself to be entitled in any way. I don’t think I am cocky either. I think that I am confident, and I know what I need. I don’t think I know what everyone needs. Sure, I have a few items in my toolbox that I love sharing with others because I can almost guarantee that it will either mentally or physically help them in some way. But I don't know all of the answers. Hell, I hardly know any answers - and most of those are self-specific.

Instead of shoving my own self-beliefs down other’s throats. I hope to use my own toolbox to hold space for others. I want to be able to listen to other people and hear what hardships they might be going through, and to allow them to release stagnant emotions and thoughts. If they ask, I would love to guide them through this exploration and to suggest ideas for building a better relationship with the self or with the universe… but that isn’t something that I would like to impose others with.

I love myself and this universe just as much as I love others. I prioritize my relationship with myself before anything else, because I cannot love others if I don’t love myself first. I cannot treat others with kindness if I haven’t done that for myself first. I cannot be judgement free for others if I am telling myself judgements constantly. I have to meet others where I meet myself, and if I keep up my self love, I can meet others in a place of absolute happiness and acceptance. There is so much love to feel and to share on this Earth. I plan to spread as much love as humanly possible during my life.

Here’s to love.

Here’s to constant growing, learning, and bhavana.

Here’s to life.

Jess

Age 22 ½