Dear Diary,

OM GAM GANAPATAYE NAMAH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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I don’t know if it’s the water I’ve been drinking, this mantra I’ve been consistently chanting the last few days, my intermittent fasting, my being away from insects finally, my happiness about having no fear of the dark, my ability to use wifi and get some of my work done finally, my smiling more throughout my day since I am working with small children, or probably a combination of all of the above - BUT I must say I am feeling on top of the freaking world!!!

I am so fucking happy.

I’m literally dancing and singing this mantra and like half/crying from happiness to myself while typing this out in my room at the top of this school.

I don’t think I have felt this happy since I was in Thailand.

I think it also might have to do with some of the new channels I’ve found on youtube and been watching recently. I’ve been listening to a LOT of great routines and mindset hacks to just be happy, positive, and really show some self love <3

I think working with children is basically the quickest way to skyrocket patience.

I thought that I had great patience before, but damn this is a whole new level. It’s crazy how being around 3-5 year olds can make an hour go by in the blink of an eye, but also can make 8 minutes feel like a lifetime.

I think that the women who work at this school are also really great people for me to be around. Seeing how much they really just don’t give a fuck about is really good for me. It’s not a bad thing for them to not care, I think it genuinely makes me realize that when it comes to 3 and 4 year olds, I have no need to feel any sort of pressure.

I’ve been realizing again in the past few days how much pressure I tend to place on myself in new situations. I assume that others want or need certain things from me, and then I try to really go out of my way to deliver. This often ends up stressing me out and constantly questioning if I am doing enough or wondering if other people are disapproving of me.

But again, it’s important for me to center myself and remember some of the wise lessons from *The Courage to be Disliked* : I need not assume what others want from me. It’s so detrimental to my own sanity to think that I know what others want and need. It makes me stress and struggle over actions that I don’t even need to do most of the time. It makes me waste my time doing things that I assume are best, when I would just save everyone’s time by asking people what they want and need.

When I’m at this preschool, I am recognizing that there are literally no expectations for me. There is no pressure and no way for me to fuck up. This is **awesome** because it means that anything that I do seems to exceed expectations in some way. Not that I receive any praise, and I’m not expecting to, but I think that it’s a nice reminder to myself that I am just a volunteer here… I am giving my time and effort to this school and these employees because I want to give back to these children and offer what I know - and that means that I will give them whatever I want to give them, no more and no less. It’s pretty freeing to recognize this.

I’m realizing that I also had that power on the reserve. But I think the circumstances were so stressful for my mind and body that I wasn’t able to take a step back and realize this. Which was why I was so consistently creating these stories in my head about what the others thought of me and how I wasn’t enough…

Here I feel like I am *more* than enough. I look at myself in the mirror and I have a **huge** grin on my face. I am feeling SO MUCH SELF LOVE HERE!!!

I think it’s also great to see the women not really giving a fuck around here because I get to see a glimpse of life running at a different speed. I am the kind of person who so constantly wants to race ahead, knock off my to-do lists, see pretty rapid growth/development or feedback, and try to achieve some version of perfection… here at the preschool - that is *not* possible.

These 3 year olds will put a wrench in any plan you have. If you make a perfect lesson plan, they don’t give a fuck. If you have one hour to teach something to them, you will spend 50 minutes trying to wrangle them into some sort of formation, and maybe you’ll get 2 or 3 kids to have a break through with an English vocabulary word. Or maybe you’ll get ⅔ of the kids to try singing a song without getting distracted by something else. It’s teaching me patience above all else. But it’s also teaching me to let go of perfection. It’s teaching me to embrace the messy parts of life and to just sit back and laugh.

It’s not easy by any means. I’ve been pretty freaking exhausted in the past two days while teaching here. But, at the end of every school day, I’ve also been talking with myself in my head and saying:

*I’m surprised, but I love being here. I feel like even though I am exhausted, I can definitely do this. I’m enjoying this.*

So there we go. These kids are already teaching me lessons beyond anything I could have prepared for. That’s how this usually goes right? The teacher learns more from the students than they do from the teacher? That’s been my experience at any capacity of teaching so far.

I’d love to know if there is anything specific that has spawned my sudden ability to practice self love and to feel so much happier and loving towards myself. It probably is just a combination of everything that I said at the beginning of this entry, and maybe my greater appreciation for everything in my life after living on the reserve. But DAMN I fucking love it. I love dancing naked in my room and watching me dance in the mirror and laughing and loving my imperfect body.

I know that I’ve gained weight since Thailand, actually I think quite a bit of weight if I’m being honest. Previously in my life, I think this would have made me so sad and angry and upset and sent me into a spiral of binging and restricting. This is actually one reason why I am incredibly grateful for intermittent fasting. It is one of the few solutions I have found to nip binging in the butt. And here at the school, it’s even better because I don’t have easy access to a kitchen where I can just cook and eat constantly during the day. Even though I’ve still been eating quite a bit during the late afternoon and evening, I know that at 6:30(ish) I have to cut it off.

This alone already helps so much. It makes me feel more confident in myself, it helps me place greater trust in myself again, and I think that it influences my serotonin / gut health because damn I’ve just been so happy!!!

So yes, in the past I think I would have looked in the mirror and been very disaproving of my current body shape. But also something that Ebba said to me really influenced me positively as well. She told me it’s good to be naked with myself often and to touch my body and feel comfortable with my body so that it’s easier to love it. I’ve definitely been naked so much more the past few days now that I have some privacy, and I’ve been dancing the past few days, singing to myself, listening to music…. It makes a HUGE difference.

Instead of spiraling into an old abyss, I am utilizing the fuck out of this new yogi toolbox - I am embracing my body, every imperfection, and I am LOVING all of it!!! My body is a temple and I am so grateful to have it, every part of it. I am so grateful for its ability to adapt to new environments, new climates, new living conditions, new foods, new eating habits, new exercise routines, and my personal mental and physical changes. I am so grateful for my beautiful superwoman body!

Also, the power of smiling probably helps so much. Although I’ve noticed that living in the city means that no one likes to make eye contact, smile at you, or say hello (especially on the street - which has actually been a nice change of pace for once to not be heckled at for being a white woman in Colombia), I have been smiling so much with the kids. I think it’s important for me to smile as much as I can during the day. When I was in Thailand, I was literally smiling all day every day, and then smiling and making long eye contact at strangers when I motor biked around the island… I was smiling SO MUCH.

Alrighty, I think that is all of the thought juice I can muster for this evening. It’s 9:30 pm and I’m a grandma now so I can’t really find any mental clarity past 10 pm (I’m even struggling to keep my eyes open now). Although this is in part because I have consistently been waking up at 6:30 am or earlier for the past month!

Ohhh quick side note:

As of tomorrow, if I make it through the whole day (and I easily will), it will officially be the longest I have gone without weed in like 4 years!!! I’ve honestly been craving it a bit, but I realized today it was probably because my body hasn’t felt this way in so long. Hmmm I wonder if that is playing a role in my self love and happiness as well…. Most likely :)

Okay I also want to note that my loopy energy / sleepiness / mental fog from speaking spanglish to children and adults all day has made me sound super illiterate haha but I haven’t lost my ability to write! It’s just one of those days and I felt like writing a bit more authentically than perfectly, you know taking a bit of advice from the kiddos.

Also as my spanish improves, my english gently declines a little bit haha, but that is totally okay.

Alright, now I’m really gonna call it.

Until next time -

Jessie J

Age : 22 and proud of it