Dear Journal,

Life is just rushing by here in Cali. I feel like I am constantly in a state of going. One minute I’ll be dancing salsa with 20 others in my hostel, the next I’ll be having a deep conversation with someone who I barely know, the next I’ll be running errands in the city with new acquaintances, the next I’ll be getting invited to stay at the house of one of the hostel workers, the next minute I’ll be in secret government offices behind caution tape talking to officials about gaining access to their platform, the next minute I’ll be having coffee with Mayor candidates…

When my days are completely full and I am in a constant state of interaction with others, I find that being extroverted no longer exhausts me. I no longer feel fear or anxiety from social situations, coffee meetings, or time spent with strangers. It has become part of my normal routine. If I fill my days so entirely with interactions, then I never have time to overthink or feel anxious for those interactions.

Yesterday some of the people staying in the hostel were joking that I am a *fairy* who lives in her own world. It was after I taught the yoga class so I was feeling a bit meditative and happy… but that expression actually made me feel really great. I love the fact that I have found my own unique way to exist here… it’s a combination of motivated, serious, driven, extroverted, and **fun**!

I am truly taking Blake Irving’s advice to heart and becoming someone that I would consider ‘fun to work with’. I’m discovering the importance of ‘showing-face’ here in South America, and honestly just in life. I’m realizing that I am actually incredibly extroverted and I thrive when I’m in constant contact / communication with others.

Of course, as I already know, I need alone time too. I need time to decompress and to recharge by myself without others around. But, for the most part I think that I live my life better when I am not alone. I am in a state of more constant activities when others are around, I’m motivated to eat healthier and better proportions when I have an audience in my kitchen, I feel like I can be my yogi-fairy self when I’m known as a ‘yoga teacher’ somewhere, I get a sense of accountability for my actions and my life when I can’t hide away in my room and indulge in secret, bad habits. It’s really nice to have these semi-forcing functions existing in so many spheres of my life here.

It makes work easier, it makes my relationship with food easier, it makes living a healthy life in general easier, it makes social life easier, it honestly just makes good habitual living easier.

I am so grateful to be experiencing everything here before starting my PhD. This is the perfect preparation for the academic world and for the beginning of my professional career. I finally feel like I am comfortable as a business-woman, as an entrepreneur, as a researcher, as a coder, and as communicator. I don’t feel fear anymore when I am introduced to others. I don’t feel afraid to set up meetings or to talk through my ideas in person. I don’t feel afraid to pitch ideas to others and to say what I really want. I am able to make better use of my time by being honest and real with others. I feel like I am professional, but I am also myself. I can connect with people of all ages. I can find friends in people of all ages.

I’m happy.

Going forward, all of these skills will be SO beneficial for me to have in my ‘tool-box’. I truly feel like I am building a huge network of people to keep in my back pocket for when I need them.

This program that I am trying to start here, to match individuals in the USA to projects here, I think has **so much** potential. I actually truly think that I can make something of it. I feel like I am the right person for the job, and that I’m passionate enough to keep working on it even when I leave Cali.

This could be the beginning of something really great. It’s getting difficult to recognize that my life here is actually real. I have actually, like *actually* created the dream that I imagined here.

I am doing volunteer work, I am in Colombia, I am learning Spanish, I am making an impact on the community, working on *interesting* projects (like opening data to battle corruption) with the **government**, I’m teaching yoga, I’m interacting in ways that make me happy, I’m being the person (and becoming the person) that I want to be, and I’m making everything happen on my own!

I think I’m kind of kicking ass here.

I’ll stay a bit modest to not sound condescending, but it’s also good to recognize the importance of confidence here.

**What a crazy life this is.**

Jess

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(Later in the afternoon)

I just reread some of my diary entries from June 2017, and it inspired me to write a bit more here today. First, I have to say that I’m blown away by what I read from two years ago. Sometimes I forget that I go through the same realizations multiple times in different ways before something truly sticks. That’s one of the reasons why I think it’s so important to journal as often as I can because I can begin to recognize these patterns that I go through.

In my journal entries from almost exactly two years ago, I was talking about this idea of solitude and loneliness, the idea of being my authentic self (even if it means changing my friend groups), and pushing myself out of my comfort zone to prepare for traveling the world…

It’s funny because last night I was literally talking to Idan about the difference between solitude and loneliness. I think that this is a recurring theme in my life, and it all sparked from when I journaled about it at the beginning of 2017.

I think that I have somewhat reversed the way that I journal from what I used to do. In the past, I felt like I was consistently writing about specific events I was experiencing or people that I was meeting, or boys that I was seeing… but then I started to shift into writing about my current thoughts, perspectives, and changing opinions.

I love that I discuss what is going on in my head more often. I think it’s both therapeutic and beneficial for my future self to look back on what has made me become *me*.

But, I don’t want to forget some of the memories I’m creating here either! (especially since there are so many) So here is an attempt to quickly recap some things that have been happening:

* Made an amazing friend group with the Israeli guys at the hostel here. They feel like a close group of guy friends that I have had for a long time. I feel like Idan understands me so well. He is definitely not someone that I would consider myself compatible with, romantically or friendly, but I do think that he thinks in a very similar manner to myself. His views about life mainly consist of constant happiness, and recognizing that you control your own reality entirely. Both through perspective and perception of external events, and through confidence to make shit happen. Also he smokes a lot of weed and likes to talk philosophically, so we just get each other in that way. The other guys though; Itai and Yoni, they are also so great to be around. When I’m with them I feel like I’m hanging out with old friends. It’s like all of us have known each other for a long time. I can’t tell if Yoni is still trying to get with me or not… but if he is then he is being very great about not being too pushy and just enjoying time together. I’m just so happy to have found people that I can connect with deeply, partially physically, and to feel appreciated by someone again. It’s been a little while since I felt that and I am realizing that I need a sense of community and belonging to feel full in my life. Whether I get that from roommates, best friends, work colleagues, school classmates, bosses, yoga community, or anywhere… as long as I have a consistent ability to feel appreciated and welcome, I find that it helps me feel much happier on a day-to-day basis.
* I’ve been getting closer with the people who work at the hostel! David even invited me to stay at his place on Saturday night since the hostel is going to be closed that day (so that I don’t have to pay for a different hostel for that night). How nice! And I know he’s not just hitting on me because he has a girlfriend so it’s even better :) I love that I’ve come into this hostel and started to really be outgoing and