Dear Diary,

Sometimes it feels good to feel sad.

Though I am alone right now, solitude provides space for me to reflect. It allows space for me to make peace with the fleeting nature of life.

This last week has surprised me. Many times I have come back to hopelessness. Death makes me feel hopeless. Growing old makes me feel hopeless. The pandemic makes me feel hopeless. When I am overwhelmed with the work that I have placed on myself -- I feel hopeless. When I struggle with my romantic relationship with Dylan, or my sexuality, or my fear of missing out on anything in life, or my general discomfort in my skin from sobriety -- I feel hopeless.

Then I cry. I listen to sad music to make me feel more deeply.

I *feel*. Deeply.

And suddenly, I feel better.

The mood shifts.

[gun song - The Lumineers]

I remember when I first started attempting to remove weed from my life in 2017, I thought that the absence of weed made me realize that I was actually secretly depressed. A pretty bold assumption back then. It’s strange to feel like I knew nothing, but that I also knew more than I realized back then.

To be 20 again… back in my small, 1 bedroom apartment. Struggling with weed addiction, major OCD, night terrors, anxiety, panic attacks, an eating disorder, depression, and no idea that I was going through any of that.

Now I’m 23. I’m almost 24. I don’t smoke weed anymore. I spent the first half of this year cultivating that. I lost my way for the summer. Now I’m not smoking again.

I have learned to curb my OCD. I keep my environment clean. I sleep with the lights off. I utilize breathing exercises to calm my anxiety, at night and otherwise. I breathe through my panic. I find outlets that are positive for me -- music, running, yoga, mediation, and connection with others or myself.

I don’t binge anymore. Sure, I overeat sometimes. I’ve even caught myself this week wanting to eat (especially chocolate in my room) in private as I feel stressed while going through weed withdrawals. But I don’t binge myself to the point of pain or sickness. I don’t force myself to throw up. I don’t look in the mirror and allow myself to feel hate anymore. In fact, I often feel love. Recently, I’ve been feeling a *lot* of love when I look in the mirror… It’s been catching me by surprise, and I’ve been trying to figure out why I’ve been feeling so positive about my body. Regardless, I’m very happy about it.

In general, I try to eat mindfully whenever I can afford it in my busy schedule. I’ll admit that the majority of my meals these days are in front of a screen at my desk. Many of my meals are frozen burritos (more than I would like to admit). But I do really try to eat mindfully at least semi-regularly. To feel connected to my food, and to eat with intention.

I’ve been relying heavily on carbs lately -- in part this past week especially to help me through my withdrawals. My next goal is to put a lot of effort into my gut health and to show some love for my second brain <3

So, the last item on that list was depression. I often wonder if I still struggle from this. The last 2 months I have felt depressed quite a bit. I don’t know if I’d label myself as *depressed,* but I had many moments of sadness and hopelessness that did make me wonder.

Now that I am again emerging from the mental fog that I put my brain into, I wonder if I’ll find myself depressed again. Right now -- I don’t think I am depressed. Here’s why:

When I do yoga, I cry sometimes. I *feel* so deeply. In a **good** way. Not in a depressed, numb, and hopeless way. In a hopeful and grateful way.

When I run, I smile so hard I start to laugh. My body thanks me for taking care of it. I enjoy the feeling of the crisp air on my cheeks.

When I am having a good day, I feel so much love for Dylan that I could burst. I feel happy to have him in my life.

When I get enough sleep, I am so fucking proud of myself. I am proud of my school work, my teaching, and the podcast. I am proud of the hard work that I put in and the amazing results I get out of it.

So I really don’t think I am depressed.

This last week has been interesting because I’ve felt hopeless at times. Fear of the future -- both near and far -- as well as a general anxiety towards the overwhelming nature of my life right now. But in general, I’m happy. I love what I do. I have created exactly the life that I want to live. I get paid to learn. I am a leader. I am respected and appreciated. I make my own schedule every day. I have creative outlets through my work that I will soon be paid for. I *love* what I do.

I love Claudia. She’s the best. No matter what happens to both of us in our lives, she is going to stay in my life forever. I’m going to make damned sure of that.

Today I decided to take off work early and get some fresh air instead. I rode my bike to the park and broke in my new journal. It felt amazing.

I want to start prioritizing creativity away from screens in my life. It is an outlet that makes me feel so whole. There’s many ways I can do this:

Journaling, playing music, singing, dancing…

Creativity is so important.

Curiosity is also important.

I am constantly evolving, and I am allowed to change into the person I want to be.

Hey, I’m Jess. I’m 23. Here’s who I am (really, who I want to be):

I am a calm person.

I am a confident person.

I *listen* to others, deeply.

I am present with those I am around.

I don’t let stress get the best of me.

I make time for myself, both for self care and self love.

I enjoy solitude.

I am **happy.**

I am sober.

I am continuously becoming and making sure I become the best me that I can be.

I love deeply.

I care for those around me.

I care for myself.

I love my body.

I love my mind.

I am close with my family.

I am close with my friends.

I am successful.

I work hard, but I don’t sacrifice my life for work.

I am kind.

I am optimistic.

There’s many things about life that are complicated or difficult or confusing right now -- the biggest one for me is my relationship with Dylan. But I’m confident that I will be able to figure it all out in a way that allows me to be my best self (see above).

I am **so grateful** for this life.

More soon,

Jess

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