Dear Diary,

I’ve been spending the last 3 days taking time away from tv as a trial to try to get rid of this ADDICTION that I’ve unfortunately found myself in since moving in by myself.

One of the things that my therapist Lori wanted me to focus on this weekend was noticing if I am struggling with this trial, and if I am, to not judge myself but instead meet myself with compassion and try to think about what from my childhood / trauma in my life might be causing my difficulty.

So here I am, day 3 out of 3 of no tv, it is 7:30pm, and I am going to write out what is coming up for me.

First, I’ll just say that in the moments over the last few days where I would have traditionally put on TV (e.g., when I finish my work, when I am stressed out, when I’m bored, when I have free time, when it’s close to bedtime), that is when I’ve struggled the most. And here are the ways in which I’ve struggled:

* I get immense anxiety at the realization that I don’t have the comfort of tv to go to
* I get this sense of existential dread thinking about my night without tv… it feels… *lonely* and a bit scary… I think I should expand on this more.

The thought of living alone and not having tv to turn to, with free time makes me feel lonely.

Maybe that’s why I’ve been so obsessively on social media this weekend… because when I feel alone or lonely, social media is the easiest way for me to feel connected to others. I can feel connected by seeing what they are up to, by checking and responding to my friends’ stories, by posting things that I am doing and engaging with people’s responses… I’ve definitely spent WAY more time on social media this weekend than I normally do, like hours more than I usually do…

I’ve messaged more people on social media this weekend than I ever usually do.

You know - I also wonder if this is why I slipped into hard core depression when I got rid of my phone and I also got rid of my social media. I wasn’t really watching tv or movies at that time in my life either, so the only opportunities I had to combat my loneliness was to spend time with people in person, which felt really lacking at that point in my life (at least in terms of genuine connections outside of sitting near people in a classroom setting).

So why is it that I feel so lonely lately when I am by myself without the crutch of tv or social media?

Actually - before I answer that question, I feel like I should also comment on the fact that one of the saving graces this weekend has been weed. When I’ve been feeling this loneliness dread, smoking weed has made it go away a little bit. In some ways probably because it is numbing me a bit. In other ways maybe its because it gives my brain creative ideas for things to do, like reading a book or decorating my apartment or calling someone. Which is interesting, because I can do all of those things easily if I am sober, but I guess I feel less dreadful when I am doing those things and I am high.

Okay, so now, back to the updated question:

So why is it that I feel so lonely ~~lately~~ when I am by myself without the crutch of tv or social media *or weed*?

Let me think…

Have I lost my ability to be in solitude with myself? Or did I never truly have it? Whenever I’ve been in solitude with myself before without tv or social media and genuinely enjoyed it, I’ve been high probably 60% of the time.

I think the other 40% of the time is when I am in solitude in nature, I love that shit regardless of if I am high or sober (maybe I should lean into that more??).

It is interesting to think about how obsessed I was with loneliness versus solitude back in 2018, and how I harnessed solitude so well… and now that I think about it I think that the key ingredient to that enjoyment was weed.

As I am saying this, I also feel myself inching toward my bong to take a rip so that I get the motivation to clean my apartment, prep for the week, make myself some dinner, and get this dread to go away..

But *where does this dread come from??*

I’m trying to think back to my childhood…

Constantly moving. Constantly going. Constantly doing things…

*“There’s not enough time in the day for Jessie to do all the things she has in her calendar”*

It’s been like that since I can remember…

When I hung out with my friends, we would put pieces of paper in a hat with ideas of things that we could do. It was rarely watch tv or watch movies. It was always creative projects or entrepreneurial projects or some sort of performance for the parents or the camera.

**I was constantly going.**

I’ve always been constantly going.

Is my brain capable of slowing down and being alone, sober, with no distractions?

I know it is because I’ve experienced times in my life when I’ve done this.

Actually, only 3 times in my life come to mind where I’ve been able to do this.

1. In Koh Phangan, during my YTT
2. In the Reserva Caoba, during my 3 weeks there
3. In Bogota in the preschool, during my 3 weeks there

To be honest, I wasn’t alone for #1, I was surrounded by people pretty constantly. I was alone for a lot of #2 and #3… and I was wildly depressed.

Wow.

I feel like I need to try to dig further back… to my young young childhood, in Maryland.

Honestly, for as far back as I can remember, my life has constantly been filled with people and activities.

Being the third child in a family of active and energetic people started my journey, and then from the moment I left home I spiraled into a more hard-working, activity-doing, spending-time-with-people, numbing-with-stuff-while-alone kind of person…

I don’t think I need to come up with solutions yet. I think just this acknowledgement is powerful in itself.

I will say that the first thought that came to my mind while writing that last sentence was “*oh, I should lean into the few things that allow me to be happy in true sober solitude then… like nature, and dance, and… honestly I’m not sure what else… maybe reading sometimes, when it’s a good book?”*

I definitely need to unpack this with Lori.

This is some good shit.

More soon,

Jess

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UPDATE: I came back to add more to this because I had another revelation.

In highschool, I remember there were SO MANY nights where I’d get back from water polo practice and I’d have so much homework to do and I would have so little time left in the evening and I would still be so hungry even though I had already eaten dinner, and I’d be SO FUCKING EXHAUSTED and so I’d go up to my room and steal a bunch of snacks in secret (either huge bowls of chips or chocolate chips or bread or tortillas or something along those lines, very sugary or carby). Then I would just binge watch How I Met Your Mother or some other gymnastics show or other similar kinds of shows or Disney movies.

Now that I look back on it, I was HARD CORE numbing because it was all too much.

Being utterly exhausted at school and utterly starving all day at school (but feeling like I couldn’t eat until I was full because I was already the ‘biggest’ of all of my friends), and then going straight into HOURS of working out and cardio, and then coming home and knowing I had so much work to do, of course I numbed out to avoid that daily dread and stress!!

I don’t remember feeling *dread* in high school (I don’t think I would classify it like that) and I don’t remember saying that I was stressed in high school (I don’t think that was a huge part of high schooler language back then), but I do remember *feeling* constantly stressed.

I would multitask and do homework while watching tv because I couldn’t even focus on just doing homework after a long day like that. And each day was just as long as the other.

So these numbing habits (especially with tv and food -- which was my previous crutch that I have in a lot of ways replaced with weed now) started at least back when I was in high school, if not earlier…

Very interesting.