**Happy Place**

There are too many thoughts. Time for a walk.

This is what happens every time. I get too anxious about what I’m working on and then I must distract myself. I must put on my headphones, listen to a podcast, and move. Move where? Anywhere, but today it’ll be to my favorite park.

A couple hundred meters and I am there. This is normally where I walk to. It’s just so close and I hate driving. Driving means that I would use gas and using gas is bad for the environment and if it’s bad for the environment that means … Nope. I have to stop thinking.

I turn up my podcast to try to drown out the thoughts.

But this is futile because most of the podcasts I listen to are about the environment. I refuse to give myself a break. Maybe I should just listen to music this time? No. I can’t waste time. The world is on fire. So even on this supposedly relaxing walk I listen to a podcast about how some people in Ecuador are working towards a climate solution. At least it’s a hopeful story today.

Eventually I get to the lake. This is my happy place. No person in site. Surrounded by trees and the weather is actually decent today. I close my eyes and take in a deep breath of the mild Spring air. Spring is my favorite season. It’s not too warm, it’s not too cold, the trees are beginning to bud, and I have also been blessed with no allergies. I stare mindlessly out over the lake. The wind is causing several small ripples, allowing the setting sunlight to sparkle on top of the water. Little bubbles close to the shore hold my attention for a minute. I wonder if a fish or another unseen animal is causing them. With the thoughts slowly disappearing, but of course never completely gone, I sit down on a smooth rock and pause the podcast. I was beginning to miss details anyways, so I will save the podcast for later.

After some time, I take my headphones completely off so I can hear the sounds around me. I take another deep breath. I finally allow myself to think, but only of things that make me happy.

Gardening. Gardening makes me so happy. Working the land, learning about different plants and how to take care of them, putting my hands to the soil. Grounded. That is how I feel when I am gardening. I love learning new things. New things about gardening, about the environment, about sustainability solutions, about history, about science, about technology, and about how to bake things I haven’t baked before. Baking. Baking makes me happy. Baking with and for the people I love. Oh yeah! The people I love. They make me happy too. My friends and family are here for me, and they make me happy. I am so thankful that I have a community of people that care about me. Whenever I get together with my family, we always play a lot of games. Sometimes board games and sometimes card games. Games make me happy. Of course, when I think of family, I also think of all the pets in my life. Dogs and cats and other animals too make me happy. I should get a pet of my own soon. That would make me happy. Baking also means food. Growing food, donating food, cooking food, eating food. And eating that food with a nice warm drink of tea. Food and tea make me happy. When I bake, I usually listen to music or a podcast. Podcasts make me happy. I should listen to music more often. Learning all the lyrics to my favorite songs is always fun. Some of my favorite songs are in movies that I like. I haven’t just sat down, relaxed, and watched a good movie in a while. It doesn’t even need to be a good movie. Sometimes bad movies are fun to watch with a group of friends too. Laughing at the ridiculousness of it. Laughing is fun. Maybe I should watch a video of my favorite comedian when I get back. Try to actually laugh. Laugh enough that my abs start to hurt. Haven’t laughed that much in a while. Exercising can be fun. I am so thankful that I am able to walk and run and hike and bike. Hiking is my favorite. Hiking up mountains and looking over large areas of land has always been one of my favorite activities. There’s just so much you can see. So much beautiful nature that you can take in all at once. Nature and the outside make me happy. The trees, the leaves, the dirt, the sunlight, the water, the air, the grass, the plants, the rocks, the animals, the insects, the people. People are a part of nature. Here I am, with and a part of nature. I used to camp a lot. Haven’t done that in a while. Camping makes me happy. I should plan a camping trip this summer. With my brother and sister and some friends. Sitting around a campfire, telling stories, laughing, playing games, and catching up with one another after too many months spent apart. All of that would make me happy. Just thinking about it makes me happy.

As I begin to end this stream of consciousness, I stand up from the smooth rock and begin to head back home. Home. Home makes me happy. There are tons of things that make me feel anxious. The climate crisis being number one on that long list. But today I will try to think of the things that make me happy. That is what is needed today. Sometimes this is what is best and what is needed for you and for the planet too. Tomorrow, I will continue to do what is best and what is needed. To do what is best and what is needed for the planet and everything and everyone that inhabits it.