

I have always been an extremist. I can trace it all the way back to 8th grade when I noticed I was chubbier than my classmates (an irrational thought, by the way.) I would needlessly stop eating sugar or sweets for months. I made it my mission to lose weight. Fast forward a couple of years later to high school when I had cystic acne. This time I went so far as to keep a journal with everything I ate. I would try to replicate the same diet every two weeks, switching up only one food to see if it affected my acne. Now, this has manifested in my lack of finding balance. In college, I never let myself miss a single day in the gym. I would not go out on the weekends or allow myself any breaks while studying. I wanted to be perfect- at everything.

Eventually, I spread myself too thin. At one point I had two jobs at once, both in two different career paths. My schedule was so packed I had to block out 20 minutes of my day for meals and could not afford another second. I was frustrated because my peers were getting better grades and higher results when they were not trying as hard as me, were not as dedicated as I was, and were even partying on weekdays!

It was a desperation I had never felt before in my life. I was pouring my whole life into my work. Every single ounce of energy I had was expended, yet I saw negative results. It was incredibly crushing, but it was also ignorant. See, a person can dedicate their entire life to working as hard as possible and still fall short of someone who didn't. The difference between these two people is that the latter worked more intelligently, while the other just blindly pushed on.

I was the other in this situation. Instead of becoming “the best” at what I wanted to be, I burnt myself out. I was inefficient when I thought I was the most efficient out there. Some may find success like this, but at what cost?

I learned the hard way that balance is essential in life. I stopped being so rigid. I gave myself freedom, and my life immediately and drastically changed. My grades started to improve. My relationships improved. My mental well-being improved. It was not complicated at all. In hindsight, this experience wasn't so bad. This obsession with perfection translated into a fierce and undying discipline I now use to my advantage. With the skills I have learned, I hope to be able to allocate all my energy to something I am truly passionate about, doing it the right way.

I still struggle with this trait of mine every day, but every day I get better at controlling it and using it to supplement my life.