

Whenever I was asked what I wanted to do when I was older, my answer was always the same- I wanted to be a lawyer. When I got asked why, my answer was also unchanging- It was because of my brother. He was and is one of my most significant role models. I spent many summers shadowing him while he was a Deputy District Attorney. I attribute my fixation with the law to him. In my mind, what I wanted was always simple. Yet when I heard that one day, I would eventually receive the same question I had always received from my law school application, I felt anxious. But why?

I used to navigate through my life with this “simplicity” mantra, focusing only on the task at hand. I didn’t think the bigger picture was important. As long as I did what I had to do and did it right, that was all that mattered to me. And it worked- I played Division 1 tennis, qualified for the state mock trial competition a couple of times, played varsity basketball, and even maintained above a 4.0 GPA, and yet still had enough time to have a healthy relationship with my partner. Life was great.

It wasn’t until college that I saw how detrimental this lifestyle was to me. It started with the little things. There were many menial things that I needlessly struggled with. I blanked on what food to buy, what clothes to wear, or even how to study. It was like I had forgotten how to live. How was it possible that I was suddenly getting anxious from a simple grocery trip? Or just going to class? And why was I spending way too much time doing simple tasks? This anxiety bled into every aspect of my life. It started to affect my confidence and eventually trickled down to my performance in my daily activities. I began to overthink everything I did. Most important

of all, my interest in the law rapidly dwindled. It sounds cliché, but my mind really was my worst enemy. It was no one's fault but my own.

I felt lost. The turning point came during the pandemic- no extra-curriculars, no mock trials, there was nothing in my comfort zone that I could cling to. I had chosen a major that did not play to my strengths. I was doing things because I was “supposed” to, not because I wanted to. Fortunately, during this unusual stage of my life, I managed to maintain at least some connection to my interest in law. I chose to spend my summers doing anything that was law-related, just to keep in touch. You see, I've always loved some aspect of law, but I didn't know what it was.

Last summer, I was working with my brother who recently just started his law firm in El Centro, California- I wanted to help in any way I could. It was just like any other regular day. I woke up, got dressed, and made my way to work. I sat in his chair, where I usually let my eyes glaze over his office. They'd mundanely shift to the diplomas on the wall, his pictures, until my eyes met the laptop sitting in the middle of his desk. He had asked me to prepare a case brief for one of his most important cases that day. I opened the laptop to the very first real-life case I've ever seen. I started looking through it. I clicked and clicked and I clicked, folder after folder. Seconds suddenly turned into minutes, turned into hours, and turned into weeks. Time flew by. That doesn't happen with work. It happens with hobbies. Yet it happened to me, right then and there. Everything felt “simple” again.

I have no regrets. Reflecting on my journey, I now understand that my previous “success” lacked a foundation of inner fulfillment and understanding. It was only through losing my way and then rediscovering my passion for law in a tangible, personal context that I truly grasped what I was aiming for. It took inner success to realize a lot of the decisions I took were not made by me but by others for me. I finally discovered the true answer to the question I was struggling with. Whatever the reasons that led to this, I’m grateful I’d lost my way.

Now, I get the pleasure of working at the District Attorney’s office in San Diego, assisting in the Victim Services division. Every single day I go to work, as I go up the impressive 22-floor building and walk down the hallways with a beautiful view of San Diego’s downtown, I take a deep breath of relief -knowing that I am one step closer to becoming what I’ve always wanted to be.