

Describe your most meaningful experience(s) and why they matter to you.

My drum teacher, who had been diagnosed with cancer a few months ago, came up to speak in front of everyone at my graduation party. He was entirely calm, collected, and strong — as I'd always known him. He called me up to stand beside him, and with his arm wrapped around my shoulders he talked about his role as an educator, the traits he saw in me, and the gratitude that he had every time I came in to ask how he was feeling. He described how I would listen to his stories about chemotherapy and his family. This was the point I couldn't hold back. I simply couldn't imagine that with all the odds stacked against him, he still found gratitude in the small, almost insignificant, support that I had provided him. I cried in front of everyone I had ever known in my community. I hadn't cried for over 5 years.

The intense gratitude I had for my family, my mentors, and my friends poured out of me at that moment. I looked around at everyone through my tears and had a moment of humbling at the incredible privilege I possessed in being surrounded by them.

I look back at this moment whenever I need to understand that I'm lucky, not unlucky. I look back to understand that remote learning gives me more time to explore my interests, that speaking with ideologically different people is enlightening, and that the world is never as bad as it seems.