



Mentality

MAGAZINE



Vol. 71

Mentality

M A G A Z I N E

JENIE LI

Editor in Chief

DIANE YU

Design Editor

ELIZABETH FERNANDEZ

Business Manager

SYDNEY KIM

Print Editor

ELIZABETH HOORNSTRA

Events Coordinator

ASHLEY BOND

Outreach Chair

KAYLINA SAVELA

Webmaster

disclaimer:

Some of our content could be emotionally triggering to those who can relate or have experienced similar struggles. If you find yourself becoming uncomfortable while reading, please take a moment for yourself. If you would like to speak to a professional, resources are listed at the end of our magazine.

facebook.com/mentalitymagazineumich

Like our Facebook page for regular updates on our new website content and other things we are working on!



W W W . M E N T A L I T Y

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

As Brene Brown once said, “Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen.”

For my first semester as Mentality Magazine’s Editor-in-Chief, I am proud to present our seventh print volume: “Courage.” The entirety of Mentality has worked hard for months to create this semester’s magazine. Through personal stories, our writers share their different perspectives of courage in the context of mental health. I’m sure you can agree that it takes courage for these individuals to share their views and their stories as they are showing up and letting themselves be seen by you.

Courage and mental health are very closely related. Although mental health has been more openly discussed in recent years, there is still stigma and misconceptions surrounding it. To this day, it can still be unnerving or borderline terrifying to disclose or discuss a mental health diagnosis. Most individuals have either known or been someone who has been courageous in regards to mental health. I’m no exception. I suffered the common trauma of being unable to cope with my insecurities in a healthy way. Instead, I used self-harm to cut away my endless frustrations and crippling sadness. This went on for years until I mustered up the courage to tell my friends. At the time, I was afraid to open up. In hindsight, it wasn’t surprising that my friends didn’t judge me and instead openly listened to all of my woes. I would have never known of their acceptance and never healed with their help if I hadn’t found the courage to share my personal struggles with my friends.

Mentality Magazine has been an amazing outlet for me and for our members. We emphasize an open discussion of mental health by facilitating thought-provoking conversations during our meetings. We also strive to allow members to write pieces anonymously without questioning their reasons or pressuring them to do otherwise. Although Mentality is only three-and-a-half years old, it’s steadily growing. Thanks to the generous donations from Central Student Government, Engineering Student Government, and LSA Student Government, we are able to continue expanding as an organization with this semester’s print edition the most robust to date.

As you’re reading through the pieces of this print edition, try to understand the courage that was needed by our writer’s to share their stories. Hopefully, you will feel a surge of courage to push you to let yourself be seen as you truly are. The result may not be what you expect, but at least you have the courage to have tried.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenie Li". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jenie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Li".

Jenie Li, Editor-in-Chief



table of contents

Abroad Definition of Courage	6
Neverending Closet	8
Courage in Being Alone	9
courage in anonymity	10
Reaching Out	12
Dear Sister	13
Reprocessing Trauma Through EMDR	14
Courage is...	16
i choose me	18
The Courage of Cutting People Off	20
love letters	21
Staying True to Yourself	22
Supporting Yourself	24
Fear Cycle	25
Starting Over	26
Why We Should Sometimes Say "No"	28
Resources	30



Abroad Definition of Courage

By Liz Hoornstra

If anything, I was told that my mental health could get worse when I first went abroad this past summer. Between homesickness and culture shock, we were told to expect that “life would not be magically great”. I’m not going to lie, this scared me a little bit. I was coming out of my sophomore year, which had consisted of 8 months of feeling lost in my life and drowning in the tides of my emotions, rolling up and down like the Atlantic ocean during a storm.

Driving across the border into Canada to catch the first of three connecting flights that would land me in Barcelona after roughly 14 hours of travel, I was on the verge of an anxiety attack. My stomach was upset, yelling in protest at this new adventure. This twinge in the back of my mind only grew stronger as my first flight was delayed, causing me to reschedule my second flight — which I still missed — overall, resulting in me missing the arrival deadline to meet the program at the airport. Long story short, it was a stressful time.

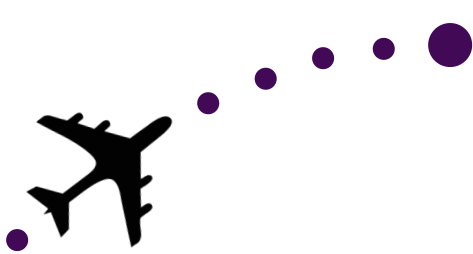
Once I arrived in Spain, life was very different, though I felt that I could handle the change. The first week went by smoothly. I made friends in both of my classes, had nighttime tapas and karaoke bar adventures, and stayed out super late after getting lost in adventures. It was from some of these little choices, choices of me taking advantage of as much as possible, that I can now look back on as me reclaiming some of my courage.

Let me backtrack. The summer after my freshman year of college, I stayed at home with my parents and commuted to Ann Arbor to work half of the week. In short, it was not the most exciting four months of my life. It also wasn’t what I had intended for my first summer after starting college to look like. While there were many situations and relationships that played into when I should have been planning for that summer, honestly, it all came down to me faulting on making decisions. I hesitated to make those choices and big decisions because I was scared. Scared of losing relationships, scared of having to discover what I wanted. Just scared. So, when the time rolled around to begin planning for this past summer, I didn’t want to pass up the chance to actually do something that I wanted.

Thus, when I got my acceptance into the study abroad program and signed the contract that I was going to attend, I made commitments to myself. I committed to embracing the experience fully. To engage in activities that I wanted to attend, no matter what other people thought. And to rediscover and fall in love with myself again.

Through the four weeks I was abroad, I did just that. In the little and the big moments, I found my courage again. My courage to be, my courage to live, my courage to love. It was the little things, such as going to a restaurant alone to try the closest patatas bravas to my homestay, but also because I just wanted to read in solitude with good food and a glass of wine. It was feeling confident in walking around my neighborhood and not feeling lost.

It was also standing up for myself in a group of eight friends I had just made because I told myself that I would set boundaries. In doing so, I allowed myself to feel



vulnerable enough to share my thoughts and emotions with others. I finally recognized this courage again while traveling solo across Europe.

While abroad, I had wanted to take a trip to Tarragona, a coastal city a few hours from Barcelona by train with a plethora of ancient Roman ruins. I have loved ancient history, since I was a child, and knew I had to go. However, weekend plans did not work out to where I had anyone to go with me, so I gathered my courage and within the first week of being in Spain, bought myself a ticket to travel hours away from the safety net of new friends and a world away from my family back home. It was such a peaceful time. I meandered around the city at my leisure. I confidently aided an elderly couple with taking pictures (and conversed with them in Spanish!). I enjoyed a typical Spanish lunch. I explored (and freaked out over) the Roman amphitheater.

This was good practice going into the following week. When I found out that I was going to be in Europe during the Women's World Cup, I knew I had to find a way to attend a US National Team game. I immediately pulled up the game schedule, found one that would fit my program's class schedule, bought the ticket and started looking for flights from Barcelona to Paris. Actually going to a different country, where I didn't know the language, and again was on my own, was a lot harder than anticipated. It took a willingness to make mistakes — many wrong metro stops, embarrassingly mumbling Google-translated French, and frantic shopping for toiletries I forgot to pack — and confidence that this experience didn't define me to fully embrace that weekend. Looking back, finding a way to go regardless of the technical aspects right from the beginning was me being courageous. I just didn't recognize it at the time. Now, I do.

Now I see courage in myself in the everyday. So while I agree, life was not “magically great” and all of my mental health issues did not magically disappear, going abroad helped me rediscover how courageous I could be. Coming back from my travels this past summer, I have found it easier to stand up for myself, make decisions that are aligned with what I want to do, and feel confident in my strengths. While I did not realize how courageous I was beforehand, and while I don't believe that going abroad was the only way to get to where I am now, I am forever grateful for my courage almost a year ago to apply for study abroad programs that gave me the opportunity to showcase my strength, love, and courage to myself.





Neverending Closet

by Ray Ajemian

People treat “coming out” as a one-time thing: scary and difficult, but finite. Those who’ve done it know better than that.

In theory, you only have to come out to each person once. If you’re feeling especially bold (or if you happen to be a celebrity), you can do it through social media and reach every relevant person in one fell swoop. You could jazz it up, maybe, with a big gay gender/sexuality reveal party. Needless to say, this isn’t usually the case. We end up coming out over and over and over again, experiencing the same tight throats and frantic hearts every time, picking and choosing confidantes until the secret escapes our grasp whether we want it to or not. Every single time you get close to a new person, the process starts again, and we pray that the worst doesn’t come.

Coming out isn’t just a process among social groups, though— it’s often a process coming out to every individual. This is one aspect of coming out that is especially prominent as a trans person: people forget. They forget names, they forget pronouns, they forget that things aren’t the way that they have been for years. When you’re coming out as gay or bi or any sexuality, it is hard to tell if someone remembers because the topic doesn’t come up nearly as often; names and pronouns are not so easily avoided. We use names every time we speak to someone and pronouns when we speak about them. Most people don’t think twice about their name or pronouns, so is it any wonder that they mean so much to those who do?

And yet, before all of this endless coming out can happen, you have to come out to yourself. For some, this can be the hardest coming out of all. Self-discovery is a long and arduous process, especially when you don’t really know your options because everyone around you would rather pretend there are no other options. When what you might be is so heavily discouraged by society at large, our knee-jerk reaction is to convince ourselves (and everybody else) that we could never be such a thing. It’s terrifying to admit to yourself that you’re something your family, your church, and/or your government hates. Doing so can take years, and we may still experience doubts years afterward.

Coming out takes guts because in a world that wants you gone, the bravest thing you can do is exist anyway.



Courage In Being Alone

By Elizabeth Fernandez

I'm around people pretty much all of the time. I live with six other girls and have 4 other members of my family, but being around people isn't a punishment — I choose it. I'm pretty clingy. I wander around the halls of my house until I find a friend to sit with. I linger in my living room with my friends until 2am the night before an exam because I really, really want to hang out with everyone. Is it the fear of missing out? Maybe, or maybe its not.

If I'm going to go do homework in my room, I have to stop myself from pulling up Peaky Blinders in my bed. If I'm going to do homework on a plane, I have to stop myself from searching through the archives of my photos and watching videos of my friends. It's not just procrastination. It's a genuine fear of being alone with my thoughts and facing the future.

When I'm alone, I think a lot. I think a lot when I'm around other people too, but my thoughts can spiral out of control when I'm alone, so it takes a lot of courage to be able to pull myself away from others. When I need to be alone to do homework, workout, run errands, or something else, it can feel like having to physically pull my heart away from people or places. I'll walk away and my clammy hands will fumble around my phone, looking for a text or a Snapchat or a meme in my Instagram DMs. For me, it takes courage to be alone, think alone, and walk alone.

If you haven't guessed yet, this is what my anxiety looks like. My thoughts race, and the way that I have traditionally dealt with them is by ignoring them. To me, this means two main things: the first is that I have to be comfortable with existing on my own. To be twiddling my thumbs on the diag and desperately rifling through Snapchat clickbait is really no way to live. Anxiety builds and builds until it can't be ignored, like a tea kettle slowly hissing until it screams. I've gone to therapy for years to ease this anxiety, and it has truly helped. I am able to better ground my thoughts in reality and come up with solutions to problems instead of letting problems control me. But this isn't a quick process. In fact, it's something I have to work on day in and day out.

Some days are harder than others— in the midst of a breakup, a fight with a friend, or when there's just too much going on. The second thing that my anxiety has taught me is to come up with something to do when I can't ignore these thoughts and I have no choice but to be alone. What has helped me the most over the last few years is music. Music's ability to relay shared experiences can make me feel like I'm not alone. When you're sad, it can help to know that other people have felt the same way. It also provides something to do — finding new artists, new ways of saying the same things.

Even more so, music can bind people when they're together. When my friends and I need a good cry, we all scream out the same things: "Play Rivers and Roads!" "Anything by John Mayer!" "That one by Harry Styles!" The fact that we've all had times where it seems like we have more in common with John Mayer than anyone else says a lot about shared human experiences and music. So although I might hate being alone, that first guitar string in "Slow Dancing in a Burning Room" can make it feel a little less scary.



courage in anonymity


By Anonymous

he was a charming talker
an artificial sweetener I poured into the tea he bought me
the elixir to make me forgive him for yesterday
I savored his kind words
only sensing the bitter aftertaste
after I already inhaled the entire cup.
5 years later I realized
I'm worth more than a 2 dollar peppermint tea from Biggby Coffee.

at first I enjoyed the way he looked at me
as if I were an intriguing puzzle worth solving.
watching him unravel the mystery might have been fun
if he hadn't been nineteen
or if I hadn't been fourteen
and if I had actually wanted it.

he was the smartest student in his english class
(so admirable that my favorite teacher kept his senior picture on her classroom wall)
spelling, defining, embodying the words
"perfidious"
and
"nefarious"
he must have studied the vocabulary list so hard that he
forgot about the word
No.

last week I finally told my friends.
my voice quivered
and my face blushed scarlet
because suppression is easier than confrontation.
my hands went numb
until my friend gave me a fidget toy
tossing and twisting the object
I looked at my hands.
hands that have shakily gripped blades but then put them back in the drawer
because I will not hurt myself
to feel powerful.



these tender hands write unforgiving stories
they tightly grasp pencils until the soft skin turns calloused
and type until they ache
they reject autocorrect because only I know how to tell my story
a story that is anonymous but not
Authorless

the author is sitting in a public cafe
using guest wifi
typing on a stickerless laptop
blending in
but living
sharing
trusting
breathing
loving.

my story is
Anonymous
but I am
Courageous



REACHING OUT

BY JENNIE FROST

No one cares. No one should care. I don't deserve other people's sympathy. I should just sit here drowning in my own negativity and cry until I'm numb.

How often have I felt disgusted with myself for no good reason? How often have I overflowed with so much self-loathing that I mentally and physically punish myself? When these instances occur, I sit in my room surrounded by sad thoughts. I wonder what it would feel like to have someone understand and comfort me. But I tell myself not to go there. I remind myself that people don't necessarily want my negative energy in their lives. I remind myself that if I showed them what I was really like, a black hole of messy thoughts and unnecessary worry, then I wouldn't have anymore friends. And I would be even more alone.

This semester, everything changed for me. Through a series of events, my mental health issues came out into the light. My secrets that were my own, my weak mental health, my extreme negativity, and my unhealthy habits were revealed to the people around me.

It was extremely uncomfortable. I didn't know how I was supposed to respond or act around my coworkers and my friends. I felt strange when they pulled me aside to talk to me. My voice shook when they asked me what was wrong and why I did the things I did. I felt so ashamed and vulnerable when I explained to them my thoughts and feelings and my reasons for acting the way I did. But then the most surprising thing happened. They offered to help. My friends listened to my situation, empathized with me, and reassured me that they were there. I wouldn't have to secretly hope for people to come talk to me anymore. I no longer had to struggle with being alone.

The hardest part was talking to my mom about my mental health. I cried with her on the phone for an hour. It was so painful reliving all the memories and releasing all my pent up emotions. But in the end, when my breathing had finally calmed down, and it was just my mom soothingly talking on the phone telling me that she was glad I had come to her, that she was going to be there for me, that she didn't hate me for making those mistakes, I felt so relieved. It was as if a burden had been lifted off me. I was no longer alone. My mom was there, she was going to help me through this.

After opening up about my mental health, I realized that I had grown a lot closer to the important people in my life. They understood when I needed to be alone, but they also made sure I wasn't alone all of the time. I felt more comfortable being myself and talking about how I truly felt inside. I also grew a lot closer with my mom. She told me to call her whenever my thoughts spun out of control. And because of that, I no longer had to contain my emotions inside me. I had a mom who loved me and was willing to be my outlet to protect me from my harmful feelings.

Now, I feel like I am in a much better place. Because I made the choice to be vulnerable and open myself to rejection by sharing my mental health struggles, I am now closer to my family and friends and feel confident in reaching out to them when I need it. I no longer have to bear the burden of life on my own, hiding behind fake smiles and a facade of optimism. I now have a support system that I can depend on.

From this whole experience, I've learned two things. First, have the courage to be vulnerable and share with others your true self. You don't have to hide anymore. You don't have to keep faking it. Let your people see you for who you are so they can know how to best support you. And second, have the courage to trust others. Believe in the genuine kindness that your friends and family possess. They care about you. You may not think so, but you are valued and loved. Be brave enough to recognize that love and accept their support.



Dear Sister,

By Ashley Bond

When I think of courage, I immediately think of you.

At the age of 12, your appendix ruptured, and you smiled at me while you were being loaded into the ambulance.

At the age of 13, you broke your leg, strained your meniscus, and tore your ACL. You still smiled when I joked that we should go down another ski slope.

At the age of 15, you were diagnosed with depression. And you would smile at me every time I would come pick you up from your therapy sessions.



At the age of 16, you started cutting yourself. I cried. And YOU tried to cheer ME up.

One day, I hope to have just a little bit of the courage you show just by getting out of bed every day.

Thank you for showing me what strength and kindness looks like in this chaotic world.

Love you to the moon and back,

Your older sister



Reprocessing Trauma Through EMDR

WRITTEN BY: BEKAH CONE

I like to be in control of my emotions. When I'm sad, I try to find ways to cheer myself up. When I'm anxious, I try to relax. All of the feelings that I have perceived as "negative" or painful are emotions that I try to avoid or change immediately. In fact, my body has begun responding in a way to favor this behavior. When I feel something intense, my brain pulls its mental parachute to help me escape through dissociation. Although this was a way to protect myself, escaping did not make any of the feelings I've experienced go away. The feelings and trauma I have ignored throughout my life continued to build until my brain and body completely resisted and needed to be heard. These emotions began to pour out in various ways. Physically, I began experiencing a constant upset stomach and consistent migraines. Mentally, I was waking up nearly every day in tears and ending my day with almost daily panic attacks. I detailed these experiences to my therapist, but nothing I was doing seemed to make these experiences subside. As my therapist listened to me, she concluded a new diagnosis for me: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. With this new diagnosis, she proposed starting a new type of therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, or EMDR. She handed me a sheet of paper explaining the process. I was immediately terrified, asking as many questions as possible to bring as much clarity as possible to a completely unknown process.

EMDR is a therapy that is typically used for trauma to simulate the bilateral eye movements experienced during REM sleep. This can help you remember and reprocess traumatic events that have happened. This therapy goes through eight different stages, but for the purposes of this piece, I am going to focus on the eye movement stage. With this process, I began, one memory at a time, reliving my traumatic and triggering experiences throughout life in small doses. As someone who habitually works to control their emotions, letting go of that control in hopes of recovery led me to a vulnerable position I desperately wanted to run away from.

I began my first session with memories related to people telling me I was weak, that my sister was better than me, that I was going to go nowhere in life, that I had no future to work towards and other damaging statements that I had internalized for years. As soon as my therapist began directing my eye movements, I started to relive the feelings and emotions I felt in those moments. My breathing became shallow, my eyes filled with tears, other memories began to resurface and the overwhelming state I was in made my brain naturally want to shut down, retreating to dissociation. My therapist was well aware of what this looked like for me and when I began to do this, she was able to bring me back to the space we were in with grounding exercises. I knew my biggest roadblock was the fear I associated with letting myself feel my emotions, so I had two choices to truly enter a state of recovery: I could continue with this therapy or stop the process and go back to the traditional talk therapy I was doing. Either choice was going to require a state of vulnerability that I was not comfortable with. After a lot of introspection and conversations with my therapist, I promised myself to jump off of the deep

The background of the page is a solid dark red color. It is decorated with several circles of varying sizes and colors (orange and yellow) containing question marks. The question marks are also in shades of orange and yellow, creating a cohesive visual theme. The circles are scattered across the page, with some overlapping.

end to truly invest myself in the EMDR process. This step of courage is what directed me towards a life changing process.

I committed to therapy three times a week with EMDR being two of those sessions each week, and I did what I was most scared of, I let myself feel. With each trauma I processed, a flood of emotions came out. In the safe space of my therapist's office, I cried like I have never cried before, I screamed out of anger and frustration, my heart raced and I panicked, I curled up while fully experiencing fear and I did my best to let these emotions release without judging their characteristics. All of the emotions I had numbed and avoided throughout my life began to filter out in a powerful way. I went through this process by letting myself feel everything, and although I experienced some of the toughest emotions I have ever felt, letting myself truly feel is still a scary thing for me. I still find myself often trying to numb or control my emotions, but I have started to understand that these things do not have to be comfortable. For me, courage is in making the choices that may seem frightening or uncomfortable because every time I make those choices, I find myself a bit stronger on the other side.

Courage is...

speaking your truth in
a world that aims to
silence you.

- Sara Smith

the little decisions we
make in our day-to-day
life that may sometimes
seem insignificant.

- Sydney Kim

acknowledging fear,
accepting it and deciding
to walk with it without
knowing the way things will
play out.

- Bekah Cone

the decision to do
something even if you're
scared to.

- Diane Yu

being strong and
supportive to yourself in a
time when you really need
it.

- Nikki Corrunker

being true to yourself
despite outside influences.

- Katie Good

being afraid, and doing
the thing anyway.

- Kaylina Savela

continuing to fight even
when daunting obstacles
stand in your way.

- Kaitlyn Brannigan

standing up for the
things you care about,
even when others don't
understand you.

- Nidhi Tigadi

having the nerve to
make a scary decision,
whether life changing
or not.

- Jenie Li

the ability to do
something despite being
afraid to. Without fear
there is no courage.

- Ray Ajemian

being able to accept what
you can do, rather than
judging yourself for what
you can't.

- Rachel West

being vulnerable and letting
the people who care about
you see your true self
with all its struggles and
imperfections.

- Jennie Wang

is very personal, and the
definition of courage differs
for every individual. For
some, courage could be going
skydiving while for others, it
could be getting out of bed in
the morning.

- Ashley Bond

i choose me

By Diane Yu

the words stay locked
behind my teeth they
burn my throat
tickle my nose
swirl around my mind until they
pour out
but
they
don't
they stay when i
fake
smile
the smile is for her always
for her
her or me?

they're invisible
weight
a vice around my voice
when she cries and my heart cries
out
it hurts
i feel

she needs me
so alone
her or me?

i hurt

for her
her or me?

the words stick but they mean nothing
they stray but never far
enough
they stay
they fester and turn bitter
they taint everything but she

needs me

the words smolder
the smiles singe
but they hurt less than
she hurts
her or me?

every day i remember again
the hurt
she hurts
loneliness in a crowd of others

i hurt
too

the words press down
i see them in
her face

she knows

she needs me
so i give
she needs me
more
so i
give
even though i know
the words have burned
within
me before
but

she needs me

i need me

her or me?





The Courage of Cutting People Off

by Rachel West

I've always had trouble communicating when something upsets me. If somebody says or does something hurtful, it's so much easier to keep it inside and not say anything. I never want to come off as rude or risk losing them. This is something lots of people struggle with, especially with someone they have spent a lot of time with.

My senior year of high school, I decided to start doing things differently. I could tell I was unhappy in many of my relationships, and I knew the only way to fix this was to finally start thinking about myself. For so long, I believed that it was selfish to do things for my own benefit as long as there was the potential for my actions to hurt others. I grew up thinking it was polite to sugarcoat things and not make waves. Although my parents raised me with many important values, being confrontational was never a priority. "Always be delicate or you'll regret how you ended things." I'm here to tell you that's bullshit.

When I was in middle school, I always swept my conflicts with friends under the carpet. Like any tween, I did not feel confident enough in myself to tell others how I felt. I remember fights, pettiness, feeling hot in my face when I couldn't just say what I was thinking. Person A would tell person B, and my reputation would be tarnished. No one ever dreamt of coming clean to one another about what we were all thinking behind closed doors. Everyone was too afraid of everybody else's opinion to say "I wish you wouldn't do this" or "This makes me upset." Of course this is just the insecurity that comes with adolescence. However, it becomes hard to grow out of this phase for many people, especially as you become accustomed to doing anything in order to avoid conflict.

I could tell that this was starting to take a toll on me when I began to feel guilty for being so fake towards the people I loved. In learning to accept myself, I decided to accept that I would never be able to make everyone happy. That's an important piece of all this. You. Can't. Make. Everyone. Happy. Understanding that other people are in the same boat also helped me come out of my shell and tell people how I felt. At such a young age, everybody just wants to fit in and feel accepted. The main part of learning to be okay with being honest had to do with feeling comfortable in my own values and knowing that it's okay to focus on your own needs. This means that it doesn't matter if you fit in. All that matters is that you behave in accordance with your own morals.

Senior year, I noticed how much anxiety many of my relationships were causing me. I wasn't used to feeling this much stress about anything besides school, and I could feel everything bubbling up inside me. I just had to be honest about how I had been feeling. I began by giving one of my good friends a call to tell him what I'd been feeling. I told him that I needed space and that I felt suffocated. I apologized that this was so out of the blue, but explained that I had finally gained the confidence to be honest. Of course, he was upset, but I knew he had the right to be, so I allowed him to be. By realizing that the power was out of my hands and that there was nothing I could do to control his reaction, I felt free.

"Cutting people off" has such a negative connotation, but sometimes, you need to cut people off. Being true to yourself and your values is courageous, and creating space for your own needs is courageous. Taking a moment to be honest does not mean you're selfish. Once you can understand that people are going to react however they choose, regardless of what you say, you can finally be truthful.

Love Letters

BY SUZANNE IRANI

you promised to save me from the depth of my thoughts,
but you didn't know how to swim, i didn't know how to breathe
and you struggled against the current until we both went under

you showed me how life glimmered with the shine of your eyes.
you didn't warn me when the lights went out and my world went grey
i always was a little afraid of what was waiting in the dark

you laughed as you reassured me that you would never hurt me,
as if the thought was the most absurd thing in the world
i never did understand your humor,
you never did understand my pain

you claimed i was your favorite metaphor
my eyes the windows to your sea, my laugh the soundtrack of your life
i forgot how quickly we tire of metaphors
a broken mirror of me, a fuller glass of you

you took hold of my hand and whispered that the universe could fit in the cracks of our palms
that night i dreamt of a world where we were space-bound, fate-bound
i held on until i could trace the lines of the sky on my own skin,
and then i let go

Staying True To Yourself

By: Nidhi Tigadi

I say “sorry” too much. I know this because I’ve grown up being a people pleaser where I just want people to like me. My ability to bend over backwards for the benefit of those around me has been one of my most valued, yet destructive qualities. It always made sense for me to compromise and be understanding of others because I have the capability to do so. My comfort and beliefs always came second. What I never understood, until quite recently, is that I can still be amicable and respected without letting go of who I am.

It is somewhat reassuring but also disappointing to know that I am not alone. We live in a world where complacency is valued in the social context. “Agree to Disagree” is the fundamental approach to conflict resolution, which fosters a certain sense of reinforcement when you let uncomfortable situations slide rather than dealing with them. But what about when the disagreement compromises someone’s autonomy, identity, or emotional health? Is it acceptable to agree to disagree on someone’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or sexual preferences? Is it crossing a line to judge someone’s professional goals and capabilities?

No. And that is something that I myself need to say more. No, it is not ok. No, this is who I am. “No.” is in fact is a full sentence. It has beauty in its simplicity, yet the power it contains is daunting to many. It’s only one syllable, but saying it brings the fear of judgment. We, humans, are social creatures and with this negation, we fear being outcasted. It takes courage to truly know yourself and stay true to those qualities and beliefs.

In 2017, the #MeToo movement challenged this fear. Initiated by Tarana Burke, it brought the issue of consent and sexual misconduct to the forefront of our attention. Individuals around the world came out of the shadows for the first time knowing that their courage to speak up about sexual misconduct could help another woman or man struggling with something similar. While such harassment is an immense problem in and of itself, people often forget about the micro-judgments that fuel this so-called ‘rape culture’. Earlier this year, there was an outrage on twitter regarding artist Billie Eilish’s physique. In response to inappropriate comments, attention was then brought to her baggy dress style which she adopted to avoid being sexualized in the first place. This attack on Eilish infringes on her freedom to safely and comfortably express herself.

This lack of comfort that manifests over and over again is detrimental and can lead to a crisis over several aspects of identity. The feeling of being victimized makes it incredibly difficult to voice disapproval or call out the wrongdoings of others. Constantly being pushed down due to aspects of identity can lead to a sort of brainwashing where individuals feel like something is wrong with them. If everyone errs on the side of complacency and letting judgment and crude comments slide, the significant culture shift that is needed will never happen.

We need to learn to be our own advocates. It is the process of building up that courage to effortlessly ask for desires and voice discomfort. It is the ability to remain unchanged, even when people disapprove of key aspects that make up our identity. This is not to excuse unacceptable behavior, but instead about protecting boundaries and maintaining autonomy. But it is not limited to just aspects of one's body. Being a self-advocate can also be relevant in cases where family members or friend circles disapprove of career aspirations or political beliefs. Nobody is worth changing these values for.

It takes courage to find that voice, but once a sliver of courage is found, self-advocacy is a domino effect. As a community, if every capable individual embraces the idea of self-advocacy, it will expand the platform to marginalized individuals who have to work against many more odds to find and embrace their identity. So call out that 'friend' who makes gay jokes or refuses to address desired pronouns. Express your style and personality in a way that makes you happy rather than what society deems 'beautiful' or 'modest'. Stay true to your decision to drink alcohol (or to not drink) at that party. Ignore the people who say your aspirations are crazy or unachievable. Prove them wrong instead.







Supporting Yourself

BY NIKKI CORRUNKER

No one is taught how to have courage. As children, we model the behavior and actions of those around us because it is the best example we have. For me, I copied my parents, like most children do. I never felt that I was courageous in my day-to-day life; children don't need to be. The first time I remembered feeling that pit in your stomach where you know that you're going to have to be strong, either for yourself or others, was when I was in fourth grade when my cousin passed away at age 15. Before then, I had never been to a funeral or seen anyone in my family cry. I wasn't immediately told what happened, but I knew that something was very wrong. I tried to "be strong" for the family around me. Later that year, I learned that she had been depressed and had committed suicide, though I still did not understand this concept. I still tried to stay strong, but that was becoming harder and harder as I felt that I was not being included in any information, and therefore could not face my feelings in any way. Trying to ignore my emotions was not helping me or anyone around me, but I thought that was what it meant to be courageous.

Everyone copes with loss in their own way. I hid behind being okay for other people in order to feel okay. The funeral was sad, but I could not find it within me to cry like I felt I should have. Years after the funeral, I realized that hiding my own emotions was not what I needed. Being "strong" for other people does not necessarily help people cope. As I've grown up, I've realized that maybe courage is more about doing what you need for yourself at the time that you need it. Other people did not need me to be strong as an eight-year-old, but I felt that they did. What I needed was to support myself, even if it seemed selfish at the time. I've now learned that supporting myself may include having a therapist to talk to, or attending Out of the Darkness suicide walks to support my cousin in my own way. There may be days where I revert back to some old coping mechanisms, but I am actively trying to improve on this and teach myself new ways to support my well being both mentally and physically.



Fear Cycle

By Kaylina Savelle

I had a panic attack today.

It started with sweaty palms and a tightness in my chest. It seemed like your average, run-of-the-mill nervousness at that point, although there was nothing around me to provoke such feelings. I was alone, on my couch, doing homework that wasn't even urgent. I had the TV on, watching my favorite show. If someone had been there to ask me what was wrong, I would have probably said "nothing," or more accurately, "I don't know." It was the not knowing that made it all so much worse.

I had a panic attack today.

It lasted only about fifteen minutes – not terrible, as far as panic attacks go. But it felt like a lifetime. My fingers started to tremble. It grew harder and harder to breathe. I wasn't in danger. I didn't have any deadlines. I haven't suffered a recent loss or trauma. Everything should have been fine. But since everything should have been fine, it only terrified me more that my body thought everything was terribly wrong.

I tried to steady my breathing. I counted the seconds.

I had a panic attack today.

I could feel my heart racing, beating so fast that I was sure it was ready to burst from my chest. My entire body grew cold. My mouth was dry, my throat was tight. I couldn't steady my hands. The chains around my lungs tightened further with every attempt to calm down.

I felt like I was dying. I told myself I wasn't dying. I was certain I was dying.

I laid flat on my back, wrapped myself in a blanket, and shut my eyes tight. I couldn't stop shaking. Why was I shaking?

I had a panic attack today.

That's the first time I've ever said (written?) those words. Usually, when I'm talking to my boyfriend or my mom about it, I dance around the subject. I'll simply say that "I was anxious," or "I freaked out." When I talk to someone I'm not as close to, I'll avoid the subject altogether. But not talking about it doesn't make it any less true.

I had a panic attack today.

Eventually, the adrenaline ran its course. My heart rate slowed and my breathing returned to a reasonable pace. I was exhausted. My body was weak, my thoughts clouded. I gave myself five minutes to breathe. Five minutes to acknowledge the terror and its impact. Five minutes before I sat myself up and got back to work.

I had a panic attack today.

It wasn't my first, and it won't be my last. I've learned to recognize the signs. I'm learning how to ask for help. I'm trying not to be afraid of being afraid. Sometimes I win. Sometimes I lose. But I'll keep trying.

Starting Over


By Patience Young

I was 25 when I started college. A gifted and talented high school dropout, I had always dreamed of the ivy towers but had no idea how to get there. No one I knew had gone to college. I was mostly on my own by the time I was 15, and holding down a job to support myself made it hard to focus on school. I had been accepted to my school of choice, amongst others, but I had no idea how to make it work. Instead, I moved to the desert with a lover and waited tables at Denny's. I scribbled poetry on my order pad and forgot about my college fantasy. I found a different life. One where I performed at open mics and traveled the country consorting with artists. We organized elaborate events and self-published our works. I ran in tangent to a world I still dreamt of, a world where I was a 'real' writer.

When I was accepted to the College for Creative Studies I was ecstatic. I had hit that quarter-life crisis and an increase in chronic illness meant bartending wasn't a sustainable career option. Through the acclaimed show *Mad Men*, I learned that someone had to write advertisements. It never occurred to me before. As a poet, I figured that I could handle writing headlines. I was tired of being poor and I didn't want to leave Detroit, so the Advertising Copywriting program at CCS seemed like the perfect solution. I worked hard in my classes and it paid off. My ads won awards, both at school and at my internship. My success gave me the confidence to consider that maybe I was selling myself short. Maybe my craft deserved a more serious dedication. A place where I could explore a variety of mediums. Advertising was a good back up plan, but I fantasized about journalism and screenwriting. I penned short stories and poetry books, and their good reception inspired me to apply to University of Michigan. I visited the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts to learn about their Creative Writing program. As I perused Maize pages, I became excited about the idea of writing for papers, magazines, record labels and research journals. I knew this was my chance to branch out, but leaving CCS would be hard. I was in a program where the career prospects were good. I was at the top of my class and had a circle of friends I loved. Deep down, I knew what I really wanted was an opportunity to challenge myself, and Michigan would be the better choice.

At 29 I thought I was beyond the first day of school jitters, but some things never change. As I walked around the campus I felt my nerves vibrating under my skin. I was used to being the best at everything, but so was everyone else here. I wasn't at the top of the food chain anymore. I had come to the University of Michigan to challenge myself in my craft, but I was humbled more quickly than I expected. In my Spanish class, I struggled every day. I studied for hours on end and when we reached our first exam I was never more excited about a B in my life.

Despite becoming comfortable with my studies, I was lonely a lot. I struggled to find community at first. I was ten years older than many of my classmates. I was disabled, I didn't drink, I lived far away, and I had a hard time relating to students that had much more access



to wealth than I had ever known. I focused on my writing and as usual, it led the way. I got a position writing on SHEI and made my first friend. It turned out it didn't matter that we were ten years or how ever many worlds apart, we both loved writing and beauty.

I thought I could start over without really starting over. I'd stay in Detroit, living with my roommate of seven years in the happy home we both loved. The home where I planted lily bulbs in the front yard to watch spring up year after year. I took the Detroit Connector and rode in with friends, but the long commute started interfering with my studies. Combined with my auto-immune disorder and mobility impairment, I knew I couldn't keep it up. I told friends in a monotone voice as if I was announcing my own funeral: I'm moving Ann Arbor. They expressed their excitement for me. They said they were proud. It was only an hour drive, one I made multiple times a week. I loosened up and interviewed at a co-op. I made plans to meet another potential roommate. I went to the housing fair and got excited about walking my dog in Ann Arbor. Living close to campus meant that I could participate more meaningfully in school activities and organizations.

I had to accept that at the University of Michigan, my life was going to look different. It was going to take time to adjust and find my footing. I had to learn how to be comfortable with uncertainty. Uncertainty about what I was doing, where I would live, and who my friends would be. Starting over meant having the courage to let everything I thought my life was fall away so that I could focus more clearly on what I was meant to be doing: writing.

My dog must think I have another family. I come home after a long day smelling like Harley, the potato shaped lump I shared a ride with to Ann Arbor. Or like Priscilla, the fun loving pitbull whose house I crashed at. When I walk through the door drained and exhausted he starts his inspection, and after a few sniffs he's moved on to excitement. His body wiggles with delight. He knows something is different, but he isn't afraid. I try to follow his lead.

Why We Should Sometimes Say "No"

• By Katie Good •

"You are enough."

It's something that we've all heard, seen on signs, or even said aloud. But saying, seeing, or hearing is very different from believing.

For most of my life, I've been a "yes" girl. Give me a job, I'll make time to do it. A club? Sure, I'll join. Extra credit? Why not! I thought that always saying yes fulfilled the motto: "If you want something done, ask a busy person." To me, being busy meant being efficient while helping others. Well, this line of thinking was all well and good until I realized that there are only 24 hours in the day, and that includes sleep. School clubs and dance went from being my release from school stress to being chores that had to be checked off. For my freshman and sophomore years of high school, I lived a perfectly balanced life that worked out most of the time. But as I'm sure you expected, it didn't take long for the scales to tip and for everything to come crashing down.

I had my first breakdown in my junior year of high school. Wiping my tears with the rough draft of a research paper, I wondered how everyone else was fulfilling their role of a "good student" while I drowned in applications, club responsibilities, and planning my future. I thought I was doing everything right by saying yes, pleasing others, and being the go-to to get stuff done.

It wasn't until I turned 17 that I realized that the best and strongest people are the ones that are able to say "Hell no!"

Being someone that says no doesn't make you a bad person. If anything, it makes you stronger and, without a doubt, happier. We all have busy days, requirements, and stressful schedules. Saying no doesn't make that go away, but it allows you to take a step back, look at your agenda, and decide how much you can mentally and physically take in one day.

Saying no will never be an easy thing. It's awkward, it's tense, and you're going to make some people mad, but it's also one of the most courageous things you can do. By saying no, you prove to others that you know and respect your limit. This goes for school work, relationships, and really any other obligations. It's courageous to be given an offer, analyze its value to you, and honestly tell yourself that the obligations that come with the offer are not worth your time and energy. As someone with anxiety, I know that saying no can make that little voice that questions your worth and relationships yell a little louder. It can feel like you're letting someone down, you're lazy, and you're selfish. Instead of succumbing to this voice and saying "yes" out of guilt, be courageous and remind yourself that by being present and alive everyday, you are a gift to the people you surround. Loving yourself and knowing your limits are courageous acts that you do everyday.

Instead of looking at saying "no" as turning down an offer, think of it as saying "yes" to your mental and physical well-being. By taking time out of your day for your own self-love and self-reflection, you are more courageous than ever.

I still catch myself falling back into my "yes" girl tendencies, but I don't beat myself up about it. Saying yes comes from a place of love, and saying no comes from a place of courage. No matter what decisions you make (or don't) in life, you will always be enough.

“Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.”

- Mary Ann Radmacher



CAMPUS RESOURCES

STUDENT SERVICES

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

3100 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Thurs: 8am - 7pm, Fri: 8am - 5pm
(734) 764-8312

(Press 0 for After Hours Urgent Support)

<https://caps.umich.edu>

Provides free, confidential services for U of M students including: counseling for individuals or couples, workshops and groups for support and changing patterns, Assessment of Substance Abuse Patterns (ASAP), online screening for mental health concerns.

MiTALK ("My Talk")

<https://caps.umich.edu/mitalk>

Offers online screenings for depression and anxiety, skill-building tools, and recorded workshops, lectures and relaxation exercises.

Campus Mind Works

<http://campusmindworks.org>

Provides resources for students who have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC)

551 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am - 5pm

Office Phone: (734) 764-7771

24-hour Crisis Line: (734) 936-3333

<https://sapac.umich.edu>

Provides free confidential crisis intervention, advocacy, and support for survivors of sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking.

Spectrum Center

3200 Michigan Union

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am - 6pm

(734) 763-4186

<https://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>

Provides a range of education and advocacy services that work to make campus a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQA students and staff. Also offers on-campus HIV rapid testing.

U-M University Health Service (UHS)

207 Fletcher St.

Hours: Mon-Wed: 8am-5pm, Thu: 9am-5pm,
Fri: 8am-4:30pm, Sat: 9am-12pm

(734) 764-8320

www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs

Provides medication and management of common mental health concerns.

U-M Psychological Clinic

500 E. Washington St., Suite 100

(734) 764-3471

<http://mari.umich.edu/psych-clinic/>

Offers assessment, counseling, and treatment for adults in the U-M community, including: anxiety, depression, couples issues, and problems with work and study.

EMPLOYEE SERVICES

U-M Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

1009 Greene St.

(734) 936-8660

Provides short-term counseling and coaching for staff, faculty and their immediate family members.

CAMPUS SAFETY

Division of Public Safety and Security

Emergencies: Dial 9-1-1

Non-emergencies: (734) 763-1131

Tip line: (734) 763-9180

NATIONAL 24-HR HOTLINES

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1 (800) 273-8255

The Trevor Lifeline

Trevor Lifeline: 1 (866) 488-7386

TrevorChat (available 7 days a week 3pm-9pm ET):

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/get-help-now>

TrevorText (Thursdays and Fridays 4pm-8pm ET):

Text the word "Trevor" to 1 (202) 304-1200

Provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention to LGBTQ young people ages 13-24.

Veterans Crisis Line

Hotline: Call 1 (800) 273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>

Text: 838255

Connects Veterans in crisis and their loved ones with qualified, Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

U-M HEALTH SYSTEM

Note: Services at the U-M Health System are not covered by students' health service fee.

U-M Depression Center

(734) 936-4400

Dedicated to research, education, and treatment of depressive and bipolar illnesses.

U-M Collegiate Sleep Disorder Clinic

(734) 936-9068

Helps improve your sleep, daytime function and, hopefully, academic performance.

U-M Anxiety Disorders Treatment Clinic

(734) 764-0231

Offers treatment of problematic anxiety and stress.

U-M Ambulatory (Outpatient) Psychiatry Services

1 (800) 525-5188 or (734) 764-0231

Provides comprehensive evaluation and treatment for patients and families affected by mental illness.

UM Psychiatric Emergency Services

Crisis Line: (734) 936-5900 or (734) 996-4747

**University Hospital, 1500 East Medical Center Dr.
Emergency Medicine Reception**

Emergency walk-in consultation and phone service available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

U-M Neuropsychology Clinic

(734) 763-9259

Performs psychological evaluation to differentiate cognitive functioning.

U-M Preventive Cardiology

(734) 998-7400

Offers a "Power of Relaxation" program, as well as nutrition, weight management, exercise, smoking cessation and stress management programs.

**If you or someone
you know struggles
with mental health,
there are ways
to get help. Use
these resources to
find help for yourself
or a loved one.**

In the little and big moments,
I found my Courage again.

My courage to Be,
My courage to Live,
My courage to Love.

-LIZ HOORNSTRA, PAGE 6

