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Sorry I'm not Perfect

A slightly twisted view on life about how it's one big struggle when you try to live up to everyone's unrealistic expectations of you.

I'm a Pain in the Ass

From the moment I was put on this earth, I've caused nothing but pure anguish for those around me, due to my crippling anxiety and constant draining pessimistic view on life. I

remember once when I was only eight years old, I panicked so much about the future that I started saving the random penny I found on the ground, or the odd envelope of dinner money from my parents that never quite made it to the lunch ladies, all so that I could start saving for a flat. Who the fuck starts saving for a flat before they've even reached high school? I've lived my life being so on edge that I've forgotten to actually live it, and at the age of twenty, it has hit me like a truck.

I have always been an extremely dependent person. Growing up as an only child, I relied on my parents for absolutely everything. My mother, especially, has always been my best friend. I go to her for advice about any obstacle that comes my way, even if neither of us are completely comfortable with a situation, she has always been, and still is the person I turn to straight away. With this, I always consider myself extremely lucky as my bond with my family is something I will cherish for life, and I know I can always rely on them to be there when I need them and vice versa. However, this came with an extreme amount of guilt when it involved big life decisions. For example, when it was time to apply for university, allowing myself the opportunity to live away from home- especially if it was somewhere far away was highly unlikely for me, as I couldn't fathom the guilt of leaving my parents without their only child. And it's not like they *made* me feel this way, it's simply because I have always been so empathetic and . I began to question if any life choice I had made was actually ever my own, or if it was this dark cloud of self-doubt that loomed over me, the cloud that I let determine potentially the most important part of my life when it came to making decisions. I am sitting here at twenty years old still wondering if I have chosen the right path in life, but I was too worried to try and change it. Until now.

So what I'm saying is if you're a freak caught in a self-sabotaging frenzy who can't find any joy in this fucked up world, you've definitely stumbled upon the right blog- *at least you've done something right, aye?* I was once like you, constantly worrying I'd made the wrong decisions, always panicking that I wouldn't do enough with my life, endlessly disappointing people because *I* didn't live up to *their* expectations. Well I'm here to tell you something. *That is a pile of shit.* So much of our lives are wasted on what we've done in the past and what we are planning on doing in the future that we forget to enjoy where we are now- no one lives in the present anymore. And when you put things into perspective, you are one of the 8.3 billion people who are living on this planet, they've got their own shit to worry about, so why are you letting them determine your life? It's time for you to start asking yourself, what do you actually want to get out of your life and are you anywhere near reaching that goal? I'm not saying to start being an absolute self-absorbed prick, but what I am saying is that people use the word 'selfish' so maliciously when actually, you should be allowed to put yourself first. And I know that some people may see me as difficult, or think poorly of me because of this, but I have spent so much of my life trying to please everyone else, that honestly, I am fucking exhausted.

My whole life, I've had a very clear vision about what I thought I wanted. I envisioned myself being married by twenty two with my first boyfriend who I met at fifteen, having a couple of children by twenty-five, and having the perfect career in what I thought I wanted to do- TV acting. I was so sure of this plan, that I convinced myself I wanted to stay in an extremely toxic, mentally abusive relationship just so that when people asked me about it, I could almost brag about the fact that I've stayed with my childhood sweetheart until death-do-us-part. Until one day I just couldn't take the relationship anymore- it affected me so much, and still does to this day, that for years I couldn't function as your typical normal human being. I beat myself up about the fact that I knew he would have stayed with me forever and I could have had that almost perfect "flex" for the rest of my life, but after the countless arguments, guilt tripping, manipulation, comments about my body, constant comparison to other girls, I knew that I had to get out of it. I was a "people pleaser" for so long that I look back now and question if I could have made so much more of myself, even from a young age.

It's difficult to go from being a complete pessimist to starting to believe in yourself. For years I have battled with my mental health- most of my days were spent sleeping, and if I wasn't sleeping I would sit and cry about things that I could have changed. But one day, you just have to realise that no one is coming to save you, no one is going to hand you a perfect life on a silver platter, this is your life and you have to make that change. There's no pressure to, there's no time frame- god, it has taken me five years to get out this point. But what I have learnt in that time is it's your life, don't wait for someone to come along to change it, because they never will.

The Girl who no one took the time to Understand

Everyone would always tell me how I am one of the nicest people that they had ever met, that I'm bubbly, quirky, funny, always looking out for other people- and they were always shocked when I'd ask the same question every single time; "really?" Little did they know that I, for years, had constantly been battling with my identity, who I actually was. Because every thought that entered my mind completely contradicted what they thought of me. To put it plainly, I believe I am actually an absolute *cunt*, which has taken me years to admit. But that doesn't mean I'm a bad person, it just means that I don't live up to everyone's unreal expectations of what a perfect person is, therefore if someone questions me or doesn't like me, I prefer to tell them that I'm aware I'm not everyone's cup of tea, instead of trying to argue that I believe I'm a good person just for them to still have their solidified opinion about me after one- not making the effort to get to know me, and two- basing their views on me about what people say or things they've heard about me.

But seriously, if someone doesn't take the time to get to know me as a person or understand why I've made certain choices, why should I spend my days worrying about a couple of people who will just hate me anyway, and then use the decisions that I have made in *my* life, not theirs, as a reason to hate me when actually they don't like me as a person, they never will, so they decide to use it as an excuse to talk behind my back and force other people to have the same opinion of me as they do. If this is happening to you, *believe me*, it says more about them than you. If people are choosing to worry about what you're doing with my life instead of focusing on theirs, to put it plainly- they're bored and they need to focus on their life which actually matters to them, not yours. I am surrounded by so much love that I know who actually matters to me. I'm not going to let a small group of people in a world full of billions actually determine my mood and how well I do. You haven't met half the people you're going to meet in your life, this is a small chapter in a very large book. I would prefer to have one good friend and be hated by everyone than be surrounded by people who don't actually know me and not have one real friend in this world- what a lonely world that would be. And just remember, *you could be the prettiest tulip in the field, but someone will always choose a rose over a tulip.*

I haven't always felt like this and I think it would be bloody difficult to feel this way without a bit of life experience. Sometimes you have to surround yourself with negativity to see what you actually need in your life. It took countless friendships, relationships, jobs, schools, *everything I have ever experienced* to realise that it's nothing to do with me, unfortunately, that's just life. For example, if I lost a friend, I would dwell, and dwell, and dwell about why. What could I have done differently to save the friendship? Even if they had done me so wrong, it wasn't about that, it was about having the security and comfort of someone who has been a massive part of my life, and I just couldn't let go. But you can't keep everyone in your life, you just have to appreciate the time you had together and hope that even if you aren't in their life, you see them grow and get everything they want to achieve.

For the last four years of my life, it has been a constant battle. I was fucking miserable. So, for the next few minutes of reading it's going to be very 'woe is me,' but I'm allowed to offload it, because it's healthy to talk about, something that took me a long, long time to discover. And to show you just how bad it can get. But no matter how much of a low point you hit, you can always start fresh without feeling an overwhelming sense of guilt.

First came anorexia at the age of sixteen when I started college. If I told someone that I felt fat that day, they would laugh and say something along the lines of "don't be silly, you're not fat at all," and looking back I know now that I wasn't, but nothing could have changed that poor, helpless young girls' thoughts about herself. Even when I look at past photos of myself, I could see that I looked completely fine. But I also knew that I looked nothing like the girls I was surrounded by- and that mixed with a lack of self confidence and self-worth completely changed what I saw in the mirror compared to what other people saw me as. College, for me, was like a constant battle of who could get the most boys to like them, who looked the prettiest that day, who looked the skinniest, who was the funniest, who was the most loved by everyone, who was the smartest- but I was the only one in the competition. And I was so defensive about it that if someone told me that I was being stupid, to me they were invalidating my feelings. When I began to question it and tried to see myself how other people saw me, all I saw was an insecure little girl who no one would want to be friends with. It didn't matter how many people were around me- I had never felt so alone. There was always an idea I had in my head of; well if I can't control what's happening in my life, I can control this part of it. What I didn't realise was that I was just punishing myself.

Then came university. In dealing with a completely new environment with a fresh set of people, the competition was up and running once again- except it wasn't just me this time, a lot of people made it very well-known that they were there to be the best. This led to depression. My depression got so bad that I was always late, always missed lessons, and always did badly in assignments. People saw me as lazy, but what they didn't realise was that it got so bad that I actually didn't want to live anymore. Every night I had a set of questions I would run through in my head; "what is the point of life," "do I actually bring any sort of good to anyone around me," and the one that hurt most of all, "who would actually miss me if I just did it right now?" I let these thoughts pile up in my head for months on end, I told no one how I was feeling- mainly because I was so sure of myself that no one could change my mind about it. I quickly

My anxiety further prevented me from progressing in my course at university- I was a performer who couldn't even stand up in front of her friends and sing a song for fucks sake. Clearly struggling, instead of receiving support and reassurance from my lecturers, I was told that if I couldn't 'fix this' I should consider dropping out and giving up on my dream of pursuing musical theatre. This was when I hit rock bottom. I had nothing else I wanted to do- being in education and taking subjects that made me feel like a fool in front of my classmates made me so unhappy, I never thought that I was going to be able to pursue musical theatre due to my lack of confidence, but then I finally made it and I just couldn't do it. It was like running a marathon you've trained for your whole life, and you were just too tired to cross the finish line.

It didn't stop there. Here we are now, in my second and final year of university, and what I'm hoping for was my final dip in mental health. I'm not going to promise anything or put pressure on myself that everything will be okay because I am only human, and allowing myself to feel so deeply gives me room to grow. But instead of sleeping, missing lessons, everything that I thought was helping me cope in my first year, I found a new coping mechanism- alcohol. I knew it wasn't a good idea, I knew that when I thought "I'm not happy with my life, I'll just have a drink," would turn into so much more- and it did. Most of my nights were spent out drinking instead of focusing on what actually mattered, which was my

education, or actually feeling happy with myself. But to be honest I hated absolutely everything about myself, and the idea there was something so easily accessible that would make me lose any sort of feeling felt like I had struck gold. I didn't see a problem with it, I'd spend the day miserably hungover but have something to look forward to when I got home. Until one day my friends sat me down and told me they were worried. I have never felt so incredibly guilty in my entire life. Not only was I ruining my own life, I was affecting the people I loved. I tried to justify it, told them that I was happy, but they made me realise it wasn't a secure way of living life. This 'happiness' was short term, and if I carried on the way I was heading, *it really would be short term*. Being surrounded by people and letting any sort of feeling slip away for a few hours, then getting home, realising I was alone and I had to face these feelings that were bubbling under the surface just made me even more miserable.

I did everything I could, acquired all of the pills I had to take, had the talks I needed to have, nothing could pull me out of that rut. Until one day when I ventured onto social media and saw everyone living a life I wish I could have, and the only person who could grant me that life was me. I thought surely it would be easier to change my lifestyle, even if I had to fake it until I actually felt a glimpse of what other people were feeling, I knew it would be worth it. And it really was. It wasn't easy. There were many moments of doubt where, again, I thought surely it would be easier if I just wasn't living. Because not only was I an inconvenience to those around me, I was an inconvenience to myself at that point, and I had been for a long time. But I don't regret a single moment of it, because I learnt more about myself in that time than I ever will again. Don't live your life with regret, wondering if one mistake will determine the rest of your life, because it *really* won't. Take it as a learning curve, and leave everything you hate about yourself in the past.

Leave that Life Behind

In realising that I had to make a change for myself, the first step was opening up more about how I was feeling. This was extremely difficult for me, mainly due to opening up in previous relationships and being told I was too sensitive. The idea that someone knew every single detail about me already put me in a place of vulnerability, but completely putting my trust in them and having them completely invalidate my feelings and pick apart my personality left me broken. And with the amount of bullshit I had to put up with from them, I thought *surely* they would spare five minutes to hear about how I'm feeling- but apparently not.

You have to realise that if one person will make you feel like shit just for being a human being with feelings, they shouldn't actually be in your life. Speak to people who cherish and value you for simply just being you.

The next step was thinking about what I was doing with my life now, and if in ten years I still wanted to be pursuing it. The answer for me was very much no.

I always used to beat myself up for not being 'school smart,' when actually, I had to realise that I had so many other things I was good at. I convinced myself for years that I wanted to help people, so I originally wanted to pursue nursing. Funny that, considering I despised biology (and was absolutely shite at it.) I also hated any sort of bodily fluid a human could produce- blood, sick, literally anything. So why was I so desperate to do something that would potentially make me miserable for the rest of my life? But what I couldn't move past was the fact there was still the pressure of proving to people that I was smart by doing something education based instead of creative. Deep down I always knew I wanted to do musical theatre. From the first show I watched when I was twelve, the idea of living a fantasy life on stage for a couple of hours and doing something that I knew I would absolutely love. I can't describe how I felt seeing the performers at the curtain, smiling, hugging each other,

being so proud of themselves and seeing others be so genuinely proud of them for what they had just created onstage. I wanted it. There were no downsides- apart from the fact that I didn't have an inkling of self-confidence.

Therefore, when making the decision about what I wanted to do a degree in, I was so, so sure I was applying for musical theatre. But this was one of the main parts of my life that I allowed other people to convince me otherwise.

When I told people what I wanted to do, they thought the goal was unachievable. I was told to go down the road of acting as a compromise, it was still performing, but there wasn't the pressure of having to perform live in front of people in case I forgot the words, and there wasn't the further added pressure of having to sing and dance on top of it. I was being convinced to play it safe instead of advancing skills I already had, and that I knew I could do. But no, due to my nervous history of performing, I had no way to prove it.

So I did what I didn't want to do, applied for acting courses. And of course, just my luck, the only course I found was an hour and a half away from everything I'd ever known. I was so skeptical about it, if I was sure about it I would have said yes without a doubt. But the fact that I had to move away from home for it didn't sound appealing to me.

But I went after crying about it for about three months prior but again there was an overwhelming sense of having to prove that I could do what other people wanted me to do. Even when me and my family were moving everything into my flat, I could not pull it together. Something just wasn't right. I remember my mother being so happy that I was doing this for myself, even though I wasn't., that as soon as she had to drive away and leave me in a place where I was so unhappy, she completely broke down and realised that this isn't what anyone wanted for me.

After her understanding this, I made it known that I wasn't staying there, and this time no one had a say in it. I didn't care who I disappointed, who lost respect for me, I was coming home. So three days later, without hesitation, they came to pick me up and got me straight out of there.

Then it was straight to auditioning for musical theatre. I auditioned close to home, I needed the support from my family at that time.

But even when I did audition and I had it set in my head that this university was where I was going to be for the next two years, I was told that I had all of the skills I needed, but they didn't know if they were going to let me on the course because my confidence was going to set me back massively. When they reluctantly accepted me, I was so incredibly thankful because this was the place where I really found myself, and even if I'm still not sure about what I want to pursue, I have learnt how to love myself as a person, and I will always be eternally grateful for that.

At the end of the day, no one will stop you from achieving what you truly know you want apart from yourself. Even if the road is bumpy, you will always find a way around it and reach your destination.

The Change

I am a completely different person to who I was four years ago.

You should never beat yourself up about how much you could have changed, even if you decide at the age of eighty that you want a different life, it will never be too late.

I don't look back and regret a single moment, if anything, I look back and sympathise for that little girl who felt like she was never enough for anyone.

I'm living my life for the person who deserved it all along, and I'm extremely proud of who I have become.

I live away from home with my friends.

I'm in the healthiest relationship I have ever been in.

I have never been so close with my family.

I have stopped taking anti-depressants and anxiety tablets.

I have a healthy relationship with food.

I don't crave other people's validation.

I don't let people determine my life.

I do things for me.

I do what makes me happy.

I love myself.

“LIVING ON YOUR ‘OWN TERMS’ IS ABOUT CHOOSING YOUR OWN TERMS, NOT ACCEPTING THEM BY DEFAULT, OR DOING WHAT OTHERS WANT SO YOU WON’T ROCK THE BOAT.”

- Kate Swoboda