

Change is an inevitable part of every person's life. From something as small as altering your appearance to a massively metamorphic event, change affects everyone at some point.

If change is essential to the human experience, why are we so afraid of it? What about it makes it so painful to deal with? An easy answer would be that it's difficult to adapt to the new features that change brings to our lives. However, there is a deeper, darker part of change that sends a chill through many. As creatures of habit, we become so used to a routine, waking up at the same time, taking the same route to work or school and seeing the same people every day. It's easy to get caught up in the lifestyle we create for ourselves. After establishing a comfortable way to live, it seems impossible to ever do anything different. But, right when we think we have everything under control, change comes and destroys what we've worked so hard to build.

Toward the end of my senior year, the word "college" seemed to be on everyone's lips. Questions about universities and majors dominated most conversations. A community college wasn't my first choice. I didn't even want to remain in the state of Kansas, but due to financial circumstances, it is where I ended up. When the decision was made, it didn't bother me too much; I knew that eventually I would end up where I needed to be. For most of the summer, I pushed the thought of everyone leaving to the back of my mind. I never wanted to accept the fact that come August, I would be the only one of my friends left in Kansas. As the days passed, the reality of everyone leaving began to sink in. Friends that I've seen every day for the last 5 or 6 years were putting their belongings into totes, leaving just an empty room behind. Seeing this happen felt very overwhelming and, to an extent, it still does.

I always knew that this change would happen eventually, but I never expected it be as difficult as it was. Each day brought a different goodbye. Some were harder than others, but no matter who it was the pain remained the same. Coming home every day, I would see memories scattered throughout my room furthering the hurt that was already so intense. My fears of never seeing some people again or that my best friends would meet someone new and replace me kept me up at night. I would spiral into scenarios that I knew never would happen, yet I allowed my brain to think constantly about them.

But, in reality, everything is okay. I know my friends will come back and although things might not always be the same, it is nowhere as severe as I once believed it to be.

What is so scary about change is how unexpected or unpredictable it can be. There's no way for anyone to know with 100 percent certainty what the future holds. As humans, that is seemingly what scares us the most. Especially in the current world state, there is no way of telling what will happen next. Similarly, overthinking a big change also creates new anxieties on top of existing fears. In my case, that is what I faced. There are some days I wish I could ship my friends back to me for just a night. But that is what makes change so great. By knocking you down, it forces you to get back up and try again, making you a stronger person. With each big change you face it gets a little bit easier.

The next time you are faced with a life-altering change don't ask "Why is this happening to me." Instead, ask "What can I learn from this?" and I guarantee you'll come out better than you started.