

Chapter 7

By: Jackson Fisher

“I would have never guessed; you don’t show it [mental illness] at all.” These were words spoken to me on one of my first days here at Lakehead from someone who, at the time, was essentially a complete stranger. These words have stuck with me, mainly because of how they can greatly exemplify the importance of perspective. Under different circumstances, the same message – that mental illnesses are often invisible – could be a painful reminder to one of the hardest parts of anyone’s battle with mental illness. Looking normal makes people think you’re in perfect health, capable of everything they are, and that you don’t need help. It can make the battle or even accepting your own situation much more difficult. This message could’ve been cruel and detrimental to the beginning of my university journey. Instead, because of the circumstance and perspective, it is one of the greatest compliments I have ever received.

As talked about before, my battle with mental health is something I am very proud of and vocal about. I was talking with my housemate, who was then still very much a stranger, and we talked about mental health. Naturally, I mentioned my anxiety/panic disorder and my unique path through high school, and in return, she gave me the greatest compliment possible. That all the stress I was still feeling over the first few days at university wasn’t showing. That I didn’t seem any worse off than all the other nervous kids moving away from home, that is one of the first moments where I felt I truly I had made it; that I was in a good place.

As I sit and write this update after completing my first semester at university, I have noticed some interesting perspectives. Roughly 4 years ago, before my mental health battle had truly begun, if I was told that in present-day I’d be in Thunder Bay studying Psychology, I’d wonder what went wrong and why I wasn’t at Brock studying sports management and following my planned path to be a GM in the NHL. 3 years ago, at the beginning of the worse for me, I probably wouldn’t believe someone who told me I was going to make it anywhere for university, I might not even believe that I would live to see 2020. A year ago, I’d probably be ecstatic to know I made it where I am today, but you throw in the detail that I still have to miss class sometimes for mental health rest, and I’d be disappointed. However, as I type this out, I am beyond grateful and truly happy with where I am. I am confident in my ability to do schoolwork, and I know the importance of resting even if it means missing a few classes. (Not to mention I’ve seen a lot of other people miss class for worse reasons)

Now, these are things I have talked about before; the relativity/perspective of situations, that things get better, that plans change and to accept it, everything happens for a reason etc. This update isn’t really a newly learned lesson to pass on, more so to show that they are all working for me. That I am living my better life, and that you can too. As long as you keep fighting, things will work out.