

A window with a view of a tree and a building. The window is divided into several panes by dark blue frames. The top-left pane shows a large, dark green tree trunk and branches against a reddish-brown background. The top-right pane shows a yellow building with a window and a tree. The bottom-left pane shows a yellow and green background. The bottom-right pane shows a yellow and red background.

*With Our
Thoughts,
We Make the
World*

REFLECTIONS ON THE ART OF LIVING

Works by UNCW English and Philosophy Students

*With Our Thoughts,
We Make the World*

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Endeavors

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life he has imagined he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

– Henry David Thoreau



From a Skater Punk Sage

Chase Horton

“Just come up with an idea and make it,” says Spike Jonze, the Academy Award-nominated skater punk who directed “Being John Malkovich” and “Adaptation.” That is “the best advice I have ever heard” . . . or “probably my favorite piece of advice.” To me, nothing beats the feeling of going out there and making something out of nothing. It may come out as a disaster because the initial idea was too audacious, but the pursuit of a creative objective will eventually reward ambition. Fail, fail, fail—it’s the only way to success.

A Good Day

Lindsay Skiba

Today was a good day! My mother responded to her new treatment! I am sitting with her now as she lies peacefully in her bed. I thought getting through this semester was a challenge, I was losing faith in myself—almost choosing to give up, and then I thought about her day and how no paper in the world could be as hard to write as facing cancer and walking with its shadow constantly on her heels. I think that throughout all of this, I have learned one thing, you can plan your dreams and you can succeed at many of them, but you can never predict how large or small an obstacle may get in your way. You just have to keep looking toward the finish line.

My “Walden Pond”

Katy Locke

My favorite place on the planet rests 110 ft underwater on a wreck off the North Carolina coast, the U.S.C.G.C. SPAR. The Spar itself is an amazing vessel. Totaling a length of 180 ft of welded steel, it has now become home to many tropical fish and sand tiger sharks.

I am a certified scuba diver and have been for over 5 years now. The most rewarding opportunity that has stemmed from becoming certified has been wreck diving. From shoving out of the slip in the wee hours of the morning to pulling back in and docking at night encompasses my vision of a successful day. I encounter so many people on the charter boat and whether they are friends or strangers, we all end up linked because of our sport.

There is something so peaceful about being that far underwater and witnessing a living piece of history. A ship that once served a purpose, such as an old Coast Guard Cutter, now takes on a completely different purpose as an Artificial Reef. It's almost ironic to think of, a ship that once mastered the seas has now been mastered by the creatures below.

My friend and dive buddy Dan once said, “Diving is my church service. It's the closest I have come to a religious experience.” I can't help but agree. Spread before you are all facets of aquatic life and the delicate balance of an ecosystem. It's also an amazing experience to give back to “the community” by participating in events like the sinking of a ship for an Artificial Reef or an underwater beach sweep.

Into The Rain

David Wappel

The umbrella has been around since ancient times. Sculptures from Nineveh in the Middle East depict kings with slaves holding parasols over their heads. In ancient Greece no fashionable woman would be caught without one. Collapsible umbrellas have been found to exist in China as early as 21 AD.

The Stoics are big fans of pro-activity. They are proponents of a school that teaches what is within our control and what isn't. What is in our control is what we should worry about. One must truly understand themselves and the world around them to rightly judge this. Often, people blame their misfortunes on things that they believe were not in their control, when in fact, they were.

Successful people are experts at this judgment. They are one step ahead because they think one step ahead. They foresee possible outcomes and consequences and do their best to mitigate ones they do not want occurring.

Imagine a rainstorm. Nobody believes the weather is within our control. One can, however, bring an umbrella. It is this type of thinking the Stoics propose. Those who whine about getting wet are not accepting the fact that they could have brought an umbrella. They are deceiving themselves into believing there is nothing they could have done.

There is a flip side to this. What if the umbrella breaks? Should we have brought two just in case? What if the second breaks? In these situations, we learn that unforeseen circumstances will arise, and one must simply soldier on.

The Stoics lead an engaged, proactive life. We cannot, however, become slaves to this life by consuming ourselves with over preparedness. I think the Stoics' true message is that we should bring an umbrella with us, but sometimes, we just have to learn to walk in the rain.

Do Work

Justin Garity

People who do not do work will not get anything accomplished. When you do not want to do work, do work. Something always needs to be done and it is up to you to do it. Stagnation leads to nothing. The only way to keep from being stagnant is to do work. By always believing there is something that can be done, you will accomplish everything you set out to do. If you want to improve yourself, you must work at it. If you want to accomplish your goals, you must do work. If you want to be the best, you must do work. If you devote every moment to doing work, you will succeed. Wake up knowing that you have more work to do. Relaxation comes only after you have accomplished a goal and are preparing to work at another.

“The only people for me are the mad ones; the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time. The ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue center light pop and everybody goes, ‘Awww!’”

–Jack Kerouac

Self-Help

William Michalove

Don't have a hitch, a vice, or an unreasonable motive for doing something. Do it for you. Of course there are always people in our lives who we do things for or in concordance with, but choose to act as a direct effect from your feelings, not someone else's opinions. Many times we are perfectly capable of fixing our own problems, yet we may not feel confident or even take the time to consider options. Instead we lean on one another for the answer. Sure, collaboration is good, two heads are better than one, and so forth, but often problems remedied on our own turn out to be the most rewarding.

Lessons from a Fire

David Wappel

I am a firefighter.
I cannot choose when fires occur.
When everyone runs out I must run in.
I must be always ready, always willing.

I am a human being.
I cannot choose when obstacles arise.
I cannot choose how obstacles arise.
When everyone else gives up,
I will adapt and overcome.
I am always ready.

On Music

Ben Drake

Music plays an enormous role in my life. It can make me happy, sad, nostalgic, excited, or any other feeling that could be linked to a specific time or place in my past.

Now I'm not talking about any of the new-age, mindless club remixes that are so popular today, but more a group of musicians that convey a message through their music; music that has feeling, emotion, and meaning. In a way, certain songs can act as to V 2MT what Nhat Hanh would call "bells of mindfulness." Whenever I hear a good song, a powerful lyric, a catchy chorus, I smile. I stop and think about a certain moment that that song might bring to the surface. Music has an amazing capability to completely change your outlook on the present moment. Although, sometimes music can stir up negative feelings, yet dealing with those feelings that arise and using Nhat Hanh's five steps to transforming those feelings can allow a person to become more mindful and give new meaning and emotion to that song that once caused so much pain.

I love music and I think that it brings me great joy and comfort. Instead of being a "lure," pulling me from the present moment, I see music as a grounding experience, making me appreciate the artist, the sound, and the memories that arise from it. Go ahead and turn off the TV or the radio and pick up a favorite album. Not only can it calm your mind, but you can also correlate your breathing, walking, and tempo of the song while meditating. It's actually quite peaceful.

Peace is Every Wave

Katy Locke

At the helm of *The Destiny*, conscious breathing comes alive
Echoing the waves: in and out, up and down
Breathing is the connection of body and mind, the boat is the
connection with nature.

While raising the sails, you must breathe: in and out
With each tug, I wince through a smile. Think less, pull harder.
As unnatural as it may be, movement provides comfort, easy
breathing.

On Writing and Rewriting

Adam Schmick

My writing process varies depending on what exactly I am doing. Usually I spend a great deal of time brainstorming ideas in my head before I even begin to write them down on paper. If time permits, I will brainstorm for a few days and then quickly write out a first draft in my notebook. I then make corrections before I begin typing a second draft. Any last minute changes are made during the typing. After one last final review, I consider the document good to go. If I know the due paper is only a first draft, I am not so touchy when I revise it because I know that I'll be revising it yet again anyway.

On Being Aimless

Erin Mullin

Since I can remember, I have wanted to be a high school English teacher. English was the only subject that I excelled at and it seemed destined that I would make myself a career out of it. I was not that strong of a writer to make that my sole occupation, and I wasn't quite discerning enough to go into editing, but I felt that I was likable and motivated enough to become a teacher. Little kids don't like me and I don't like middle schoolers dealing with the throes of puberty, but I thought I could relate quite well with those at the high school level (which made sense, since I was about a year older than they were). When I graduated from high school and found myself in a world where I could be anything I wanted, I chose to submerge myself in English and focus completely on becoming a teacher.

For a while, it worked very well. Despite occasional setbacks, I did very well in my English classes and found I had a natural ability to understand the concepts being taught in my education classes. The goal that I had set for myself was slowly but surely coming into reach as I began the final phase of my senior year, student teaching. When I stood in front of my senior English class to begin the lesson the first day of my endeavor, I froze. Not in the figurative sense of the word, where I stammered through the lesson painstakingly, but literally froze. I had to have my partner teacher take over while I sat in the back going over the notes of the lesson I had been so confident in preparing. I tried over the next week to bring back some of the fire that I had felt in the years I had spent preparing to teach, but I couldn't manage to bring anything back.

I quit student teaching after only a week, thereby completely messing up what I had spent four years trying to do. I couldn't graduate in May as I had planned, and I had to change my major into English literature, which we all know is not exactly the most lucrative em-

ployment. However straying off of the path that I had predestined for myself turned out to be one of the best things I have ever done in my life. Don't get me wrong, I'm still terrified of what I'm going to do whenever I finally do graduate, and I'm not thrilled that I quit something so important so quickly, but for once in my life I don't feel pressured to live up to everyone else's expectations, or even my own. In high school, I was famous for answering, "I'm just trying to live, man," when people would ask me what I was doing, and for once that is completely true. I'm not worrying about the future or the past, just reveling in the moment that I'm alive and here and even though it seems dark right now, I have the freedom to do whatever I want with my life, and modify it if need be.

Memories

“Everything was beautiful, and nothing hurt.”

– Kurt Vonnegut



Rained Out

Emily Parry

Ten straight days of nothing but rain can dampen even the most cheerful personality. But, then again, I be used to this. The dreariness of the bleak Ohio winter was nothing new to me. The gray sky sank into the gray trees that slumped atop the gray ground. A quiet explosion of monotony that descended every October, covering everyone and everything in its path. Occasionally, a crisp snow would blow through and cover it all. But, after a few days of mingling regretfully with the salt and dirt road, the once pristine snow would turn black. Succumbing like everything else to depression of the Ohio winter.

As I stared out of the classroom window, my breath fogged up the glass, covering the raindrops that beat restlessly against it. I heard the professor droning on softly in the background about the history of the Civil War, and I began to draw on the blank page in front of me. First, raindrops. Dropping of the top of the page, between the clouds, landing on an umbrella held by a stick-figure. Me. But as the class crept slowly on, my page being swallowed by heavy drops of rain, I drew the sun. Starting out small, behind a cloud, then extending its rays to the far corners of the page.

As the class came to a close, I grabbed my notebooks and headed towards the door, zipping my heavy winter coat and pulling my already-dripping umbrella out of my bag. I braced myself as I stepped out into the biting air and felt the rain whip against my coat. Holding tight to the umbrella, I thought of the rays of sun beaming down on me, wrapping me in their warmth. I wished for another life, somewhere warmer. Somewhere brighter. Somewhere else. I think about Florida. Hawaii. North Carolina. I wondered what the weather was like along the coast, away from the lake-effect snow and negative ten degree temperatures.

When I reached my car, my thick glove fumbling with the key, I realized that I needed that warmth. I needed the sun in the blue skies above me, with the sand beneath my feet and freckles on my skin. I needed to find my way out of the dark blanket that had been covering me for all these years. As I folded the umbrella, I looked towards the sun, forever hidden behind the somber clouds, and took in a deep breath of the numbing winter air. It was time for change and I was ready. I closed my eyes and as the sky grew dark, a single raindrop fell upon my nose.

Mom

Meghan Solomon

I can remember as a child, my Mom teaching Kindergarten, taking care of my brother and me, and going to community college. She wanted a two-year degree, and she stressed herself out doing it. She often questioned whether what she was doing was really right for her family, after all, she had an 8 and 12-year-old to take care of. But she knew what she wanted.

When I was 10-years-old, I got to watch my Mom walk across a stage and graduate with her associate's degree in hand and a huge smile across her face.

So whenever I think working and going to school is too much for me, I remember my mom's determination. And I find myself working as hard as I can to impress a woman who showed me the true meaning of success, getting what you want out of your life.

My Favorite Place

Lindsay Skiba

My favorite place may strike some as weird: my mother's bed. As odd as it sounds, it has been my shelter, my hiding place, my comfort, my shoulder to cry on and my support. When I was a child, my mother and father would travel for weeks on end for their business, and my brother, sister, and I were cared for by a sitter. I would miss them so much, and my mom would always tell me to look at the moon because she would be looking at it too. I tried that, but I never felt like they were ever really looking at it. I spent nights not being able to sleep fearing the monster under my bed, or fearing that my parents would never get back and I would be stuck with the babysitter forever. Luckily, I found a cure for my childhood fears. As soon as everyone fell asleep, I would climb into my mother's huge bed that I had to use a stack of books as a step; I would curl up and fall asleep. Later on, when I was 15, my mother was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer and was sent to Duke for Stem cell treatment. She was in isolation for 18 months. In those months my father rented an apartment and stayed with her. Not having my mother present was difficult at 15, and although the fear of the monster was gone, bigger fears haunted my mind not allowing me to sleep. Every night, while my mom was at Duke, I would sneak into her bed and let out all the emotion I had held inside all day. It was my safe haven of thought and comfort. Throughout the years I don't think my family has ever caught on. But it remains my favorite place; it reminds me of her when she is not able to be touched or reached. Whether or not my family knows, it makes me feel safe.

How Well Did You Love?

Keri Holman

On my Mother and Father's 25th anniversary we took a family trip to the beach for the weekend to celebrate. I remember sitting in the back seat one Saturday and spotting the card that my Mom had gotten to give my Dad. She spoke of the memories that she had the first time they met and her surprise at how quickly and deeply she fell in love with him. She spoke of their wedding day in vivid details and the overwhelming joy she felt on the day of my sister's and my own birth. She described flowers he brought her when she was in the hospital and the unyielding security she felt when she was with him.

As I read the card, I began to feel a sense of peace and gratitude. I began to realize how lucky I am to have parents who truly love one another and who support each other in every decision. Of course there were moments of bickering and occasional frustration, but there has never been a day in my life when I have been fearful that they might separate or that my family might shred. I remember the words of my father years ago when I was just a little girl in stringy pig-tails, "there is no greater gift a man can give his children than to love their mother." In my heart I know that there is nothing more vital to a healthy family than the love that the parents share and the compromises they make together.

Without even knowing it, I learned through my childhood how important it is to love the person you plan to marry for who they are and to have a mutual understanding with that person about the way in which you will raise your family. My parents taught me what it means to love and I believe that that is the measure of a successful life. How well did you love?

On Kindness

Will Michalove

My father and I were driving home from something or another when all of the sudden my dad stops off on the side of the road to assist someone whose car was immobile. I was in the car all the while, but I soon learned that the man had run out of gas. I can remember my dad getting back in the car and driving up to the nearest gas station where they didn't sell gas cans. I then saw my dad come out of the store with a gallon of milk-he dumped the milk out and then filled the jug with gasoline and took it back to the man on the side of the road. I don't think I've ever seen someone so appreciative and somewhat stunned at what had been done for him. I, to this day, still think it was one of the most generous things that I've ever seen.

I think this instance has shaped my perspective on what it means to lead a successful life- it may not always be about making money or making yourself happy, but about assisting others and maybe finding some pleasure and satisfaction in what you do for someone else.

"Things themselves don't hurt or hinder us. Nor do other people. How we view things is another matter."

—Epictetus

My Hero is Dead

Jon Flynn

Norman Borlaug is dead. I find myself holding back tears, hoping in vain to write a eulogy that he deserves. You have not heard of him, but he was one of the greatest human beings to ever walk this earth. Through his work, he directly saved at least a billion lives. That's not a typo. Billion. With a B. What did he do?

Norman Borlaug was a scientist, a biologist to be exact, and the father of the Green Revolution. He bred high yield disease resistance crops and brought those, along with better farming techniques, to every country in the world. His crops produced 4 times as much food on the same amount of land. Not only did he feed people, but his creations saved an estimated billion hectares of land from agricultural development. Again that number, billion. To put that in perspective, that's larger than Canada. That's 6.7% of the land area in the world, or about 20% of currently forested, arable land. Imagine the innumerable species Borlaug also saved.

And he did it for free. He worked for the Rockefeller Foundation, and rather than sell the seeds to these wonder crops to corporations at what would have been enormous personal profit, he gave them away. Borlaug worked in Third World countries all his life, in the field, sometimes even under fire. During the Indian/Pakistani civil war, he planted seeds close enough to a battlefield to see artillery flashes.

It is difficult to imagine the state of a world without Norman Borlaug. Before his innovations, a Malthusian catastrophe was thought to be inevitable. There simply would not have been enough food for all the people in the world. Indirectly, I am certain he has stopped wars, famines, plagues, and countless deaths. He faced down the four horsemen, and won.

What does this have to do with the art of living? This was a beautiful life.

On Fear

Emily Parry

“It is fear that I am most afraid of.” – Montaigne

I remember the two of us, arms linked, as we walked down the hill into the woods. My sister and I were whistling and throwing rocks, sinking into the stillness around us. The woods were quiet this time of day, with the sun drowsy in the sky, its light warm and hearty on our backs. Our soft whistles filled the air and danced with the sparse branches above as we crushed through the autumn leaves.

We had just climbed over a mossy boulder when it caught our eye. Long, slender bones shining in that afternoon sun. Screaming for our immediate attention. It was a spine.

Bleached and glowing in the open air, it mesmerized us with its power. We squatted down next to it, covering our open mouths and poking it with a stick. “What do you think it came from?” my sister asked quietly. “A human being, probably. It’s long enough. Look, lay down next to it. I’ll measure.”

We stood unyielding, and instead we felt an unusual fear begin to slowly make its way into our veins, filling them with a fascinating new pulse.

At once, we began to run, not bothering to hold the branches from our faces, or stepping gently over the puddles of mud. We ran into the sun, hot in our faces and pulling us closer. We ran past the mailbox with the tiny red flag. We ran with the fate of the world in our hands.

A Tasteful Fight

Katie Miani

It is the end of summer of 1990. Leaves are dying, and the sun is beginning to lose its dominion over the sky. I have just begun kindergarten at Briarcliff Elementary. My eldest sister, Kristin, is home for dinner from her first few weeks at UNC Chapel Hill. Stephanie is my sister closest in age to me; she has just gone back for her second year at East Cary Middle School. Nikki is starting her third year of varsity basketball as a junior at Apex High. My mother is the head accountant at the North Carolina State Bar. My father is adjusting claims for Nationwide Insurance. Chapters in each of our lives are opening and closing. In a few months we will find that my father has opened a new chapter of his life, one that did not include us.

On this particular evening, we all prepared a meal of steak, onions, corn, mashed potatoes, salad and bread. My dad stands at the grill in his usual attire: construction boots, shorts, and a sweatshirt. My mother's hair is in a brown, short, curly perm and his is wearing something baggy. His face is tired. Although my parents are not strict, in our house dinner is a familial requirement. Every night we sit at the table together, and have to ask to be excused before we rise to clear our plates. Tonight, however, I am excited about this dinner. We are setting the table on the back porch, and will eat outside by candle light. Once the table cloth has been spread and the plates have been set, we take out cushioned patio seats. We then say our routine Catholic blessing, the one that at age five I can mimic without really knowing what I'm saying.

Mom and Dad cap the ends of our rectangular table; Stephanie and I sit on one side, Kristin and Nikki on the other. Nikki is making fun of how excited I am to be eating outside, making faces and sticking her tongue out at me. My eyes never leave hers as I warningly put my tiny hand over the huge olive green bowl of onions sitting

between us. She shakes her head and rolls her eyes and then she says, “You won’t do it,” So I scoop a handful of slimy onions and throw it right at her. It seems like less than a second before Stephanie and I are both splattered with salad and ranch dressing.

After that I don’t know who threw what, but this outlandish act catches on at the other end of the table. I hear my dad’s laugh of surprise and amusement at the head of the table. He then breaks his bread and tosses pieces at us. My mom even joins in- she flicks onions and corn at us with her spoon. We all begin digging our hands mashed potatoes and corn, flinging food at anyone who still looks clean. I can imagine this meal on the table as we blessed it, and then in mid-air as it is heaved so freely before ever being tasted. Wiping my face, I see my mother with hands and arms up and crossed trying to shield herself, but her head is thrown back in that cackle of true laughter that I see rarely these days. Within five or ten minutes we are all giggling and on our feet, covered in food. My mother and sisters go inside to wash up. As I walk toward the back door, I feel a tomato squish between my toes. Disgusted, I hop to the deck railing and examine my foot, which is the least messy all my body.

My Dad laughs and comes to stand beside me and we look out into the night over the side yard. Leaning with us against the railing is a jack-o-lantern that has been rotting for almost a year. I think about how my mom had asked him to get rid of it months before, and how it would be impossible to move now without concaving the mush. I think about how we’ve never had a food fight before, and that we’ve never had a jack-o-lantern this long. Somehow, I know then that things are about to begin to change.

There was a silent tension in our home those days, though I could not name it or completely recognize it. This food fight to me is the personification of the expression “just kidding” used after a serious remark. It had been the loud outdoor relief we all needed from the unspoken storm brewing under our roof. We seized this chance to throw things at each other and laugh at the same time; to fight each

other without worrying about hurting each other or apologizing afterward.

This old pumpkin and forty years lie between my father and me, but we are sharing thoughts. He is thinking of being somewhere else, and feeling guilty. I am thinking about how much longer it will take before the pumpkin's laughing face falls apart. I get the feeling that I will always remember this moment, and I pause and appreciate how special this night has been. I know then, at age five, somewhere deep in my young subconscious, that when that pumpkin is finally gone, my dad will be too.

Jimmy V

Meghan Solomon

“Don't give up, don't ever give up.” –Jimmy Valvano

Whenever I hit a wall, whether it is in school or in my personal life, the quote above from Jimmy V always comes to mind. With seven words, he encourages his audience to keep putting their best foot forward.

Jimmy was the head coach of the North Carolina State University basketball team when they won the NCAA title in 1983 . He made this now famous speech at the 1993 Espy's, right before he lost his battle with cancer. In the same speech, he also said, “Keep your dreams alive in spite of problems.” For a man who was looking death right in the eye, he had so much peace and wisdom, and though he was fighting a much more challenging battle, he still inspires me to always do my best and never give up.

My Favorite Place

Lindsay Skiba

My favorite place may strike some as weird: my mother's bed. As odd as it sounds, it has been my shelter, my hiding place, my comfort, my shoulder to cry on and my support. When I was a child, my mother and father would travel for weeks on end for their business, and my brother, sister, and I were cared for by a sitter. I would miss them so much, and my mom would always tell me to look at the moon because she would be looking at it too. I tried that, but I never felt like they were ever really looking at it. I spent nights not being able to sleep fearing the monster under my bed, or fearing that my parents would never get back and I would be stuck with the babysitter forever. Luckily, I found a cure for my childhood fears. As soon as everyone fell asleep, I would climb into my mother's huge bed that I had to use a stack of books as a step; I would curl up and fall asleep. Later on, when I was 15, my mother was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer and was sent to Duke for Stem cell treatment. She was in isolation for 18 months. In those months my father rented an apartment and stayed with her. Not having my mother present was difficult at 15, and although the fear of the monster was gone, bigger fears haunted my mind not allowing me to sleep. Every night, while my mom was at Duke, I would sneak into her bed and let out all the emotion I had held inside all day. It was my safe haven of thought and comfort. Throughout the years I don't think my family has ever caught on. But it remains my favorite place; it reminds me of her when she is not able to be touched or reached. Whether or not my family knows, it makes me feel safe.

On Hope

Emily Parry

“Things themselves don’t hurt or hinder us. Nor do other people. How we view things is another matter.” – Epictetus

When I was five, my parents sat my sister and me down one afternoon. It was cool, and the light outside suggested winter would soon be blowing in. My sister and I sat on opposite couches; my father was next to me and my mother knelt on the floor with her hand on my sister’s leg. I stared out the window at a small bird standing on a branch and wondered if it felt cold.

“We want you both to know that we love you very much, but things are going to change. Your father and I aren’t going to be married anymore,” my mother said as the bird fluttered its wings. “You don’t love each other?” my sister cried. “You don’t want a family?” “We will always be a family and we will always love each other. We think things will be better if we live apart,” my dad reassured. I stood up from the couch and went to the window. The bird was gone.

A few weeks later, my sister and I were packed into a U-haul with the rest of our childhood and re-assembled four hours away in rural Pennsylvania in order to be near my mother’s family. I remember feeling the tears, hot on my cheeks, as I watched my father standing in the driveway as we pulled away from the curb and began the long trek, leaving behind our lives in Ohio.

After a chaotic day full of boxes and hugs, my mother tucked me into bed that night. As she turned off the light and left the room, I began to cry. I sat up, unable to sleep, and looked out the window. A light snow was beginning to fall on the bare branches that hugged my view. As my breath fogged the glass, I saw something small and dark nestled in a nook of the tree. Hollow and empty, it was a bird’s nest.

Three years later, I sat next to my mother and sister, smiling in

the passenger seat of a borrowed pick-up truck as we pulled into the familiar driveway in Ohio. The truck crawled to a stop, sighing under the weight of its contents. My father stood on the stoop, beaming at us as we ran to greet him.

“Are we back for good?” my sister asked as he kissed her cheek. “Yes, sweetie. Things will be just like before. We’re together forever . . . all of us,” he said as he picked me up, swinging me through the air. I smiled as he held me above his head, my arms outstretched, flying like a bird.

Judging My Brother

Meghan Solomon

“Do not judge; because you never know when you might be in the same situation.” Right.

When I was in high school I didn’t drink or do drugs. I judged my older brother for dropping out of school and being hooked on multiple drugs. He was in and out of rehab, but, eventually, he got better.

Then, I graduated high school and started attending community college. I met a very different group of people there than I used to hang out with. They were very much into drinking, and soon I was too. I started drinking once a weekend, which very soon moved up to all weekend. Which eventually escalated into 5 to 6 days a week. I would take liquor to school, work, wherever I felt necessary. Then, one night in early February 2008 I drank way too much. I was unconscious. I went in and out, blacking out every few minutes as my friends tried to figure out what to do. Luckily, one of my friends had a buddy who was an EMT. He rushed over and catered to whatever he thought I needed. The rest is a blur, but it was the scariest night I have ever experienced.

The following day I was in a ton of pain. But I realized that all that time I had spent judging my brother was just a waste of energy. I really should've just talked to him about his problems. Maybe I could've learned something valuable from him.

On the Swing

Keri Holman

On the front porch of my Mom and Dad's house, there is a swing with chipped red paint that I love to sit on when things in my life aren't working out quite right. This swing sits in front of the bay window to our living room. It is surrounded by acres and acres of farm land and when I look out past our front yard I can see the cows and horses in the pasture grazing. This place, for me, is more serene and tranquil than anything I have ever experienced here in Wilmington. While I love the beach, the boat, and constantly being surrounded by water, there is something so indescribable about the peace I feel when I am sitting on that swing with a glass of my mother's extra sweet, sweet tea and a puppy licking my neck.

The last time I remember sitting in my favorite place I was home for the weekend over the summer. I was swinging as I waited for my mother to finish getting before we went into town to do some shopping together. As I sat in that swing, I thought about the days that I'd spent playing in our front yard, down at the barn with the horses, and splashing in the creek. I thought of the days that I'd spent there unable to walk without crutches holding me steady. I thought of the nights I'd snuck out of my bedroom to sit under the moonlight and cry over a broken heart. When I sit in the swing I do my best thinking. I am my most poignant and introspective self when I swing.

I went through stages when I liked to swing alone the best. I liked to write in the swing and think about things in silence. Now that my dark “poor pitiful me” adolescence is behind me I realize that the swing is much better now when it is shared with a loved one sitting next to me. The swing is best when I am remembering the blissful days of my childhood.

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