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# Keeping Perspective

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Megan Doyle

In my high school yearbook, next to my senior portrait, I quoted Oscar Wilde: “All of us are in the gutter, but some of us are looking up at the stars.” As an oversensitive person with a tendency to be easily defeated, I had chosen this sentiment as a reminder to myself: to consciously shift my focus from my failures and frustrations to my achievements and aspirations.

We all are in our own “gutters” of debt, loneliness, stress, illness, and so on. It is often easy to throw up our hands, exclaim “Why me?” and curse our fate. The noble challenge of this modern life is to strive for acceptance and positivity rather than succumbing to the useless state of self-pity.

I believe in perspective. Keeping perspective helps me to remember that I am but a small organism in a vast universe, and that every obstacle I face is likely arbitrary and coincidental. How dare I assume that I am grand enough to warrant a personal attack from an invisible hand? I must not let trivial upsets like a spilled coffee or a traffic jam convince me that the universe is out to get me. It isn't.

Perspective helps me realize that people rarely have bad intentions, but oversights and accidents can happen regardless. I must strive to excuse people who may upset me, and to apologize when I upset others. I must remember to cut people slack, to lighten up, and to accept a genuine apology if someone hurts me unknowingly. I cannot assume that everyone is out to get me. They aren't.

Perspective reminds me not to envy the seemingly perfect lives of others, but rather to appreciate where I am and what I have. When I truly reflect on my possessions, both worldly and otherwise, I can say without hesitation that I am incredibly fortunate. I have never been unhealthy or homeless or hungry. I have a warm coat and sturdy shoes. I have the love and support of my friends and family. I have received an education that has nurtured my passions and interests. To gripe about the relatively few inconveniences would mean I am being ungrateful for my overwhelmingly safe and happy young life.

As someone so fortunate, I have a duty to not only appreciate the stability and satisfaction in my life, but to help others obtain the same. Keeping perspective reminds me to give what I can. There are plenty of children, adults, families, animals, and environments that need crusaders. Some issues are across the globe, but others, just as pressing, are right in my backyard and deserve my attention. I must remember that small gestures of love and consideration are often just as meaningful of a contribution as time or money. I must remember that someone can be “in need” without appearing destitute, and giving what I can to these people is my duty all the same. I cannot help them all, but I am obligated to make a difference to a few.

I believe in being appreciative and aware, in expressing gratitude and love, in being considerate and helpful. However, I must accept that there are days when I am terrible at all these things I believe. Sometimes I complain, sometimes I am frustrated easily; sometimes I curse the sky for raining on me, and my car keys from hiding from me. On these days, I believe I am capable of pushing the reset button on my attitude. I must take a long walk or a hot shower, calm down, grow up, and move on. When I emerge from a stretch of ranting and wallowing, I must not get caught up in shame. I must remember that I am human, and I am flawed. I will work harder the next day, and

the day after that, and the day after that, to act on my beliefs. I believe that in keeping perspective, I can be the best version of myself.