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Category: Personal Essay & Memoir

How Does Getting Lost Affect Us?

The idea of getting lost is something nobody wants to experience. Getting lost can be categorized in both a physical and psychological sense. Being physically lost gives us a very unsettling feeling of fear while being psychologically lost gives us a mindset of being lost in the direction of our life. Both situations give us a negative impact upon a point where trauma and depression can be developed. People who get lost physically get into a panic attack knowing that this is reality and that they can actually die (Wired). They get into an emotional state and neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux calls this the “hostile takeover of consciousness by emotion” (Wired). According to him, 90% of people make things a lot worse for themselves when they realize they are lost (Wired).

I personally experienced both sides of getting lost. I have gotten lost once on a cruise ship when I was very young. A vacation with my family that was supposed to be relaxing and exciting turned into a fearful experience. After we ate dinner, we were leaving when something intrigued me. What lay before me was one of those things that showcased the menu outside the restaurant. I do not know why, but I was intensely focused on it. Before I knew it, my family was missing when I turned around. I panicked as I soon realized I was alone in a crowded place not knowing where to go. It is said that the best choice of action for parents to prepare for this situation was to make a plan with their child on what to do if they get lost (Romper). However, my family and I never planned a plan for this situation. This was something I would never have thought I would experience as I grew up. Like every child, I was afraid and shedding tears. It is known that children seek security and reliability from their parents (Romper). Like every other child, I was one of them. I heavily relied on my parents in a foreign world, where I couldn't speak their language. What's worse was that I got lost in a place I had never been to. I remember going up to a staff member asking for help. Then, they brought me to a vacant floor, and on the intercom, they said my name and asked if anyone was missing a child with my name. They told them to come to the floor I was on. My dad misheard the floor and went to a different floor, while my brother came to the right floor. I was finally reunited with my family after a scary experience.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) is the organization that recommends preparing a plan with your children when they get lost. The NCTSN states that the impact of separation depends on how stressful the incident was (Romper). Luckily, I barely remember the details involving this incident, so I did not develop trauma. However, separation can give children issues with trust and safety (Romper). I think trust and safety issues affected me with this incident. As I grew up, I automatically thought to avoid strangers and never interact with them. However, the neighborhood I live in is very friendly to each other, and I start to greet them every time we pass by each other. I think my trust and safety skills are slowly building up.

In a psychological sense, I am currently lost in the direction of my life. Even though I am still very young and haven't experienced the outside world, I still feel lost in my school and social life. I am an introvert, and I tend to think about my actions and how others will perceive me for my actions. I don't have a strong sense of confidence. For college, I am not sure what I should pursue. I have available career choices but I don't really have something I really want to do. I'm not sure what college I want to go to as well. Before I go to college, I have to worry about high school first. I do not know if what I am doing right now is something that is useful in my resume or if I need to do more. I have to consistently keep my grades up, but it takes a lot of effort and the results I want are not showing up from time to time. I feel like COVID-19 made me lose my sense of direction in school. Instead of paying attention in class, I was more focused on my phone or other things. I was being less productive and it ruined my life. I barely knew anything about my subjects and I had to cram so much study time as exams approached. I did pass my two exams, but I got the lowest passing score, which was not the result I wanted to get. However, I am trying to improve and get myself back on track. I recently got a good score on the ACT and I am happy with it. I am constantly trying to keep my grades up and maintain an A. Even though my junior year just started, I feel like the first nine weeks are going by really fast. Even with school and COVID-19, I hope I can find my sense of direction

back and survive through this school year.

Even with the negative impact getting lost gives, there can be some benefits. Being lost can lead to a deeper understanding of yourself and your goals (Psychology Today). You might not know what you want to pursue in life just like me. About 35% of students enter college with an “undecided major” and about 75% of students change their major (Psychology Today). Having this confidence to change the major shows that you realized you were lost and found something that is a better fit for you and what you want to do. I hope I can also find out what I want to pursue and be able to pursue it with a strong sense of direction knowing I won't stray off of it.