All You Need is a Safe Space

Imagine you're sitting on the floor, in a stall, in the school bathroom. You just walked out of class. You told your teacher "I just need a minute." They say they'll take away a B-point but at this point, what does it matter? You're sitting, on the floor, in a stall, of the school bathroom, crying, and alone.

You've had enough for today. Your anxiety has gotten the best of you. All these presentations, homework assignments, social interactions, high expectations, it's all too much and it's coming down all at once. So now you're sitting on the floor in the bathroom stall, and you've lost track of time. The motion sensor has gone out and the lights have turned off. You sit there wondering where else you could go, but it's either here, on the dirty, cold, hard bathroom floor, or back to class. You begin to panic, you're short of breath, shaking, and crying, you don't know where to go. You feel lost, so you stay right there, on the bathroom floor. Where else is there to go?

Hi, I'm Alana, I've been on the bathroom floor, the only difference is, I've picked myself up. I was sitting, on the floor, waiting for someone, anyone to come in, and pick me up. To engage in conversation, to teach me how to get through a panic attack. When I realized that no one was coming, I knew I had to pick myself up. I couldn't wait around. It is my responsibility to take action and to go through my journey.

About a week later, after getting myself off the bathroom floor, dusting myself off, and finding motivation, I found a therapist. She was great, she taught me many ways to manage my anxiety and how to pull myself out of a panic attack. She taught me meditation, which led to the start of my journal where I logged how my mental state changed each day. She told me how proud she was for getting help for myself. She told me I did everything right; I noticed that I was struggling, and I got help. Anxiety often feels like you have no control. It feels like you're being

controlled by a brutal force that doesn't want to see you being happy and successful. I soon realised how important it is to take control, to show that force who's boss, and to find some way to be happy. After months of therapy, I thought I was doing better. I was practicing my meditation, staying mindful, and everything was staying together but yet depression snuck up on me like a tiger hunting its prey. I was so confused. "I thought I'd get better? I'm getting help aren't I?" It was this moment that I realized my journey wasn't over, it was only beginning. Mental health is a continuous journey filled with good days and bad days. It's a journey that is never truly over, but one that you can always grow from, especially on the bad days.

A few weeks later, I'm in Beta, a class where we strive to make a change. Change. That word stuck in my head for days. "How will I make a difference?" I kept looking around at all these amazing ideas people were coming up with and I kept thinking "Pfft, I don't stand a chance." I go home, and I start brainstorming all these stupid simple ideas; fruit cup vending machines, smoothies instead of energy drinks, ways to make our lunchroom handicap accessible. None of these ideas stuck with me. They were all too simple. The next day I was back in the bathroom stall, on the floor, face buried in my palms. That is the moment I knew what our school needs; a safe space. You may be asking; What is a safe space? A safe space would be whatever you need it to be. A space for people like me, for people like you, a space for everyone to feel safe, to de-stress, to unwind. A space of comfort, and collaboration to provide solitude while discussing mental health among students and staff.

Imagine you're in a bathroom stall, sitting, on the cold hard floor. You just finished crying. You're ready to get up just as the lights go out, you here another person crying two stalls down from you. The light turns on, you see their feet under the stall. You realise you're not alone. That's the moment, you understand the impact of a safe space.

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