

A Pinch of Fluidity



di Rosalba F.

It is natural to think that when you travel far you will need to adapt to a different environment. Despite this logic reasoning, we often fall trap under the idea that everything should be as we imagine it. But reality is different, and sooner or later it will hit us right in the face.

When I left Italy to go to Canada, I was just a spoiled teenager convinced that everything had to go the way I wanted it to. My dreams were not simple imagination, they were facts in my head.

Nothing could go wrong, I was absolutely sure about that.

Well, useless to say, not much went the way I wanted it to. From the very first moment I stepped into the airport, to the very last goodbye I said to my second home, nothing was how I dreamt it.

What I wanted was the typical North American high school experience. But what I got was much, much more than that.

Fluidity: the ability to shape ourselves in order to fit the container we were put in. It is a necessary skill to have when we want to fulfil our dreams and hopes.

During my exchange year there were so many moments where I was confused about what I was doing, because I felt uncomfortable, and out of place. Those feelings are common when you try something out of the ordinary, but that doesn't necessarily make them bad. Throughout the year I learned how to kick those emotions away so that I could enjoy what was happening to me, whether it felt weird, new or awkward; nothing of that mattered as long as I faced it with a clear, open and adaptable mind.

I recall walking once on the side way in a part of the city I had never been to before; it was just about 6pm, but it was as dark as if it were midnight. I was wearing a light jacket and an even lighter dress with dark tights, not to mention it was around -2, and it was only mid-September. The day before, I had been invited to the birthday party of a girl I had met about 2 weeks earlier. To be honest, I didn't really want to go, I felt like the effort was much greater than what I would have gained from the experience. That thought didn't leave my mind until a bit later into the party, but while I was walking in the freezing Canadian weather because I jumped off the bus at the wrong stop, I wasn't exactly ecstatic to go to that party.

Then I arrived, alas I was late because of all the setbacks and honestly there is nothing I hate more than not being on time. My mood was still not the best, and when I realized that, in fact, I did not know one single person there, my first instinct was to back out and run home. But then a voice in my head made me think that, although I was extremely uncomfortable, it could have been a great opportunity to make some new friends

The party itself was nothing like I imagined a Canadian high school party would have been. It was much more still and, honestly, not that exciting. So I could not help but be a little disappointed; in my imagination that would have been such an awesome party, but in reality I was sitting on a couch awkwardly looking at my shoes. That was until I realized that if I wanted to have fun I needed to be fun to be with, so I took off and decided to start dancing to the music it was playing at the moment. I am pretty sure that the song was "The Hokey Pokey", which actually was a blessing, because if any other modern pop song had been played no one would have joined me in my extremely embarrassing decision. But while I danced I saw all the people present joining me, and after that we danced to another group song, and then another one, and so on. The party ended up to be different from what I wanted it to be but no less fun.

Maybe, the example I just described is not particularly striking, but what I'm trying to say is that we need to adapt and find solutions to the problems we face. We can't stand still and expect that everything is going to go well by itself. We need to try our luck and shoot our shot, or else we will regret what we had not done.

This is the most important lessons the year I spent abroad taught me.