

# Climbing to Inner Peace

By Riley Purcell



My eyes were set in front of me, not daring to move, as I was terrified of falling or getting myself hurt. I thought out where I would place my hands and feet next, to get closer and closer to the top. My heart skipped a beat after my foot slipped, and I narrowly avoided falling on a cactus. It was scary, but it also made me proud of doing something I would never do in my life. I glanced up; I was over halfway there. There was no sweat down my back or extreme dehydration. I was having fun.

I was tackling a mostly vertical climb which I am notoriously not good at. It only felt like a few minutes before I reached the top. I did not even realize I had already been gone for 40 minutes; time seemed to fly by as me and a new friend found each other up there and spent another hour taking pictures of the gorgeous scenery, perched on a rock that you could not see from our camp. It was all lush and green, which was a shocking contrast to our dead and dry campsite.

This hike was an option on our 9th grade Anza Borrego camping trip with our team of 60 students. I had never been camping before, and I was determined to make the most of it.

I did an activity by myself, and completing this hike was an accomplishment for me mentally. This is because I self-destruct when I am by myself, especially in social situations. For the entire first semester, I was with my best friend every single chance I had. We would just be right there. Whenever I failed, she was the support, and when I succeeded, she was the person I went to. As the second semester approached, I ended up in a different class from her and every single friend I made the first semester; I was by myself for the rest of the year.

It was a hard shift. It took some time, and I was communicating with the people in my life about what was going on and getting myself to a feeling of normal. That led to me becoming extremely codependent. Every field trip, break, or team outing, I put a lot of effort to be with my friends, because I felt like I needed them.

But being able to climb a small mountain by myself was something of which I was proud. I did not have any FOMO, and I made myself comfortable. It was peaceful. All the negative voices in my head became support, because I could turn the negativity I created into my anchor for my growth by having a more positive outlook. And I ended up creating one of my favorite memories of the semester.