

Making eggs is something I do all the time: they're cheap, fast, and easy. However, I never seem to actually get that much better at making eggs. I make lots of sunny-side-up eggs and egg-in-a-holes and scrambled eggs but I think my screw-up rate has remained relatively consistent over time; my partner similarly speculates that they crack the yolk of any egg 50% of the time.

Making eggs, like most things I do, exhibits that I want to and should be better at many things but do not change; I say I'll stop leaving my laptop on the floor next to me when I sleep because having an electronics-free room leads to more a more restful falling asleep, but next week I do it again. I say I will exercise more, and I know how to exercise more (bring a small sack of exercise clothes to school, leave my phone in my bag when I go to the gym), and why I should exercise more (it noticeably decreases my general anxiety and makes it easier to fall asleep at night, as well as reduces physical tension), but most days after classes and meetings I climb on the next bus home and lie down and look at my phone for like an hour.

Objectively I should know how to make eggs better at this point; I've iterated on the same handful of recipes enough times that I should know in my bones the exact angle the heat knob needs to be dialed to for the crisp outside and soft inside I so crave in fried eggs; I should know how much butter the pan needs; I should know when to drizzle water on the pan and cover it and for how long. But invariably I'm distracted by packing my lunch for the day or making a protein shake to accompany scrambled eggs—to the point where eggs seem unpredictable, spiteful. The outcome of my eggs spans a random distribution I feel I have no control over—I'll think I've done an excellent flip and turn the egg over to gawk at a horrifically hardened yolk, or helplessly slam the egg toast

down, folded against the pan, only to find later that the yolk came out smooth as jelly, cushioned by the soft envelope of the egg white.

Eggs do not seem to do what I want them to most of the time, they seem capricious and stochastic, uncaring and uncommunicative, but the truth that I know in my heart of hearts is that eggs are dependable and consistent and ask for exactly what they want, and I am the one just not paying attention. The bubbling of the butter tells me exactly when to crack an egg onto the pan, the initial hit and sizzle of the liquid tells me whether to turn the heat up or down, and the opacity of the white tells me when to segue into the steaming portion of my frying technique or flip the egg toast, depending on what I'm making. Everything I cook tells me a story and the only variable is how much I'm paying attention.

For most things it is not enough to know exactly how to change and why to change, I also have to pay attention, all the time—I have to notice things—I have to be quiet and observe, to feel, really feel. Over spring break in my partner's hometown, I deleted Twitter and Instagram for the nth time and I spent the week unspooling, physically and emotionally, taking long days just to feel the sleep sink into my muscles, to eat well and to hug people and to pet animals. Noticing the golden thread of peace that ran through my body when I sat on the porch and listened, just listened. Feeling the insurmountable dread that sat heavy in my gut the few times I scrolled through social media, satiating the urge to just “catch up”. Comparing the two, cupping my metaphorical hand to my metaphorical ear to really soak in the truth of my body's story, its volume, its desperation.

I read a lot of literature about this kind of physical mindfulness—a central tenet in Bessel Van Der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score* is that many trauma victims have difficulty physically inhabiting their body; the author relays stories of people who can't feel their massage therapist holding their feet, who don't feel the part of their body they continue to self-harm, who continue to build up tension in certain muscles because their bodies refuse to respond to the fight-or-flight messages sent by stress hormones.

Though I have not sustained the debilitating kinds of trauma chronicled in the book, I can't help but feel that perhaps the endless journey of my life is to notice more, to fully inhabit my body, and choose to pay attention again and again, day in and day out.

Asking myself to pay attention erases the need for a dogma on *why I should change* and a syllabus on *how I can change*, and replaces them with the singular action of feeling something all the way—feeling poorly while scanning dozens of tweets is the incentive to change, feeling peaceful when making time for cooking good food is the guideline for change. *Feeling it out* is something most kids are discouraged from doing (at least I was and I don't know if that's an immigrant thing or a religion thing), encouraged instead to appeal to their less limbic self, to think, to ruminate. But at some point in my adult life this mentality has caused me to regress back into a Plato's cave sort of half-reality, a worship of the image of the truth, of the thought over the occurrence.

From *Lady Bird* (2017):

Sister Sarah Joan : You clearly love Sacramento.

Christine 'Lady Bird' McPherson : I do?

Sister Sarah Joan : You write about Sacramento so affectionately and with such care.

Christine 'Lady Bird' McPherson : I was just describing it.

Sister Sarah Joan : Well it comes across as love.

Christine 'Lady Bird' McPherson : Sure, I guess I pay attention.

Sister Sarah Joan : Don't you think maybe they are the same thing? Love and attention?

From “Free Churro” from *Bojack Horseman* (2018):

BoJack Horseman : All I know about being good I learned from TV. And in TV, flawed characters are constantly showing people they care with these surprising grand gestures. And I think that part of me still believes that's what love is.

BoJack Horseman : But in real life, the big gesture isn't enough. You need to be consistent, you need to be dependably good. You can't just screw everything up, and then take a boat out into the ocean to save your best friend, or solve a mystery and fly to Kansas. You need to do it every day, which is so... hard.

I want to spend the rest of my life thinking *I am real* and *I am here* and *I am feeling this, really feeling this, letting my body memorize it in a way my mind will never be able to*. I want to pay attention the way Christine does in Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird*, an attention that's tantamount to love, and I want to do it every day even though it's hard, an idea explored so incisively in *Bojack Horseman*'s “Free Churro”. I want to be dependably attentive, which is to say I want to be better at loving.

I said at the beginning of this essay that making eggs is cheap, fast, and easy, and while I still believe that it's cheap and fast, maybe I don't quite believe that it's *easy*, the way doing anything well is never *easy*. Doing anything well regularly requires perseverance and demands that you step back and observe, let what you are doing tell you how it must be done, rather than slack off and project your half-formed and un-lived theories onto it. Making eggs is a piercing exposure of human folly—here is something I do all the time that I want to be better at but I am not better at it because I have not been paying attention in any way that matters.

I love eggs and I love leaving my laptop in the next room at night, I love exercising and I love limiting my time on social media, but perhaps most truthfully, I love sleeping. I love sleeping so much that I've started to make my bed in the mornings this semester, so that when I come home from a long day, I'm welcomed by the warm embrace of three thick blankets and a soft mattress. It's very simple: this makes me feel good, this makes me feel like I am home, this makes me feel like I am looking out for myself. Perhaps there are more concrete *whys* and *hows* at play here but, most viscerally, making my bed provides my body with a space to feel right and safe. Making my bed makes me realize: I listened this time. I paid attention this time. And so, maybe, I can do it again.