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Breathing the Good Air - Remarks from the Journey

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Introduction

This newsletter is the newsletter that I initially thought I would have the most difficulty writing, mostly, because it covers two months where I, primarily, spent time away from my placement sites. My thought could not have been further from the truth. The down time I envisioned for myself during these months turned out to be very active and eventful. More importantly, this time has shown me a lot of what I want this experience to be and how I intend to work, engage, and build relationships in the future.

The “down time”

January and February was to be the time where the Argentina/Uruguay YAGMs would be away from their placements sites and allowed to take their vacations. I engaged this concept in a very intentional manner. Very little did I interact with those who I had built such impressionable relationships, but also very little was it what I considered the “down time” I felt I needed so much. January was filled with weeks of activities, plans, and visits. February was a back and forth between returning to my placement sites and being whisked away to Patagonia for an extremely fulfilling retreat in Bariloche, an opportunity that let me escape the city and see the natural world, that, at times, reminded me so much of home. The illusion that all of this activity would fit so nicely into my introvertedness is gone. The activity fit very awkwardly into the down time that I thought I needed. Looking back, I am aware that the time away from my placement sites and feeling even more busy is a concept that has drastically changed me. Rather than feel so comfortable being alone, I yearn to be myself within a community. Fortunately, the community that I am apart of now is full of life while allowing my quiet self to be alive within it, beating at my own rate.

The months to come

Having felt such a drastic change in how I feel in crowds, or how I confidently approach complete strangers with a language I continue to struggle with, I have discerned that despite struggles of the past and insecurities with the present, the future will be much different than I ever thought it would be going into the summer months here in Argentina. Obviously, the future is uncertain, but based on our experiences, our emotions, and our wants and needs, we create a detailed account of what we want that future to be. Having changed so much, that future is becoming more and more uncertain and I just do not know what to do next.

The uncertainty is most at play with my long term ambitions and commitments, where the concept of my post YAGM life is driving me forward to an objective that I have yet to form, and especially to a concept that I have yet to fully understand.

As I begin this second half of my YAGM year, I will continue to struggle being truly present with my work here while trying to decide how all of this will affect my post-YAGM life. The annoying after-college questions “what are you going to do now?” and “what can you do with that?” are questions that I find myself contemplating.

I have been told, now that I am over the hill, I will be able to be truly present and aware while doing my work. I think I will be even more present and aware building those relationships that I have already cultivated so much. This has been so evident with those I now call my friends.



Recently, a woman I volunteer with, asked of me one simple thing, that I when I return to the United States, I carry in my heart all those who I have come to know.

I already carry so much of this experience in my heart. It is hard not to, but there is so much more to learn; there is so much more to do. So much more is expected of me; so much more I expect of myself.

In other words, the months ahead will be far from downtime.