

The Day I Lost my Identity – Ashley Fyle, YAGM in Australia

A few weeks ago, I was on holidays. As a YAGM, we are allotted two weeks of holidays, so I took two weeks off during Easter because this is when the schools in Queensland have time off. My boyfriend came to visit during these two weeks. One day during the first week, we decided to go to the beach. We went to the main beach in Coolumberrah. We both brought backpacks along. The first thing we did was set those down and went for a swim. The water was really nice that day and the waves weren't too big. We ended up swimming for 30-40 minutes. Then, we got out of the water and went over to our stuff to grab our towels. When we got there, my backpack was gone.

My first thoughts were that I was being pranked. It was the backpack I always used at work, so I thought, surely, someone from Luther Heights is at the beach and is playing a practical joke on me. But then, we waited there for a while, and none of my coworkers came out from the bushes yelling "SURPRISE". I thought to myself, "but if someone stole my backpack, why didn't they also steal Jordan's backpack, which was right next to mine?" I asked a few people next to us if they saw someone leave with my backpack. No luck. We went over and talked to the lifeguard on duty. He was very sympathetic and told us to check all the beach accesses and the bushes. No luck. We checked with the family that was camping on the other side of the beach access that was closest to my stolen backpack. Although they were very pleasant to talk to, still no luck. It seemed like we had looked everywhere in the area. We even walked up the beach, looked along the sand dunes, and looked down every beach access. Nothing.

As we were searching, I was playing in my head everything I had lost. My iPhone, YAGM Nokia phone, wallet, American debit card, Australian debit card, driver's license, house keys, bus card, two hats, a tank top, shorts, a towel, water bottle, a book I just started reading, YAGM journal, and a few other little things. A lot of the things that were "crucial" to everyday life.

Thinking about someone taking these things from me made me feel violated. It felt like someone stripped part of my life away without consent. Who would do something like this? The toughest thing to lose was my journal. I have been journaling multiple times a week throughout my YAGM year. It has been my main medium for reflection. My journal has a lot of sentimental value to it.

Days went on, and part of my daily living was slightly inconvenienced from my losses. It made me realize how much we fall into habits/routines that revolve around the things we own. Why did I feel like my life was "less" without these things? Everything that I truly value in life hasn't changed. I am still loved by God, family, and friends. Shouldn't that be enough? Shouldn't God be enough? God's grace should fulfill my life and purpose because everything else from there will fall into place.

Losing these things made me realize how privileged I am from a new perspective. I lost all my money and identification (except for my passport, thank God). How could life go on? Well, life goes on. Pretty smoothly, actually. My boyfriend bought me a new bus card

so we could get home. First thing I did was facetime my mom from my Macbook Pro (so hard, right?). I told her what happened, and she instantly cancelled my American debit card, reminded me I brought an emergency credit card to Australia that I had in my closet, told me she would go to the DMV and get me a new driver's license tomorrow morning, and asked when I wanted to get a new iPhone. In less than one minute, I went online and reported my Australian debit card stolen, cancelled it, and had a new one sent to me within five business days.

How do I live a life where when I lose valuable things, all I have to worry about is the logistics of *replacing* them? What a privilege. Although I was sad to lose my journal and all the experiences I had documented, I still have a sharp, working memory with everything stored. What a privilege.

I would like to propose a challenge. Go ONE DAY without your phone or wallet or BOTH. Leave them at home in your room. How many times do you grab your pocket to try to check your phone, but then remember its not there? What things do you think of buying, but then remember you don't have money? We are creatures of habit, and we don't realize the habits we are in until we CHANGE.