

Untitled

by Avery Chen

There are moments in your life when someone becomes a part of your world and leaves an enduring effect on you in unexpected ways. For me, that person was a close friend that helped shape my perspectives and actions that helped me grow. What started as a cross-country meet turned our friendship into a profound connection that helped me discover my strengths.

This past October, our schools went to the same cross-country invitational, and we were both excited to see each other again. We were both complaining over the fact that the race course included an insurmountable sandy hill that would definitely drain all our energy. Nonetheless, we both ran good times that boosted our moods. After both of our races, we walked in the park and decided to go on the large playground structure. While climbing up the ropes, we settled into a corner of the rope tunnel and started catching each other up on recent events in our lives. This turned into a deeper conversation about personal struggles and challenges. We were both able to open up about any problems we faced that were bothering us. As we talked, I felt an ineffable sense of peace as these burdens seemed to be lifted off my shoulders. The act of sharing and being heard by someone who truly understood made me feel supported and motivated to live a meaningful life.

Looking back, I realize that this friend's ability to listen without judgment and offer insights gave me a sense of clarity. Although they didn't try to fix everything, their time and effort to try to make me feel better was far more valuable. In a world where it's easy to feel like you're alone in your struggles, this simple act of support left me feeling deeply grateful. That conversation served as a catalyst for change in me. It prompted me to reflect on how I can be a better friend for others, offering the same empathy and kindness that my friend had shown me. It made me recognize the power of listening and the importance of making others feel seen and heard. I began to approach my own challenges with a renewed sense of strength and a more optimistic perspective. This unexpected gift of empathy inspired me to become more mindful of the people around me and to offer support when they are at their lowest. I now understand that sometimes, the simplest gestures can have the most profound effects. It's a

lesson that continues to guide me, and one that reminds me to always pay forward the kindness that I had received.