

Finding Solace in Solitude

I slipped from under the covers and looked around my room as my eyes adjusted to the dark. Sweating and overheating from the hours I'd spent binge-watching my newest Netflix show, I ripped the headphones from my ears and plopped them back into their case, annoyed at the sound that my ears were unfortunately greeted by.

My sister had been watching the entire show "Jersey Shore" all day every day for the last week. I now involuntarily knew the lore of the character "Mike the Situation" like the back of my hand and the lyrics to the obnoxious theme song at the beginning of each episode by heart. My body filled with heat, but it wasn't from the covers I had just been under. This was strike one of the unreasonable anger I felt boiling inside of me. I trudged my way through the disheveled room, down the stairs, and into the kitchen slowly and sourly since I had what felt like all the time in the world. The smell of the only meal my sister knew how to make, fettuccine alfredo shrimp pasta, entered my nostrils and immediately made me lose my appetite. Strike two. This would now be the fourth time that she made this same dish, and the family would smile pleasantly to her face, but grimace as soon as they turned away with their plate.

Don't get me wrong, I loved fettuccine alfredo with shrimp pasta, but having had it for days straight spoiled the former love I once felt so strongly for it. Exiting the kitchen without a plate, I sat on the couch of my living room for approximately one minute before becoming bored again. I wonder what day it is, I thought to myself. I turned on my phone and was surprised by what I saw. April 25th?! It was just yesterday that we were in March and now we're in the last weeks of April! Come to think of it, the last time that I actively knew the date was the last day we were at school. I pressed on the pre-organized monthly recaps and chose the album for the month of February. I was hit with images filled with friend selfies, sleeping over at our cousins' house, and fencing tournaments from the school season. The memories of the last shreds of normalcy before the pandemic had stricken overcame me with emotions. Strike three. During quarantine, I began to feel high amounts of anger towards the smallest, minuscule inconveniences. My mother changed the channel that I was watching and I'd get angry; My sister staying on facetime with her boyfriend for hours past midnight and I'd get infuriated; My video game wasn't

loading as fast because everyone in the house was on the Wi-Fi and I'd become enraged. From the minute that I woke up to the minute I went to sleep, the crushing weight of anger would become heavier and heavier throughout the day.

One afternoon no different than the rest, my siblings and I put on our karate uniforms, and gathered round the computer screen. I typed in the zoom code and waited to be admitted into the room by our instructor. Seconds went by until we were admitted, and I was immediately greeted by some familiar faces. I hadn't seen most of these people in months since everything closed and was comforted by the fact that we had all come together once more to practice what we all loved: karate. During class, we went through the forms starting at the most basic and working our way up. Since that first zoom karate class, I would sign into practice three days out of the week. When I wasn't signed into a class, I would bust out randomly practicing a move. In the kitchen waiting for something to finish in the microwave? Practicing a hook kick. In the bathroom after I had just washed my hands? Trying to make my punches quicker and stronger.

I had finally found that outlet that I could gush all my anger out into, just like those mental health gurus whom I had always overlooked advised people to do. I have karate to thank for getting me past the hardest and darkest times during the Covid-19 quarantine lockdown. In doing so during this unprecedented time, I was able to appreciate my sport on an entirely different level that I never had done before.