

Noah Parker

Resilience is a term I have become incredibly familiar with in my journey as a Central Piedmont student. Despite the many difficulties the year 2020 brought for the entire world, many people, myself included, had smaller, more private battles to face.

I found myself in an uncomfortably dark space. The year I began my tenure at Central Piedmont, challenges came forth in a fury. In my first-year alone I experienced a great deal of difficulty getting settled in community college. Most of my friends were off attending four-year universities living what many would recognize as “the college experience.” This, however, was the smallest of challenges I would face.

During my second semester as CPCC, in the period of just the spring semester, my parents had gotten divorced, I had lost my grandmother and best friend to breast cancer, and I broke out of a long-term relationship with the first girl I ever truly loved. This was, without exaggeration, the lowest point of my life. Regrettably, there were many times I wish my life had ended that year. I had reached a new low in my mental health that was virtually inescapable. Waking up every day and feeling nothing defined (in my mind) that my life was just purposeless. I had no hope. On top of all of this I began to lose my relationship with God, which was the most important relationship of all. So, that year, I had lost many people. This led me to isolate myself from friends and family alike and wake up some days without talking to a single person. There was not a single good thing happening in my life, I did not feel happy nor sad. I felt nothing.

Thankfully, I am here today to say that this was not the end of my story. This was a beginning.

I say “a beginning” because that was something I learned to celebrate: new beginnings. My story of getting there is a little bit different, but I feel it is vitally important. There was no moment. There was no point in time that define my rejuvenation. There was no single point in time that marks the new beginning for Noah Parker, no. What led to the new beginning was day by day, even though I had little to nothing going for me, and I had all the reason to fall down and fold, I didn't. I don't know why I didn't, honestly. But I didn't. I couldn't. Why not? That seems a rather important piece to a story that ends in triumph. Surely there was SOMETHING that gave that extra push? Maybe my future and bettering myself? Or perhaps overcoming for the sake of inspiring others? Nope. All this story is, is a refusal to let the difficulties of life consume you. I didn't give up because my story cannot end without a fight. The resolve to stand back up can lead to such incredible feelings of strength, I couldn't make it without.

I am in my final year as a community college student, and I have come such a long way. I almost didn't make it into classes because I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. Life was so hard I barely knew what I wanted to make of it for my future. Thankfully, Connie Johnston sat me down and walked me through my interests and values. I arrived at Exercise Science, which I am excited to pursue at UNC Charlotte. But the journey won't stop there! I'm going to aim higher. For grad school! I want to become a PA. I want to work with people every day and help them solve their problems and work towards recovery. Though this field specifically specializes in physical health, I want to pursue caring for others psychologically and spiritually later in the future, though I am unsure of how as of now.

If there was one lasting thought I wanted to give on resilience, it is this: so much emphasis is placed on the

actual 'getting back up.' While I do agree, when you fall you should always get back up, sometimes it's not as immediate as we'd hope it to be. Another way to think of it is, "It's okay to not be okay, but it's not okay to stay there."

Kahil Gibran once said: "out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars." I don't hate my scars, I'm here because of them.