

Lessons Learned : New Friendships and Experiences in Los Angeles

“The last announcement for flight No. 005CI8 heading to Los Angeles, passengers should approach gate 112B, thank you.” The future is something that no human being knows what will happen in it. Scientists spend years and decades predicting what will happen or estimating things. We are all good at guessing. Unfortunately, our guessing sometimes does not work, and we end up in a place where it was just a quick thought that has passed through our train of thoughts. Spending hours of building that trail of thoughts to find the right path, to reach your goals, is absolutely worth it. The most stressful thing in life is when you begin with thinking of whom will you be in four years from this moment, or after ten years, will you be seated in front of a computer and a desk? At an oil field with co-engineers? Or would you be at home with your kids surrounding you with love and joy? I am Dalal Aldbayan, A 19 year old kuwaiti girl who is curious about her future.

Everything is literally possible in our world. Decisions. Working. Achieving. This is your life, you achieve your goals by your own, you face difficulties alone, and sometimes things don't work the way you wanted them to work. Life determines whether we are eligible for such things or not. Further, some made decisions like studying abroad or quitting high school and work, while others prefer to get married and build a family. In my experience, I choose to study abroad in the United States. Life teaches us lessons and we should learn them, and I have learned a lot about this decision. You will now have an access key to my life, I will hand it to you in a few, be aware of all the ups and downs that you will experience them with me, we shall now begin.

Imagine living somewhere where your value as a person was determined by a grade, this is what high school was for me. Graduating from high school was a dream to every freshman ; We lived in a real-life hell and could not wait to get out. Counting the days of my graduation ceremony was stressful enough yet it motivated me to keep going with my studies when the big day was almost here. I was a straight A student and graduated with a GPA of 4.00 in high school, with the ambition to study abroad in the United States of America. Of course, scholarships in my country, Kuwait, are pretty much easy to get regardless to any other country. Since I got a GPA of 4.00 I applied to the ministry of higher education for a scholarship, Medicine in all the countries that were shown, with being sure that I will get accepted. The results came out. I did not get the scholarship. I remember that day very well. I was sleeping and woke up from a nightmare. That nightmare for somehow woke me up, feeling that there is something going on in real life, it was related to the fact that I was on my nerves because the results are coming out soon. So, I went to our kitchen that was located on the first floor of our house. I approached my mom looking at me with sad, disappointed eyes. I looked at her not knowing why is she feeling that way.

I got my water and asked her, “mom what’s wrong ?”

She replied, “nothing darling.” I did not want to push it on her. I tried to bring up the fact that I am still waiting for the results of my scholarship, not knowing either if they came out or not.

I asked her politely, “Mom, do you know if the results came out or no?” while taking a sip of the cold water, there comes the bomb.

“Honey, i am afraid to tell you but ... your name was not with the accepted names.” That when all i heard was the glass of water in my hand broke, i dropped it on the floor. Saw it

crashing into pieces. I heard my mother screaming, and everything went black. Yes, i collapsed from the shocking news. People might think that I overreacted but in reality, I worked so hard for it. All those years of hard work couldn't get me to the major that I have always been dreaming of. disappointing. Later on, I moved on and said to myself. "Life is testing, it may be god leading me to the right path but I don't know where I will be going next, somewhere and something way better than all of these predictions." . what made me feel terrible is that all of my fellow classmates got into where they wanted to be, in fact, I did not even though my grade is higher than them. It's all about luck.

My father, or most likely to say, My super hero. He is the only man in my life who can make me smile if I were in my worst mood or situation. Making that decision of studying abroad for a couple of years, alone wasn't easy to get the approval from my father. Unlike my mother, she is the one who encouraged me to study abroad because she know that I can do it and rely on myself unlike other girls. My father on the other hand, took him two exact years to think about this whole "my daughter is growing up and is now making her own decision.". It was not easy at all, letting your little girl experience a new world, she will get to know good and bad people, face obstacles, and get sick, who will take her to the hospital ? is she eligible to do this thing ? There is one phrase that I will never forget as well, in the phase where I was waiting for the results to come out. My dad and I were out for a dinner, and on our way back home at night, in between the cars in the middle line of the street waiting for the traffic light to light up green, told me "baby girl, are you really considering this studying abroad thing, are you ready for it, Facing problems by your own, being away from home and lastly, leaving your one and only father alone thousand miles away from you ?" My father said. That when all I saw was the blurry traffic light

lighted up green, my tears started streaming down my cheeks and my voice started to get shaky, “yes dad, i am.” he said, “ if that is what you won’t, go ahead and achieve your life goals, experience the world within the limits of our religion, make us proud.” .

As a kid, I always saw myself studying alone, living individually. Doing things by own have always been my thing. From cleaning my room to booking my flights. So, I thought studying abroad will help encourage me do things by myself more often than just simple everyday tasks, while still living with my family under one roof. When you think of it as a future plan, it is actually very scary, terrifying. I made that decision with having goals in my mind that I want to achieve, one is that I want to experience something different in my life for approximately four years in a row, graduate from university with not only a certificate but also with knowledge and experience that I learned about a variety of cultures and got to see the other half of the world, by myself. Making myself, family and friends proud of me, and what will make them feel proud is that I am relying on myself, dealing with difficult situations, paying for everything by my own, and studying. all at the same time. When it comes to applying for a job, Companies want to hire people who are absolutely creative and know things from The United States, because it have the best educational system. Education is really a great matter nowadays, you can’t get a well paid job without a good resume, a great background and a certificate. Working hard will pay you back. People seek for education in many ways to find the perfect living, get married and live happily.

Kuwait International Airport, I remember that I was having the world’s most happy yet sad feeling ever. I was sitting next to my gate, 112B , looking at people passing through busy or in a rush trying to catch their flights. I, on the other hand, was busy but in my own thoughts.

Sipping my last coffee in K-town from Starbucks coffee, and holding my tickets in my other hand. My feeling was priceless, honestly. Dried tears were on my cheeks from the goodbyes that I said to my family and friends. The feeling of fear was running down my veins with a mix of excitement. yes this was my flight to The States, It happened. I am glad to say that i made the most important, yet the right decision of my life for getting my Bachelor's degree in the United States. I got accepted to the scholarship with a petroleum engineering major, in The United States. As an international student, we must first finish a year of learning English As A Second Language in order to get into any university in The States. I find this rule greatly amazing to test out students who are going to study abroad if they can do it or not. On the plane, two hours away from landing in the beautiful Los Angeles, a city located in the state of California, with all the butterflies in my stomach, the feeling was undefined, happiness and fear were both combined together as if they were one thing, with my eyes glimpsing the cotton candy shaped clouds. My dream, in that moment, was no longer a dream.

Arriving to the lands of the state of california, feeling that beach breeze coming from the ocean, all the crowd coming from variety of countries all gathered in Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) . In my mind, I was drowning in my thoughts and imaginations and started to ask myself, “ is this really happening? All those years of hard work ? this is it, I payed it all off. “ . To be honest it was all worth it. Arriving to my apartment, the moment I opened the door, the smell of the ceiling drowned down my nose, the sunlight crashing through my window and are placed perfectly on the sofa. I met my neighbors, I went grocery shopping for the first time ever, without my mother. Everything was going slightly and neatly, until the next morning. I woke up frightened and scared, not knowing where am I. “Where am i at ? who brought me here ? what is

this place ? “ I asked myself. It was bit of a culture shock as my first night in my apartment. I went out to explore the amazing City that I am in. Art District, Downtown Los Angeles, sipping my coffee from Urth cafe and enjoying the beautiful morning. An incident happened, that was the first scary thing that happened to me, walking back home with my bag on my back, that included my passport, cash money and all my identification cards. A thief was threatening a poor lady and started to beat her, I felt lost and my legs couldn't lift me up anymore, I took a moment to realize that if I didn't run, I would lose everything I have left with me and be a complete homeless. I learned that I should never carry all my belongings with me and walk in downtown no matter what time it was of the day. Always be aware of all the consequences that may face you.

School had started, going to the University Of Southern California as an international student was such a pleasure. Getting to know people from different countries from all over the world was also helpful to me because, as an international student, I should communicate using the second language which is English and learn about cultures and traditions. It was all about practicing and engaging in the community. Of course, I made friends, good and bad ones, with learning lessons that seemed like my life is slapping me right in the face to make me aware of what is going around in my world. Bad ones, I got so close with two girls from my country, Sarah and Farah. We were the perfect three friends that everyone would want to be friends with us, until one day I was feeling down and needed a space away from everyone, they understood me wrong and left me alone and we were never friends again. They started to tell everyone about my secrets as if they were something that everyone should know. I , myself have never experienced such thing in my home country, so it was a complete shock for me. On the other

hand, you can always find good, innocent people like my best friend, Nouf. I met this girl in an activity and she was the most sweetest person anyone could ever meet. We became good friends, when i'm with her, I feel comfortable and that I am myself, Dalal. Good friends are rare, make sure you take enough time to find one, one is more than enough in a society where everyone wants to take advantage of you. Do not get too attached to a person, you'll end up cracked up.

Lessons are what we take from our mistakes. We must learn from our mistakes and never do the same mistake again. Life is absolutely testing us day by day, testing our ability to overcome obstacles, how are we patient enough to deal with things. Of course I have so many lessons that I would like to share in this story. One is that I should never get too attached to anyone no matter how close that person is to me. You never know what the future is hiding for you. Life is full of surprises. Dishonesty and betraying could occur and happen at any time during your life. Make sure to choose the right person to share your secrets with. I learned that I should Always rely on myself, don't rely on others, it's super easy to make up excuses and ditch a plan. Life decisions aren't easy, take the absolute time needed to make up your mind on the right decision. I am now a better and strong person that what i used to be back home due to the thing that happened to me. In fact, I am the only one who is responsible for whatever I want to do in my life. Therefore, I should also take full responsibility and considerations of all the consequences that I will be facing. Taking the advantage of living in Los Angeles with it's extravagant beautiful landscapes and skyscrapers is one of the best things that I am thankful for. Experiencing All of these ups and downs for six months, is something that makes me proud of who I am today. Here I am, Sitting in my own apartment in Morgantown, West Virginia attending West Virginia University with a Petroleum Engineering major. A female with an

ambition to study medicine, she chose the flow and it took her to the right place, and she is now pleased. Yes I am. “You shall lock my life now with the key that you have, keep this secret between us.”