

Cry Me a River

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What becomes of the broken hearted who has forgotten how to cry? How does one forget the ability to shed tears for the pain they've endured? Sadly, I had become that "one."

Before I entered the National Benevolent Association's XPLOR program, I was engaged to someone from my college. We were together for 3 ½ years and engaged for a year....and then Summer 2016 happened. Let's just say, I am no longer engaged, which was "fun" explaining to my housemates during our Laboratory orientation week. Because everything was happening at a rapid pace, I had not found the time to truly process the major shifts in my life. I can only assume that I remained in survival mode to get me from Point A to Point B. As most people realize, when dealing with stress, if you bottle up your emotions, they are sure to explode. Well...BOOM SHOCKALAKA!

This explosion of emotions did not occur until one fateful Sunday evening during "Soul Sunday." (This is not to be confused with Oprah Winfrey's "Super Soul Sunday," a program that I'm certain no one in our house knew existed.) Our "Soul Sunday" consisted of us gathering around the kitchen table, lighting a candle, and prompting the question, "How's your soul?" Three simple words that created an open and affirming space. A space where you say what you mean and mean what you say.

After a few weeks of soul searching, my soul finally cried out what ailed it. My soul was not okay, contrary to popular belief, and needed to be heard. When I said this, a snowball effect was underway. I honestly could not stop explaining my pain, confusion, frustration, anger, and heavy amount of self-blame. As all of this is occurring, tears begin to fall from my eyes. For those who know me, my crying is about as ugly as the concept of sin, but that didn't matter to my housemates. With open hearts and minds, they listened to my woeful cries and only spoke words of love and affirmation. They provided me with a love that surpassed roommate status. This love was a gift provided by my new family.



This gift reminds me of the story involving the prophet Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. God instructs Elijah to visit her to receive something to eat. When he arrives at her residence, he calls out to her asking for something to drink and a morsel to eat. As the sole provider for her household, which included a son, options to feed a guest, let alone her and her son, were limited. The widow informed him that there was only a small amount left to feed her family, after which they would die from a lack of food. Elijah, being insistent, directed her back to her kitchen to make this small meal for him, as well as a meal for her and her son. Probably annoyed with his demands, she complied with his request and found that her oil and grain jars had become miraculously filled. When she gave her last bit of resources, her attempt was rewarded with a replenished jar of oil and grain. With an attempt to love my family at a reduced amount of love, they, in return, replenished my jar of love.

While my journey has not been easy, and every day provides a new challenge, I've learned that it's okay to cry, and to cry for myself. If I have a day that weighs on my soul, I just go over to my jar and remind myself that "I am loved."

NBA XPLOR is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. ***Learn more and apply at nbacares.org/xplor.***