New Year, New Me
By Roxanne Alloway

Five. Four. Three. Two. One. It is December 31st and the clock strikes midnight. My family and I gather around the television with our sparkling cider as my mom snaps pictures for our family in the Philippines.

It was a new year, which also meant that it was time for a “new me.” Images of this “new me” were found on the board of my Pinterest app, creating every single piece of the puzzle that I wanted to be.

I always adored the concept of new year’s resolutions and planning a fresh start. My resolutions were compiled neatly into a folder on my notes app, listing hundreds of both big and small goals as I entered the new year.

Unfortunately, my main obstacle with the resolutions was that I created high expectations, overwhelming myself with endless goals that I forgot about by the end of the week. Eventually, I stopped caring about my goals as I continued to compare myself to the “Pinterest girls” who lived the exact lifestyles I desired. I was a moth in a swarm of butterflies, trying to fly along.

Between workouts, new diets, and social media cleanses, they never seemed to stick. The multitude of beauty influencers told me that becoming this “new version of myself” would lead to a happier life, so why was I still unsatisfied? Why was I giving up so quickly and distracting myself with the simple excuse that it was just too hard?
Based on my track record, I assumed that I would face similar bumps in the road if my phone ever broke for an extended period of time. As much as I would love to imagine that a month without a phone would produce a new and improved me, I know that not much would change in the beginning. Not having a phone would not lead to automatic productivity because although I never understood self care, I still mastered the art of distraction to a T.

I would go through each day with my broken phone placed in the back of my jean pocket. Even if my phone was unresponsive, I would find comfort in knowing that at least it’s still there.

Eventually I would relearn how to live. I would worry less about the root of most of my problems: comparison. Anytime that I felt semi-content with my life, my phone was the first to scream out at me and let me know that I was doing it all wrong.

Comparison is the reason that I pushed myself into the shadows and aimed to be perfect at everything.

Comparison is the reason that I never wanted to speak out or connect with anyone.

If my phone was broken for a month, I would finally allow myself to focus on my current self, healing, and growth. I need to grow into who I am instead of who I should become.

Naturally, I plan and have a solution for every aspect of my life, but not having a phone also means that I would have to make more spontaneous decisions and live in the moment. No more timed schedules and no more distractions. I would hang out with my loved ones and truly be with them for once.
Time would be filled with all that I have always loved and taken for granted: the books on my shelf that continue to multiply, the record player that is slowly collecting dust, the guitar that my parents got me for Christmas, and my family which I hold deeply in my heart.

The melodic Oregon rain would dance along my window at night, and for the first time in a long time, I would notice the drops of goodness and how they gently hug my ears.

As attached as I am to my phone, I know that a month without it would only benefit me. The weeks where I have gone without my phone have been some of the best points in my life.

Over the summer, I worked at a summer camp and it was easily one of those experiences that shaped me into the person I am today. From the trees, fluorescent stars, and Samson the guard dog, Camp Howard quickly became my home for the week.

Happiness was something I fought so desperately to achieve, but without a phone I do not have to worry about becoming happy and instead, I look around and realize that I am happy.

Happiness is held so deeply within my memories of the crackling fireplace, the night walks back to the cabins, my wide smiles, and the confidently standing view of Mt. Hood from the dining hall.

Throughout the week I was too busy to use my phone, so I relied on the company of my kids and fellow counselors. I had a group of twelve nine-year-old boys, which sounds like a nightmare, but they were some of the funniest and most caring kids that I have ever met.

On my final day at camp, I sat in the dining hall, arms linked with my new best friends, and my eyes rapidly pouring buckets of water. The tastes of frozen pizza and Hawaiian punch
continued to linger on the tip of the tongue as we listened to “Lean on Me” for one final time. I wanted nothing more than for the feeling to last forever.

My experience at camp taught me a lot about myself. I discovered how enjoyable it is to care for others. I discovered how much I overlook God’s wonderful creations. I discovered happiness—pure and gentle happiness which I wouldn’t trade for the world.

Growing up, my dad always made fun of my attachment to my phone, saying, “you wouldn’t be able to live without your phone.” Honestly, I think that he’s wrong. I don’t want to continue living through screens. I need to live without my phone to truly begin living.

The clock strikes midnight and it is January 1, 2023. My new year’s resolution is to give it a try.