The Me Behind the Phone
By Elisabeth Fromwiller

If I didn’t have my phone for a month, honestly I would probably be a much better person, a stronger person, one who would not allow herself to be governed by the peer pressures of society and social media; if I didn’t have my phone, I think, or at least I hope, that I would become, in a much too simple sense, me.

No service for a month, the first thing that I would do would probably be to try and go somewhere that has service. Of course, if that failed, I would turn to the outdoors. You see, although I most often exist through my technology, I truly love the outdoors. I love the smell, and I have always felt that the honesty of the outdoors is much more appealing than the twisted views of social media that I get from a phone screen, but then again no matter how hard I try I never seem to be able to fully tear myself away. My worldview would greatly expand, nothing holding me back, just feeling the world, spending time with my family. Going on adventures where all I have to worry about is, well, nothing.

I have struggled a lot with self-confidence, and I can’t say it’s not because of my phone. The truth is, even having that option of social media is overwhelming. Although it is an amazing way to share what’s going on in my life, it is stressful and scary trying to live up to the social standards that are placed on me today. Not having my phone would allow me to explore who I am, to see that without my phone, I am in fact a real person, a person who deserves to be valued, not broken down by impossible standards. Without a phone I would probably fall back to a journal, a way to express myself through writing, drawing, and meditation. After finding that I
don’t have to be a person who relies on social media to be who I am, I would want to work on my relationships with others.

I might have been uncomfortable with who I was with my phone, but without a phone, I would only have access to my true friends. The ones who don’t care what I look like or what demons I may have; no matter what, they just want to support me being me. Of course, it would be harder to contact them, due to the fact that they still would have their phones while I would not, but if the relationships were true, we would have much more interesting ways of communicating and being together. We’ve always wanted to go paddle boarding together and now, without a phone or service, I would actually be able to slow down, focus long enough to follow through with the plans and get to spend the quality time that our friendship deserves. I love my friends, I love our relationships, and I would hope that even after that month without my phone, and the few struggles that would come with it, I would be changed for the better in my interactions with others, and that I would be willing to use my phone substantially less.

My phone has been pulling me away from my family for years. We used to have game nights and fun movie marathons, but now we all sit on the couch or in our rooms playing games or scrolling the news or social media, each of us on our own device. I love my parents more than anything, but do I want to be the daughter who they lost to social media? Of course not! I want game nights back, and I want my family back, so if my phone was gone for a month, I would make sure that theirs were too, even if I had to hide them myself. This might not sit well with them at first, but after suffocating them with my endless logical lectures on why we shouldn’t have them, I’m sure they would give in, or they’d humor me so I’d shut up. We would play our favorite board games and go on a hiking trip, maybe even a Hawaiian vacation. No matter what we would choose to do, I know that we would all be better off because of it. My parents would
get to see the happy me, not the one trying to live up to the world’s expectations of her, the girl who revels in the outdoors and who jumps excitedly at the sound of a flock of birds overhead. I would be a changed person because the outdoors is what truly fuels me within, and through the outdoors I have gained all of my compassion. I am the shy person who would rather play with birds and squirrels than talk to a new person. Compassion for nature is what first taught me how to be more confident, and looking at myself today, I know that I need that back. The month of fun outdoor adventures and hilarious game nights would remind me of who I am and what I care about most.

Nature can drive me to be my best self, and my phone drives me to care way too much about others’ opinions of me. A month without my phone: on the one hand pure torture, but on the other, the most important experience to show me that I am that confident person. I want to remind myself, my family, and my friends of what it means to have true relationships, ones of compassion, strength, and love. It all comes back to who I am and who I want to be. Without my phone I would be the shy but strong girl who would be 100% herself without caring for the standards she is expected to follow.