



THE

# PHOENIX NEWS

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## BREAKING THE MOLD: How Body Traffic is Shaking Up the Theater Scene

by Aiiisha Rishi

When thinking about theater, what comes to your mind? Is it sitting in your high school auditorium, watching your classmates put on a production of *West Side Story*? Or the days you were forced to recite Shakespeare in your English class? UBCO's *Body Traffic* aims to defy these expectations, and show you a theater production you have never seen before. I interviewed performers Laken, Josie, Kamille, Bella, Okuji, and the artistic director Tracy Ross about this upcoming performance.

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### OPINIONS

## a trans man's guide to survival in university.

by Noah Davis

*I'm writing this article as an ode to transgender students, specifically at UBCO. Expanding on my past article, I'm specifically focusing on 5 survival tips for transgender students in university, in order to make the world seem less draining and scary as a student just trying to get through their day, but also in order to give advice on how to survive a typical day on campus as a transgender person.*

At the moment I'm writing this, my human rights are being questioned in the United States.

During the 2023 Conservative Political Action Conference, speaker Michael Knowles stood on stage and said with full confidence, "Transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely," basically calling for genocide of the transgender community.

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## We Need to Talk About Toxic Masculinity:



Graphic by Derian Guadarrama, 2023.

## Is Healthy Masculinity the Move Forward?

by Ana Salgado

*"I'm expected to stay within the confines of masculinity or I'll never be seen as a 'real man'."*

About a week ago, I came upon a group on campus called "Healthy Masculinities." At first, I must say, I wasn't sure what the group stood for. I kept thinking to myself: What does that even mean? Is this a Men's Rights Activist group? Some people I talked to had similar confusions about the group's purpose on campus.

However, upon closer inspection and research, I realized that this term is far beyond what many of us (at first) thought it was.

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## Healthy Friendships: Why Don't People Talk About Them Enough?

by Lois Chan

*When we take a look at why some friendships crumble, it can become clear that there simply wasn't enough respect on one end or the other. Whether that's respect for the other person's privacy, time, well-being, energy, or feelings, good friendships require both parties to reciprocate good intentions.*

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### SPORTS

## ACADEMIC WEAPON: A GUIDE

by Carlos J. Real Lopez

*For now, you can become the worst nightmare of any paper, project or presentation: an academic weapon.*

The end of the year is looming, and like an object in a car's mirrors, it is closer than it appears. With it, of course, comes a slew of situations that are going to truly test what we are capable of as students, dreadful as that might be. That's right — you might have a paper that is worth 50% of your grade due in the next couple of days, or cumulative exams of the same weight that are back-to-back at the start of finals season. This need not be a dreadful situation — it never has to be. You can become the worst nightmare of any paper, project or presentation: an academic weapon.

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Photos by Owen Clark, 2023.

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Comic by Derian Guadarrama, 2023.



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# BREAKING THE MOLD: How **Body Traffic** is Shaking Up the Theater Scene

WORDS BY AISHA RISHI

When thinking about theater, what comes to your mind? Is it sitting in your high school auditorium, watching your classmates put on a production of *West Side Story*? Or the days you were forced to recite Shakespeare in your English class? UBCO's *Body Traffic* aims to defy these expectations, and show you a theater production you have never seen before. I interviewed performers Laken, Josie, Kamille, Bella, Okuji, and the artistic director Tracy Ross about this upcoming performance.

"*Body Traffic* is about the moments we experience in our day-to-day lives that go a little bit more unnoticed, but still leave a large impact," says Bella.

"After being separated and distant from each other all through the pandemic, we are starting to explore what happens when we get close again," mentions Tracy. "I wanted to highlight how we touch each other's lives. And then, I was thinking about touch and how we communicate in that way. Then, I was thinking about bodies, and then I was thinking about traffic, and then [the name *Body Traffic*] came together. I think I was probably driving at the time."

Laken explains that this show is not a typical "high school musical" and "is

not all about the words that are being spoken, and has a lot to do with the space in between."

"Our show's developed with a less strict [idea of a] protagonist and an antagonist. It's more of a reflection of unique people throughout our daily lives," says Laken. "The show is just a zoom in on one part of our life throughout that 24-hour period. Each actor is the protagonist in their own story and is in two scenes, with the show having 18 to 20 scenes in total. These scenes show short snippets of interactions between people throughout the day, even if they are not back-to-back. And we're each telling our own stories."

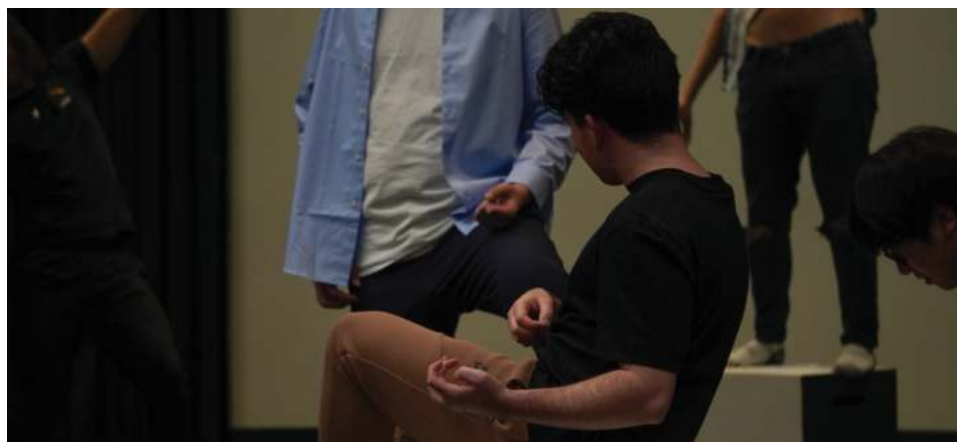
Tracy adds to this idea of the show being different from how people usually develop theater productions.

***"We didn't start with scripts. We started with bodies in space, and got everyone to play and generate ideas. [That way], everybody in the room has contributed to what is being shown."***

Laken elaborates more on the comment about the show being a collaboration, with everyone having a role to play.



Provided By Owen Clark, 2023.



Provided By Owen Clark, 2023.

"We don't have a production crew. We all [help with] marketing, props, costumes, the front-of-house, and sound."

Josie mentions how this collaboration is also seen on stage. "Even in transition scenes, we all intersect in one way or the other throughout each other's days."

Working with a team is all about "trusting the process, your team, and your director," according to Kamille. "When I came into this experience, I was [uncertain] about devising a show [in this way]. But I think it's been cool. We have a really strong cast of people. By working together, we're making something really cool that's worth being a part of." Kamille says this show has taught her to be "comfortable with the uncomfortable, because life is uncomfortable, weird, and messy. We have all put ourselves out of our comfort zones."

Other students who worked on this production say that this atypical theater style allowed them to reevaluate what they consider a typical "production," and how they perceive the world around them. "I'm the kind of person who always sees that the journey itself is greater than the destination or the ending," Okuji explains. "When we have a script, you are expected to reach towards this ending. But in our show, we see that the little snippets [of the day] are

equally as valuable. No matter how big or small, each moment is as valuable as the other."

The team mentions they would like the audience to take home a similar message from their production. "Do not discredit the smaller moments in your life. The little moments can be as important as the big," says Bella.

***"It's important for students that haven't seen theater since a middle school play or a high school play to come and get a different perspective of what theater is," Laken told me. "[The show] allows you to expand, enjoy yourself and have a good time. It's entertaining, it's going to pull some heart-strings, and it's going to make you laugh."***

*Body Traffic* has three shows from April 14-16th: Friday at 7 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets are available for \$10 in advance, and \$15 at the door. For more information, reach out to [bodytraffic.ubco@gmail.com](mailto:bodytraffic.ubco@gmail.com).

I look forward to seeing *Body Traffic* and how these incredible performers will surpass my expectations.

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# We Need to Talk About Toxic Masculinity: Is Healthy Masculinity the Move Forward?

WORDS BY ANA SALGADO

GRAPHIC BY DERIAN GUADARRAMA



About a week ago, I came upon a group on campus called “Healthy Masculinities.” At first, I must say, I wasn’t sure what the group stood for. I kept thinking to myself: What does that even mean? Is this a Men’s Rights Activist group? Some people I talked to had similar confusions about the group’s purpose on campus.

However, upon closer inspection and research, I realized that this term is far beyond what many of us (at first) thought it was. The group’s homepage can be found under the *Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office* (SVPRO) website. Its purpose and mission is to be “a

group of masculine-identified people talking about issues that matter: social expectations, mental health, suicide, dating, consent and sex.”

I immediately began doing more research about this term, because of course, the term resonates with a more familiar term that has been in conversation for a while: toxic masculinity. I couldn’t help but think that this was an important topic of conversation. How is toxic masculinity affecting men who do not hold a toxic masculinity complex?

*Is healthy masculinity, thus, a response to counter the effects that toxic masculinity has in society?*

Toxic masculinity is often defined as “the dominant form of masculinity wherein men use dominance, violence, and control to assert their power and superiority.”<sup>1</sup> Some other common traits also include: anti-feminist behavior, sexual aggression and violence, hyper independence, discrimination against people that aren’t heterosexual, and fear of emotions.

Many of us have, of course, experienced the impact that toxic masculinity has. More particularly, the effects it has on women, and the way we are treated by men with toxic masculinity. But, it is worth noting that even men who do not hold such complexes are still being affected by the societal effects of toxic masculinity. More broadly, even stereotypes and traits

— such as “fear of emotions” and “hyper independence” — can regularly be seen amongst men who, although we as a society do not consider them toxically masculine, are still being inevitably affected by it, due to societal stigmas and stereotypes that have been in place for generations.

I asked a couple of masculine-identified people how toxic masculinity affects them, and whether they thought healthy masculinity was an important response to counter the effects.

*“Personally, I do not consider myself someone with toxic masculinity traits, quite the opposite. But, common stereotypes about men, such as how I can fix anything or how we are always looking at girls at the gym, make me feel as if everyday is like walking through a minefield, where I need to be careful of what I do and what I say to others. On the other hand, I also feel the need to fulfill the stereotype of a young guy who has to deal with his own problems without asking anyone for help. But truly, I’m struggling on the inside.”*

He went on to add what he thinks of the importance about having healthy masculinity:

*“I feel like some of us need to learn how to forget about these kinds of stereotypes that constantly affect us, and understand that we are not alone and it’s okay to have feelings, and show what the majority of us guys consider as ‘weaknesses’.”*

Noah Davis, a fellow *The Phoenix News* writer, said:

*“As a transgender man, it [toxic masculinity] affects me differently than it would a cisgender man. For me, if I even express my gender in a feminine way, cisgender people assume I no longer identify as a man. I’m expected to stay within the confines of masculinity or I’ll never be seen as a ‘real man.’”*

He went on to add:

*“In the end, I realized that no matter what I do (dressing unconventional, expressing my emotions), that I am still the man I say I am. I really think there is such a thing as healthy masculinity. And, I think I’ve learned it through friendships with cisgender men and with transgender men. Healthy masculinity, to me, is the ability to reclaim your masculinity in a way that is meaningful to you. It’s also just the idea that expressing emotions and being affectionate to your guy friends is okay, and still very much masculine.”*

My takeaway from my peers’ comments is that we must all reflect on how toxic masculinity affects us, and ensure we don’t leave anyone out of the conversation. Healthy masculinity is a move towards the fight against toxic masculinity. But, change comes from within, and without critical reflection and conversations like these, it’ll be impossible to move forward.

What do you think? Make sure to check out the Healthy Masculinities group at UBCO for more information! <https://sv-pro.ok.ubc.ca/healthy-masculinities/>

## Healthy Friendships: Why Don’t People Talk About Them Enough?

WORDS BY LOIS CHAN

Friends. Everyone has them. If you have trouble agreeing with that, don’t worry — I count my mom as one of my best friends; you can too. But, though friendships are often an integral part of our lives, we don’t always talk about what constitutes a healthy friendship.

*Just like romantic relationships, people are involved in platonic relationships — therefore, people can get hurt.*

I don’t know about you, but I can name a couple of dramatic platonic “break-ups” in my past. My previous experiences mean I carefully pick and choose friends nowadays, because incompatibility and red flags exist in friendships too.

Whether it’s shit talking or backstabbing or simply not vibing on the same frequency, sometimes friendships can end explosively, or with a slow fade into acquaintances... then strangers... after grievances are left secret and unsaid.

It’s always awkward when you have to scurry past an old dorm neighbour or first-year classmate on campus, trying your best to not make eye contact so you

don’t have to say “hi.” It’s even more awkward if you hung out everyday and shared formative university memories with them — only to no longer speak to each other after a terrible fight.

*The truth is, friends come and go, and that’s okay. But, when we take a look at why some friendships crumble, it can become clear that there simply wasn’t enough respect on one end or the other. Whether that’s respect for the other person’s privacy, time, well-being, energy, or feelings, good friendships require both parties to reciprocate good intentions.*

So, if you’ve been second-guessing a friendship that just doesn’t feel right — consider this:

*What kinds of friendships do you want in your life? What kinds of friends do you want around? How can we all be better friends to the people around us?*

**When Trauma Dumping Might Lead to Friend-Dumping**

If you haven’t heard of trauma

dumping before, it’s whenever someone suddenly shares information about intensely traumatic events in their life without notice. Though trauma dumping isn’t done with harmful intentions and is often a subconscious coping mechanism, being surprised with difficult and potentially triggering information about someone comes with an emotional toll.

Trauma dumping to “forge deep bonds” can potentially create overly dependent friendships that are built on a therapist-and-patient dynamic. When a friendship enters this toxic and emotionally draining stage, the “therapist friend” might feel like they’re being used, with no one to advise them on *their* problems.

Another outcome is when friends don’t have the energy to properly listen to each other and process serious topics. If you pour out your heart to a friend, only for them to respond with “Well, that sucks,” then move on to another topic, it might feel like what you shared meant nothing at all.

Now, I’m not saying you should internalize your struggles and deal with them alone (please don’t)! Just make sure

you’re sharing personal information about yourself with people you *know* you can trust. By trust, I don’t just mean someone who can keep a secret — they also need to be capable of emotionally supporting you *and* having fun with you too. Time spent with friends shouldn’t solely consist of unpacking trauma.

*We shouldn’t have to carry our burdens alone, but we need to acknowledge that sharing difficult or traumatic experiences with someone asks them to be responsible as a friend in supporting your well-being.*

Every friendship requires work on both ends — work that comes in the form of loyalty, in sticking by each other’s sides through thick and thin. If you have a friend that constantly rejects opportunities for you to emotionally support each other, then they might not be someone who wants or deserves a deeper friendship with you.

**Friendship is Magic — and Also Contractual?**

There’s different levels of inti-

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# a trans man's guide to survival in university.

WORDS BY NOAH DAVIS

At the moment I'm writing this, my human rights are being questioned in the United States.

During the 2023 Conservative Political Action Conference, speaker Michael Knowles stood on stage and said with full confidence, "Transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely,"<sup>1</sup> basically calling for genocide of the transgender community. 35 bills are being introduced in Texas alone, which target transgender individuals and their right to gender-affirming care and abortion.<sup>2</sup>

*I wake up — and after scrolling through TikTok and Instagram reels on these transphobic bills — I throw my phone across the room, into the pile of clothes at the end of the bed. I get up, brush my teeth, pick out an outfit that makes my chest look flat enough, and head out the door to my first class. I pretend that everything is alright, putting this all in my emotional backpack.*

After class, I cry in the dining hall, after watching videos and reading comments on more TikToks, asking my friends: "Why can't we just be respected? Is it too much to ask to not debate the existence of transgender individuals? Why do people think so many transgender people commit suicide?" I eat cucumbers, because they seem to be the only thing that cheers me up.

Even though I'm in Canada, it's scary to know what's happening "next door," and I still get scared walking out my front door sometimes. Something that my cisgender and straight classmates have the privilege of doing is ignoring the concerns regarding these ideologies from the United States. Cisgender students have the privilege of not fully understanding gender and concerns for gender-affirming care, because they don't experience gender the way I do. They don't have to worry about their needs and their rights being taken away, simply because of how they identify, with regards to their gender. They don't carry the same emotional backpack that transgender students do.

I'm writing this article as an ode to transgender students, specifically at UBCO. Expanding on my past article, "Reflecting On The Transgender Community At UBCO" — which touches on the resilient transgender community here at UBCO — with this article, I'm specifically focusing on 5 survival tips for transgender students in university. Hopefully, this makes the world seem less draining and scary as a student just trying to get through their day, and also gives advice on how to survive a typical day on campus as a transgender person.

**1. Express your gender identity in whatever way you want, but also in a way that feels safest to you.**

When I came out as transgender at 17 and I started my transition, I was simply embracing my masculine side. I rejected nail polish, makeup, and anything that was remotely feminine. That was until I started my first year at UBCO. I decided that I would grow my hair out, simply because I couldn't afford haircuts. However, the motivation for this changed as I realized that a lot of men grew their hair out in their teenage years, which made me feel euphoric and masculine. I was painting my nails black, because other boys my age were, but then I started to paint my nails other colors too, simply because I like having colorful nails.

In a way, I was deconstructing the toxic masculinity I felt I had to confine to because of how other boys my age expressed themselves, and how society expects trans men to express themselves in order to be perceived as men.

*I was starting to explore different forms of self expression, through writing and making other transgender friends, as well as reclaiming my teenage years and childhood in a way that was, and still is, meaningful to me. But, I also did this by wearing makeup, painting my nails, and wearing pretty headbands.*

I wasn't given a guidebook about gender expression. I wasn't given a guidebook on being transgender in university. I never expected my gender expression to change, and if you told me three years ago that I would be doing my makeup and growing my hair out in a way that reclaims masculinity in my own way, I would've laughed.

This is all to say that my first piece of advice would be to express your gender in ways that matter to you, no matter what you think other people will say. It might surprise you how you choose to express yourself, and how free you are to express yourself in ways you thought you never would.

*But also, express your gender in a way that feels safest to you; sometimes it feels scary to push conventions, but university has taught me that there is more freedom to be yourself. In the end, self-expression is survival for transgender people.*

**2. Find a community of queer or transgender students who you can share your experiences with.**

Finding a group of other transgender or queer people helps you to explore your expression in the way you want, have meaningful conversations about what it means to be transgender, and create an outlet where you can express your fear and frustration about the transphobia we witness in other parts of Canada and the US.

The connections I've made with other queer students at UBCO and other transgender students have allowed me to form a support system. Many of my closest friends, who are queer and/or transgender, have been with me during my most dysphoric days, and when I'm frustrated about transphobia happening in the world — recently, this has been when I open any form of social media and read about transphobic legislation in the US.

*We've sat on my dorm room floor, late at night, discussing our transgender experiences, in a way that has made us go, "Yea! I feel that deep in my fucking soul!"*

Don't be alone in your frustration; being transgender and a student is like wearing an emotional backpack. It's full of facts about gender-affirming care, so that you can correct people on transphobic rhetoric. It's full of all transphobic videos and ideologies that we have to witness on the Internet. Sometimes, you need help from other people to lighten the weight, which can be done by finding the resilient transgender community here at UBCO that I talked about. Making other transgender friends also allows you to explore gender expression together and feel less alone in your exploration.

**3. Take binding breaks (if you wear a binder).**

Walking around campus and sitting in class while wearing a binder tends to be a lot. Campus is a safe place compared to the rest of Kelowna, and I've felt safe to wear a bra instead on the days my ribs and back hurt more than I expected.

Not binding can be especially dys-

phoric for me and for other transmasculine individuals. However, taking binding breaks is important in order to not have too much back pain, whilst walking to classes. I've had moments when I've had to take my binder off in a bathroom, because I was in so much pain that I almost started crying. UBCO is a small campus, however it can still be a strenuous trek, especially while wearing a binder.

**4. Use the bathroom you feel safest in.**

I use the women's bathroom in buildings that don't offer gender-neutral bathrooms, because it's the bathroom I feel safest in. I feel much safer in gender-neutral bathrooms on campus than any other bathroom, because they take away the dilemma of which bathroom I should use.

*For other students who've witnessed me stand in front of the women's bathroom in ARTS, struggling to decide whether to go in, I sincerely apologize for blocking your way.*

What I'm trying to get at is: take advantage of gender-neutral bathrooms when you can, and don't go into the men's or women's bathroom if it feels unsafe to you, regardless of whether or not it matches the gender you identify with. At the end of the day, you should feel safe on campus, especially while using the bathroom.

*It isn't fair that transgender people have to choose which bathroom to use based on safety, but it is important to put our safety first, and it is a common experience among transgender individuals. This is a guide to survival, after all.*

**5. Drop a class or tutorial if a TA or a professor says something that borders on transphobia.**

I was in an 8 a.m. English tutorial when the TA told the class to remember: "We are not our opinions, no matter if we have an LGBTQ student, or a student who thinks a different way." I felt uncomfortable, especially when the TA looked at me after saying, "an LGBTQ student." I also felt uncomfortable about what he was trying to get at. So, I dropped the tutorial for a different tutorial, because it felt safest for me.

I also include my pronouns in my emails to professors and in my Canvas display name, so that they know what my pronouns are. However, I acknowledge that another safe option is to not express your gender identity and pronouns to profs or TAs in order to avoid transphobia, which is valid as well.

So, drop that tutorial or class if the instructor says something that feels wrong; it's safer to go with your gut as a transgender person, especially to feel safe on campus and in university in general.

In the end, all transgender students want is to be able to survive like everyone else. Sometimes, surviving can be hard, especially when you don't know what you're going into. However, I hope that what I said in this article resonates with some people. As I said, being transgender is like carrying around an emotional backpack, and I want to make that backpack a little lighter.



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<sup>1</sup> Zoledziowski, A. (2023, March 6). CPAC Speaker Calls for Eradication of "Transgenderism," Crowd Goes Wild. Vice News. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvjgnq/cpac-transgenderism-speaker-called-for-eradication>

<sup>2</sup> 2023 anti-trans bill tracker. Trans Legislation Tracker. Retrieved March 14, 2023, from <https://translegislation.com/>



CONTINUATION OF HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS (PAGE 3)

macy by which we categorize our friends. Maybe there’s a handful of “party” friends you get drunk with. “School” friends that you only study with. “Legacy” friends that you’ve been tight with since you were kids.

Whether it’s spoken or not, we have different “contracts” with friends about what we talk about and how we treat each other. While I feel comfortable hugging certain friends, I know others don’t prefer physical contact. Some people also prefer not to talk about their love or sex lives, so it’s essential to not broach certain topics with friends unless they’re willing or ready to share.

**Everyone defines friendships differently: I personally don’t consider someone my friend until we hang out one-on-one outside of the context where we first met. But, I respect my acquaintances just as much as I do my friends, and can have great conversations with them too.**

Additionally, everyone has their own way of managing their friendships communication-wise. After quarantine, I’ve found that myself and many others struggle with keeping text conversations consistent; being able to interact in-person

is a fresh breath of air, compared to being stuck in our rooms all day on Zoom or FaceTime.

**If I don’t have the energy to engage in a text conversation that’s not urgent, I end up forgetting to respond for three to five business days. As university students, after all, we have a lot of assignments to finish; when we’re not studying with friends on campus, we’re either going out to unwind (extrovert-style) or decompressing alone at home in a blanket burrito (introvert-style).**

But, if your love language happens to be quality time, and a friend is terrible at following up with plans to a frustrating degree — then maybe you shouldn’t direct your energy towards maintaining that relationship. Platonic compatibility isn’t just about liking the same shows or games, it’s also about agreeing on how much effort you put into the relationship together. Depending on our life stages, that level of dedication can fluctuate with distance, time, and circumstance, which can make or break friendships.

Having moved across the country to attend university, I have lots of close friends from high school that I touch base

with once or twice during the school year. Though we’ve grown and changed with our new life experiences, when we reunite during the summer, it’s like no time has passed at all.

At the end of our university lives, we have to accept that we all have to move on from the time we spend here. Whether that means we’ll leave Kelowna to find a job or continue our education elsewhere, we may no longer be surrounded by the friends we currently have.

By investing in the healthy, fulfilling, and loving friendships we have in the moment, we’ll be able to make the most of our memories at school, look back into the future with fondness, and reconnect with our old friends — knowing that we can pick right up where we left off. **Though proximity helps friendships flourish, the main thing that needs to be consistent in our relationships is love and respect for one another. Just because you haven’t talked or met up for months, doesn’t mean you should value each other any less. If it feels awkward the moment you reconnect, it could be that you’re no longer willing to open up to each other.**

Conclusion

This isn’t your foolproof guide to perfect friendships. Nor does it assume that trauma dumping or a lack of reciprocity are automatic signs that a friendship is doomed from the start. But hopefully, it helps you consider what kind of friend you want to be, and the friendships you want in your life. Keeping behaviour and boundaries in check can lead to fewer fights and falling-outs.

Maintaining a healthy friendship *needs* effective communication. This ranges from asking how your friend’s day was so you know more about their lives, to checking in on their progress with coping, healing, or solving their issues. When egos are bruised, it’s not about who gets the last word; resolving arguments means moving forward with all hurt feelings addressed, understood, and kept in mind for the future, so resentment doesn’t build up.

Friends, no matter how many or few you have, can make our lives better. Friendships are often formative elements of our university lives, *especially* when they’re meaningful connections that allow us to navigate through the hardships and joys of life together, not alone.

# ACADEMIC WEAPON: A GUIDE

WORDS BY CARLOS J. REAL LOPEZ

The end of the year is looming, and like an object in a car’s mirrors, it is closer than it appears. With it, of course, comes a slew of situations that are going to truly test what we are capable of as students, dreadful as that might be. That’s right — you might have a paper that is worth 50% of your grade due in the next couple of days, or cumulative exams of the same weight that are back-to-back at the start of finals season. This need not be a dreadful situation — it never has to be. You can become the worst nightmare of any paper, project or presentation: an academic weapon.

A what now? Academic weapon? What in the Urban Dictionary/TikTok trend is this? Well, an academic weapon is just an individual who excels in the classroom through sheer will. This is no different than an athlete who absolutely outshines the competition, en route to domination and accolades. While diametrically opposed in types of exertion, there are resemblances between those excellent in each respective field; that is to say that even if a basketball player who averages an efficient triple-double and a pre-med student have little in common, there are underlying ingredients in their success that even you can adopt for a positive impact in your life — not just in school, but beyond it. If you choose to accept the mission of becoming an academic weapon, here are a couple of mental strategies that high performance athletes frequent that are sure to make you an academic weapon, unparalleled in the Okanagan.

EYE IN THE MIND

The first strategy you need to employ is a visualization, a mental image so to speak, that will help with your performance. In Layman’s terms, this involves knowing what you want to do, mentally picturing yourself in that situation and playing out the outcomes in your mind, in real time, so as to experience the success before it has even happened. It is like dreaming, but with purpose. A wise man once said: “the first step to reaching your destination is to set one, then you plan and then you go.” After all, without knowing where you are going, you will just randomly exert energy without purpose or benefit to yourself. This, itself, is a tragic predicament. Not that there’s

anything wrong with having a couple of days where you rest and do nothing, but even these breaks have to be in service of a journey that you have committed yourself to.

Mental imagery or visualization is very much employed by the top athletes in the world, since around 30 years ago, when cognitive techniques to improve performance started being employed by the medical staff of sports teams. As already established, the method for this is relatively straightforward. First, define your objective: whether that is an exam or a presentation, it is up to you. Just make sure you are being deliberate with your depiction. Then, relax and meditate. It is usually helpful to close your eyes and concentrate deeply on that objective, completely to a point where your conscience is present in between both places. Once you are mentally there, imagine you are doing precisely what it takes to succeed in that endeavor: if it is an exam, picture yourself answering the questions perfectly, focused, without panic or fear, but with the sense of triumphantly solving the difficult puzzle that exams can be. Focus on that moment: what you are doing to triumph, where are you sitting, how do you feel, what are you wearing. The more details, even sensory ones, the better. While in that moment, do not skip around (as it usually is the case in dreams). Play it out in real time if possible.

If you are doing this correctly, by the time you get to the exam, you will feel as though that exam is something you have already aced before, an innumerable amount of times. The benefit, of course, is that instead of your pre-exam energy being composed of Red Bull and anxiety, you are, instead, present and calm in the moment, ready to solve whatever riddles the professors throw at you for the next 2 hours or so.

Annex to visualization. Personalization and Mindfulness.

However, that is not all that there is to it. While it is a general description of what is necessary to achieve results from visualization, there are additional elements that you need to tuum est it. Hence, you must also consider some of the following habits to aid your visualization: training, reflection, and motivation.

Each element can be integrated with visualization and can benefit you.

Training should be obvious enough. In sports, without training, you can only go so far as your talent takes you; this is the same for school. Through repetition of exercises, through the mastering of skills, and through sheer repetition, your mind will become more adept at the task. It is not rocket science, but it is science. However, training must be done strategically, based on what the aforementioned objective of yours is. To illustrate that concept better: if you want to be a great short distance sprinter, you might not need to train your endurance as much as your acceleration. Sure, the latter might help you, but you have to know where your bread will be buttered.

Knowing where that bread is buttered, so to speak, is a poignant description of the role reflection plays. No one knows your own limitations and strengths better than you, so make sure to tend to the former when useful to the latter, but never neglect your strengths. Take, for instance, a player like Lionel Messi. I’m sure he could, if he wanted to, build up enough muscle and strength to look like a bodybuilder, but doing so would invariably hurt one of his utmost strengths, which is his agility.

Back to the studying part of this: if you are great at taking notes, prioritize a regime of preparation that frames challenges in that sense. In other words, turn the difficult syllabus content into notetaking, and since you are good at this skill, the river of knowledge will flow at ease in your mind. If you are an audio-visual learner, seek documentaries. If you need many repetitions of an exercise, repeat it a thousand times; if you don’t, then simply repeat as many as you need. The key lies in not wasting your precious time and energy in redundant methods that don’t work for you, while also being honest about what you need. This can be difficult due to our tendencies to overestimate our strengths, so be honest with yourself about your objectives and abilities. If you just want to graduate, there is no need to exert yourself like a PhD valedictorian, and if you are the latter, you obviously know how much you must exert yourself. Just maximize your abilities — that is the point of training.

While all that rings pretty to the ears, in reality, it is not easy to carry out such weighty commitments over a sustained period of time. The common evidence of this is in gym attendance as the year goes on, compared to January 1st. Fortunately, there are two things working in your favour. One, you only have roughly a month of classes to go, and two, you got this. Motivation should be easy enough to come by; again, you ought to know what your fears and your drivers are. You don’t need to read dozens of self-help books to know that, but if you did, this would be a central finding. So, motivate yourself to keep consistent to your training and objective, simple as that. Here are some of my personal favourite ways to motivate myself. While it is far from an exhaustive data set, it should be enough to get you thinking of similar ways — set small goals that are easy to achieve, reward yourself with snacks, engage in positive self-talk, or get yourself a good coffee (or another drink, up to you).

If you complement your visualization with training to increase your competence, motivation to keep going, and reflection to not lose your way, your chances of becoming a full-fledged, top-of-the-line academic weapon are favourable. After all, nothing in this life is guaranteed, except taxes and death; so despite that, you could fail. However, keep in mind the following. Firstly, failure is not fatal in a university scenario. You can always come back stronger, smarter, and maybe with a re-evaluated set of priorities for your life; hell, you can even discover that your current career path is not the one you wanted, and that failure was the wakeup call you needed. But, more importantly, failure to prepare is preparing to fail. In preparing, you are already improving your chances, and a chance is often all you need in this life to reach your destiny and carry forth your ambition. And personally, there is not much that I could ask for — to have that chance, to be in that moment prepared and ready, to meet with whatever task is at hand and utterly shine — and in doing so, march closer to the fulfillment of my own dreams. For the sake of your dreams, give yourself that chance; and as an academic weapon — nay, as a person — go forth, for the challenges lie ahead for you to conquer.





# FEBRUARY *Film*







# BY OWEN CLARK





# Recall

WORDS BY ANONYMOUS

In Vietnamese the word “nhớ” simultaneously translates to “remember” and “miss”. The language has many words that are pronounced and spelled the same, which have completely different meanings based on context. This is one of the few nuances of Vietnamese that has stuck with me.

When I was young, I was fluent and spoke with my parents daily. I asked them about flowers, if I could climb the trees in forests, if we could go wade in the ocean, if they thought the stars watched over us. I was always curious, running where I shouldn’t, picking up animals I didn’t know how to take care of, climbing trees that peered over the horizon. My mother would always lecture me, “**Mẹ muốn con phải cẩn thận. Đừng bị đau với đừng đi xa qua. Khi nào mẹ không thấy con thì mẹ nghĩ con đi lạc rồi.**”

*My baby. I want you to be careful. Don’t get hurt, don’t run too far. When I don’t see you I think that I’ve lost you.*

I would let out an exasperated sigh. “**Đạ mẹ, con hiểu rồi.**”

*Okay mom, I understand.*

I’d brush off her remarks, dismissing them as overbearing. I would still run off into the forests, because I’d always find my way back to her. For years, my fixation was on learning more about the world around me, wanting to chase after things that were not mine.

I was 16 when I realized my ignorance. As a child, I lacked the context needed to understand my mother’s sacrifices. I hadn’t known that she’d immigrated from Vietnam to Canada in 1991, abandoning everything she had for a chance at giving her future children something she did not have: opportunities. In Vietnam, my mother didn’t even finish elementary school; instead, she became a cog in the cycle of child labour. Despite her lack of support, she still managed to — decades later — become the owner of a home, and be a supportive mother to my brothers and I. I didn’t see this as a child. Ignorantly, I focused on her fractured English instead. My actions still haunt me to this day. I was an unappreciative child, unable to realize the distance that was steadily growing between us. Her progress in learning English remained stagnant, while my ability to speak Vietnamese diminished as I grew older, as a result of speaking with my parents less and less. Meanwhile, in school, my favorite subject was English, and I would spend the entirety of my days focused on learning more about the language. I learned about Roald Dahl’s classics, Shakespeare’s visions, and the echoes of stoicism through Ryan Holiday. On



*Provided by anonymous, 2023.*

the other hand, in speaking only a basic level of Vietnamese, I was unable to learn of all the hopes and dreams my mother brought to this country. As time progressed, we became less and less capable of meeting in the middle of either English or Vietnamese.

I wonder if she sees me as the result of all her wishes, the things she misses, if she’s also pained by the loss of emotion and understanding through translation. If the situation remains as is, the stories I pass down to my future grandchildren will not be those of tradition and culture — it will be those from my Canadian-born mind. I ran from my mother tongue to immerse myself in the English language. I had grown into someone who was unable to speak to their own mother properly.

My mother began calling me every other day since she moved away.

“**Con nhớ mẹ không?**”

*My daughter, do you miss me?*

“**Đạ, con nhớ mẹ.**”

*Yes, I miss you.*

But, how could I tell you, mom? What words could I string together to perfectly convey how I felt? Mom, I’m scared I’m starting to miss you more than I can remember you.

In 2018, my mother and I were told that my grandma passed away from old age. We were both sitting in the living room, on a dark green velvet couch that has long been fraying at the hems.

My mother had her phone on speaker for a call from my uncle; he had texted and said it was serious. I don’t remember exactly what he said, but

the room felt heavy, like a cotton ball soaked in oil. I heard everything — the tick of our clock over the dinner table, distant piano keys from my neighbor’s home, a midsummer breeze against our window. I expected to hear a snuffle, or words, but there were none. My mother was sitting upright on the couch, phone in her hands, and a furrow in her brow. She slowly exhaled and began to dial my other uncles and aunts’ to ask if they’re okay. Then, she began helping my brothers and I pack our suitcases. She didn’t verbally express her grief, admitting to no one how sadness was swallowing her whole.

She wouldn’t cry, and it made me want to. What could I say?

Suddenly, I felt ashamed of myself. I lugged English novels everywhere, reviewed essays with teachers, and spent my leisure time studying the meditations of philosophers. My mother came to Canada to provide me with a good future, but at what cost? I doubt she had intended to lose her children to Western culture. In this country, I fought tooth and nail to become an academic weapon in hopes of being rewarded through meritocracy. I never thought about how I abandoned my ancestors language, traditions, and culture — the price of my education was the abandonment of my heritage. Here I was, a modern day Christian janissary, a modern day product of assimilation, unable to console my own mother. At this point, I’d been studying Vietnamese in hopes of expanding my vocabulary, but what could I do with my fractured Vietnamese? What words could help me meet her in the middle, for us to reach an understanding?

“**Con xin lỗi mẹ, Con xin lỗi.**”

*I’m sorry Mom. I’m so sorry.*

As I held her hand, she gently spoke,

“**Không sao con.**”

“**Không có gì ma sống hết cuộc đời, con, giống như mình. Con có hiểu không?**”

“*It’s okay my child,*” she paused, fixing her eyes on mine. “*Nothing is infinite my child, not even us. Do you understand?*”

Then, I saw her face in a new light. Her long, black hair slowly graying, her skin becoming creased with time — I imagined her breath catching. I knew that one day, far in the future, I would lose her. She would succumb to her mortality, and I too, would be forced to bear the pain with grace. I would begin to grasp the impermanence of life: how the sun sets, but how it too, rises. I would mourn, crying in the comforts of closed rooms, alone. I’d spread my mother’s ashes at the tops of mountains, in the depths of the great blue sea, and through the lush vegetation of forests. One day, I would walk and find that my mother is nowhere, and everywhere at once. I would find her voice in joyful tunes, her long hair in the whiskers of cats, her embrace in Sunday’s morning sun, her freckles adorning my night skies — I would close my eyes and be with my mother once more, then open my eyes to a world without her. I will never forget her.

In a world deluged by chatter, sometimes the simplest phrases are the most important ones.

“**Con hiểu mẹ. Con thương mẹ.**”

*I understand, Mom. I love you.*

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