

Going Crazy Via Silence

I was sitting very still, hoping nobody would speak to me.

"¿Estás aburrido?"

"¿Que?" I responded in a panic, being talked to for the first time in 30 minutes.

Being in the high school classes of my Costa Rican pen pal forced me into a lot of situations where I would fake a yawn or cough to avoid eye contact, or even speak to the person on my right. While in Costa Rica with my seventh grade class, I had plenty of wonderful spanish conversations with people, but it was the school setting that destroyed my desire to try. Clearly this was apparent to the young man asking me this.

"Are you boring?" he said in English, quickly giving up on my ability to comprehend.

"No, I'm just tired."

As I explained to him how late we slept the previous night, I couldn't help but think that; 'Yeah I am boring', but I gave the response I could most easily back up.

The year before this, in 'United States School', I really felt like all of my social abilities crumbled. Another year prior to this one, was the last one for a couple of people I should have considered rocks in my life. I returned to school from summer like a totally different person. I couldn't finish, start or continue conversations.

I remember trying to communicate that I had really enjoyed a show I watched over the summer, to someone I didn't normally feel uncomfortable talking to. I just asked them if they

watched the show and they replied 'no'. Nothing was said after this, neither of us had a response. I remember thinking: 'Damn, I wanna die, This is the worst'.

Many, many more similar interactions, pushed me to general silence. I don't think it affected me very much outside of school, but this new attitude kept me pretty quiet in school and to save everything for elsewhere. A few of my best friends actually still went to this school, but a few people wasn't enough to make me feel any real confidence.

I don't know exactly how to string all of this together, however, I knew that I didn't feel like I could do or say anything without totally overthinking it. There is no true origin of this, but these were only the events that came to mind as I tried to backtrack it.

After this original trip to Costa Rica, I realized that I didn't clash well with many of the people in my elementary school class. With a solid thirteen individuals, I don't think I'd interact unless I was interacted with first. I just strongly associated these people with the bad interactions I had at school, so it is likely my fault and not theirs. Either way, I became quite unhappy with my school situation and I quickly developed the thought that I would just hold out on being a person until I was away from these people and my situation.

Turns out it doesn't work like that, and I think it may have caused some actual damage. Even if I didn't always live like I was withholding part of myself, that was always the way I thought. By the beginning of high school, I must have realized that I wasn't going to magically become a different person, however I definitely expected more. I expected more in my ability to not regret the things I say and to be able to be more open with the people in my life. I can say now that I am definitely more intrigued by the people and things around me. However, I

constantly wish I was never driven to that state of mind. There is certainly a feeling that I am behind others in the realm of social security, but I feel this benefits me in noticing and appreciating little things.