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Find balance, not rhythm

by Sam Garifalos | CONTRIBUTOR | HE/HIM/HIS | bnw25003@uconn.edu

Since graduating high school, one constant theme in my life has been the search for a consistent rhythm. A steady academic, social and mental state where I could just be reliably happy and content. No longer would I need to constantly monitor every aspect of my life. Instead, I could just coast in this blissful contentedness, never again having to undergo the slog of introspection. Until fairly recently, I was convinced this routine was possible to obtain. All I needed to do, I thought, was have a few things go right, and I could sustain it. If I could find a reliable friend group, have a decent GPA for a semester and get on the right medications, it would be smooth sailing from there. This belief was reinforced when, for the first time in my life, these things started to occur. My first semester in community college, I aced all of my classes, and my social and mental situation improved drastically. From my perspective, I had achieved the rhythm I had for so long been searching for. I started to ignore the nagging thoughts in my head of the inevitable struggles and instability that lie ahead. Now that I had found my rhythm, I could simply coast. Unfortunately, though, this wouldn't last.

As the next academic year came about, my friend, who I had relied on for much of the social and mental security I had come to enjoy, left for college out of state, leaving me once again in a state of instability. My mental health and academic performance began to diminish, leaving me back where I

started, searching for that oasis of stability. Recognizing this, I once again began working to build a foundation for myself. For the first time in a while, I began to feel satisfaction with my life again, not from rhythm, but from the knowledge that I could actually sustain my success through this balanced approach to struggles. Instead of trying to find the perfect routine, I was facing my struggles head-on. Without even realizing it, in my search for rhythm, I had stumbled upon the very approach to life which made it obsolete. Unfortunately, I did not yet see this. Soon, I started the process of applying to universities and getting on track to pursue my passion for motorsport and engineering, leading me to UConn.

When I arrived here, I took it as a new beginning. Unlike the

limited environment of community college, UConn offered the full university experience. I had seemingly endless opportunities to meet people with similar interests and a bounty of clubs and courses with which to explore my passions. For the first time in a while, I found my coursework interesting, my social life thriving, and I even discovered a new passion writing for The Daily Campus. Slowly, the balanced approach to life I had cultivated began to fade. The allure of complete stability once again pulled me in, blinding me to the inherent instability of life. Once again, I grew complacent, discarding introspection as an unnecessary habit. Once again, this was not a

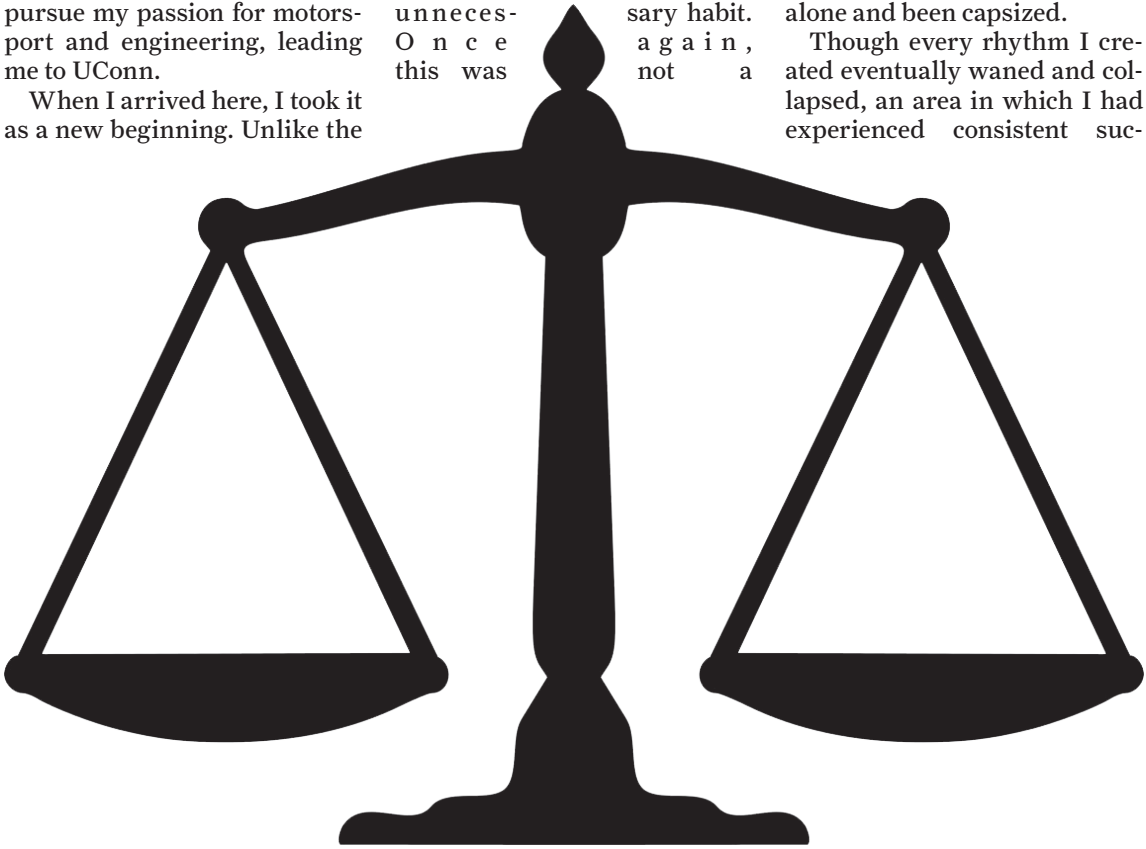
smart thing to do.

Soon, major assignments and final exams approached, club pressures increased, and my social relationships began to strain, all combining to form a psychological weight that affected every aspect of my life. As had happened several times before, when faced with the inevitable chaos and volatility of real life, my carefully tuned rhythm began to crumble to dust, with the balance that may once have withstood these pressures having been long since abandoned. Instead of seeing the menacing swells on the horizon for what they were and steering to confront them, I had put my faith in rhythm alone and been capsized.

Though every rhythm I created eventually waned and collapsed, an area in which I had experienced consistent suc-

cess was the buildup of those rhythms. Each time I fell from my pedestal of stability, I eventually picked myself up and began to redevelop my balance. When community college turned out not to be the permanent oasis I had hoped it would be, I searched for satisfaction elsewhere, eventually ending up at UConn. When I underperformed academically early in my first semester here, I took a new approach to studying and began to do better. It was then that I began to realize that my true aim should never have been to simply reach a summit of stability and satisfaction, but to develop my ability to climb ever closer to it. Not to eliminate the bumps in the road that might disrupt my perfect rhythm, but to absorb them and keep moving forward.

This is what I plan to do moving forward. I can't guarantee it'll work. I honestly can't even say for certain that I won't just abandon it a few months in and return to my search for rhythm. What I can say, though, is that it's worth trying. So, as this school year comes to a close and we all depart to engage in our various personal pursuits for the summer, the best advice I can offer is this: There is no rhythm, no routine, no stable state that is completely immune to the chaos of life. Sometimes, it's best to accept there will be bumps in the road (and cavernous potholes too), and focus instead on pressing forward regardless. Good luck, UConn. May you find success in whatever passion you choose to pursue and may no rogue wave capsize you.



COMIC BY CHRISTIAN BARBARA



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