

Saying Yes to Life (101)
A freshman perspective
by Natasha Fallahi

My first day of chiropractic college hadn't even started and I was already slated to spend a weekend on the Life 101 retreat. Like everyone else who anxiously packed and moved their life to Hayward, CA, I had a personal narrative that led me to Life West. Introductions were always followed by the question "So...what brought you to chiropractic school?" Some of us (think) we know why we're here. Others haven't quite found the words. Sydne Pomin said, "Life 101 helped me realize that I didn't choose to be a Chiropractor, Chiropractic has selected me. The activities, exercises and people at Life 101 allowed me to find my purpose." We're all here for reason, whether we've realized it yet or not. One does not make their way to the fringe by accident. From what I've seen, chiropractors are distinguished by big-picture thinking and a sense of purpose. Life 101 dove into the core of the obvious and subtle shifts that occur over the course of our lives (whether past, present or future) and helped solidify our sense of purpose in what we are pursuing.

It was early Friday evening when the Life101 caravan arrived in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We were exhausted from a syllabus-filled week of hand-holding and study skills counseling. Wasting no time, we grabbed our flashlights and headed out on our first adventure: a late-night high ropes course. It's funny how quickly strangers become friends when they're scaling 65 ft trees and jumping out of them together. Once everyone was high on adrenaline, we gathered back at the lodge at about midnight where Dr. Kelly launched into a workshop on the nature of fear and limitations. Morgan Waterstraat loved this integrative approach, saying, "The high ropes tied nicely into the personal growth workshops because the fears you faced were immediate, while the others were more buried and not as likely to be in the forefront of your thoughts, such as fear of heights." As Dr. Kelly pointed out, for some people, the physical tasks would be a breeze and the emotional feats would be monumentally difficult. For others, the opposite might be true. Life 101 let us experiment with our limits through challenges that were reminiscent of an easygoing childhood.

Over the next day and a half (which felt like a week...in a good way) we pushed our own boundaries and learned to let go through a whirlwind of creative, fun and stimulating activities. I don't want to ruin the surprise for future Life 101ers, but I will say there were ropes courses, martial arts board breaking, fun races, campfire stories, yoga, meditation, vision boards, and a decent amount of Michael Jackson and left-handed hugs.

But without a doubt, one of the most valuable parts of walking into the woods with 40 people is walking out with 40 friends. As cheesy as that may sound, remarkable relationships are formed when you isolate yourself with a group of fantastic people, disconnect your phone and internet, lose track of time and indulge in guilt-free fun. Although predominately first-year students, the retreat is open and invaluable to all. There were students entering clinic, students about to graduate, students from other chiropractic schools, prospective students, and alumni. My favorite part was getting to know the demi-gods of our education on a human level. And by that I mean our teachers and mentors: experienced chiropractors in practice as well as the faculty and staff of Life West. "I opened myself up. I saw Dr. Kelly's wisdom and love for life and learned to trust him as our new President. I got to work with professors and chiropractors on a much more personal level," said Aaron Lyon.

So next time the opportunity comes around, set aside your maybes and maybe nots. Here's a great tip for Life (101): Just smile and say yes.