

Topic 1: Independence Day!

Oddly enough, with all the preparation for becoming a teenager and going away to college, no one ever prepares you for the fact that you will one day be an independent adult who must in some cases fend for yourself. A couple of years ago, I asked my classes to come up with all of the things that “frighten” them and oddly enough (after snakes and spiders) came a lot of answers that all pertained to being alone in public. For this assignment, I want you to face this fear.

Part I: You are going to go on a “date” with yourself. For one whole evening – I want you to be out in the real world; near other people – but otherwise alone.

You must go out to a real restaurant (one that does not have anything resembling a drive-through window or could be called a “food court”), and have a leisurely meal (no wolfing down the food to get it over with quicker). The restaurant must have someone who seats you and you cannot sit at the bar nor go to a restaurant where you oftentimes go with groups of friends (certainly avoid EVERYTHING close to campus or places where SBC students hang out). You are not allowed to bring reading materials; other than the fact that you are alone – it should be exactly like you would plan for a night out with friends.

Following this, you should find another activity to do that has also has some social/group connotations (e.g. a movie off-campus, a lecture/event at another college, a visit to an art museum). The only other rule is that this evening must be done in the “normal times” associated with these activities – which means a night out on a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday at the regular dinner/movie times. You must face all the obstacles alone – standing around waiting for a table, etc. Obviously, you need to work with honor here – you cannot load up a car with 3 people and all attempt to dine alone at the same time, etc. or end up at the same movie with friends sitting a few rows apart. From the time you leave your room/home to your return that evening – you are on your own.

Part II: Write about your experience. I want you to focus on the unique feelings you had (good and bad), any bizarre behavior you accidentally engage in when out (e.g. constantly apologizing for being alone), and the reactions you receive from others (or more likely, your perceptions of others’ reactions). Try to avoid useless details like how yummy the food was or a review of the movie you saw – focus on the internal world and noticeable differences in the outside world around you. Finally, sum up, the experience in terms of what you learned about yourself in doing this.