

### **Attitudes affect Change**

From my birthplace in Georgia, I've moved to Texas, Michigan, Washington D.C., Germany, Poland, Germany (again), Ohio, Massachusetts, and finally Virginia. That's a grand total of 9 moves in 17 years. As a military child, I didn't understand how atypical moving was since I was surrounded by kids with the same lifestyle. Especially living in Europe, I took my situation for granted and never fully appreciated the food, tourism, and language opportunities available to me. While overseas, I didn't get to see the rest of my family often, so I resented the military for this forced separation. I remember vividly the day my parents told us we were moving back to the U.S. because to me, it meant moving back home. At that point in my closed-minded 8-year-old brain, I failed to understand that the word "home" transcends much more than a physical location.

Nevertheless, moving to Ohio was glorious because I finally was closer to my friends and family. In fact, I was so overjoyed that upon landing in the U.S., I kissed the ground of the airport in my usual young drama queen fashion. My mom quickly scolded me, reminding me that I need not be overdramatic. As soon as I started celebrating, I noticed my mistake in hating the past: the change from Germany to Ohio revealed that my unique experiences and exposure to non-American cultures within Europe had actually made me a more well-rounded individual. In hindsight, I acknowledged my experiences in Europe as important milestones, exchanging unpleasant memories of homesickness for appreciative and sentimental ones.

Although the transition back to the states helped me see the value in change, my new environment in Ohio changed my mindset. Unlike the military community in Germany, Ohio was populated primarily with rooted families who rarely moved; consequently, I grew jealous of them, believing my life would never be stable. We lived in Ohio from 2008-2012, also known as

the most critical years of my adolescent life. Junior high marked the time I spent discovering my identity; consequently, I became attached to the friends, activities, and sports that helped me grow during those developmental years. Because of those close ties, one can imagine the difficulty of moving to a big city like Boston, Massachusetts the summer before 8th grade. Where I reacted positively to the news of moving to Ohio, the news about Boston rocked my world: I quite literally felt like my world was falling apart. As I reflect on the past now, these moments seem trivial to me because I have optimistically accepted the benefits of change. However, in that moment; in my pre-teen, emotional, boy-band-loving world, I refused to see light at the end of the tunnel.

Thinking about the transition ahead, I became extremely despondent as the move to Boston became more imminent. It took me a year to mentally and emotionally transplant myself to this new environment because I was still stuck in the past. As I looked selfishly on the surface of my new home, I overlooked the wealth of acceptance embodied in the Hanscom military community. I would take each experience for granted until after I moved from a place, but then I would finally reflect on my past in fond appreciation. With each move I've observed how change improves my character and molds me into a person who values resiliency. Yes, the move from Germany to Ohio showed hints of self-actualization, but that progress was buried when I failed to take change like a champ when moving to Boston.

Living on an Air Force Base, we were assigned base housing, which is less than ideal and more like a rundown utopian living complex than a welcoming family neighborhood. Upon arriving at our duplex, I took one look at the faded plastic siding and broken concrete and immediately burst into tears. My attitude was so poor that I judged the quality of a home based on looks, rather than an abstract opportunity to share life and create family memories. This

closed-minded attitude quickly changed as I learned that personability was key to moving on fast, forging new friendships, and getting involved in clubs/sports.

After completing my first 2 years of high school, my dad received orders to move to Langley AFB, VA. Of course I preferred to finish my high school career in Boston, but for some reason, this news was not intimidating like the rest of my moves. I did not see this move as a way to get away from Boston, as I did when we moved from Germany, and I did not see this move as the end of the world, as I did when we moved from Ohio; instead, I gained newfound maturity by accepting this move as a new opportunity. I anticipated the gift of change and welcomed Virginia as a frontier for new experiences. Although I knew I would be leaving my track and cross-country teams, drama club, and friends, I opened my mind to the possibilities awaiting in Virginia. All told, my 3 years in Boston changed my selfish and pessimistic worldview for the better.

And here I am today, in Yorktown, VA, about to graduate from Grafton High School, 2 years after moving from Boston, MA. Leaving my home in Boston, many friends remarked that I was strong and brave for accepting the challenge to move. Moving was never my choice, but my attitude change was a choice, and I am proud to say that I have lived to tell the tale of a military brat. To say the process was hard is an understatement, but I will admit that the process has hardened my character and produced an adaptable young woman.

To other teenagers preparing to move, I want to impart the importance of change. The marginal benefit of adaptability far outweighs the marginal cost of hesitation and moving. Moving from Germany, I was belligerent towards my past in Europe. This negativity did not improve my character because I failed to recognize the strength of experience. Moving from Ohio, I was negative about my future in Boston. This mindset stalled friendships and prevented me from

fully appreciating Boston. Yet, when I adopted an open-mind moving to Virginia, my moving experience was no longer burdensome, it was a gift of new opportunities. My constant relocation has instilled a new confidence because I realize how much better equipped I am thanks to moving. All it took was an open mind. Change does not faze me now because my military brat background has trained me well in the art of transplanting quickly, which is why I'm now ready for my next move: college.