

STRIKE

Saint Augustine
Issue 06



Toie de Vivre



Joie de Vivre is a magazine that encourages readers to appreciate life's beauty and see the world through an optimistic lens. It goes beyond traditional fashion and lifestyle publications, aiming to inspire a more meaningful perspective on existence. Through its stunning fashion photography and thoughtful articles, the magazine explores how fashion impacts culture, the environment, and personal identity. It also shares stories of individuals who have discovered their unique paths to happiness and success, celebrating the diverse narratives that make up life's tapestry. *Joie de Vivre* is a beacon of positivity in a world where fashion and lifestyle can be perceived as shallow, reminding us that they can be powerful expressions of beauty and optimism.

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Letter from the Editor

The concept for Issue 06, Joie de Vivre, is a French saying that means “the Joy of Living.” This notion seems so foreign in today’s age. While many of us are consumed by stress and anxiety, it feels impossible to ask one to appreciate the world around them when it seems to be going up in flames.

So here, I present to you a task. The task is to look around and find joy in the little beauties of life. To see the world through a hazy, childlike, innocent lens, which is a feeling that we all crave to relive. Through this issue, one can go back in time to relive the purest memories, ones of families, first loves, and friends, all while highlighting their connection to nature, self and spirit.

Joie de Vive tells a story of an optimistic outlook on life. Through this issue, we showcase contrasts between optimism and reality by displaying modern subjects in unlikely outfits or time periods. We show an ideal world without judgment or hate. As we connect back to the lens we all used to view from before we absorbed the biases around us.

My inspiration for this Issue came from unlikely sources, some of which being the movies I grew up watching and the many hours that I spent in Ikea as a kid. As a military kid, I grew up overseas in Germany and would travel to France often. The

influences from French culture were something I knew would consume my first Issue. I wanted to bring my childhood to life in many ways, and through the styling and inspiration, I brought the hazy memories of France to Saint Augustine, Florida.

I want to thank my amazing staff, some of which I have been so grateful to work with for multiple Issues. Our staff is a collection of creatives that dedicate their time, money, and minds into this publication and I am so lucky to have them on my team. Though this Issue wasn’t flawless, and many ideas were not pursued, we persevered to make it what it is today.

As you flip through the magazine, immerse yourself in the stories told by our models and writers through the pictures and graphics these tales are displayed within. Each page is filled with creative details, inviting you to savor it like a children’s book. I suggest you analyze each page, appreciating the scattered creative nuances that were carefully chosen to subtly compliment the pictures around it. So, let yourself be transported to a different time and place as you let the beauty of life immerse you.

Strike Out,
Genevieve Lococo
Editor-in-Chief

Hello! I hope you enjoy the magazine. This was my 6th issue with Strike St. Augustine, I started as a freshman in the role of photography director for the inaugural issue. It has been a wonderful and life changing experience to be able to collaborate with so many creative individuals. A huge thank you to everyone on staff, we have all worked very hard to deliver something that you, the reader, will appreciate.

My story with Strike started in my dorm hallway when I saw a poster asking for photographers to apply. This very hallway is pictured in the Self Love spread! I am beyond grateful that I took advantage of this opportunity, and have been able to learn so much throughout my college experience. I am so proud to look back at all of the magazines Strike St. Augustine has created, and I will cherish them forever.

My passion for photography started in High School with a brilliant art teacher named Bryan Carson who taught me how to appreciate and create art through an intellectual lens. This began

my love for portraiture photography and capturing moments. Strike has been an amazing way for me to learn about all things magazine related, and I am so excited to keep learning and growing as an artist. Issue 06 is all about focusing on the reasons that we are thankful to be alive. I wanted to emphasize the timeless aspects of why life is an amazing thing to experience! I hope when you see these spreads, you can connect to our messages and relate them to your own beautiful life.

Stay grateful and always pursue what you are passionate about. What else is life for? <3

Kathryn Hennessy
Creative Director

Letter from the Creative Director



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HOME is WHERE the HEART is

Making College a Home

by Emily Braunstein



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy

“Family”, by definition, is a group of people who are raised together. But, this isn’t the only kind of family. Flagler College students are finding a new meaning to this word, called “chosen family”.

A “chosen family” is exactly what it sounds like. It’s a group of people that you choose to provide you with support and care. Jeanne Tissot has discovered this for herself after moving out of her home country of France to St. Augustine Florida. “We always joke that we are siblings in another life, and sometimes, the connection is even stronger than a sibling,” said Tissot.

There is no better opportunity to develop life long relationships than through living on a college campus.

“When you live on campus, you see these people everyday and you live with them. Your connection is strong and you become best friends super quick,” said Tissot.

Before moving to college, most of us have only lived with our blood family. Now that we live with friends, we are experiencing everything that cohabitation has to offer; the good, the bad and the ugly. Laughing, crying, and learning to do laundry together creates a bond that can only be found by living in the same room.

College is a great time for finding yourself. You’ll figure out what you want to do, who you want to be, and the people you want to surround ourselves with. The people you spend your time with can guide you in the direction you desire and inspire you. Growing and changing with people creates a bond that surpasses just friendship—you can become a family.

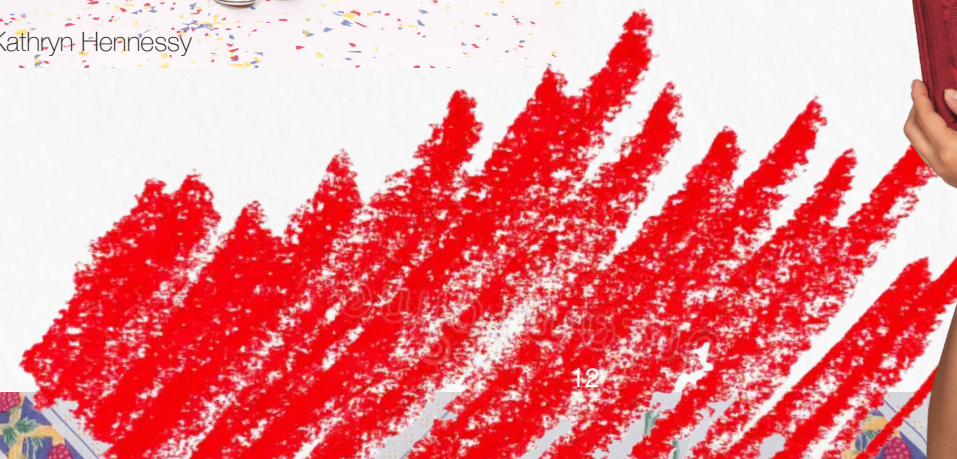
Arc Peroni is a Flagler student who has been lucky to find a “chosen family” at Flagler College. “They were a solid group of people, but they basically adopted me, and now they are my best friends. I feel that they always love me for who I am,” said Peroni. Family should be the people who give unconditional love to who you truly are, despite your flaws.

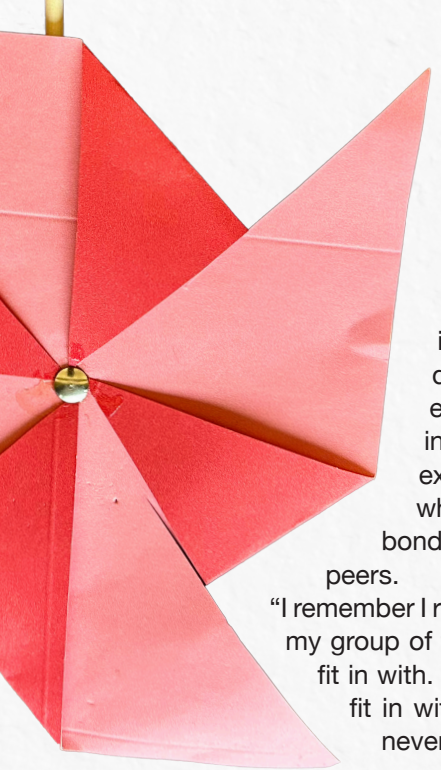
Chosen family are the people that provide a home for us. A home is a place to be yourself in, and a place where there’s comfort and peace. A home is not just a physical building, as it can also be found within the people we love and trust.

“I would define a chosen family as the people you can trust with your secrets and the people you can talk to about what is going on in your family. It’s the people you know you can trust to just listen to you”, said Peroni. People are social



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy





creatures, and we are not complete without human interactions. This is why it's so important to create relationships with others. College is a lonely and isolating time, which makes developing relationships essential. There is comfort in knowing that everyone is experiencing college together, which creates an unspoken bond between you and your peers.

"I remember I really always struggled to find my group of friends or people I thought I fit in with. I remember I always tried to fit in with the popular girls. It really never ended up working out,

and then one summer, my best friends invited me to hang out with them, and after that, they basically adopted me into their family", said Peroni. If family isn't a happy word for you, that's okay. The family you're born into doesn't always provide you love and support, and if this is the case, know that you're not limited to this kind of family. Remember: you can create your own family. Choose the people you want to surround yourself with, and deepen these friendships as you grow together. College is the time for finding "our people". People that provide us with the love, comfort and support that feels like home. Finding our "chosen family" is our way of making college a home.



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy

WHICH ASPECT OF LIFE DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST?

BY JESSICA GIRALDO

FAMILY
ROMANCE
FRIENDSHIP

CUISINE
SELF-LOVE
SPIRIT

What is your most vivid childhood memory?

1. The first time you ever kissed someone.
2. The taste of that one meal from that one restaurant in your hometown.
3. Playing with the neighborhood kids
4. Seeing butterflies in a garden
5. Writing in your diary before bed
6. Pranks wars with your siblings

Pick a Films List:

1. Pitch Perfect, Hangover, Bridesmaids
2. The Florida Project, My Sister's Keeper, Little Women
3. The Notebook, La La Land, Pride and Prejudice
4. The Menu, Ratatouille, Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory
5. Mulan, Legally Blonde, Romy and Michele's High School Reunion
6. The Lion King, Midsomer, Where the Wild Things Are

Pick a food item:

1. Acai Bowl
2. Chocolate
3. Strawberries
4. Homemade Lasagna
5. Milkshakes
6. Steak

Favorite Holiday Tradition?

1. Giving people gifts
2. Using holiday scented hygiene products
3. Cooking a family recipe together.
4. Mistletoe
5. Matching pajamas
6. Going apple picking

Favorite Scent

1. Rose
2. Sugar Cookie
3. Pine
4. Vanilla Cashmere
5. Cedar Wood
6. Coffee beans

Pick a doll series:

1. Bratz
2. Strawberry Shortcake
3. Monster High
4. Cabbage Patch Kids
5. American Girl Dolls
6. Barbies

Best first date?

1. High class restaurant
2. Doing facemask together
3. A date with my best friend sounds like more fun
4. Sitting on the beach and talking
5. A stroll downtown under the moonlight
6. Watching a movie together

What's your favorite Strike Saint Augustine Issue, based on the title?

1. Issue 1: Paradise
2. Issue 2: Intuition
3. Issue 3: Dreamland
4. Issue 4: The Principles of Being
5. Issue 5: Prima Donna
6. Issue 6: The Joys of Life



Romance



LOVE LETTERS IN 2023

ARTICLE BY LEMMY BRUTNELL

We all flirt on social media. We ask numbers out on dates, and we blush when certain words are written. So, dear reader, what is romance? How is it granted? How does it feel? Where is it? How did it look in the past generations? Why do we yearn for love as humans? Hopeless romantics tend to believe they were born in the wrong century. Romance evolved into modern romance, which is centered around the idea that technology plays a role in our dating lives. We spy on love through social media and we see it in every corner of our phones. Instead of flowers, you get a like on your instagram story. Instead of shielding you from traffic when walking together on the sidewalk, you get a slide into your DM's. As we grow as a generation, we are more accepting of different types of love. There are now more dating platforms available to the public and there is a larger variety of people to discover. However, Tinder, an iconic dating app, may not



be the place where you find your future lover. You can swipe your way through strangers and hope to find a gem in a pile of stones, but, your future significant other may be right next to you. Every person longs for a healthy relationship with someone who understands them. To journey through life with a partner, someone you can vent to, relate to, and feel for, is a gift. Dating apps like Tinder are known for causing more harm than good. For instance, in the article "4 Reasons Why Dating Apps Are Bad for Your Mental Health" by the website Make Use Of, Sean Mitchell states that "according to a study conducted by Western Sydney University, using dating apps can lead to increased feelings of stress and anxiety. The study surveyed 475 people over the age of 18 and found that those who used dating apps had significantly higher rates of psychological distress, anxiety, and depression." Dating apps influence mental health just as much as they influence

...romance in our social media world. Self doubt comes into play and feelings tend to be let down. Hopeless romantics itch for love letters, but nowadays, the closest they'll get is a "good morning" text. Love letters as we know them today began in the early Renaissance, around the start of the 14th century. The content may have changed throughout the decades, but, the purpose remains the same. In the early 18th century, they became more powerful and personal, and played a huge part in love stories. Feelings became more real once they were written, and once those letters were received, the assurance of love became more real. For instance, Oscar Wilde wrote to Lord Alfred Douglass,



"My Own Boy,

Your sonnet is quite lovely, and it is a marvel that those red rose-leaf lips of yours should be made no less for the madness of music and song than for the madness of kissing. Your slim gilt soul walks between passion and poetry. I know Hyacinthus, whom Apollo loved so madly, was you in Greek days."



WHAT IS ROMANCE?



Nonetheless, this is not the case for all relationships that bloom on Tinder. Sometimes, you may just be lucky enough to find that gem. Once you find it, be sure to talk in a 'love letter language'. Convey your feelings and dive down to a deeper layer of their personality. Social media has also influenced the LGBTQ+ community in a positive way. For instance, there was a study conducted by the Journal of Medical Internet Research and the results read: "Social media was a popular tool used by LGBTQ youths to connect with LGBTQ communities. In qualitative data, we found that LGBTQ youths negotiated and explored identity and obtained support from peers on social media. Instagram, Tumblr, and Twitter were commonly used to access LGBTQ content owing to ease of anonymity." (Berger MN, Taba M, Marino JL, Lim MSC, Skinner SR). LGBTQ+ individuals are known to be at a higher risk of poor mental health. Social media provides the community with a space where they can openly communicate. People can connect with, meet, and relate with each other. Planned events for the LGBTQ+ community are also mostly organized through social media. More people notice these events on their social media feed, which means more people can get involved. All types of romances are seen as a gift in this world. So, even if we were born in the wrong century, make social media your love letter. Pick your head up from your phone and notice who is around you. Notice who you are happiest with and notice who makes you feel like you.

The late poet Oscar Wilde was widely inspired by his passion for Douglass. Douglass was an undergraduate at Oxford when the two men met. Douglass quickly became Wilde's muse. With this inspiration and the glimpse at real love it gave him, Wilde wrote his best work. Letters influenced more than just communication, it influenced personal work. Romance opens up a complex world for literature. In the book, *De Profundis*, Wilde states, "The only people I would care to be with now are writers and people who have suffered: those who know what beauty is, and those who know what sorrow is: nobody else interests me." Oscar is emphasizing the idea that to seek true relationships and friendships, you also have to be intrigued by them. Learning about that certain person and their background leads a relationship to a sincere connection. To see one's beauty, you have to see their sorrow. You have to accept their bad just as much as you accept their good. If you only see the worst in someone, you aren't turning their sorrow into beauty. Tinder reiterates the opposite. Instead of writing in a profound language, selfies and portraits take over. The meaning is wiped away and bios try to make you believe you already know the stranger. It's hard to navigate through an app when you wear your heart on your sleeve. Society may have shaped our romance language into something totally different from the past.



Friendship





Put your best red lip on and shuffle Lana Del Rey. You want to be a Cool Girl? You have to start by being a Girl's Girl.

Being a Girl's Girl

by Jessica Giraldo

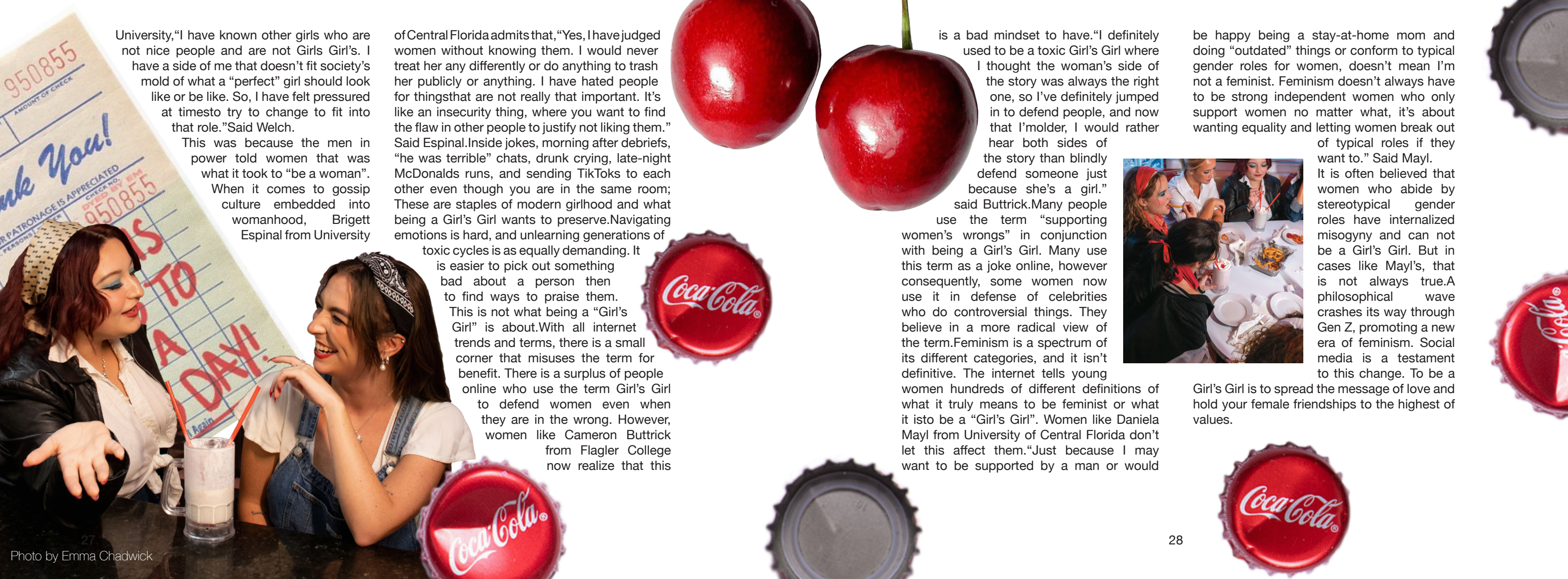
Being a Girl's Girl Tagline: Put your best red lip on and shuffle Lana Del Rey. You want to be a Cool Girl? You have to start by being a Girl's Girl. Girl's Girl is the new modern-day feminist philosophy. What exactly is a Girl's Girl? Dominika Mierzwinka from Flagler College sums it up well. She defines being a Girl's Girl as, "Unapologetically loving and honoring your relationships with other women and holding them to a value much higher than with men. It's about supporting women around you instead of tearing them down, having their back, and being there for one another", said Mierzwinka. Being a Girl's Girl is finding simple pleasures

in flowers and chocolates, communicating with one look, and drinking a whole bottle of wine on a bedroom floor while listening to the most gut-wrenching Taylor Swift song. Women exist in the world differently, and only in the way other women understand due to shared experiences. Today, women judge other women whom they see as competition, which is heavily normalized in society. In the past, people only valued women who were housewives, took care of children, and socialized with other women. When things got boring, they would gossip about other women to entertain themselves. According to Kara Welch from Florida Atlantic





Photo by Kathryn Hennessy



University, "I have known other girls who are not nice people and are not Girls Girl's. I have a side of me that doesn't fit society's mold of what a "perfect" girl should look like or be like. So, I have felt pressured at times to try to change to fit into that role." Said Welch.

This was because the men in power told women that was what it took to "be a woman".

When it comes to gossip culture embedded into womanhood, Brigett Espinal from University

of Central Florida admits that, "Yes, I have judged women without knowing them. I would never treat her any differently or do anything to trash her publicly or anything. I have hated people for things that are not really that important. It's like an insecurity thing, where you want to find the flaw in other people to justify not liking them." Said Espinal. Inside jokes, morning after debriefs, "he was terrible" chats, drunk crying, late-night McDonalds runs, and sending TikToks to each other even though you are in the same room; These are staples of modern girlhood and what being a Girl's Girl wants to preserve. Navigating emotions is hard, and unlearning generations of toxic cycles is as equally demanding. It

is easier to pick out something bad about a person than to find ways to praise them.

This is not what being a "Girl's Girl" is about. With all internet trends and terms, there is a small corner that misuses the term for benefit. There is a surplus of people online who use the term Girl's Girl to defend women even when they are in the wrong. However, women like Cameron Buttrick from Flagler College now realize that this

is a bad mindset to have. "I definitely used to be a toxic Girl's Girl where I thought the woman's side of the story was always the right one, so I've definitely jumped in to defend people, and now that I'm older, I would rather hear both sides of the story than blindly defend someone just because she's a girl." said Buttrick. Many people use the term "supporting women's wrongs" in conjunction with being a Girl's Girl. Many use this term as a joke online, however consequently, some women now use it in defense of celebrities who do controversial things. They believe in a more radical view of the term. Feminism is a spectrum of its different categories, and it isn't definitive. The internet tells young women hundreds of different definitions of what it truly means to be feminist or what it is to be a "Girl's Girl". Women like Daniela Mayl from University of Central Florida don't let this affect them. "Just because I may want to be supported by a man or would

be happy being a stay-at-home mom and doing "outdated" things or conform to typical gender roles for women, doesn't mean I'm not a feminist. Feminism doesn't always have to be strong independent women who only support women no matter what, it's about wanting equality and letting women break out of typical roles if they want to." Said Mayl. It is often believed that women who abide by stereotypical gender roles have internalized misogyny and can not be a Girl's Girl. But in cases like Mayl's, that is not always true. A philosophical wave crashes its way through Gen Z, promoting a new era of feminism. Social media is a testament to this change. To be a



Girl's Girl is to spread the message of love and hold your female friendships to the highest of values.

Dear Diary,

December 1st, 2023

I'm a junior in college now, and I'm thinking about my life - the things I've done, the friends I've made, the romance I've experienced, and everything I love and hate. At twenty-one, I feel ~~undoubtedly~~ undoubtedly and unapologetically myself. I'm not afraid to say when I feel pretty or when I like my outfit. I am no longer worried about what people think about me if I post my favorite emo bands on **MY** Instagram Story.

I grew up as an only child until I was thirteen. I had zero internet regulation, and was everywhere online - even Wattpad. I found an outlet to talk about the things that brought me joy and made friends with people in the community. We may not text everyday like we used to, or even still enjoy that one common interest, but we always make sure to refollow each other on new accounts.

When you tell people you have a fan account, they nod their head slowly and tell you, "that's so interesting". In ~~reality~~ ^{reality}, they think you are crazy and in a parasocial relationship. You're going to be judged. When I got to college, I made a vow to be proud of what I love. The moment I started to fully embrace myself, the more confident I became the hotter I got. 🔥

To be a hot girl is to be unapologetically yourself. Once a tween posts a face reveal for their 100 followers, there is virtually no stopping the sheer force of a hot fan girl. You no longer give a shit what you post - you've seen or posted worse before. You are not a weird kid for dedicating time and creativity to things that bring you joy in life, you are hot.

There are so many people in this world who had the same experience as me and I would have never known if I didn't start to embrace it. It's a lifestyle. Of passion, bliss, entertainment, and for some people, a way to feel connected to others and truly be themselves. If that means screaming at the top of your lungs, so be it.

- Jessica
Lizalde







Food for Thought

Preserving Memories through Family Recipes

As the world enters an era full of frozen and premade meals, the number of people who regularly cook (or know how to cook at all) decreases. Despite this, many people's dearest memories of their family involve the kitchen.

Ainsley McCullen, Strike St. Augustine's Blog Director, shared her most treasured family recipe and discussed the fond memories she associates with it.



McCullen said, "Grandmom Rita's cookies were a staple of childhood. They lived in Mommom's cookie jar year-round and tasted of love and chocolate. I would always get so excited when Mommom told us there was a treat in the cookie jar or when she showed up with a tupperware container full of them. Those cookies have been so special to me and my family. As I got older, I learned to bake them on my own. It was a favorite pastime of mine in high school. I'd put on a movie or an episode of Criminal Minds and spend the night sitting on my stool, baking cookies."

There is a reason why kitchens are known as the heart of the home. It may seem like just another room, but it is a hub of activity where we make extremely fond memories with our loved ones. Smell and taste are powerful memory triggers, so continuing to cook or bake family recipes helps evoke recollections of these family members and the times we spent with them. In general, recipes are extremely beneficial when it comes to making connections with our roots. By cooking the same foods that our ancestors did, we become further connected to them and to our culture.



Grandmom Rita's Chocolate Chip Cookie Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 cups of Crisco
- 1 cup of Brown Sugar
- 1 cups of White Sugar
- 3 Eggs
- 1 teaspoons of Vanilla Extract
- 1 teaspoons of Baking Soda
- 1 teaspoon of Salt
- 3 cups of Flour
- Chocolate Chips
- Pam cooking spray

Instructions:

Mix together the Crisco, brown sugar, and white sugar with a wooden spoon (no stand mixers allowed).

Once fully mixed, add in the eggs, vanilla extract, baking soda, salt, and flour. Once your dough is fully mixed, add in however many chocolate chips your heart desires.

Lightly grease the baking sheet with Pam cooking spray and wipe with a paper towel (only do this once at the start, not between bakes).

Separate the dough into small balls (I prefer a melon baller) and place on the baking sheet with space in between.

Bake at 350 for 14 minutes.

By: Maya Nayyal and
Ainsley McCullen



Photo by Emmy Brutnell



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy



Photo by Kathryn Hennessy

SELF LOVE



Grieving Your Inner Child

By Lauren Lytle

Those who can say “I had a good childhood” are the fortunate few. A lot of people have traumatic childhoods, and some are never able to fully heal from what they endure at a young age. These adults not only lost their chance at a childhood, but they also lost their parental guidance and validation, as well as their personal identity. To heal, move forward, and have a successful adulthood, they must mourn their younger selves.

There are many steps to this healing process that can last for a lifetime. One of the first steps is to “develop compassion for the child that wasn’t, to not blame themselves, and to realize they had no control.” As Psychologist and Professor Michele Fouts says, “victims will blame themselves. They need to see the innocent child who didn’t have any control.” After this realization, a major step in healing trauma is body-based therapy. This is known as “tuning into bodily experience.” Connecting with the body and identifying how one feels helps combat dissociation, or “freeze response,” which is a common protection mechanism that bodies who have experienced trauma will go into. As Fouts says, “Trauma is less based on what happened to you, but instead, how you responded.” Through understanding what’s going on in their body, one can rewire this dissociation.

A useful technique to do this, tuning into one’s body in the Psychology world, is called “mindfulness”. To practice mindfulness, one has to fully observe their body. Usual practices to do this are yoga, breathing techniques, and meditation.

Besides being physically aware of your body, you must also be emotionally aware. This means “getting in touch with your thoughts and feelings.” Popular practices for this are journaling, therapy, or talking to someone you trust.

One effect of childhood trauma that most do not know is a loss of sense of self. Adults who have childhood



We are most

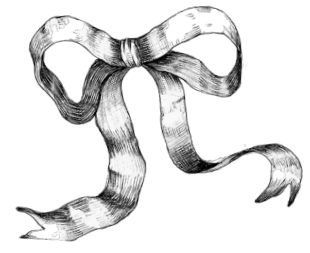
VULNERABLE

as children

trauma did not have role models. They had “no stable support” to guide them or validate them. Finding that self-identity later in life can be more difficult. Fouts states that it is “trial and error” for these young adults, such as trying new things, being involved in different groups of people, and joining churches or sports. However, they have to be careful, as “not having a strong self-identity means they are more impressionable to others’ influence.” This can be looking to celebrities or figures in the media as role models or falling for dangerous groups or organizations, with examples being religious or political cults.

Childhood trauma creates a great “longing” that runs into adulthood. These adults “long to feel loved, seen, and for their parent(s) to apologize and understand.” Victims of childhood trauma must also keep in mind that they might not ever get that closure. Some people do not heal from their trauma because they “long for resolution” that never comes. They “long for parents to understand the impact they had on them, but once parents are gone, so is their last hope. This adds to another layer of grief with the death of the parent(s), but also the loss of hope, making this a complicated grief.” Obviously, there is no reversing trauma that occurred throughout one’s childhood. Asking the question “why?” or blaming one’s self for another’s actions when they were too young will not bring the answers in order to heal. It is important for adults with childhood trauma to begin this healing process as soon as they are ready. If they do not, they may have to mourn the parts of their adulthood they have missed out on, along with the ones from their childhood. However, once adults with trauma have healthily mourned the childhoods they have lost, they can finally start to live freely and move forward.





PIECE BY PIECE

The Marvel of Art

By Olivia Shea Garvey

Time and again, I have heard people say that life is all about discovering who you are meant to be. While the sentiment is not altogether untrue, I subscribe to a slightly different perspective.

I believe life is less about becoming, and more about remembering. It is about getting back to who you have always been, to the truest version of you that lies at your core.

The way I see it, we exist at the beginning of our lives in a pure, unburdened state. Then, we start taking in details that construct our understanding of the world, the people that inhabit it, and—ultimately—ourselves. So, when we are inevitably confronted with trauma or pain, it imprints on that understanding; and it has the potential to contort our view of ourselves into something sour and false. This is especially true when we are children.

It is easier for fear to take hold then. It wraps around and destroys parts of us in ways that leave us feeling broken. And, sure, we put ourselves back together, but oftentimes, the pieces do not quite fit the way they once did.

The trick, once you have recognized its existence, is not letting that fear define you. It is not giving up on the light just because all you see is darkness. It's facing fear and doubt head-on until you remember: you are a divine being, born of the cosmos, made of stardust.

Finding your way back to that untinged version of reality usually is not a particularly fun journey. Almost always, it requires a long, arduous mission of unearthing your pains, extracting

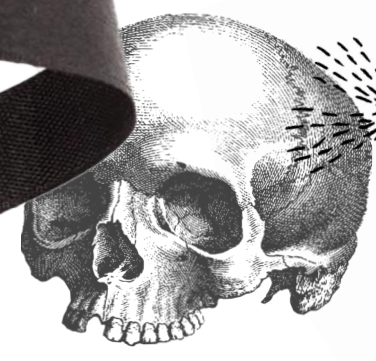
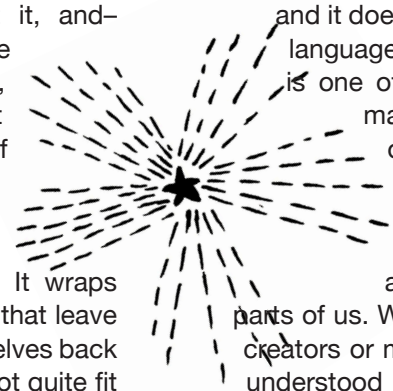
them from your subconscious with your own two hands, and dissecting them until you understand them. It is a self-induced exorcism, of sorts, and it is hell; but, it is one that allows you to rediscover all you thought you had lost.

Embarking on such a pursuit takes courage, patience, and empathy. It takes an open mind and soul. Unfortunately, the world of today is not always the most conducive environment for such transformation.

But, there does exist a force that can conquer it all, and it does so across barriers of opinion, language, culture, class, and so on. It is one of the most powerful universal magics in existence: the marvel of art.

As is the nature of any kind of creative expression, all forms of art intrinsically hold the ability to touch even the deepest parts of us. Whether we are participating as creators or members of an audience, art is understood by the primordial soul, and it stirs emotion in us like the moon does the ocean tide.

However, there is something peculiarly magical in the act of artmaking. It somehow aids in the exorcism in a way nothing else does, practically forcing the demons out, whether through sprays of paint onto a canvas, the surge of a dancer's leap onstage, or the swell of lyrics lilting over a melody. It is the closest thing to having your suffering in the palm of your hand and then letting it go, piece by piece.



Many artists that I have known experience some kind of similar impetus of inner healing through their creative work, whether they are aware of it in the moment or not. One such artist is Gem Hansen, a Fine Arts student at Flagler College in St. Augustine.

I have discussed this topic with her many times over the past few months as she has fleshed out a piece she tells me embodies her childhood traumas. Through illustrations of some of the earliest nightmares that she remembers, she visually evokes the emotions she was never afforded the chance to fully process as a child.

Stark, blood-red devils and gray skull roses; swirling quagmires of black tentacles and acidic hues; heads stretched and squashed by uncanny expressions; and irony-imbued birthday balloon creatures mingle across the canvas. Bright yellows, greens, blues, reds, and purples pop beside sickly, muted tones and hints of murky shadow, giving the different zones of the piece juxtaposing properties. Some reinforce the light, fun characteristics of childhood, while others introduce the many unsettling, ugly emotions that also exist there for Gem.

The imagery is not the only expressive aspect of her piece. The process by which it came about was a pure, unregulated artistic expression in itself: it happened without her even realizing.

"When I first started this piece a year ago," she said, "I didn't have in mind that I wanted to do it about my childhood dreams...but, after sketching it one

night, I stepped back the next morning and it was there. It was all my dreams in one piece, looking back at me".

Our conversation then turned to spirituality, which, for Gem, is intertwined with her creativity.

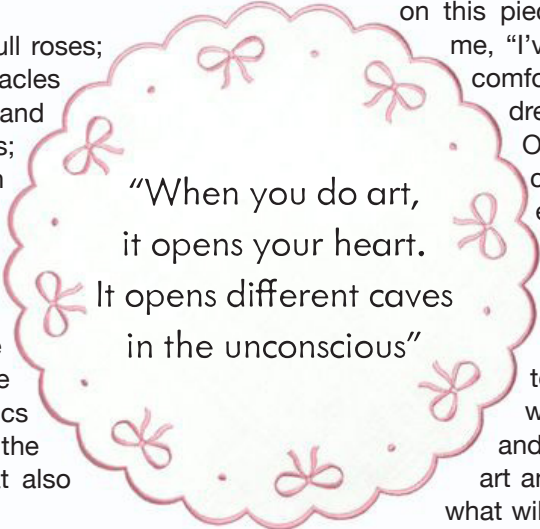
"When you do art, it opens your heart. It opens different caves in the unconscious," she said. She describes the mind as a place for unseen beings and energies to reside alongside you, sprinkling bits of inspiration around for you to pluck out of the air.

"It's not like you're pulling it out of yourself. It's just like, 'Oh here's this. Oh, here's this'," Gem mused with a smile.

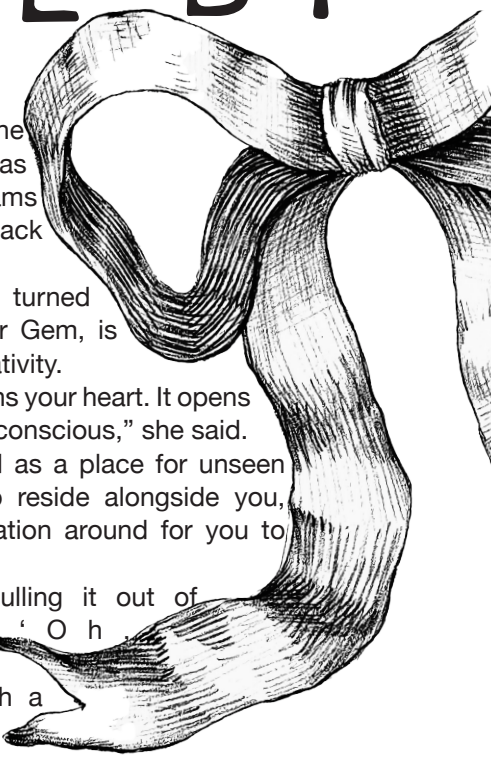
When working on this piece specifically, she felt her inner child expressing itself from within her, allowing her to process ancient emotions that she had kept buried. Simultaneously, she experienced the guidance of another motivating energy, one she identified as a wiser, higher self. When I questioned her further, she agreed that this was her true self. It was the Gem untouched by the wicked parts of life, and the Gem she was finding her way back to.

And it seems she is on her way. "Having worked on this piece for a year," she told me, "I've definitely gotten more comfortable standing up to the dreams."

Our conversation continued to wander, but eventually found its way back to those arcane, shepherd-like energies. We agreed that they exist for all of humanity to consult with, so long as we are open; and it is Gem and my shared belief that art and creative expression is what will grant us that openness until the end of time.



"When you do art, it opens your heart. It opens different caves in the unconscious"





Spirit

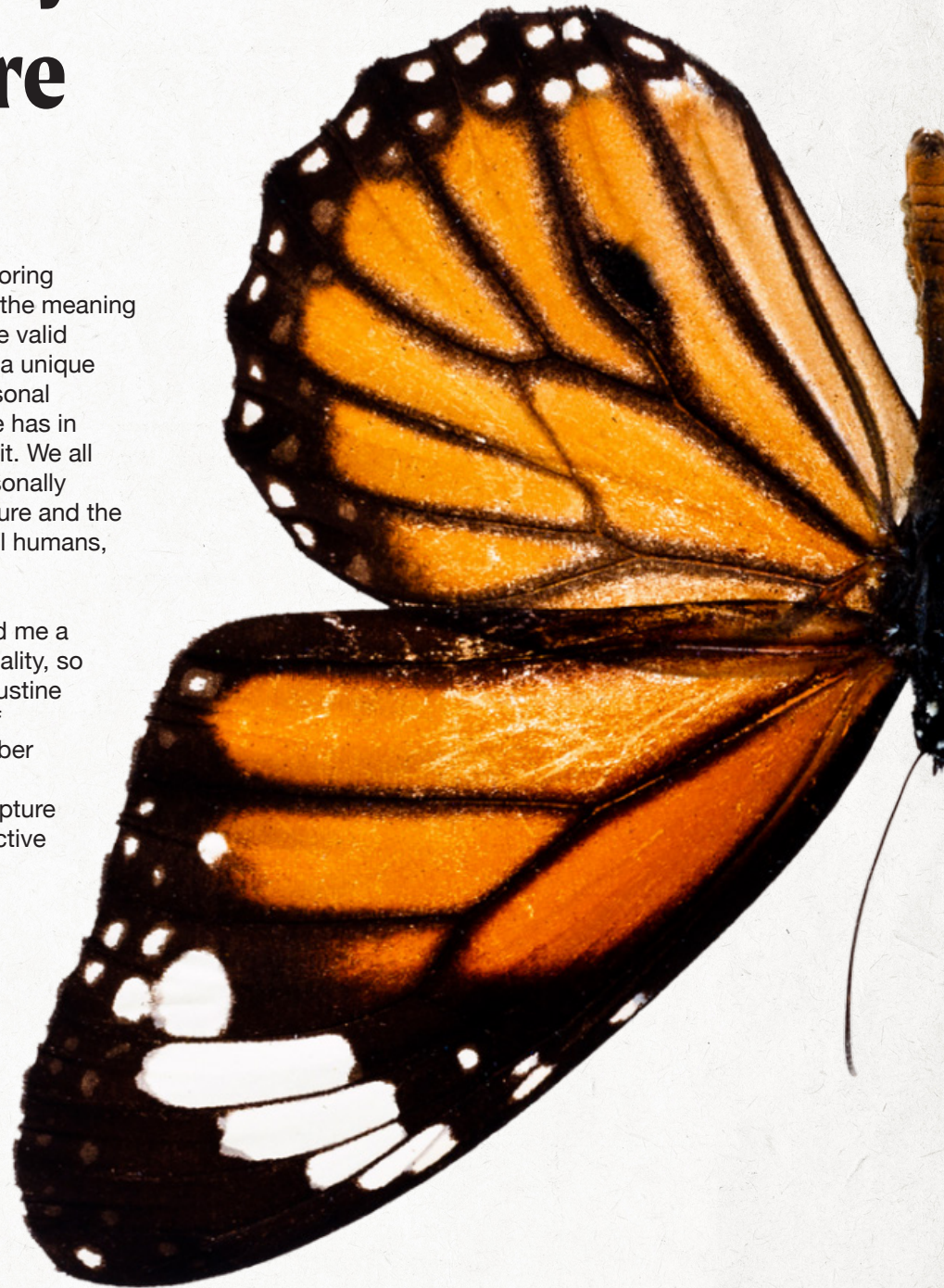


The Sublimity in Spirituality and Nature

By Indigo Carter

A part of being a human is exploring unanswerable questions about the meaning of life. All answers and ideas are valid because each person will have a unique perspective based on their personal experience. One thing everyone has in common is the planet we inhabit. We all live in and around nature. I personally relate to spirituality through nature and the interconnectedness amongst all humans, animals, and plants.

Art is a medium that has offered me a deeper understanding of spirituality, so I reached out to a local St. Augustine artist to discuss the question of meaning with. Russell Maycumber runs the wood-shop at Flagler College. He is a father and sculpture artist who has a unique perspective on life from immersing himself in different cultures. I had a conversation with Russell in the Ponce De Leon Courtyard, overlooking lush green flora as it began to rain. "I don't think meaning is a thing. I think people that try to lock onto a meaning are the same people who want to separate themselves. Turning belief into an object



undermines it," said Russell. He brought up how humans attempt to interpret life rather than simply experience it, and doodled spiral shapes to help himself think. Spirals are coincidentally one of the most common shapes in nature. In them I was reminded of galaxies, gastropod shells, DNA, and weather patterns.

"The less I consider myself separate from nature, the more at peace I am with myself," voiced Russell.

"Healing is how close your real self is to matching the one that interacts with everyone and everything" Russell explained. New age spirituality often references a "higher self". I wondered if this is what he meant by describing a "real self."

"Who's to say if it is higher or lower?" questioned Russell. I was left without a rebuttal, and instead an internal reflection. The rain smelled sweet on the cement. The trees in the courtyard shook in the wind and offered a subtle sublimity. The English Romantics define sublime as a realm of experience that is

unmeasurable. It is a tiny man rowing on a small boat across a vast ocean, suddenly realizing life is bigger than himself, and it is terrifying and beautiful all at once.

To Russell Maycumber the sublime is "the blending of everything. It is selflessness." The Buddhists say that desire is the root of all suffering. But when Maycumber had his son, he experienced a deep desire to protect him.

"If suffering comes from desire, the uncontrollable desire to have another creature survive carries a sublime suffering," remarked Russell. I could feel how much he

loves his son from the way he talked about him.

Smiling as he described his grown-up son still calling him for random things like "how to put a screw in the wall."





Photo by Daisy Pflaum



“Trust yourself. There are going to be a lot of times where you doubt yourself and your intuition. You have to trust yourself” he said as the drizzle settled and the parting clouds revealed a faded gray sky. Once you center yourself, you can find peace. As I walked away, I thought about how asking someone else’s perspective on life broadened mine, and I thanked the ground I walked on for being there, supporting me.

thankful for
our Staff



Strike
out!

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