

Federica Reale

I arrived in London two years after my study abroad experience in America. Living in the U.S. taught me to adapt to the habits of a different culture, to embrace change and learn from it. In a way, this gave me the motivation to push myself outside my comfort zone once again and embrace London as my next adventure.

I immediately developed a sense of belonging towards Cass, probably because of the international and diverse atmosphere. This made me feel absolutely free of expressing myself with an accent without fear of being judged. From the very first



day, I have been learning something from every person I met and I can really say that the many different cultural backgrounds and nationalities shaped my identity. I used to be quite an anxious person, constantly worried about my future and always concerned with how I spent my time to make sure I did not waste it. I used to see life as a competition so all I wanted was to get ready for the challenging future and excel at it. When I arrived in London, noticing what a competitive reality I was in, I started feeling overwhelmed by my own ambitions and responsibility. Nonetheless, the people I met at Cass and the whole experience flipped the way I think about both the definition of success and life.

I started yoga and meditation in order to help myself focus on short term goals. In my head, I had this picture of the future like a wave ready to assault me. I was afraid that if I did not plan the future to try to have at least part of it under control, I would have ended up feeling lost in the end. I shared my passion for meditation with Helio, my friend from Portugal, who taught me how to fully feel the benefits of the practice, meditating always in the same place. This enables you to easily find the same concentration when back to the specific spot and allows you to free your mind completely before sitting down to focus on. I learned how to move towards my goals one step at a time and to avoid being too hard on myself.

From Lee Tong Yi, from Singapore, I learned how to effectively manage my time. I observed him being able to plan his commitments weekly. This allowed him to get things done, while always save some time to do what he enjoys. "It is the secret to my productivity" he always says.

Oussama, from Algeria, a gym addict that really knows how to get things done, taught me to quickly accomplish my daily tasks. "No distractions allowed when working, just do it"- he always tells me. My Lebanese friend, Edwin, taught me the art of fully living each day, taking life as your own masterpiece, daily balancing hard work with fun time because "we never know what is going to happen tomorrow".

I will never forget the day in which me and my friend Ara, from Lebanon, went for a walk. I needed to talk to someone about all the doubts I had about myself, my future and the life choices that I had taken so far. I started thinking whether these choices were right and where I was supposed to direct my intentions. He listened to everything I had to say. In the end, he showed me a quote on his phone: "Our job in this lifetime is not to shape ourselves into some ideal we ought to be but find out who we already are and become it". It shocked me. That sentence washed away all my worries in two seconds. I immediately realised that regardless of what phase of your existence you are going through, it will all make sense in the end because it is for you to be able to find your own strengths and understand how to progress.

Ilef, one of my best friends from Tunisia, gave me sense of direction when I told her I was feeling lost about what next steps to take after graduation. She defined me "a bubble of energy", generous and willing to help people and encouraged me to use that side of me that knows how to take the best out of everyone around me by undertaking a career as an executive coach.

If the experience in America made me more self-aware, Cass gave me the tools to improve who I am and become a better version of myself day by day. This university taught me how to stand up and ask for what I want and to take the initiative to challenge myself because nothing worth having comes easily. Most importantly, I learned that through collaboration I can go faster and further than alone and that success is only real when shared. With time, the people I met turned from initial strangers to a real family, making me feel supported and empowered. They nourished me with confidence, made me who I really am and taught me that it is only in the context of each other that our real purpose as individuals is revealed.