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2nd Project: Trying Something New

I have never been one to feel comfortable and have fun in a large crowd setting. So you would think I definitely would not be a live concert person, or at least I thought I wasn't. When my boyfriend got himself and me tickets to see my favorite band The Wallows in concert last year, I wasn't sure how I felt because that was so nice of him and I loved that band, I just didn't know if I would enjoy the concert setting or not and it could be a waste of money for him.

Ever since I can remember, big crowds of people have always given me an overwhelming feeling of stress and anxiety. The thought of hundreds of people surrounding me so I feel unable to move, having to scream to talk to someone right next to me, and being touched and shoved by random strangers does not sound like a fun time to me. I tend to get overwhelmed easily in social settings. I have noticed that the introverted side of me tries to limit having to go to social events as much as possible and only if necessary. I think everyone has a social stimulus battery, and mine just happens to go through the energy much faster than the average one. Once my battery starts running low, my mind makes it almost impossible to enjoy anything around me. I kind of shut down and continuously think in my head about how I would rather be anywhere else. This is one reason the thought of concerts is terrifying to me.

Before deciding if I would go to The Wallows concert or not with my boyfriend, I thought back to the last concert I had been to. It was a couple years ago at the New York State Fair at Chevy Court, which is basically a free public concert, so obviously hundreds on hundreds

of people go. With that being said it was also an A Boogie concert, and because he is so popular it drew in even more people. My friends had dragged me to a concert with them that night. They said it would be fun, and it was- for them. Before the concert even started fights were breaking out and people were arguing over seating. Every minute more and more people were adding to the crowd, and this started making me stressed. When the concert started, I immediately was shoved from behind and squished in between two strangers, one of whom was smoking a cigarette and the butt of it got pressed to my arm. It hurt so badly and the man didn't even notice. After that I tried my best to move to a different spot near my friends and attempt to enjoy the concert but I couldn't. Everyone around me was jumping on each other and screaming to the music. At this point, I couldn't even find my friends. I felt so uncomfortable and my anxiety was through the roof, so I did my best to make it out of the crowd to one of the buildings nearby and go to the bathroom. After cooling down and taking some breaths, I realized I was more content just listening to the music safely on the steps of the nearby dairy building. I then texted my friends, told them where I was and to just text me when they were ready to leave and I would meet up with them because I could not go back out there into that madness.

After having that experience, I didn't think I would enjoy going to the concert my boyfriend had bought us tickets for. Although I felt awful telling him that, I really did love that band, and he had put so much thought and money into the gift. So I decided to put on my most confident face, go to the concert with him, and do my best to have fun and enjoy it. I kept telling myself every day leading up to the night that I would have the best time and I wouldn't get stressed because I would have Mike right there next to me to make me feel safe and comfortable. I ended up being right. As soon as the band walked out, I was overwhelmed with happiness and couldn't believe I was looking at them in person. It literally felt like a dream. When the music

started playing the crowd wasn't as insane as the last concert. Everyone was on the same page it felt like, we all wanted to enjoy the live music, dance, sing, and have fun without acting like total animals. I felt safe and I wasn't thinking about the strangers around me or that I was in the middle of a huge crowd. I was so content next to my boyfriend and living in the moment for once. I was just happy listening and vibing to my favorite music with my favorite person.

Leaving the concert felt unreal. It was one of those rare life moments where I felt like everything was perfect. It didn't even cross my mind that I went through the entire concert without having any stress, anxiety, or overwhelming thoughts. After the concert I was thinking about why I enjoyed The Wallows concert so much and hated the A Boogie one. I had realized that there was a huge difference between a public concert and a private one that is payed for. The crowd was more controlled in numbers and there was security in case anything happened. I had also realized that the style of music at the concert definitely has an impact on the way the crowd acts. The hip hop rap at A Boogie definitely made the crowd more hyped up, as opposed to the chill alternative music at Wallows, which makes everyone just want to take it all in and enjoy being there in the moment. I also was at Wallows with just one person, my boyfriend, and obviously we stood by each other's side the entire time and never got separated. He made me feel safe and comfortable.

Looking back on it now, I am so proud of myself for going. I proved to myself that I can have fun in big crowd settings, with the right mindset and the right people. Ever since that night I have felt way more confident going to larger social events. This was very comforting for me because I was then more confident and excited to go to school dances and sporting events. Whereas before I dreaded going to big school events because I knew I would be squished in a big group of people, it would be loud, and I would get easily overwhelmed. Although after learning

how I can control my anxiety at big crowd functions. I focus on the things that make me feel safe and happy. Such as being around the right people, knowing my surroundings and where I can go if I do get overwhelmed, and to focus on enjoying the moment because I will never get it back.

I am so happy I went to The Wallows with my boyfriend that night because I ended up having a great time and if I didn't go, I would have had regret and always wondered how it would have been. It's always important to try new things and give second chances. If I didn't give things a second try I would never know what could come of them or how they could affect me in a positive way.