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A RELATIONSHIP THAT CHANGED MY PERSPECTIVE

Low Entropy's First Blog Jam

CONCEPT FOR THE BLOG JAM



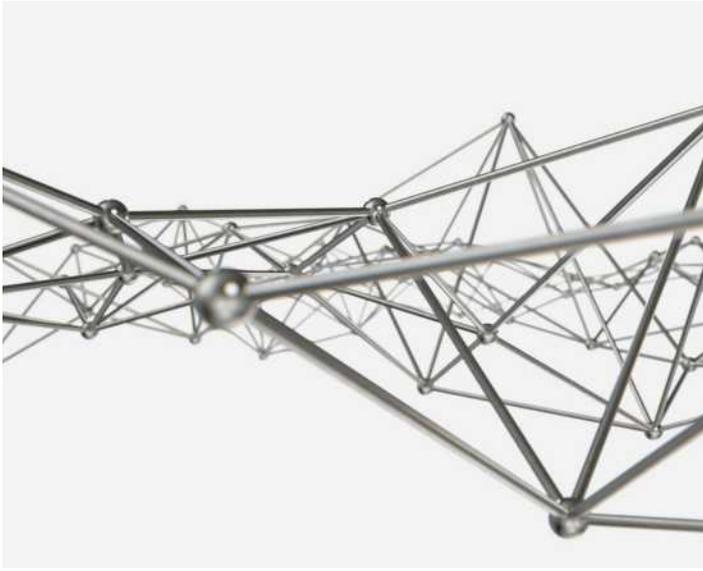
The concept for Low Entropy's first Blog Jam was simple: eight writers had 45 minutes to write on a topic revealed just moments before the clock started ticking. This was followed by 45 minutes of facilitated discussion about the individual pieces, after which the writers were given another 15 minutes to apply their finishing touches. The topic was "a relationship that changed my perspective."

The time limit and individualized discussions were intended to give the participants a space within which they could explore their writing, whether it involved relying on old habits or opening the door for experimentation - or both.

Indeed, the workshop became an exhibition of the beautiful diversity within the Low Entropy team, and the global community as a whole.

With some gentle final edits, we have collected their works below.





RELATIONSHIPS ARE ATOMS

Written by Satkar BK

Relationships are like atoms. Alone, they are invisible, but together they can become anything. The relationships we have with our peers, our families, our bodies and more shape us as a person, just like a collection of atoms might. As we continue to grow, we will form countless different bonds with a myriad of people. Some that last for just a moment, while others stay forever. In the end, all we truly leave behind are these relationships.

Although I have only had 20 years' worth of relationships, I've been lucky enough to have a few that have stuck with me and changed my perspective. The relationship that first comes to mind when thinking about this question is my relationship to the idea of kindness. The idea of kindness is a relationship? Although this may seem strange, it is important to understand that relationships are intangible. They exist not only between living things but concepts as well. We have relationships with our souls, our minds, and our mental health. For us to become truly happy and healthy people, we need to be fulfilled in our relationships with every aspect of our being.

I chose the idea of kindness as my relationship because of how it consistently changes my worldview. Like many others, I grew up with the constant fear of not being a kind person. This modern age only seems to worsen each passing day, and it is often hopeless to attempt to change it.



However, every time I want to quit believing in others or myself, the idea of kindness snaps me back. I've learned over time that no matter the situation or context, no amount of kindness and acceptance is too much. This perspective has stayed with me ever since.

We all have the choice to be good people. I've met so many who always see the positive and have never a bad thing to say. This has led me to work on my relationship with being kind to others and myself. Over time I've had the pleasure of seeing kindness pay off in wonderful ways. Through helping a friend with a tragic experience, through making my mom smile because of a compliment, though the short but warm interactions I have with people I may never see again.

Relationships are like atoms. They can be invisible on their own. But, when you keep adding and building on it, it transforms into life itself. *My relationship with being kind is transforming me into the person I want to become.* And at the end of it all, I hope it is the one thing the people I love never forget.





POWER OF PRONOUNS

Written by Leah Costello

Pronouns are tricky. Gendered pronouns have been getting a lot of press, but what about the individualist capital I versus the collective we? An anthropology recap: different cultures relate to each other in a variety of ways, and language is often the vehicle. But what about the lived experience of these terms?

And there's me. A fierce, independent woman. I need a man like a fish needs a bicycle. A lack of family support, a series of tragedies and the lessons of a ruthless capitalist society taught me to support myself at all costs. Don't rely on others. They leave and betray. Money and a steady career is your only savior. Live alone in your apartment, doors locked and bills paid.

So, I was brought up to embody a sort of traditional North American ideal. An isolating experience, but I wasn't beholden to anyone. No pressing family obligations, just their ever-looming expectation for success and security. But I soon learned that "western individualism" is a poor representation of North America.

I learned the power of pronouns when I met this most wonderful, compassionate man from Mexico City (part of North America, by the way). When we started to get serious, all of the sudden his car became our car, even though I wasn't paying for it. My bills were his bills and vice versa. And that's not all. He has a son and an unruly pug. They were mine too.

Naturally, I was infuriated. What do you mean *your* money is *my* money? Does this include debt? I need my precious savings to bail me out in case you leave. I'm a woman and as the oppressed sex we've learned that men cheat, lie and leave. We always have to have a backup plan. And the son and the dog? More to clean, more to do! All the responsibility will be put on my shoulders. The prehistoric caveman tends to leave his cave in disarray.

Sounds extreme, right? My uncensored thoughts took a while to calm. My adjustment to familial life all happened in a tiny townhouse during lockdown. But our love for each other was strong. We needed each other. And when we both started to get sick and suffer from chronic pain, I learned the power of *we*.

His pain is *my* pain. I would do anything to take it away. The best I can do is cook *our* meals when he's hurting. He orders Uber Eats for *us* when I'm feeling down. We struggle to pay *our* bills and entertain *our* child during lockdown. We're in this together. We're stronger together. He changed the way I think, forever, and healed a part of me I didn't know was wounded.

But this isn't to say the individualist in me didn't teach him a thing or two. I realized where my partner was coming from when I went to Mexico City for surgery. His family took care of me with open arms. The love and support of *we*, *our*, and *us*.



But the collective has flaws too. Their insistent pleas to tour around Mexico City, all while I was healing from facial surgery! Oh and the hurt feelings after I declined, in favour of Netflix, sorbet and Nintendo Switch. I learned that a lot of accommodation and people-pleasing comes from the we.

I was thankful to meet my partner's family. I realized that I and we aren't mutually exclusive. My partner holds a lot of anger inside of his friendly, diplomatic exterior. He laments at not having enough time to write and do as he likes, always yielding to the wants and needs of others. But I'm teaching him that we all need alone time to reflect, process, and heal.

I'm about to redefine our inadequate pronouns. They sure do a shoddy job of expressing sexual identity. Nor do they capture our unique human capacity to go within ourselves, to feel both isolated and connected at the same time. They're terribly ambiguous, pronouns are. Language puts us in boxes and it's easy to forget the human condition. We all see things differently, yet we're in this together. Together but alone



INDEPENDENT YET CONNECTED *Written by Vanessa Wideski*



I never looked up to anyone growing up.

There were adults in my life who told me what to do and what to think, but I always questioned them, and their ideas never really made sense to me.

I was a curious child, wandering my way through life. In many ways, I was lost.

My father shared stories of our Indigenous relatives and he talked about my mom's Polynesian roots, but I never found a sense of identity or comfort in these stories. They remained as just that, stories, stories that I could not relate to, stories that I felt far removed from.

This lack of identity prompted me to search for meaning. I spent my entire life looking for purpose. When I wasn't actively pursuing my quest for Truth, I was numbing myself out and pretending that everything was okay.

I was either "finding myself" through meditation, books or retreats, or I was distracting myself with alcohol, drugs and dysfunctional relationships. I thought of myself as a spiritual badass and this became my identity. In 2015 I took my spiritual-badass self over to The Monroe Institute in Virginia, for yet another 10-day retreat. It was here that I met a man who forever changed my perspective.

This man shared his understanding of the nature of reality and for the first time in my life, what he was saying actually made sense to me. His story resonated with me and I could relate to his words at an intensely deep level. My curious nature questioned his philosophy relentlessly and he patiently answered my questions.

As I grew to understand more about this man and his





interpretation of reality, I grew to understand myself more.

I'm learning to understand that I am an independent spiritual being, free to make my own choices. *Although I am an independent being, I am connected to all other beings and my choices affect all that I'm connected to.* This provides me with a sense of purpose and meaning. This is what is true for me and this is my identity.

FINDING MY ROOTS

Written by Nicole Riglietti

I was born into an Italian family and growing up that's all I knew. My grandparents immigrated to Canada from the south of Italy, a small town called Sannicandro in the Province of Bari. My grandfather, or "Nonno" as we say, travelled across Canada in the 1950s looking for work, and as he travelled from Montreal to Toronto, everyone he met there kept telling him to go west, as all the jobs were filled up. Growing up on a farm, his father, my great grandfather, lived in New York City in 1907 for a short time and moved back to Italy before the First World War as Italy called its sons back to the motherland. My Nonno heard stories of how living in America there was a sense of freedom, where people were rich in these great big over-crowded cities, where you could eat these giant steaks and food - oh, such glorious food - was plentiful. These tales sparked dreams in my Nonno's mind and soul and danced around, igniting the hungry flame of a better life than the impoverished farm he managed. At 27 years old he went in search of those dreams and left his home and all he knew behind so that he could begin to make money, save up and help his family back in Sannicandro. He wanted to go to the United States of America, just as his father did, yet, America had closed their borders to any new foreigners and his only two options were Venezuela or a new country similar to America, called Canada. He travelled up north, worked with lumber and in the mines at Britannia at one point, and then travelled south again, working on the railway.

After some time he decided it was time to find a bride, so he travelled back to Italy, met and married my Nonna, and took his new bride back west to Vancouver. He slowly learned English and provided for his young family.

My mother didn't know a word of English when she first went to school, as her parents only spoke a cross between Italian and their southern dialect. All the kids laughed at her, calling her names like WOP (without papers), which made my Nonno very angry, yet even through the prejudice they persevered and worked hard to belong. They met others from the same province as them and all the Italians stuck together on Commercial Drive in East Vancouver, living out their dreams of owning land with a big house, and enough money saved in the bank that there would be no reason to go hungry.

When my mother graduated from high school she went on a trip to Italy, visiting family and friends, and at some point along her holiday she met my father, a young soldier in the military on leave for his brother's engagement party. They were both charmed and decided to write letters to each other when my mom went back home. After two years of writing letters, my dad decided to move to Canada to marry my mom, and so he left his home, his family and friends to start a new life with endless possibilities and freedom. My parents kept the Italian traditions and culture alive, and growing up I always felt more Italian than Canadian. I lived and breathed Italy. I identified with being Italian to my very core. The three P's were a staple and something to live by each day, although not the healthiest or most nutritious: pasta, pizza and panzerotti. For Sunday dinners, the family would come over to our house and we'd eat, the table full of food as if we were feeding an entire town. Filled with meat, lasagna, fruit, nuts, cake, espresso, anything and everything you could get your hands on. We'd sit there in the kitchen eating, talking, eating some more, playing scopa (an Italian card game, where the images resemble Tarot cards), we talked some more.



Everyone. Very loudly. Talking over each other just to be heard. And when it was time to go, it would always be a 20-40 minute goodbye.

“Okay, we’re leaving now” someone would say, and so that began the rounds of giving hugs and a kiss on each cheek to say farewell until the next time. Yet, the conversations would continue or start up again in a completely different direction, with everyone on their feet at a standstill in the hallway.

“Okay, we’re leaving now, bye” someone else would say, which would start the sequence all over again, making the rounds of hugs and kiss on each cheek, but this time they are by the door putting their coats on, and yes, still talking.

“Okay, we’re leaving now, goodbye” they would say again, after which we would all stand around with the door open, still talking. Finally, they’d make their way into the car, with engines on and still talking, as we’re standing outside without coats freezing, waiting for the honk so we can wave and close the door.

As I grew up with this sense of Italian pride and understanding, I’d often fight with people proving how Italian I was, because to me I was Italian and not Canadian. It wasn’t until I went to Italy, travelled there, lived there, that I fully grasped and discovered how Canadian I was. How different I was from the authentic Italians, born and raised in Italy. How special I was that I was a blend between the two. I truly understood why people would argue with me, telling me I wasn’t Italian. I was embarrassed at the realization and lost a sense of myself and who I was. I was an image of Italy that wasn’t quite true. As a child I didn’t walk around at night with my friends circling the piazza and hanging out with friends on their vespas. I didn’t have a specialized form of schooling in high school that I had to commit toward my future at such a young age. I hardly spoke the language perfectly, let alone tried to learn the regional dialect which all my cousins seemed to speak 100% of the time. I didn’t have to go to the store on the daily to buy fresh products or go to the mercato on Sundays for fresh olives, cheese and bread. Nor was I used to walking by statues of saints that you would come across just walking on the street, inches apart from each other, saying a prayer as you passed, asking Padre Pio for protection. Nor going to the beach, in a itchy bitsy yellow polka dot bikini that barely covered my bum. And when I would tell my cousins of what we wore to the beach, how it covered much more than that and that the guys hardly ever wore speedos or short shorts, or that the women couldn’t just randomly go topless, they’d ask, “But why? How do you get tanned?”

When I lived there for a short time, that’s when I knew I was Candian. Especially as a woman. I have independence and choices, opportunities. I as a woman was truly free and not stuck behind a man, cleaning and cooking in the kitchen. As much as they are fashion forward there, some of the mentality of a woman’s place and her rights and freedoms are not.

that’s when I knew I was Candian.



finding myself



FINAL DESTINY

Written by Tim Ling

Before I started my own novel, I never thought I would one day become an online writer. My spare time was always filled with browsing other people's literature, whether it was a discussion article, online novels or performance videos.

There was one period of time that I got really into reading. I would squeeze out a couple of minutes in the busiest morning, my head always looking down on a bumpy bus, opening my laptop at the moment I got home, just to read that novel. I was really attracted to the topic it expressed: the final destiny theory, also known as eschatology.

What I loved about the final destiny theory, was everything that does not seem to be possible can happen. It's a total overthrow of the real world we live in. Besides zombies, which might first come to mind, these kinds of novels also give me feelings I seldom get to experience in real life. The hush and intensity to survive, the cruelty and bitterness of humanity, the viciousness of nature . . . the preciousness of hope.

With such a fast pace of reading, I finished that short novel in less than a week. Not fulfilling the enthusiasm I'd just built up, I desired for more. One novel after another, I went through. Physical, emotional, theoretical, fictional, affectional . . . I can't recall how many types of novels I've read, all focusing on one topic: the final destiny.



Lying on my bed, finishing another novel, I don't even remember which, my hands tremble. I drop my phone. What next? Look for another similar novel to read? I'm starting to get numb with the feelings they try to express. I would see that person smile, and know he is going to betray the group, see that person go over a pit, and know he's going to die. The plots in the novel no longer entertain me as much.

I feel like I've been there - what is final destiny - higher than being there, I seeked to create it - it's different from reading and creating - what actually is final destiny - what is it about reading a novel

OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Written by Hayley Chan

I was never one to believe in the saying "opposites attract." Clichés simply felt like cheap ways of making a point.

For example, in particularly dramatic TV episodes, a badly CGI'd full moon - in a dark and stormy night, sometimes featuring the silhouette of a howling wolf - almost always makes an appearance.

In astrology, a full moon marks the end of a cycle. And, allegedly, this "end" usually brings about dramatic events and life-changing meetings - aka TV plot twists in real life. This is where the full moon trope originates from, but it's a HUGE TV cliché.

It's a quick and easy way of implying drama and has been overused so much that TV viewers have ingrained the meaning of its symbolism with a quick glance.

However, I can't deny the fact that, as I've grown older and have acquired more experiences, I've realized that a lot of seemingly tiresome clichés actually hold a lot of truth to them.

Maybe, because we have grown so accustomed to the repetitive nature of clichés, we have learned to dismiss them on instinct. But . . . Once upon a time, on the night of a dark and mysterious full moon in Scorpio, clichés experienced redemption.



It all felt like a crazy dream . . .

I had met my better half.

I was going to my friend Arlene's 20th birthday party. I wasn't too keen about taking a bus in heels and, luckily for me, I knew of a mutual friend of Arlene's who lived in Markham, Ontario as well.

If I knew sisterhoods could be developed within five minutes of a carpool, then I would've started blaming my choice in footwear for not wanting to commute a long time ago.

I was certain I had never met someone that had mirrored, yet opposed, my personality so much - like the full moon itself.

I was passive. Sara is aggressive. I had an aversion to conflict. And Sara stands up for herself on instinct.

As mentioned previously, I always thought the saying "opposites attract" was a truthless cliché. This wasn't just because it was a cliché. It has more to do with who I have always inherently been as a person - a people pleaser.

This is why I often got along with so many people. I rarely got into fights with my friends. I was always in agreeance with others because of my distaste for conflict. Now "opposite" doesn't



necessarily point directly to conflict, but through meeting Sara, someone so opposite from me, I learned to embrace the beauty of sharing differences with others, and the disagreements or conflict that may come with it - and the growth that results.

I learned there's nothing healthy about sacrificing your feelings to keep others happy. In fact, it's a disservice to my relationships to hold back my genuine thoughts and feelings, even if they're negative.

Through my friendship with Sara, I haven't changed the person I am, but revitalized the respect I have for myself. I always thought myself to be a pretty confident person who recognized their self-worth. But my thoughts and actions were pretty dissonant.

For example, I always shrugged off playboy behaviour; especially in casual circumstances where I didn't have actual feelings for the person. It didn't matter that he flopped or that he ghosted me for two weeks - I'm chill, I'm cool, I'm calm. I didn't care.

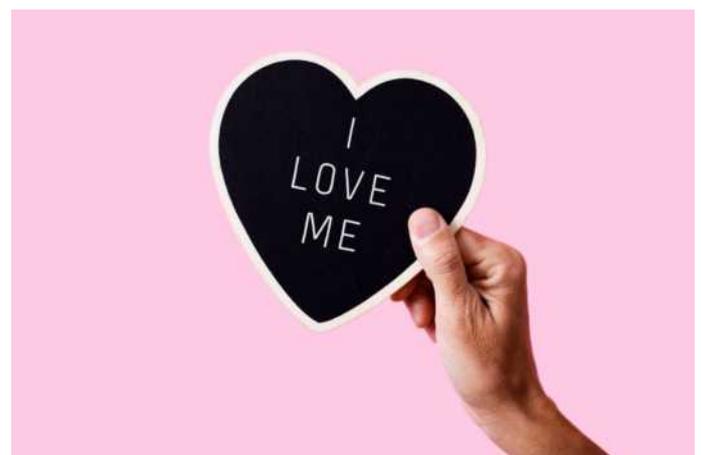
Sara on the other hand, always had a "tell it like it is" attitude. Most people talked about how "men are trash" . . . meanwhile their finest act of redemption was waiting exactly five hours to reply to their Snapchats because that's exactly how long they took to do so.

But Sara has literally told a guy who had wronged her, that he was trash . . . to his face. And then never had anything to do with him - on her own volition.

She talked the talk, and she walked the walk.

I have always been someone who admired boldness, but I never actually acted on it. I figured my aversion to conflict was noble. I didn't want to cause others emotional strife and I was fine with not reacting when someone did something to upset me. I would attribute these reactions to my stable emotions and state of neutrality. I never saw anything wrong with this because, as a result, I never had any problems in my relationships. But the problem is, I didn't see the problem in the avoidance of conflict. Even more important, I didn't see the relationship between conflict aversion and self-respect.

My now almost two-year friendship with Sara has changed how I viewed myself in my relationships, through the differences we share. This is not to say another person has changed me for the better, but it turns out sometimes opposites do attract, and for the right reasons.



CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVES

written by Isabella Harris

My shifted relationship with my mom changed my perspective on having kids in the future. I had a tense relationship with her as I grew up, in part due to our similar natures. She and I are both hot-tempered, outspoken and stubborn.

This resulted in a household where tensions ran high, and we frequently fought. My relationship with my mother was filled with animosity and I continued to amass resentment toward her.

Accordingly, from the young age of 12, I was adamant in my proclamation that I would never have kids. I believed that having kids would result in a similar relationship between my mother and I – one that was hostile and filled with stress. Virtually every adult in my life told me I would change my mind, that one day I'd warm up to the idea of having kids. I truly believed this would not be the case.

However, as my relationship with my mother shifted, so did my perspective on having future children myself.

As I grew older, our similarity was the basis of our friendship, instead of constant conflict. It was as if two incredibly volatile forces had finally found a way to not only co-exist but to thrive off of one another. We started to not just tolerate one another, but enjoy each other's presence.

Our relationship is now filled with love, laughter and appreciation. This change made me reconsider my stance declaring I would not have children; I now consider myself very open to the idea of having children of my own. My perspective has now changed drastically, which can largely be accredited to my transformed relationship with my mother.

I can now see how unique the relationship between a mother and her children can be, and how close you can become.

This relationship has gone through many ups and downs, yet, remains extremely important to me. Though we may have fought and argued intensely for years, she is now the person I trust most.

My transformed relationship with her has shown me the joys of having a daughter and changed my perspective on having future children.



WHO AM I?

written by Andrew Woods



Who am I?

“Your need for acceptance can make you invisible in this world.” – Jim Carrey

As I stood at the edge of the lake, looking out at the mountains and pale sky, witnessing a moment that would never repeat itself, a question came to mind.

It wasn't any kind of question I'd ever had before, nor at the time did it reveal its true intent . . . but curiously, it stuck with me.

It was a question that I began to ask myself more and more, as time passed. And although the answer seemed absurdly obvious, I recognized there was a deeper, more profound realization behind it.

After all, the question of, “Who am I?” could only have one answer.

“I'm me.”

Obviously.

“I'm Andrew.”

But through observation alone, in nature and in civilized society, things were always changing. Always evolving. Everything was simply in transition.

A caterpillar would identify as caterpillar . . . until it becomes a butterfly.

As we go through life, and ride the ups and downs, there are occasions when you might wake up and realize that some kind of transformation is necessary. Maybe you're unhappy, maybe you're uninspired, maybe you feel a lack of something.

Whatever the emotion or thought is, you realize that somewhere along the road you've lost touch with who you truly are.

And so I awoke to find myself emotionally, spiritually, and morally bankrupt. To the point that I no longer recognized the person reflected in the mirror.

But that's life. And through life we are given the opportunity to learn from our mistakes, and to acquire new wisdom through a unique series of lessons.

I spent most of my early life looking externally for the sense of inner peace I desired.

I sought acceptance from the world around me, without ever asking whether I could even accept myself.

That external validation became its own drug. And I rode from one high to the next, seeking from others what I couldn't provide for myself. And it was never enough. I wanted more, and that nagging feeling of incompleteness and inadequacy became a heavy burden. And looking back there's a kind of acknowledgement that maybe everything happens when it's supposed to.



As Robert Downey Jr once said, “You end up doing the stuff you’re supposed to at the time you’re supposed to do it.”

I guess what I was supposed to do was become acquainted with myself. To learn that there isn’t anything on the outside that I need, and rather it’s what I can offer to myself that matters most.

I learned the value of self-love, of being self-compassionate, of accepting the whole spectrum of who I am – the good, the bad and the ugly.

It was a beautiful process.

That kind of shift in perspective can have a huge impact on a person’s life. Because, in a way, the reality we face on the outside is a reflection of our own inner reality.

I still ask myself the question regularly.

Who am I?

And the answer is never a constant. It’s always changing.

I take comfort in the awareness that who I am today will not remain static, or stagnant.

With every day, there is growth, maturity, learning and progress.

For all of us, combined. As part of the bigger picture, the bigger narrative.

Like the story of the caterpillar who becomes the butterfly.

We must crawl in the dirt before we can reach the sky.

