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When I begin to ponder the question, who am I as a writer, I am confronted by the glaring reality that it is through writing I have learned about myself and continue to do so. Writing for me began when I was just seven or eight years old. I wrote a short poem called “the doorknob meets the door.” Rereading the poem as my eighteen-year-old self, I am impressed by the creativity of my young brain. My passion for writing grew rapidly. I remember scribbling out short stories on scraps of paper and asking my mom to type up poems I created because my typing skills were, at that point, nonexistent. I knew I loved writing, but I didn’t realize the power of my words, until my words were the only thing I had left. Let me backtrack a little.

When I was nine or ten, I began my journey as a runner. I was an energetic, outgoing kid, but I also struggled greatly with anxiety. Running calmed my brain, my restless body, and it helped me focus throughout the day. What began as an afterschool activity a few days a week, turned into my life. I joined a club team outside of school called the Chelsea Greyhounds. To say the training was rigorous would be an understatement. Never would I have believed my body, or brain, could be pushed to such limits.

Now you may be wondering, what does this have to do with writing? The two actually hold many similarities. When I am running, I am completely exposed on the outside. Every bump, lump, and dimple was visible under my tight race uniform. There is nowhere to hide. When I write, I am exposing the innermost parts of myself. I am naked from the inside, out. There are my words, and there is my spelling (thank god for spell check), and there is my heart.

When the world of running became toxic and I began to suffer from an eating disorder, I believe I wished that someone would see past my exterior. After years and years of being judged by my body, before I even stepped onto the track, I craved the inner exposure of writing. But at the time, I couldn't see that. I grew sicker and sicker, while simultaneously being praised for "my new body." Eventually I was hospitalized and sent to a residential facility (aka a psych ward specialized for eating disorder recovery). For the sake of this essay, I don't think it's necessary to dive into the complex, terrifying, lack of control I experienced there. But what is important to say is that writing was there for me. Writing got me through. I began to journal every night. I haven't stopped since. I started to write and read poetry once again. I poured every single thought onto paper. Through writing (and lots of therapy of course) I began to find myself outside of the eating disorder.

There was a time when I didn't think I could survive without running. There was a time when my sole identity was that of a runner.

Through writing I have been able to slowly recognize that running, while still one of my biggest passions, isn't the most valuable thing about me. My self-worth is not based on a race time, a training session or the shape of my body.

There was a time when I didn't want to recover. When my eating disorder felt so safe, I didn't know how I could fight it.

When everything was stripped away from me; when I wasn't allowed to move or walk or shower; when I lost control of my body and of food, writing helped me realize that really, I was gaining control back. That being controlled by an eating disorder feels like freedom, but really, it's a prison.

I hate change and I often expect the worst from it. The past few years have overflowed with change. Seriously, it feels like someone is pouring water into a cup without stopping until the entire room is flooded. As a result, my emotions have been heightened for extended periods of time. When I

am angry or sad or anxious, I write. When I am grateful or hopeful, I write. Sometimes my words feel foreign, and I don't understand them. Other times everything clicks, and I come away with a piece I am proud of.

Writing for me is more than just a hobby, it's a way of living. It's an outlet. It's a safe place to explore.

So, who I am as a writer is always changing. There is no linear formula. Writing is like running is like life. It's messy and complicated, but there is beauty in the process.