I love coming back to school, yet here I am, feeling overwhelmed after two days. You wouldn’t think that was possible, right? Well, I am the walking embodiment of biting off more than you can chew.

Heck, even my own parents have been begging for two years that I take fewer classes and just enjoy college! You know it’s bad when your folks are telling you to work LESS.

And then there’s my girlfriend, who is the epitome of low self-esteem; that she is somehow inadequate. She thinks that she doesn’t have the brains to pass a class. She doesn’t feel worthy of compliments. She wants to throw away her drawings almost as soon as she finishes them.

She doesn’t realize how brilliant she is, how talented, how kind, or just how able she is. Yes, maybe that drawing won’t end up in a museum, but your friends love it because it might as well have been pulled straight from a professional manga! You’re worried about getting a B in that class? So many others are barely managing C’s or don’t even seem to care!

In short, we have to help each other.

She tells me when I’m taking on too much and when I can let my exaggerated sense of guilt and responsibility go. I tell her that she is doing amazing things and that she should never feel inadequate or ashamed because she has never done anything to deserve that self-image. She gets me to loosen up and I try my best to provide a good mirror for her.

I hope you know that this sort of support isn’t relegated to romantic relationships. I just wrote about us because this aspect of our relationship struck home today. I might have had a similar experience with Hunter or Jess or my parents. However, I don’t tend to listen to them when I should because their warnings are white noise to me. I’ve heard
them too often. Yet, for some reason, I’m inclined to listen to this girl that I probably don’t deserve.

You need to find someone who is honest, that you can listen to. That doesn’t mean that you hear what they say, acknowledge it, and then ignore it. It means that when they say something, give you a warning, or otherwise try to reach you, your heart is inclined to open and accept what they say, even if it’s the same thing that you’ve heard a million times before.

Sometimes it takes a stranger in the career office to get through to you. Sometimes it’s your parents or fiancé. Sometimes talking to yourself will sort it out.

So, I’m going to drop a class and she’s keeping a drawing that she’s beginning to love. Hopefully, this is the start of me learning my limits and the start of her learning to appreciate her abilities. I can only hope that each of you finds someone in your life who can help you like she helps me.

Song of the Week: I’m choosing “Lean on Me” partly because it’s just so applicable to the topic and partly because it annoys my girlfriend whenever I sing it to her. Also, just saying, Seal’s version is infinitely better than Bill Withers’s original.

Blog Column: Love, The Old Man

Source URL (retrieved on 01/05/2019 - 5:50pm):
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