

The Most Valuable Lesson I Have Learned

“Caesar salad and Coke Zero” was the order I gave every time I went to any restaurant. Nothing else. I said it was because the flavour was that good, but really it was because it was safe and predictable. My comfort zone, I later realised, was not a cosy sofa but a cage with invisible bars.

That cage cracked when I arrived to study abroad on a small island I had never heard of. Overnight, everything familiar disappeared: new people, new food, new house. It felt like closing one book halfway through and being thrown into the sequel with new characters and an unknown plot. I could no longer order the same meal, talk to the same people or hide behind the same routine.

Instead, I picked up a hockey stick for the first time, ran onto a netball court and cheered at rugby matches I barely understood. I had to stand in chapel and read in front of the whole school, in a language that was not my own and with an accent I wanted to hide. While others argued about who would give the sermon, I silently prayed to be invisible. But life has a habit of pushing you onto the stage before you feel ready.

The biggest turning point came with the Prefect team elections. I did not even know what a Prefect was, and I was sure no one would choose a girl who had been at the school for only seven months. I applied only because I thought I had nothing to lose. Then came the email. The email everyone was waiting for, except me. The email announcing the new Head of School. I read it several times before believing it. I hesitated, convinced I did not deserve it, but with encouragement I said yes.

That “yes” changed everything. I began reading in chapel almost every month, speaking to executives, and even eating breakfast at the Governor’s house. Each new challenge added a brick to a small but growing tower of confidence. The fear never vanished, but it shrank into a quiet voice I could manage rather than a command I had to obey.

That experience taught me my most valuable lesson: comfort zones are not safe places, they are invisible cages. The moment we step beyond them, we discover something extraordinary.

Fear is not a signal to stop.

It is an invitation to begin.