How Youthpass changed my mindset and helped me to become a lifeguard

What?? To swim 25m under the water without coming out for breath? I cannot do this!" I said to my lifeguard trainer. "Just try, Vanja." he encouraged me. I tried, and guess where I came out of the water for a breath. At 10 meters! "You see, I will fail!" I complained.

However, let me start at the beginning. When I applied for my one year ESC project in Germany I thought I am going to volunteer just in the kindergarten. Although, as it often happens in life, also other great possibilities show up. One that showed up for me was to apply to be one of the summer camp leaders for youngsters in Spain. It sounds great but once you accept the position, it also demands a lot of work and commitment. With other volunteers, we attended 3-weekend seminars, went to the first aid course, learned how to cook for big groups and to manage the finance. Okay, no problem!

Yet, in the last moment we found out our team doesn't have a lifeguard and somebody has to do the course. Finally, I and my friend applied to "save" our team. Lifeguard course lasted 4 weeks, was short but intense. I realized it is not going to be easy. We should complete all the tasks demanded as saving methods in the water, swimming 400 meters in different techniques in less than 15 minutes, 4 meters diving, jumping in the water and similar.

The most difficult for me on the list was swimming 25 meters under the water without coming out for breath. I was pretty sure this one will be impossible for me to do. I was always bad at holding breath and had the feeling I cannot last longer than 5 seconds under the water. As I described in the beginning, my trainer encouraged me to try but I failed. "I knew it is going to be like that and there is nothing I can do!" I said to myself. I went home disappointed. My hopes to become a lifeguard are lost.

Luckily, I was writing the Youthpass diary that helped me to recognize my emotions, thoughts, achievements and to reflect things that happened to me throughout the whole ESC project. I as well wrote down my problem with swimming, and tried to reflect it from different ways. It gave me some guidance and I started to question myself how can I change the situation and what competencies can I get? I mentioned it to my mentor too. I figured out that the problem may not be in my physical disability to swim and hold the breath under the water. The real problem was mental – my fixed mindset that didn't want to risk, try something new and work for a goal.

Wow, then it clicked in my head! First, I have to change my mindset and start to believe that I can do this! After that, everything changed. Of course, I had to work hard. I was individually practicing swimming under the water every second day, I meditated, held my breath, bought swimming glasses and hat. I did everything to get closer to my goal.

The last day of the lifeguard course came. We had to perform on demanded tasks. When swimming under the water was on the list I breathed out, I breathed in and jumped. I was nervous, my heart pumped fast and that is not good when you should spare your oxygen under the water. Still, I kept swimming and came to another edge of the pool. I couldn't believe it! I was so proud of myself! I did it! I am a lifeguard now!

If at the beginning of the story, somebody would have said I will achieve this particular task and become a lifeguard I would have probably laughed. With the help of Youthpass and my mentor I started to believe in myself, see my potential to grow and reached my goal. I believe that was just a small piece of puzzle in the big picture of success, but now I see how Youthpass can help me to achieve much more in my future career and personal life.

P.S. Hola from Playa de Sant Feliu, Spain!

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