

*"If I have seen a little further than others, it is by standing on the shoulder of giants."*

*Whose shoulders am I standing on and what do I see?*

**Marissa Claire Nowak**



## *Going Through Life Without Really Living*

~Before I saw what life and the world really is I was in the dark for a long time. For many years I went through life dragging my feet and with a constant feeling of anxiety. I sometimes felt anchored to the spot I stood while others were free of any restraints.

~I always feared what others thought of me and that if I was truly myself I would end up alone. So I trudged ahead with my anchor and tried to do the best I could with my anxiety.

## *Coping with Isolation*

A large, spreading tree with a thick trunk and many thin branches dominates the left side of the image. The tree's branches extend across the top and right. In the center-right, a green picnic table with two benches is situated on a grassy clearing. The background is a dense forest of green trees under a bright sky.

~A lot of the time I felt the only thing I had that gave me confidence was my art. I would sit in my room and document my emotions through my paint brush. Whether I was happy, sad or fearful I would paint or draw and relieve myself of my overwhelming emotions.

~I had started to feel that art was my only friend, and I knew it couldn't be good when someone is referring to something inanimate as their only friend. This didn't last for long though because little did I know I would soon drop my anchor and begin an upward climb.



## *Finding My Way to the Top of the Mountain*

~While in painting class one day, a girl sat across from me and abruptly me asked me my name. It's funny how easy such a small sentence started a beautiful friendship. Her name is Claudia Papa and she was the exchange student that year. We quickly started hanging out and I soon realized her adventurous nature. When I was with her I felt free from the weight I carried and had no fears.

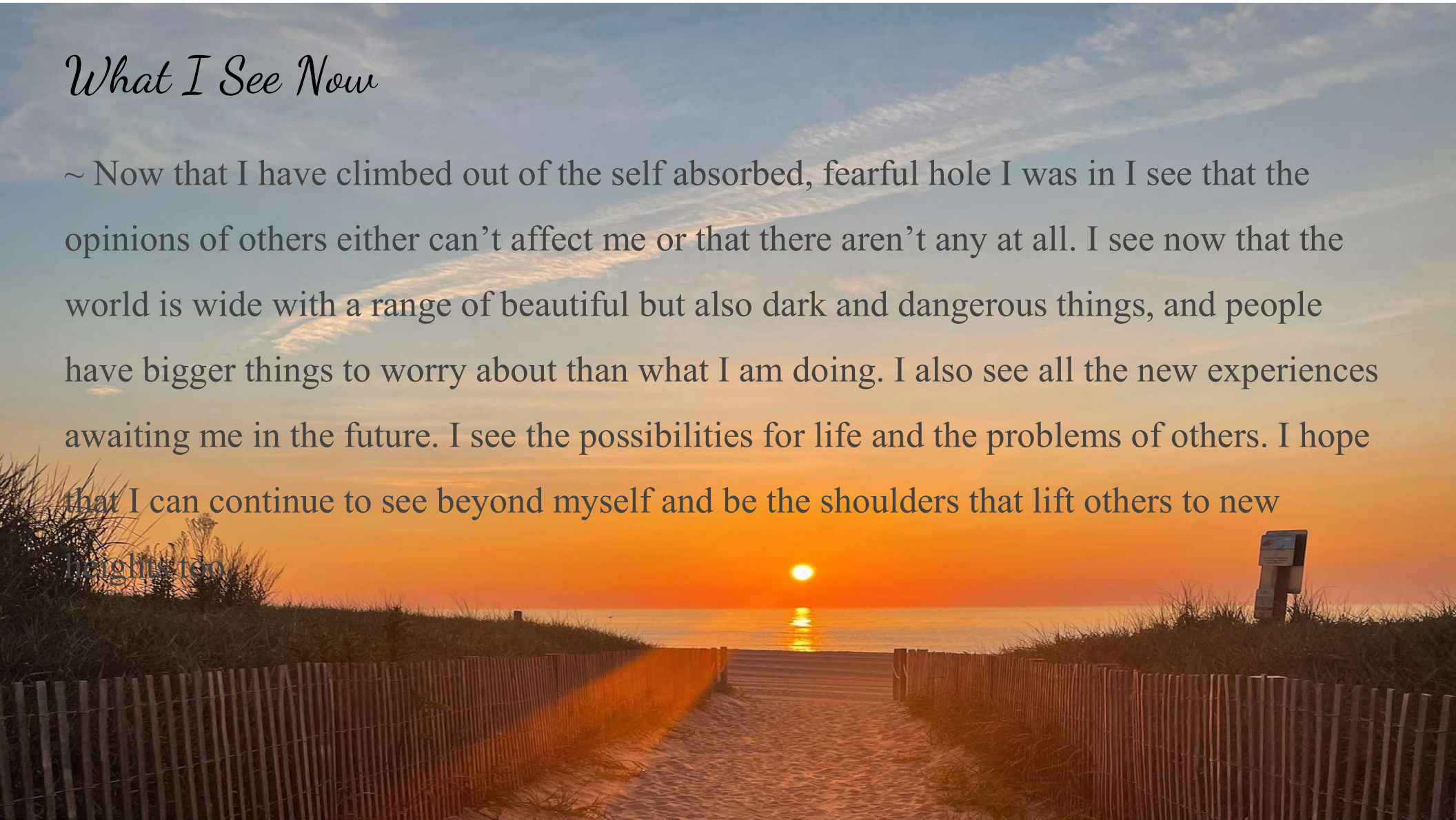
~ I started to finally understand what it meant to live and enjoy life. Together, me and Claudia went on many adventures crossing things off our bucket lists. Some days, just to try something new, we would decide to where to eat by closing our eyes and pointing to something on our list. I never wanted to miss a moment and grabbed a hold of every opportunity I could. I was changed forever.

## *The shoulders I stand on*

~I know it is Claudia's shoulders lifting me up to see the world from the highest possible point. She gave me a new outlook on life and let me know that the world is a big place and there is always space for me. She took me to heights I didn't even know I could reach and brought me out of a place I thought there was no way back from. She is the support underneath my feet. When I stumble she catches me and when I start to lose balance she gets me back on track. No one else has ever had that effect on me.

## *What I See Now*

~ Now that I have climbed out of the self absorbed, fearful hole I was in I see that the opinions of others either can't affect me or that there aren't any at all. I see now that the world is wide with a range of beautiful but also dark and dangerous things, and people have bigger things to worry about than what I am doing. I also see all the new experiences awaiting me in the future. I see the possibilities for life and the problems of others. I hope that I can continue to see beyond myself and be the shoulders that lift others to new heights too.





## *Exploring the Dark*

~Once I started to look beyond myself I realized that other people really did struggle in the same way I had. It made me curious as to why some people all over the world are subjected to depression and anxiety and I started to learn more about how our brain works. I had always been interested in all kinds of sciences and even attended science camps at the school when I was younger but this was different.

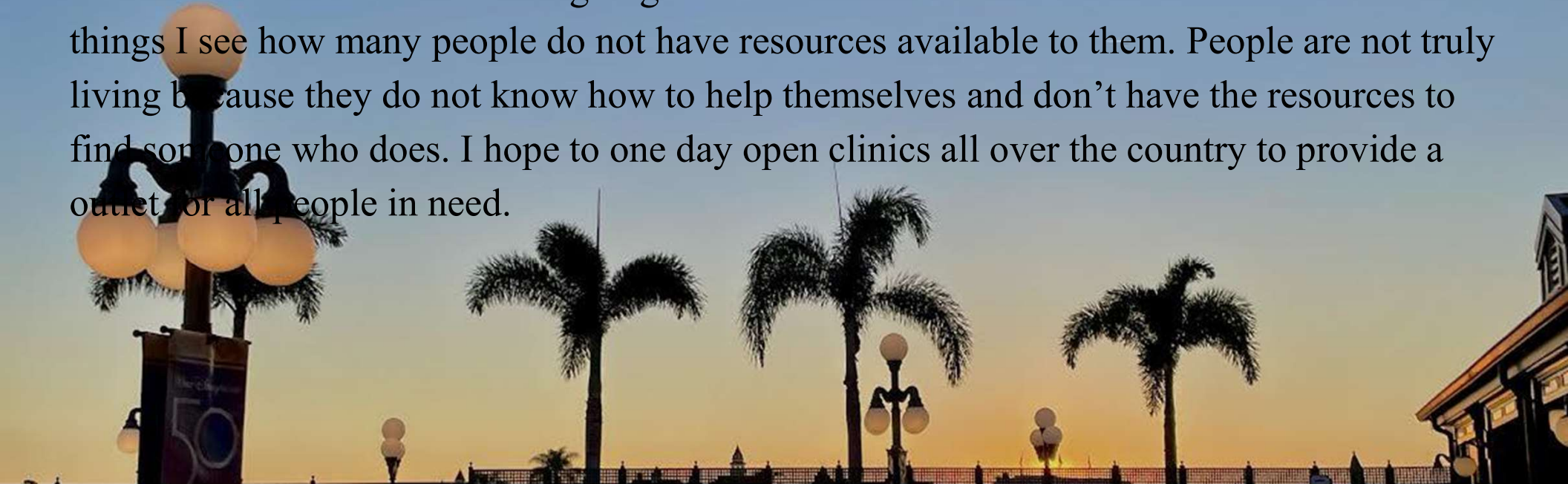
~I became very interested in studying psychology and learning about all different types of mental illnesses and what causes them. Each one is different because some are caused by outside factors while others are just our brain.

~I also learned about the different available treatments which led me to choosing my major.

## *Forming Ambition*

~ While learning about psychology and mental health I came across a treatment called art therapy. It combines my two passions: art and psychology. As I learned more about it I realized that it was the right path for me. I had used art to help heal myself and I aspire to do that for others.

~ There is a mental health crisis going on in the world and now that I see the full view of things I see how many people do not have resources available to them. People are not truly living because they do not know how to help themselves and don't have the resources to find someone who does. I hope to one day open clinics all over the country to provide a outlet for all people in need.

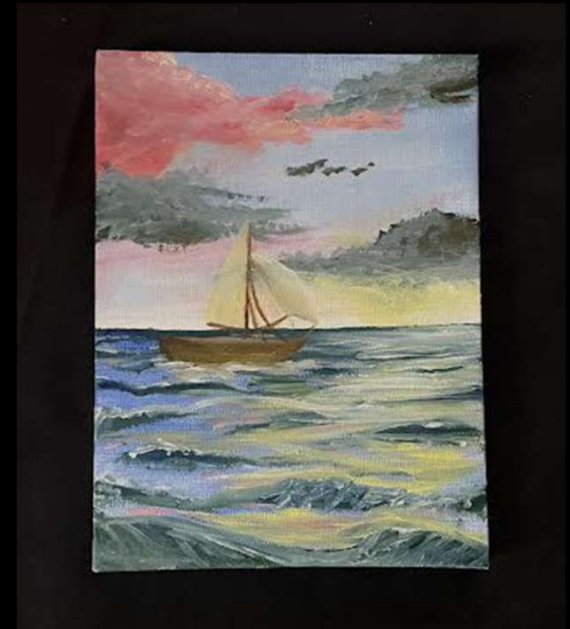




## *Expanding My Art*

~Since broadening my view I have decided to step out of my comfort zone and get into different mediums and techniques in art. At first I was nervous about failing so Claudia agreed to try the new things with me and fail together. After a while I learned to use acrylic, watercolor, and oil paint and have been more involved in my hobby of photography.

~The pictures presented throughout these slides have all either been photographed or painted by myself. I no longer have a fear of sharing my works and am excited to explore more in my classes after high school.





## *Accepting New Heights*

**~Having blossomed into this new person some may think I never look back, but it's the exact opposite. It is important to remember your own history and look back at your hard times to remind yourself of where you are now. The distance from here to there is great but it doesn't take much to get back there. However, with the right view of life and the right people lifting you up, you will only ascend into greatness and continue to see things others may not.**

*Maudie Nowak*