

HÄ, WAS?



THE ADVENTURES
OF JOHANNA - AN
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT LIVING
IN FREIBURG

**10 LESSONS I'VE
LEARNED WHILE
LIVING ABROAD**

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INTERCULTURAL MENTORING

OH, SWEET FREIBURG...

You have taught me so many valuable lessons. After living abroad for the last 2.5 years, there are an endless amount of lessons I've had the opportunity to learn. My experience here has pushed me to grow in ways I could have never been experience if I was back home. I'm sure if you're reading this you've also been pushed to grow in ways you couldn't have imagined before! Today I'd like to highlight 10 most valuable lessons I've learned since living abroad.

1



THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Even if you're not an international student, some kind of community is essential to a sense of well-being when relocating to another city. I've always been a big believer that our purpose lies within loving and connecting to one another. In fact, there's a shirt I wear that says "we rise by lifting others" and I think it's just as important to know that there are times we will be on the giving and receiving end of it. Whether that's meeting others to share your favorite hobby or having a meaningful conversation with a friend, community can help us feel heard, understood, and give us the family we may not have nearby.

SMILE AT STRANGERS

2

Create your own sunshine and bring a little spark of happiness to other people while you're at it. You never know what kind of magic can happen when you take a peek at the world from outside of your bubble and engage in simple acts of love to the people around you.



3 PRACTICE GRATITUDE

There will always be someone who has it better than us, and there will always be someone who has it harder than us. In the days of social media it's easy to compare our life situations to other people. The best medicine to comparison? Gratitude. There is so much to be thankful for including for our health, food, the opportunity to call a new city home, muffins, tea, chats on the phone with loved ones... the list goes on and on!

What's one way you can incorporate more gratitude into your life? I recommend starting a "blessing jar." Here's how it goes: take an empty jar. I personally wrote the word "blessing" on a piece of paper and taped it on the jar. Each day before going to sleep, write one thing you feel thankful for on a small piece of paper and put it inside. By doing this practice, you may find yourself intentionally noticing the small bits of magic tucked away throughout your day. At the end of the year, month, or whenever you need a little pick-me-up, dump the jar of written blessings on a table, open them up one by one as a way to be reminded me of how much there is to be thankful for.

4

HONESTY MATTERS

Since living in Germany, I've learned the sweet lesson of honesty. Being honest also means saying when to say YES and when to say NO. Valuing yourself, your time, and your energy might mean that you have to be real with yourself and others when you have too much on your plate. If it's anything Germany has taught me, it's that!

5

NATURE

Something I feel like can take you out of your everyday life and gain a good perspective on what's going on in your life is simply going out on a walk or watching the sunset. Back home I'd drive my car out into the middle of the wheat fields with the windows down, blast music through the stereo, and would watch in awe at the colors of the sky turn from blues to a cotton candy sky of pinks, yellow, and purples. Whether you take a nightly walk around a park or find some time to sit next to a lake, it is a beautiful ritual that can amplify your joy, understand your sadness, or just give you the space to breathe.



6 PUT YOUR FOOT DOWN

Be kind, but know when to put your foot down and stand up for yourself. There are several situations in Germany where I've had to learn to know my value and speak up for myself as well as the energy I was giving to people and projects. There is tremendous importance in knowing when enough is enough. Get yourself out of bad situations and people who are abusing their relationship with you! Whether that means needing to change your course of studies, changing your job, or moving apartments, listen to your needs and put your foot down when it's needed!



7 TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Between work, school, a socially-distant social life, grocery runs, washing dishes, and all other sorts of miscellaneous paperwork, it can feel like you need to be crossing things off of your list all the time. When things get really crazy, it can be difficult to take care of ourselves. Living abroad has taught me that creating a schedule where you have moments of rest is just as important as moments where you're getting things done. Whether enjoying the slow process of brewing tea or taking the time to water your plant babies, rest is vital to feel recharged and work more efficiently.



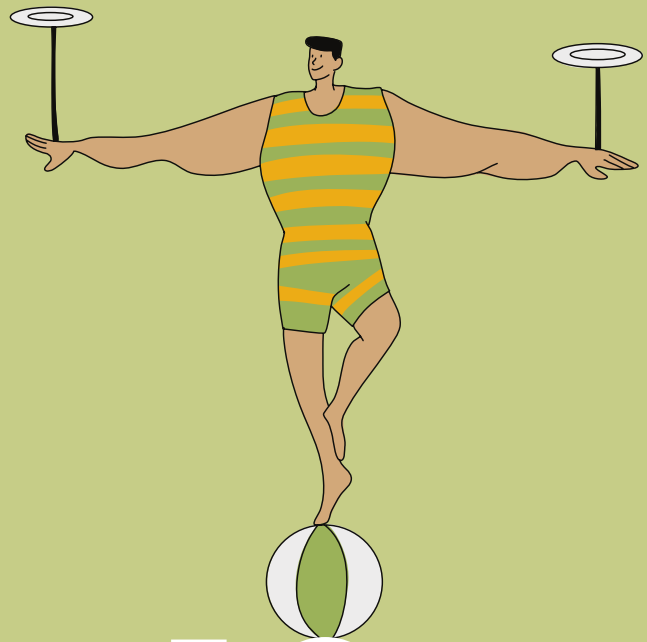
8 HELPING OR HARMING THE PLANET?

Freiburg has taught me to care more about my carbon footprint, to become more aware of the state of the world, and to do my part to make a difference. There is such a high awareness around the amount of plastic waste is produced, where food comes from as well as its impact on the planet, as well as the understanding that fast-fashion comes at a cost. It has inspired me to look closer at the way I'm living and make an effort to doing my part!

9

PROCRASTINATION

You're required to be autonomous at the Uni. Without a clear schedule or focus, and can lead you to procrastination and ultimately make you feel stressed-out and frazzled. I'm still in the process of getting this one figured out, but I've definitely seen strides in the past year of how to procrastinate less and get things organized to save my future self from crazy amounts of overwhelm.



10

BALANCE

No matter which element of life I'm reflecting on, I always come back to the idea of finding balance. If you are notorious for being a workaholic, find balance with rest or else you may have to suffer with the consequences later such as burn out. On the other hand, we could be severely lazy which is not a recipe for joy, either! Too much of anything is unhealthy so just remember the basics like getting enough fresh air, time to work, play, rest, and simply be.

One of the biggest wonders and delights is to continuously learn throughout life, to grow, and to be open to what life hands us. I've found that these lessons aren't as simple as checking off 'bananas' off of a grocery list- we don't simply learn a lesson and move on from it without expecting it to reappear in life again. Lessons love to pay a visit every once in a while in different seasons of life. Each time they come back and pay me a visit, I find myself learning something different each time- and I hope they do the same for you, too! Encouraging you to continue growing, learning, and creating yourself.

Cheering you on!

xoxo, Johanna

