

FALL  
2021

# “I thrive when...”

CELT- eCampus Ontario:  
PhotoVoice Project Virtual Gallery

This PhotoVoice project was a collaboration between the Community Engaged Learning & Teaching (CELT) initiative in the Faculty of Arts, X University and Centennial College's Centre for Accessible Learning and Counselling Services.

“I Thrive When...” - this was the focal question posed to students in two courses (SSH 102: Learning and Development Strategies and PSY 706: Positive Psychology) co-taught by Dr. Diana Brecher and Dr. Deena Kara Shaffer, as part of the CELT PhotoVoice initiative led by Dr. Reena Tandon at X University and to student participants from Centennial College's E-Mentorship and Peer Listening Program, led by Dr. Rick Ezekiel and Miguel Litonjua.

As per the respective curricular and co-curricular projects, students were asked to take pictures in response to this statement, and write a narrative about what the picture conveys to the audience in response to the topic.

This is a collection of their photos and narratives. This is their PhotoVoice Exhibit. Let's start the conversation: “I Thrive When...”



# Heaven is a myth, nature is real

*by Keshav Dulal*



There are times in life when we are busy worried about trivial things. We tend to get lost in the process and lose direction. We then stagnate.

Every once in a while I feel lost and disoriented while treading through the hoops of life. I then take these deep retreats into nature. All my problems seem nothing in comparison in front of these huge mountains and landscapes. This helps me realize my priorities that actually matter in life. I learn to step back and rethink where I should be heading next.

To travel is to come alive and to explore is to experience.



# Free To Be Me

by Savannah DiMuccio

I thrive when I am in a state of flow. Being in a state of flow means feeling safe to be my most authentic self. I feel safe when I have supportive people in my life and when I have structure. It is moments like in this photo, that I feel truly aligned with my purpose as every part of my being feels a sense of ease and liveliness at the same time. There are always hardships in life but when I am thriving I am able to accept these hardships as part of life, and even be grateful for them contributing to who I am. This photo is a real life example of when I was truly thriving. My happiness felt effortless and I was flowing from one experience to the next feeling fulfilled, safe, and alive.



# Boundaries

by *Priya Gupta*

I thrive when I have my boundaries set. The photo highlights the importance of the railing that acts as a boundary and stops people from crossing and falling into the water. The same concept can be applied to our lives because as someone who often said “yes” to everything in fear of missing out, I struggled with making time for myself and kept pushing against the railing to a point where I was close to drowning. Eventually, I learned that I had to start limiting myself from running after making others happy at the cost of my own happiness.

Setting firm boundaries with people, work, school, and other commitments can help you live a balanced life; wherein, not only the needs of your professional or academic life are being met, but your personal mental and physical needs are equally prioritized.



My chosen photo is an image of myself performing a balancing move that is a part of the second-degree black belt movement pattern needed to advance to the next degree.

The move itself is only done when a student reaches their second-degree black belt, which reflects the experience and skill needed to learn and perform the balancing technique.

Currently, I am a full-time student balancing my courses, a placement, and a mentorship position, while being an employee at two part-time jobs. Thriving, to me, is being in balance with all of these dimensions that make up my life.

Like the move I am doing, the skills needed to balance my current responsibilities have grown and developed over time with practice and experience.

## Crane Stance



## Oh Pumpkins!

This is a photo of pumpkins at Downey's farm. My partner and I went to see the bright pumpkins. This photo grasps the focal point of "I thrive when" as it represents love, contentment, and nature, as I did not spend the day drowning in homework. Personally, pumpkins represent growth and the season of being thankful. I thrive when I am able to share my thanks, contentment, and growth with others, for example, my partner and family; as my family does not do this often. When I sit down and explain how thankful I am, or how much progress I've made for example, in school, I feel that they then connect with me and motivate me to thrive.



Have you ever had one of those days where you feel like you need to boost your confidence a little?

When I get days like that, I go to the makeup stores to try new lipstick products. Lipsticks, especially, are my favorite makeup item. I feel like even without the basic makeup routine, using only lipstick is enough to boost my confidence. When I go to these makeup stores, I see so many women there trying to buy products to cover up their “imperfections”. It could be a mole, freckles, or a scar, that I think defines and enhances their beauty; but to them, it needs to be covered up. Makeup is a way for me to thrive.

Thriving in the sense that it makes me realize how much women must go through to meet new beauty standards in the world. It makes me realize that we are truly beautiful inside and out—with or without makeup—and that we strive so hard to exceed the expectations and beauty standards already set out for us.

## Beauty Assembly



## Harvest

I thrive when....

I take care of my health in all respects. I thrive best when I can achieve a balance in prioritizing self-care and maintaining my other obligations.

This is a photo of my late August harvest, of all the foods I planted as seedlings, nurtured as they grew, and collected when they were ready to be picked. Gardening is an activity I do with my family, it provides me the opportunity to practice gratitude and welcome awe into my day.

Gardening is representative of the self-care I need to thrive, but also serves as a greater metaphor for thriving. Thriving, in all respects, is hard work. It involves extra effort, time management, dedication, and maintaining balance with prior commitments. Though this can be a challenge, reaping the fruits of your labour is always rewarding and well worth the effort.



I thrive when I am in a challenging and reflective situation.

Everybody feels great when they are in their comfort zone, but it is in a situation where one can be productive; that is where thriving occurs. For me, both have been occurring for years on a small hill near a park of mine. When life gets overwhelming, I retreat to this safe space not only to meditate and reflect, but also to analyze and plan. I am in a place where I am deciding what my next course of action is, whether that be the next assignment I work on or an important life decision. I am able to see the past, present, and future in my own head and take the appropriate steps to plan for whatever comes next.

It is something I hope to continue doing into my future career and current adult life.

# Reflective Planning

*by Sipan Haikazian*



I thrive when I take a moment to step out of routine and experience the awe of nature.

When, for small pockets of time every day, I can take my mind off of everything: the pressures of school, work, and relationships. The only thing that matters is taking in the beautiful scenery that I am surrounded by. In these moments, everything gets minimized. My anxieties about life cannot compete with the vastness of nature, of the ocean, and the land. My mind suddenly becomes clear, and I can appreciate all of the things and people that I am thankful for.

This is when I am in my element, and this is when I thrive.

## **At Ease**

*by Ryther Remmington*



After complex sequences of events occurred over the last year and a half, I am sure we all felt a sense of desperation and isolation from everyone and everything. So, when I was able to reconnect with loved ones by visiting a flower garden this summer, a sense of hope manifested.

I thrive when I am connected with friends and family, the outside world, and myself. My mood, my motivation, and my productivity have all been improving as a result. Being able to reconnect with everything once again makes me feel like I can move forward from the adversities and begin a new chapter in my life.

I encourage anyone reading this to experience nature with someone you hold dear. I hope you will thrive as I am.

## Reconnection

*by Maisha Ahasan*



This photo was taken on a rainy evening on College street at the MaRS research center in downtown Toronto.

I was leaving the building when I caught a glimpse of this view and decided to take a photo. What makes the photo representative of how I thrive, is the fact that it is a view of downtown Toronto which is where I began university, met some of my closest friends, and explored my identity to become who I am today. I especially love that the window's reflection can be seen because I see this image as a reflection of how going to university downtown has taught me to enjoy finding new ways to challenge myself.

When reflecting on the statement "I thrive when..." this photo best represents that because to me, thriving is when I can explore the city and embrace the moments where I can escape my comfort-zone.

## The Reality of a Reflection



My understanding of thriving is that moment when I am happy, and I feel in synch with the world around me.

I thrive when I can create. One of the activities I decided to retake after the pandemic began and I moved to a Canada was crocheting. For me this activity is joyful and meditative. When I am creating something, I disconnect from daily stress. I focus on the simple task in front of me. I can go on for hours and hours with my mind just following the thread and the movement of my fingers. When I crochet or knit, I feel connected to the many generations of women and men who have been making garments and pieces of clothing for their loved ones. I bring something to the world that serves a purpose and expresses my personality, that is how I thrive.

## **I thrive when I am creating**

*by Ana Arias Castano*



## I thrive when I catch a rainbow!

This is a picture of the view across the lake at my cottage. It is a cloudy day but despite that, a reflected rainbow has formed. The water is like glass and reflects the rainbow, so it looks like there are two rainbows, and their endpoints seem to meet in an almond-shaped formation. This is truly a rare occurrence: having a rainbow peek out from the grey clouds and then having just enough sunlight travel through the clouds to make the still water reflect like another mirrored rainbow.

This impacts my life because I am grateful to be able to have the opportunity to see this magnificent wonder. I feel blissful to witness such a remarkable moment that it puts a smile on my face and a stride in my step.

“A rainbow is a multicolored arc made by light striking water droplets. The most familiar type rainbow is produced sunlight strikes raindrops in front of a viewer at a precise angle (42 degrees) [...] A rainbow is an optical illusion—it does not actually exist in a specific spot in the sky. The appearance of a rainbow depends on where you’re standing and where the sun (or other source of light) is shining” (National Geographic Society, 2012).

I can observe and be mindful and patient in waiting for these unexpected moments; to catch a glimpse of the small wonders in this world brings me so much joy. Often the busyness of life prevents me from taking the time to slow down and appreciate the simple things in life like nature, trees, clouds, movements of the water in the lake, animals, or the vast landscape around me. They are unique and glorious, and I need to be mindful to stop, wait, and look for it!



In all its simplicity, this photo is exactly as you see, a caterpillar. While simple, this photo speaks volumes to me. It's a process of change, it's a process of nature and the beauty within. It has the promise of a potential for a brighter future. Something to look forward to, and a process in which you will grow and emerge. The changes that take place within a caterpillar can reflect much on what changes life can bring; growth into something beautiful. While you may feel that things may be in a stand still, there is always the potential to grow and learn from that. To me, the caterpillar represents just that, becoming a new and improved version of yourself through growth and recognition. A transformation that will bring forth new ideas, new beginnings, and blessings, much like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar.

## Changes



# I thrive on My Legacy of Success

by *Santiago Sanchez Calle*

I thrive thanks to the motivation I get from remembering my past accomplishments.

One of the moments I felt most accomplished was when I was hiking in Loch Lomond, Scotland just less than a year after having arrived in London, England. I had moved to the United Kingdom after a major loss and health issues. Despite Covid affecting my original plans, I felt I was thriving thanks to having a stable job during the pandemic, in a country where I had no family or previously friends and was enjoying one of the most beautiful experiences in my life. This was a great accomplishment for me since, despite the odds against me, I had succeeded. It was precisely this moment, when this picture was taken, where I was literally on top of the world that I felt like I was in the best moment of my life.

These memories are the reason for my current undertakings. I recharge when I remember how fear, hope and love, have motivated me to bring dreams to life. I have learned that time in our lives that's not being enjoyed is being wasted. When I face hardships, I recall they're part of the journey where the destination is the accomplishment of my goal. Feeling miniscule among the expanse and beauty of nature yet proud at having earned a breath-taking memory motivates me to continue putting in the effort to thrive.



# **I Thrive by helping others help me to Succeed**

*by Seyi Awotimiro*

This image shows the beauty of flowers and the awesomeness of what nature can do to release its inner wonders of colours. The inner potential of every individual is tied to the seed that has been sown in each person, flowers in this manner are planted with good soil, and are shaped by the provision of the rain and sunshine they receive. As a student I see myself thriving when I am mentored and guided by others who are there to give me the best advice to shape my life as a responsible adult. Growth is a process that requires patience. But the truth is, no one grows on their account. When we see ourselves transitioning from one level to another, it is natural for us to look up to others. But what is the end goal? The end goal is to show our true potential, and what we are capable of doing in society. For this reason, I thrive when I can show my inner potential, knowing that as a shy person who at times is afraid to confidently present myself. I want others to know regardless of whatever failure they may have experienced, there is always a precious talent stored, waiting for the right moment to be displayed.



I thrive when I can spend time outdoors.

It can be really easy to forget that having time to yourself to heal and tending to your needs (especially food and sleep) is an important part of maintaining harmony in your life. Tending to these needs helps me to gain confidence and drive.

This photo is at my favourite place in Toronto - Kew Beach! It embodies my love for nature and reminds me that everything is constantly in flux. We live, we struggle, and we overcome. During the pandemic, nature has become an integral part of giving me the strength to try things I was too afraid to, like psychotropic medication. I learn to accept whatever outcome occurs and go where the current takes me. I have also reached out to my community for support, which has also reminded me that none of us go through this journey alone because we are all connected in some way.

# Cycle

*by Jacqueline Phuong Uyen Vo*



# **I thrive when I bloom where I am planted**

*by Nephelane Alvarez*

Flowers bloom well when the soil is healthy. The same goes with people. We usually bloom well when we are planted in a healthy environment. But life does not always allow us to stay in the same comfortable, healthy ground. Most of the time, life leads us where the soil is harsh and where survival depends on how strong our roots are. In my lifetime, I have been placed in several environments where survival is difficult. The most difficult one is risking everything and having to go to a new country with a diverse culture. Along the way, I realized that blooming does not really depend on the place where you are planted. It is deeply rooted in the perspective that no matter where you are, you will take advantage of the opportunities that will help you thrive.



# **Grounded in Nature**

*by Arjun Vaja*



This is a picture I took while on a hike, and it helps me to thrive everyday. It is on these hikes where I can reflect on my life, ground myself, get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and experience life with all 5 senses. There is a sense of calm and quiet where I can simply enjoy the present moment, which puts me in a better mental state. Through this picture I realize that all of the other problems and worries I have going on in life are miniscule compared to feeling at peace which I see through the picture.



## Fitness helps me Thrive

To me the word thriving is to do good at something that you set your mind to especially if others tell you cannot do it; and doing something that helps you feel a sense of accomplishment. What helps me thrive is going to the gym and exercising to make my body feel better. A time where I felt like I was thriving has been the past few months since gyms reopened and I have been consistent with going, and I dropped some weight and that made me know that I was for sure thriving. My definition is different from others because I am more focused on myself and not as a broad spectrum of people. It is similar because it still mentions what thriving is and how it is defined. I can convey thriving in a photo visually by having the photo connect with someone else who may thrive in a similar way that I do. It would be a photo of an exercise machine or gym equipment.



## I thrive when... I travel

Since birth, I have traveled every year. My family owns a tour business and every summer, I am on the move. On my travels I have learned about many different cultures and the rich history of each place.

The picture I chose is in downtown New York City, representing people on the move to their chosen destination and everyone you pass has their own story and culture. I believe when I travel, I learn more about myself and world history. It helps me as a human to be more empathetic and step out of my comfort zone. I truly think that it helps me be more successful in school and to be a wholesome person in a culturally rich society.



I thrive when I am mindful of the nature around me.

It has become increasingly difficult for me to embrace all the wonderful sights and sounds of nature because of the conventional routine that I find myself living in each day. This photo was taken during orientation week prior to my first year as a Ryerson (X) University student. I was nervous to undergo this new journey because it meant that a lot of things in my life were going to change. I felt myself getting lost within the beauty of the flowers and reflected on the notion that in order for something new to begin, something else requires an end.

The flowers themselves symbolize the growth that comes with starting a new beginning.

## The Way of Beginnings



# Looking to the Horizon

by *Tessa McCarthy*

This photo was taken on a tall ship in the Atlantic Ocean whilst sailing around the World with some of my now-closest friends. We took this photo on one of the first nights of our trip, sailing towards the horizon, unsure of what incredible memories were about to be made, friendships to be forged, and challenges to be overcome.

“Looking to the Horizon” represents how I am able to thrive when I let go of my need to know everything, plan everything and control my surroundings. Some of my greatest accomplishments have come from letting go and trusting that all experiences, good or bad, are able to teach us a lesson. Upon leaving the “comfortable”, we are pushed to grow, move forward and become better versions of ourselves.



On Vancouver Island, it feels like around every corner there might be a fairy that belongs in a Brothers Grimm novel.

The moss-covered trees tower over you, giving you a break from looking up at skyscrapers, and the sounds of forest critters chatting replace the whispers in lecture halls.

That is where I thrive; when I can breathe the mountain air, listen to trees rustle or waves crashing on the shore. There, I can relax and take a break from academic pressures that surround my life when I am in the city. When I can take a break in nature, I not only thrive at that moment, but I continue to do so for the rest of the day.

Therefore, allowing me to focus better on the daily tasks that help me accomplish a future that I am working towards.

## Serenity on the Island

*by Kathleen Morris*



Sometimes I find myself surrounded by unexpected or new situations that I do not always know how to handle. Some are fun and enjoyable experiences, while others can cause difficulties. When I hear the statement "I Thrive When...", it reminds me that there is always something that can help you overcome barriers.

I personally thrive when I am surrounded by familiar people, places, and experiences. I find comfort within them. They remind me that life will continue even with challenges. I thrive when I am surrounded by comfort. It gives me a sense of calm and peace. It allows me to gather courage to get through challenges. Consistency is my key for prosperity.

As I observed the raindrops on the windows, it made me realize the small consistencies life brings. I've always been comforted by the sound of rain. There will always be rainy days, but they remind me of a continuous journey that isn't dependent on obstacles but the use of your surroundings.

# The Fall

by *Lathania Lewis*



## I thrive when I am in peace



A peaceful environment makes me thrive. In it, I am reminded of how much I love myself and how much I should respect, honor, and care for my body and soul. Whenever I am in nature, I experience this sense of peace. Nature pushes me to think outside the box, it reminds me that there is no limit to what I can achieve.

This photo was taken when I was in Lisbon last year. At that time, I was amazed by this picture and can still vividly remember it now. Considering how fast-paced my regular day-to-day life is, being alone and in peace allows me to reflect on my life. Having a group of people around me may be entertaining but it can compromise my productivity, so taking a break away from emotional and mental connection allows me to recharge. I find that being alone is my most productive time because there are fewer distractions. The best place for me to achieve peace is to be alone in nature, which leads to becoming more productive and thriving more and more.



Everyone has their view of what it means to thrive. When I incorporate routine into my life, I thrive because it allows me to stay grounded, productive, and balanced.

The stacked weights in my photo signify organization and structure. I feel fulfilled when I establish and achieve goals, no matter how big or small they are. It is crucial to implement a routine to accomplish my goals. I chose weightlifting to demonstrate this message because it has become a habit in my life that boosts my confidence, builds resilience, reduces stress, and improves my mental health.

These principles help me in all aspects of my life, allowing me to constantly thrive and become the best version of myself.

## Everyday Routine, Future Foreseen



# Celestial Sphere = Delight

by Adejumobi Ogundairo



Human emotions are similar to the sky's color, at least mine are. It's very calm, beautiful, and provides comfort; but when there's bad weather it becomes darker, and there could even be thunder/lightning. At first, I thought the word thrive had to be something that kept me moving forward in hard times, but the word "thrive" means to grow/ prosper. So, I've decided to let it be something that makes me happy. Being happy is a part of thriving, it has so many emotional and health benefits.

I thrive when I look at the sky. Being able to view the sky might seem little or irrelevant to others, but quite a few people are not blessed with this opportunity. People die every day, become blind, and are born blind, including other reasons. I think if they were able to see the sky at least once, it would bring some sort of happiness to them. The beautiful light blue color is accented by shapeshifting white clouds. I love to lay down on the grass, and observe the serene view. I don't have to be in a bad mood to be amazed by the sky, it reminds me of how lucky I am to live to see another day. When I think that "tomorrow, some people probably won't see the sky", due to various reasons, it keeps me motivated and drives me to work hard and live to the fullest.



I thrive when I am by the water, whether that be by the pool, beachside, or lakeside.

A moment where I feel the most alive, loved, and flourished, is when I am spending the day by water with my family; just like how I was in this picture. We went out on a Sunday afternoon and took a road trip to Belleville, Ontario where they had the prettiest lake open to the public, called Nickel Beach. Its crystal-clear water, the nice sun shining on us, with the waves crashing in so gently made my experience that day so calming.

Taking a dip in the lake was very refreshing and relaxing, and the overall experience was able to help me forget about my stress for just a moment.

## Sea-nergy

*by Johannesol Marie Balayon*



Thriving is being able to grow and experience life around you.

When surrounded by a natural environment, I can escape the day-to-day routine and expand my sense of awareness and thoughts. I thrive in an isolated, non-noise polluted, natural environment with the beauty of the world in front of me. Embracing and recognizing nature allows me to settle my thoughts and feel more confident in myself. Feeling the breeze on my face and watching the color change in the sky reminds me of who I am, and allows me to appreciate each moment and truly thrive.

This scenery grounds me and it reminds me to live in each moment. I am reminded of who I am and how I can improve myself. Living in, appreciating the beauty around me, and taking in a breath of nature, truly allows me to surrender negativity and to grow in a positive mindset.

# Thriving in Natural Beauty

*by Samantha Kustec*



## Apples of Life



This is a photo of my good friend hugging a bag full of freshly picked apples at Albion Farms. This photo captures the notion of “I thrive when” because it represents peace-finding, solitude, and love, as I spent time away from school and work to share an enjoyable activity with friends, to nourish ourselves emotionally and physically. The apples symbolize shared happiness and time. I thrive when I share happiness and achievements with my friends because I was brought up in a culture where accomplishments and milestones are often not celebrated. Spending quality time with my friends doing activities like apple picking, creates a special bond where they understand me and we share common goals in life - to thrive.



I thrive when I am with the people who I care about most.

To me, this picture expresses togetherness and straying away from the everyday stresses of life for a special moment. Every time I get to have a campfire, it's always with people I am closest to, who have had an important role in my life, and who have loved and supported me.

Going into my first year of university was a very stressful time for me, but when I was asked the question, "I thrive when"; I was reminded of all the people who helped me get to where I am and who will continue to guide and support me throughout my journey.

## Igniting Unity



I thrive when I am near the water and watching the waves reach the shore.

This reason may sound unrealistic, but it is worth thinking about. Those waves started in deep waters, far away from the shore, but got there eventually. Numerous obstacles influenced how and if the waves reached the shore, meaning that some did, and others, not quite yet. But despite it all, they are thriving.

Therefore, I thrive when I realize that thriving is just not linear, so whether I achieve or not, I still am.

## Rise To Thrive

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# How to read the stories in the online Lightroom gallery

When you visit our online Lightroom gallery please click on the round 'Info' icon right to the image to expand the view and access the story accompanying the photo. You can also click on the image to expand it.

Enjoy!

