

New Couch Smell

People always talk about new car smell, but nobody ever mentions how new couch smell can vanquish any other scent in an entire basement. It smells incredibly clean and fresh, so it would surprise you that this scent fills my eyes with tears, not quite spilling down my cheeks but right on the brink. My reaction is physiological, as though I am smelling spoiled milk instead of spotless polyester. Sure, my dad had talked about getting a new couch for years, but I never expected it to actually happen. Nobody told me that the day prior would behold my last whiff of the brown couch that had been there since we bought the house. I understand the couch was filthy and worn, with dark stains from the many meals we ate in front of the TV, and covered with years worth of accumulated dog and cat hair that never seemed to quite go away no matter how much we vacuumed, but I do not think that warranted its abandonment. To me, that couch smelled like home, and this new one smells of betrayal.

As I stood there taking in the scene and searching for a single trace of the perfume of this couch's predecessor, the tears I was trying so hard to repress began to flow freely down my face and dropped onto the couch, leaving more soot colored splotches in a sea of light gray. At this moment, the tears feel like the last straw. Even my body is betraying my wishes, even my tear ducts are out of my control. I curl up at the foot of this charlatan piece of furniture in my basement and pretend I am in the comforting arms of my brown couch, with its deep musky scent that always brings me back to the simpler times of my childhood. It told me the stories it recalled from its time in the home of my late great-grandmother. It sang me the songs from when my mother still lived in this home, the house that she loved with all her heart and that I know she still misses. It laughed with me when we watched silly movies and hosted sleepovers with friends, and it mourned with me when I dissolved friendships and faced my prepubescent bullies.

We grew up together, me and this couch. As I grew as a person, it grew in scent, and while that seemed to be the factor that drove my father to get rid of it, to me it felt like its accumulation of memories.

I fall out of my daze when I realize that this new couch even feels so much different. The old couch was soft and comfortable because it learned how my body fit best into its cushions. This causes me to really begin to acknowledge my attachment to the past, and my deeply rooted fear of change. I had never thought about why throwing out socks with holes in the heels, or upgrading my phone to a newer model always filled me with such dread. I had always decided it was just a quirk, and I just became attached to inanimate objects for an inexplicable reason, but I had never realized it wasn't the thing itself, rather the memories it carried and stored for me. On top of this, I began to draw the connection between my affinity for familiar objects and my devotion to routine, friendships, and even hopes and dreams. I didn't want to let go of my past and the parts of my life that had been staples for so long, because the past is so much more certain to me than the future. The future was, and continues to be, completely out of my jurisdiction.

I'm not going to evade the truth and say that my problem with letting go has been resolved since this revelatory moment. I still have a hard time throwing out birthday cards and changing my phone's wallpaper. But I will say now that I am mindful of my anxiety, I have developed a better grip on it. For somewhat silly things, such as replacing broken objects or donating old clothes, I can usually think through my emotions and rationalize with the part of me that feels this unnecessary attachment. For tougher stuff, like dropping toxic friendships or processing the new year when the ball drops at midnight, I usually take my time and reach out to

loved ones for guidance. I've created a system that works for me, and while I do face setbacks, I'm infinitely better at handling change than I used to be.

While having this trait probably sounds solely detrimental, I believe that, in many areas of my life, I constantly use it to my advantage. One way that it has become really useful to my academic life is that I will not lower goals or expectations, even when I'm struggling. In my toughest of classes or after bombed tests, I always seem to hold myself to the same standard. Having such deep intrinsic motivation has powered me through adversity many times. I also believe that it makes me a good peer, friend, and daughter. I will never walk away from somebody's question or problem without focusing as much energy as I can on helping them resolve what's going on or understand information. I also cannot walk away from an argument. While that may seem like a problem, I believe it is why I have been able to foster long lasting, positive connections with the people that I love. If someone feels bad, wronged, or hurt, I make sure that that is never ignored or avoided. I don't give up on them, and I will always be available for their feelings and opinions to be heard. Yes, I am admittedly obsessive about the things that I care about, but I do not think that is necessarily a flaw.

Once that old, smelly, dirty, brown couch was brand new too. It didn't come with its personality or character. It was built by the future. After new beginnings, everything and everyone is built by the future. When I go to college, I won't be the same person that I am in High School, and everything is going to change, whether I like it or not. While right now that idea scares me more than anything, knowing that my future school will start off with a new couch smell, but will eventually hold the comforting scent of happy memories and personal development excites me profoundly.

