

"The world has
so much to offer.
If you stay in your
own little shell,
you're not
fully living!"

-Bailey, 17



THIS SUMMER COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

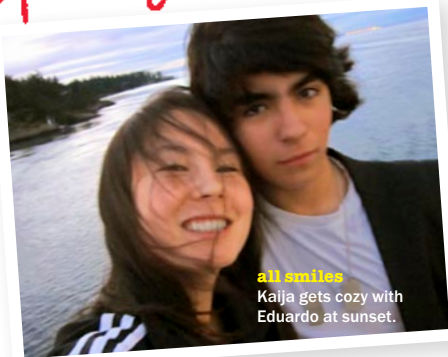
Now is the time to break free and dream *bigger!*

By Holly C. Corbett

There's something about summer that makes you feel as if *anything* could happen. The days are long, the nights are warm, and the possibilities are *endless*. Without the pressure of school, you're free to daydream and be spontaneous. You can throw impromptu sleepovers, have bonfires at the beach, go on a road trip, or take a chance on the cute lifeguard at the pool—all without having to stress about getting home to study or worrying if everyone at school will judge you. The best part is, you don't have to go too far for a whole world of unexpected things to happen. Whether you're hanging out in your hometown, going away to camp, or traveling for vacation, this summer can be *yours*. Take a page from the summertime diaries of girls who had amazing, life-changing experiences, and get ready to start your own adventure!

MAIN PHOTO: BETH STUENBERG. (MODELS USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY.)

let love
open your eyes



all smiles
Kalja gets cozy with
Eduardo at sunset.

CB Eduardo and I first met at the last school dance before summer break, and we had an instant connection. I Facebooked him a couple of days later, and we met up every day for the rest of the summer. He was an exchange student who would be going back to Mexico at the end of the summer, so I didn't want to get too attached, but I couldn't help myself! He was hot, exciting, smart, and bad-a**. I used to spend all my free time working or studying—I took life so seriously! I knew I needed to stress less, and Eduardo showed me how to have *fun*! We'd watch movies and climb trees. While listening to music on a bus, he would sing, not caring about the other people listening. Before, I'd felt too silly to sing—even when nobody was around. **I loved how confident he was.**

One night while snuggling at my house, he asked me to be his girlfriend, and I said yes. A few nights later, he kissed me during a sunset and my heart overflowed with happiness. I had never felt so close to a guy. So when he finally had to go back to Mexico, I couldn't stop crying.

Then I did something wild—I decided to spend my junior year of high school in Mexico. I visited Eduardo and learned Spanish, all while taking online classes. It was Eduardo's lust for life that made me want more out of *mine*. **Falling in love is a risk, but if I had never met Eduardo, I would never have had the courage to do that!** Even though the two of us are now just friends, he helped turn me into the adventurous, free-spirited person that I am proud to be today.

—kaija, 16, victoria, bc, canada



a whole new world
Bailey, left, in Kenya taking a walk with some new friends.

BUST OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

For me, summer meant having a good time at the mall, not caring about anything except putting together the perfect outfit. Total carefree fun. But all that changed after my sophomore year. A group of 17 friends and I raised money so we could spend the summer volunteering in Kenya through the Free the Children charity. I thought it'd be exciting to finally get out of my small Iowa town and bond with my friends. But the experience was so much more than that—it introduced me to a world I didn't know existed. We helped out at a school where kids didn't have pencils or notepads. Still, they were so happy. They'd sing Shakira songs and dance in their worn-out school uniforms. It made me see how much I took for granted at home. It was always *stuff* that made me happy—not something as simple as being able to go to school. **Since taking the trip, I'm not as materialistic as I used to be.** Now I use some of my money from working at Dairy Queen to sponsor a girl in Africa. It feels better than buying a T-shirt I'll hardly wear. I had no idea how important our trip away from home could be. Seeing another corner of the world opened my eyes, my mind, and my heart.

—bailey, 17, maquoketa, ia

FIND THE RIGHT FRIENDS

“ The months leading up to my summer program at a college were difficult: Even though I was surrounded by my friends, I felt so alone because **the minute I'd hint that I was bi, they'd stop talking to me—and my mom thought I was just confused.** I felt like a freak. When I got to the program, I tried to focus on studying, but I was drawn to this girl, Kristen*. I saw her flirting with a girl, so I asked her if she was gay. She said yes as if it were no big deal! I was stunned by how open she was, and felt excited and relieved to meet someone who was going through the same thing I was. It wasn't romantic—I just wanted to be confident like she was. She gave me the strength to fully come out and find friends who love me for who I am. **”**

—iveliz, 16, newburgh, ny

PUSH YOURSELF CRAZY-HARD!

“ I’ve always been gangly and bad at sports. And being weak made me less confident all around. I’d put off *anything* that seemed hard, even writing my college essays. And I was tired of it! I knew I needed to do something huge that would guarantee I’d get in shape. So I went on a 28-day camping and canoeing trip in the Canadian wilderness, because it sounded intense and I didn’t want to sit indoors all summer. The first two weeks were exhausting! I paddled 11 hours a day and spent the whole time thinking about how I wanted to be home in my comfy bed watching TV. Then one day, I had to carry my canoe through the mud for almost a mile! I wanted to give up, but I knew that if I didn’t push through the pain, I’d never get stronger. So I kept going—and I made it! That one moment showed me that **facing challenges rather than avoiding them is the only way to succeed**. When I came home, I gritted my teeth and tackled those college essays... and got into my dream school!



wild ride
Mandy gets in touch with nature.

—mandy, 17, st. cloud, mn

BEND SOME RULES

L ast summer my parents made me to go to camp to “cure” my shyness. I’d been bullied by girls at school who made me feel ugly. I’d never had a boyfriend, and my self-esteem was at an all-time low.

At camp, my cabinmates confided in me about the flaws they thought *they* had, like being fat or having bad skin. That was really the first time I realized that other girls had insecurities too—even the girls who seemed totally put together. I saw that I didn’t have to be perfect to be liked. As I felt more comfortable with the girls, I came out of my shell and shared secrets with them.

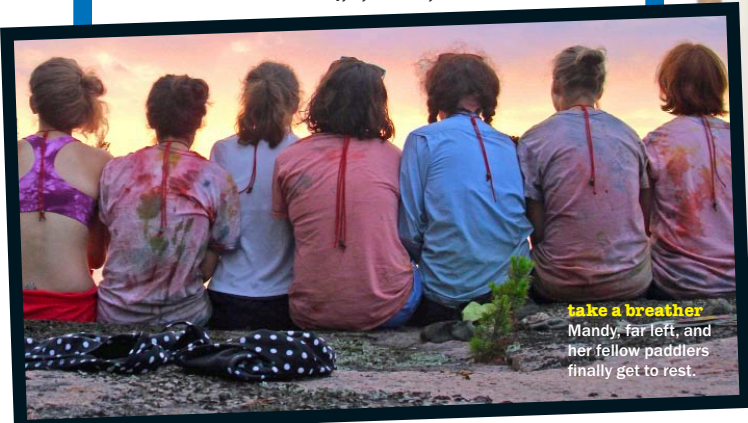
A few weeks in, I got up the nerve to talk to a brown-eyed lifeguard, Jim*. He was five foot nine with a great body—and reserved, like me. I didn’t expect anything to happen between us because he was 20. Plus, it was against the rules for campers to date counselors! Since the pressure was off, I could be myself.

Jim was the guy all the girls wanted to hang with, but during the last few days of camp, he talked only to me! It made me feel special (and also scandalous, so I kept it a secret). There was a meteor shower on our last night, and Jim asked me to sit in a field with him. We cuddled, wishing on shooting stars. Then he whispered in my ear that he’d had a crush on me the whole time! For the first time, I felt beautiful. I couldn’t believe that a guy this good-looking was into me!

Even though the fling with Jim ended with summer, I’ll never regret it for one second. I learned that sometimes bending the rules—as long you follow your heart—can be good for you! He helped me see my true worth. Instead of letting my shyness get the best of me, now I’m confident enough to flirt with anyone!

—maureen, 17, queens, ny

Where was your life-changing moment?
Visit seventeen.com/summermap to share your story and help us create a map of everyone’s special places.



take a breather
Mandy, far left, and her fellow paddlers finally get to rest.

3 ways you can change your life this summer

Go on, be bold. Transform yourself.



1. Turn off your tech.
Set aside at least one day a week to get totally unplugged from your texts, IMs, and e-mails.

You need space to let your mind wander. Sometimes just dreaming is fun!



2. Do something scary.
Think of one thing you’ve avoided because of fear (like going to a musical audition or starting a blog), and then do it anyway. If you fail, at least you can say that you gave it a shot. You have no idea what you are capable of until you try!

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3. Travel a little.
You can be whomever you want to be in a new place. Teach English or volunteer in another country! Check out villagevolunteers.org

For study abroad, work abroad, and scholarship opportunities, visit statravel.com.

*Names have been changed.