

# Growing Pains & Comfort Zones

Text and photos by Melanie Chee

Nobody really knows what causes growing pains – a diagnosis of exclusion describing recurrent musculoskeletal pain in children that usually resolves with age. However, it is still interesting to play with this idea that growth in general causes some degree of discomfort. Stretching oneself beyond the familiarity of the known is definitely a less-than-comfortable experience in that moment, but it may result in development. In hindsight, it is easy to say that the burn of the stretch

is worth it. I know I would take on the temporary muscle aches if that would earn me a few more inches of height! Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the initial struggle and recognise how far you have come from that first step into the unknown.

Moving out of Singapore and into a foreign country is one such huge leap out of our comfort zones and is a shared experience of overseas students, which Sanskar and Alistar reflect on in this month's letter.

Text by Sanskar Gupta

The rather interesting contradiction of personal growth is that although we value it enough to seek it, we tend to be apprehensive about putting ourselves in situations which stretch our boundaries. Fairly so, given that it is by no means easy to step into uncertainty from the comfort of familiarity.

I was certainly one who feared the discomfort and instability that changes in normality would bring to my life. Fortunately, being thrust into a completely new environment almost 11,000 kilometres away from home lends itself quite well to creating uncomfortable situations. I say "fortunately" for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because it has made me a lot more aware and grateful of the position of privilege that I find myself in. From my lovely mum's cooking to the love and warmth of family and friends, living and studying in Cardiff has given me a substantially greater appreciation for the gifts of home's little comforts that I have taken for granted.

Secondly, because it has presented to me a great deal of

unfamiliar circumstances. These can often feel precarious, which does make them daunting. Certainly, it was scary as a fresher to think about whether I would be able to handle myself adequately, let alone handle unfamiliar situations – situations like being lost in London trying to find the nearest Tube station while dragging along two suitcases. Living independently though, you quickly realise that you must adapt to navigate the situations that you face. Whether that is something as seemingly trivial as barging your way past dozens of Welsh rugby fans in order to get off your train (so that you do not end up far away in Swansea), or something more significant like learning to sustain yourself on more than just delivery pizza and instant noodles.

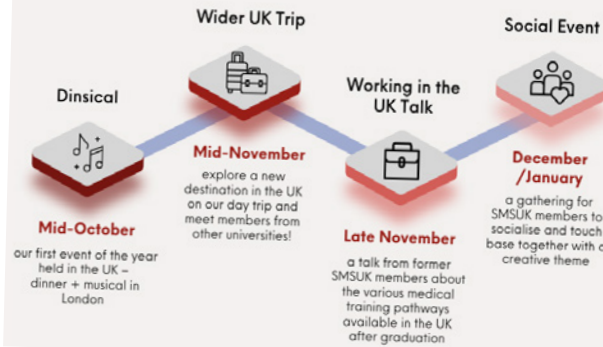
Collectively though, as I have journeyed through these challenges that have pushed me out of my comfort zone, I think I have learnt to accept them as an aspect of life necessary to drive growth. This journey has definitely been

made easier by the support I have received, not just in Cardiff but from back home as well. That, and the fact that I have been fortunate enough to be welcomed by a society that has allowed me to integrate into it, for which I am extremely thankful. Importantly, it has made me realise that, with the right support, we do have the potential to adapt in the face of uncertainty. I will be the first to admit that I still feel terrified of stepping out of my comfort zone and that the fear of uncertainty remains. However, I am extremely grateful that embracing un-familiarity and stepping out of my comfort zone has afforded me the courage to actively seek situations which could support my personal growth – like writing this article.

Sanskar is a Year 2 medical student at Cardiff University.

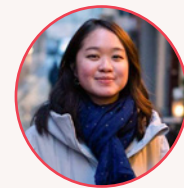


## SMSUK TERM 1 EVENTS 2023



SMSUK Term 1 events overview

Melanie is a Year 4 medical student at the University of Leicester and is Editor on the 29th executive committee of SMSUK.



Text by S Klyde Alistar

For as long as I can remember, I have called Singapore my home. Although I have been fortunate to grow up in the comforts of this sheltered “cosmopolis”, it has also made me dependent – dependent on the family and friends around me, the convenience of getting around and the availability of scrumptious multicultural cuisine at my doorstep.

As I stood on the cusp of adulthood, I realised that my family and friends would not always be by my side. I yearned for an awakening, an experience to help me become more independent. Thus, I made the daring decision to leave the Lion City and embarked on a transformative journey to the other end of the world.

Touching down at Heathrow Airport, I was greeted by a gust of cold wind and the smell of smoke, reminding me that I was far from home. The first “You alright?” (a common greeting in the UK) I heard, the first red phone booth I saw, the first pot of roasted chestnuts I smelt and the occasional giant towering over the rest of the people gave me a glimpse into the kind of place I was in. This was somewhere very different from the place I called “Home”.

Starting university in a foreign land, I frequently found myself

out of my comfort zone. Having to juggle socialising, cooking, washing and most importantly, my studies, I struggled to find my bearings initially. However, as I was getting used to my new routine, I recognised that every challenge was an opportunity for growth.

Studying abroad came with formidable tests of resilience and determination. Some days I felt like doing absolutely nothing and some days I wanted to explore the world. After spending a few weeks alongside my newfound friends, I gradually became accustomed to the way things were done here, and this led me to have more “want to explore the world” days. Firstly, I celebrated festivals I had never even heard of before, such as Guy Fawkes Night (also known as Bonfire Night, which commemorates the failure of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot), tried local foods such as shepherd’s pie and hiked in beautiful places such as the Peak District. Secondly, my growth led me to travel to different cities to represent my university in badminton and enabled me to take up leadership positions on two different committees. Additionally, being involved in various church activities gave me the opportunity to meet many people from a myriad of backgrounds and cultures,

exposing me to traditions I had never encountered in Singapore. Ten years ago, I never would have imagined myself leading such an adventurous life, and I have only my parents to thank for this chance.

I could not be more grateful towards my parents, who sacrificed and worked extremely hard in order to send me overseas to give me the opportunity to broaden my horizons and realise the meaning of independence. To me, the responsibility of shaping your life and growth is your own. For the people who are fortunate enough to study and live abroad, treasure your experience because you will undoubtedly have an awakening outside of your comfort zone. And for those remaining in our bustling and modern Singapore, make sure you create your own opportunities and be ready to grab them when they appear in front of you. The moral of the story is, no matter where you are in the world, step out of your comfort zone and seize the day! ♦

Alistar is a Year 2 medical student at the University of Sheffield.



SMSUK orientation camp group photo