

Jonathan Livingston Marshmallow

Jonathan Livingston Marshmallow grew up in a small town. He worked hard in school and earned good grades in courses like “The Composition of Sugar,” “How to Avoid Campfires,” and “Alternative Additives to Hot Chocolate.” He struggled in his physical fitness class, “Marsh” Pit Aerobics, though. He felt so uncoordinated.



He didn't feel like he fit in with classmates, especially Roasted Marshmallow Crispy. All the girls seemed to be interested in Roasted, and his remarkable dance moves. He made friends easily. Jonathan wondered how Roasted did it.



Jonathan had been shy all his life. Jonathan had a cat, Cookie, that was a great comfort to him. When he came home from school, Cookie would greet

him and snuggle up to him while he would do his homework. Cookie also would follow Jonathan on walks, and they would play in the backyard climbing trees together.



One day Jonathan was mowing his lawn to help his dad. As he was mowing, his neighbor, Smore, introduced himself. Smore invited Jonathan over to watch a movie. They hit it off and enjoyed getting to know each other.



Jonathan and Smore liked to go shopping for chocolate bars and graham crackers and would cook all kinds of delicious desserts.



They also liked to ride skateboards and go fishing. They would talk about the best techniques to avoid the dangers of campfires, hot chocolate, and ice cream machines. They also talked about their future plans.



They both wanted to further their education after high school.



Smore decided to go to cooking school, but Jonathan had heard of this school in Utah.

It had this cougar that could breakdance and dunk a basketball.



The cougar could jump through fire hoops. He could snowboard with ease! He could even scale table towers with his bare paws!

His name was Cosmo, and he reminded Jonathan of Roasted. He was an athletic wonder!! Who wouldn't want to be at the same school as this awesome cougar?

It was hard to think about leaving Smore and Cookie. He didn't know anyone at this university, let alone anyone in Provo.

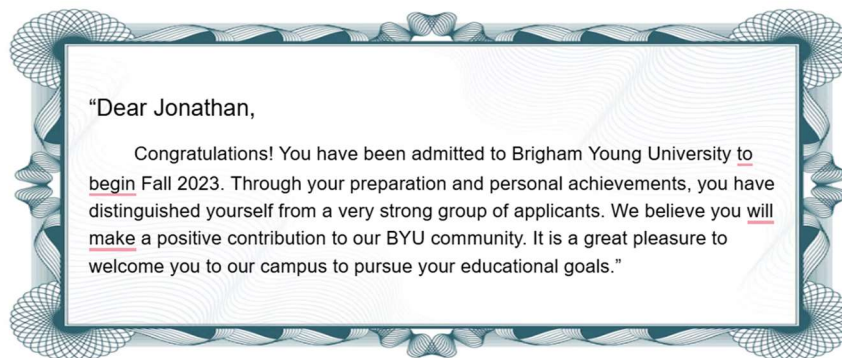
But Jonathan researched the school and found that it had an honor code, and it was less expensive than other schools he was considering. He also saw that it had one of the best actuarial science programs. He was very interested in actuarial science because graduates became experts in determining risk. Jonathan was afraid of taking risks. The risk of falling into a campfire or a cup of hot chocolate, or getting mixed into a bottle of marshmallow fluff were always in the back of his mind. Also, the risk of getting hurt by others made life, in general, risky.

Jonathan worked hard on his admissions application. He knew his grades were good, but did he have the other qualities Brigham Young University (BYU) wanted? One question was about overcoming a weakness or a challenging situation. What weakness would he choose? He felt like he had so many, and did he really overcome any of them?

He realized one of his greatest challenges was when his dad accidentally fell into the campfire when they were camping. He got burned quite badly. Jonathan needed to think quickly to help his dad out of the fire.

As his dad recovered in the Marshpital, Jonathan became the man of the house and helped his mom with more chores. He also got a job to help pay for expenses. He mentored his little siblings and helped them with their homework. Jonathan felt like this challenge was a huge growing experience for him. He learned not to take his parents for granted and he also learned the value of hard work and the value of money.

With excitement, Jonathan nervously opened his email from BYU, and was shocked to receive an acceptance letter. He started reading...

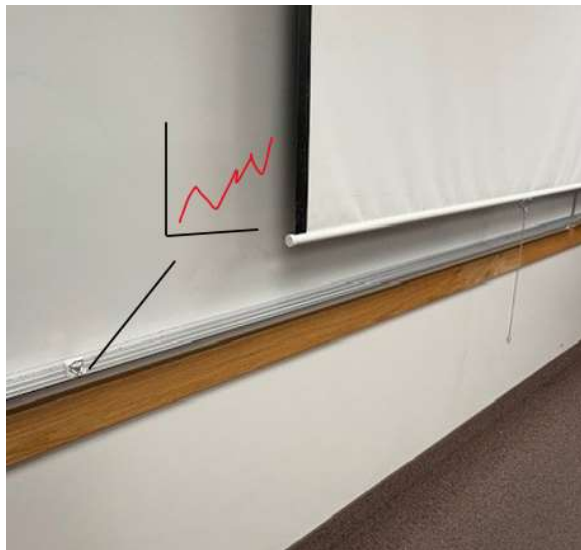


Jonathan read the words, “We believe you will make a positive contribution to our BYU community” again. He wondered what he could contribute. What did BYU see in him that he didn’t see in himself?

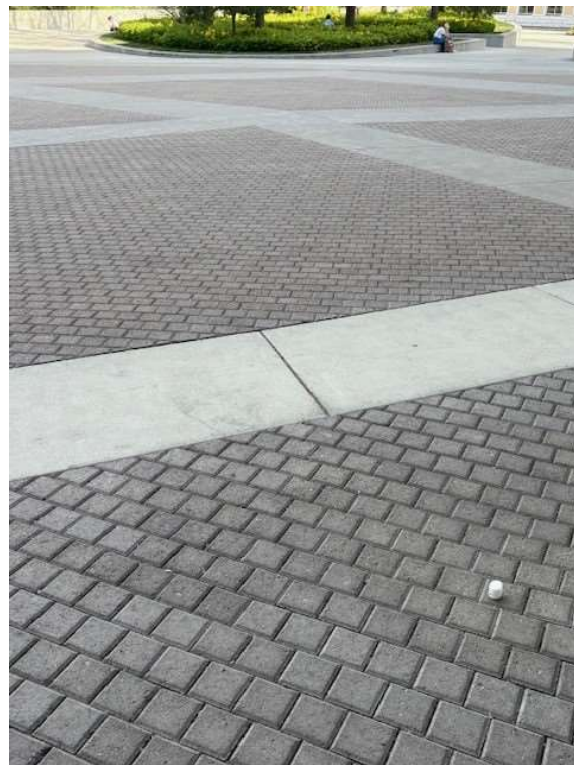
In spite of his insecurities, Jonathan readily accepted admission!

He attended New Student Orientation and was surrounded by so many students eager to start their academic journey. The number of students at BYU outnumbered the number of marshmallows in his hometown by sixteen times. This was overwhelming to Jonathan. He was nervous to reach out to others for friendship or support.

Jonathan enjoyed learning about actuarial science, but he felt so alone.



He would observe others. They all seemed to have the answers, and they walked around so confidently. He would watch groups of students chat and laugh together. He always felt like an observer of what he was hoping for himself. He felt small and insignificant.



He literally felt invisible.



At times it was like he got run over by a skateboard or kicked by a passerby.



As each day passed, he felt flatter and flatter and more tossed about. He had no idea how to create a support system or make a friend.



Everyone passed by and didn't seem to notice him. He felt like he was crying out for help as daily life pushed him around.....and no one heard him.





Jonathan felt miserable and realized it was time to make a change. He was tired of feeling sad and lonely, and watching others be successful, happy, and popular (or so he thought).

He picked himself up. No more would he sit around and watch the world move around him as an observer in his own life. It was time for action and time to leave his spot of loneliness and sadness.



The next day, he sat in his first class and instead of looking at his cellphone before class, he turned to the student next to him and introduced himself. He was surprised how friendly Rocky Road was. Rocky asked Jonathan if he wanted to study together. As he and Rocky studied together, they got to know each other. Jonathan was amazed that Rocky felt lonely too. How could Rocky feel lonely? Jonathan thought he was the sole master of loneliness. He literally occupied the space of loneliness until he finally decided to leave it.



This experience got Jonathan thinking. In his classes, Jonathan was learning statistics and how to conduct experiments. He wanted to determine how many people were lonely. He started with getting to know more people in his classes. He was surprised that there were many classmates who felt lonely. How could so many students feel lonely at a school with more than 32,000 students.

Jonathan with the help of his professor created a survey and sent it to students in his college. The results showed that 80% of the respondents felt lonely.



Jonathan wanted to help others feel like they belonged. He started reaching out to more students. At first, it was hard, but he found, as he did, it

became easier, and he became happier. His loneliness was disappearing. He also realized he didn't feel so flat and kicked around. He started feeling filled again, especially when he helped others feel less lonely. He still had hard days and setbacks with being brave and reaching out to others, but overall, he found life was more enjoyable and fulfilling.



Because Jonathan began reaching out more, he crossed paths with COSMO! He was thrilled that Cosmo let him take a picture with him.



As Jonathan's confidence grew, he tried some activities he never would have done growing up. He was inspired by Cosmo and he tried skiing. Jonathan even considered trying a catapult to discover what it felt like to fly. After further evaluation, Jonathan decided that it was much too risky. He was, however, brave enough to get a picture with the catapult.



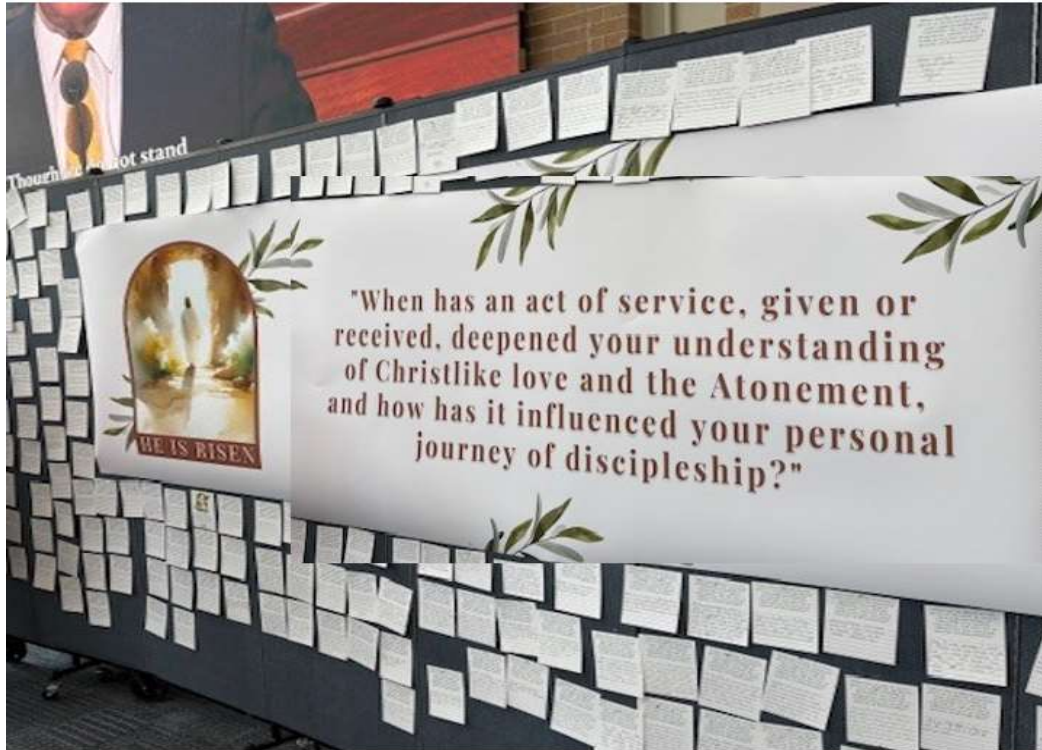
Jonathan was learning a lot at BYU, but one of the most important lessons he learned was that it was up to him to overcome his own loneliness and

help others to do the same. He found the more he helped others feel like they belonged, the more he felt like he belonged.

Jonathan found time to do service, and he invited others to do service too. He observed that others were following his example. They also started inviting others to clubs and service projects.



They all enjoyed an activity where they tied blankets for people in other countries who don't have blankets. They also got to reflect on times they helped others, or they received help from others. They wrote these experiences down and posted them on a board.



Jonathan had become a handsome, filled, and fluffy marshmallow inside and out again. He wanted to be the type of marshmallow that made a difference in the world. He wanted to be a marshmallow that worked daily to overcome his weaknesses and help others to do the same.

Be yourself...and follow Jonathan's example. You'll be surprised how great you'll feel and how your loneliness fades away.

