

Starting my freshman year of college, I was incredibly shy and nervous. Starting my sophomore year of college, I was a whole new person. I became more confident in myself, started stepping out of my comfort zone, and began taking on leadership roles I never thought I would be able to handle. I attribute this largely to my Resident Assistant, Tommy. Before moving to college, everyone told me that RAs were strict and mean and would never talk to me unless I was getting in trouble. This could not have been further from the truth. Tommy and I immediately became friends. We realized that we had a lot in common and conversations were easy between us. I truly could not believe that anyone could have an RA that didn't become one of their best friends. He recognized that I was a naturally anxious, nervous, and shy person. He also knew that I had intense desires to break out of my shell and do things that would have once felt uncomfortable to me. Using our close friendship, he began a slow but efficient process of mentoring me to step out of my comfort zone.

Another thing Tommy knew about me was how much I love service and helping others. My school has a program called Alternative Break Service Trips (ABSTs). These are week long immersion trips that delve into the service of others in various places around the country and the world. Tommy was a student leader for an ABST to Washington D.C. that focused around hunger and homelessness. I had mentioned previously that D.C was one of my favorite cities in the world, so when he recommended me for this trip, I couldn't turn it down. This trip changed my life for the better and shifted my worldview in ways I couldn't even imagine. I enjoyed my experience so much that Tommy recommended I interview to be a student leader for an ABST for the next year. While this idea scared me beyond belief, I interviewed for the position and got it! This year I have stepped into that leadership role and am using the skills he taught me to form my own leadership style. With the new-found confidence I gained after getting this position, it lit a fire under me to start taking on more leadership roles and joining clubs and organizations I was afraid of before. I joined my school's Student Government Association, became the service chair for my school's Honors Program, and I interviewed to be a transition/orientation guide for the incoming freshmen.

Before Tommy, I had never had a mentor before. I was an emotionally closed off person for most of my life. I had friends of course, but none that I talked to about my desires to change how I was living my life. Tommy truly helped me to change my life. I have finally found my place in college and found things that I love doing and people that are helping me to live my best life. I attribute this all to my freshman year RA. Someone people told me I wouldn't like and would never talk to became my mentor and my friend. He impacted my life in the best way possible and I couldn't be more thankful for the friendship I have with him. Tommy inspired me to apply to be a resident assistant, and as the interview process for that approaches, I reflect on the things he taught me about how an RA should be. I can only hope that someday I can have the same impact on someone else as he had on me.