

“This is the start!”
I breathe in. I place the oar.
“Attention!”
Eyes in the boat. I'm ready.
“Row!”
I pull the first stroke.

This is my race, move the boat.
This is our race, row to the finish.

After about more than two years my family still ask me “What is rowing?” My friends still ask me “Why I'm rowing?” Not everyone understands what exactly rowing is because the heart of rowing is developed every practice, race and time spent with my team.

I knew nothing about rowing. I was born in New York City and raised in in a traditional Ecuadorian family. At home I grew up with two little brothers, my parents and without my two older sisters. My sisters were born in Ecuador and I didn't see them until I was twelve, my parents haven't seen them for over twenty years. As I grew up I loved playing sports and learning new things. The only sports I grew up at home was soccer and volleyball. But I always tried new things and sports were my door to discoveries. I learned basketball, squash, badminton, taekwondo, rugby and finally rowing. Rowing with Row New York was where I left everything and gained everything.

Practice was a place where we left our load of problems at the gate. But it also is a place where I received and gained support from my team. Rowing gave me a place where I would be able to make great friends from all over New York City. I went to a small all girls school since sixth grade, The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria. We were a group of about eighty girls who will be the first graduating class. Rowing made me enter a similar environment but it allowed me to grow and become stronger as a team. If I was on land on an erg or on the water rowing, I made every practice counts. I knew that I had to become stronger but also fix the little things that will improve my rowing. Focus. We had to focus on our goals and picture my boat and the whole team in future races and what kind of team we wanted to be. It made then reflect on my life and how I have to use each day to improve myself for the sake of my future. It also made me a stronger confident person who is a role model for the novices and middle schooler on our team. But also developed and sharpened my leadership skills where I can use anywhere.

At races, I always seem like its the first time but I know that I have to have my game face and that it's a business day. It's where as a team and individually we make and demonstrate what we have been working on. We concentrate on the small changes and big changes also. I learned to win the small battles because it will get me closer to the big goal. At races I also reminds me how fortunate I am to be rowing for Row New York. But I know that I tried out with other three hundred girls and have earned my seat. What I love about my team is that every single one of us makes it diverse. I bring diversity to the team and to rowing.

Nothing is going to keep me back from achieving my goals in rowing or in life. Rowing has led to many experiences that have made me confident, focused and a team player. Everyday is like a race. You have to start strong and focused. You have to finish it with heart and power.

“Last 500, finish it off!”
I won’t give up. I got this.
“Empty the bucket!”
This is me. Every stroke counts.
“Power ten!”
Last strokes, I give everything.

Heart, Mind and Power till the end.
Everyday. Anywhere. Anytime.

I love the adrenalin rushing through my body, when I row. When I row, I focus and pull every single force I have within me. Within me, I have become stronger and won the small battles.

A battle I had to win was swimming, or else I wouldn’t have experienced new things, I wouldn’t be able to row.

The fear rose from inside me, I’m taking swimming lessons for a reason, I can’t swim!

After trying out and joining Row New York, I knew that I would have to learn how to swim. Actually I didn’t know

what to expect. As a New Yorker, and coming from a traditional Ecuadorian family, I knew nothing of rowing. But I wanted to try something new, something challenging, something life changing.

I have been practicing in four feet water, where the little kids play. Some of them swim better than me, and they know it. When was it decided that after two weeks they can drop me in twelve feet water and expect me to swim and tread water for three minutes.

I entered the water but gripped the edge of the pool. It scared me that I couldn't touch the floor. Everyone else took the ladder to get in, and stood near it the whole time. I wasn't the only one scared, that relieved me. I was suppose to let go of the edge of the pool. It was hard at first but I relaxed and remembered what my instructor told us to do. I began to tread, it was like riding a bicycle underneath the water. There were times when I got scared. I would swallow a lot of pool water but kept trying. After practicing for a long time I could finally tread and swim. I even wanted to stay in twelve feet water. My fear was gone and I was ready for my swim test. I even helped my teammate later on.

Passing a simple swim test has been my victory and has led to many experiences that have made me confident, focused and a team player. Everyday is like a race. You have to start strong and focused. You have to finish it with heart and power.