Mapping the Stages of a Group/Social Experience

	Before	During	After
Time (When and how long?)	I knew a week in advance - so I started to mentally prepare myself about a day before. Happened a couple of weeks ago	I joined late at 1:45 (15 minutes late - ADHD, punctuality issues). 3 hours long and boring	I replayed it daily for a week until I had somethin else to replay. I still think about this, and I still feel I am crappy
People (Who was involved/there?)	Did not really discuss with anyone about attending. On the day of, I spoke to family and friends about other things	There were 5 other classmates. I don't think anybody knew anyone well. But I feel like others were closer with each other than with me	I am talking about it now. I did not even discuss it with my roommates, who I am close to
Environment (Online/offline, see/hear/touch)	I had spent all day in my room or in the shower. Until I had to leave. I was just doing non-project related stuff	A quiet Friday evening. It was eerily quiet except our own voices. We had this large screen that we were using to present to each other	It's like a song in your head on repeat. I remember during random moments like grocery shopping or other social situations. It just hits me like a wave

Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)

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10
                                    Disappointed (12)          Overwhelmed              Guilty                      Embarrassed
         Afraid  Overwhelmed  Concerned      Uncomfortable  Shy              Annoyed    Tired
5  Stressed   Focussed                                              Appreciated              Lonely                       Relieved
        Nervous
0                Brave
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	Before	During	After
Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)	Feeling stress helps me to mentally prepare. So I started planning ahead for the meeting - about all possible suggestions and ideas I could give, talk about vacation plans, and potential non-assignment dialogues we could have. I started mentally hyping myself up in the train. But then I got mad and upset at myself because my decision paralysis made me late again. I was asking myself "Why do you do this every time? Why can't you ever do anything right?" I have only me to blame	Initially, I did not talk or contribute much. I always feel overwhelmed in social settings. People were only making small talk when I reached and I stayed quiet because I feel like they would eat me. I felt good when I shared project ideas, but also felt like crap when I kept some good ideas to myself. Then when they postponed the movie plan to next week, I felt really guilty as one person would be travelling abroad. I ruined it for the other person	It barely ended before I started deconstructing all the things I did wrong, which is also a normal feeling for me after every social interaction. I kept feeling more and more guilty as my brain was amplifying everything. It was very confrontational in my head. But I was also kind of glad it was over, so I could cringe at my behaviour without other judgmental eyes now
Actions (What did you say and do?)	All day, I was speaking to my family and friends about random things, which also made me late for the group meeting. I also took a long shower where I was imagining all the possible ways it would go wrong. I listened to some loud music in the train - it calms me	I feel like the vibe in the beginning was great. People were talking about some festival, travel plans, other assignments. And then we brainstormed for the project. Then there was an impromptu movie plan for the same night, but I declined saying I had other work. But I was not mentally ready due to social anxiety and also I didn't really know anyone there. But then somehow they postponed it to next week, which sucked because one of the girls would be travelling	After the meeting, I stayed at the University, working on a different project by myself in the same room as before. So, the ghosts of the conversation were still there. I have so far not discussed this with anybody. I don't usually write these kinds of things. Writing is only when my anxiety is high or I'm really happy and want to remember
Highlights (What was/felt good? Gains)	Before: I enjoyed the train ride. I did not need to put on a facade, which I do with friends too. The loud train and music helped me gather my thoughts. During: I had a proud moment where I shared this idea that everyone loved, and so I felt people value me . After: I was just glad it was over		
Lowlights (Hurdles, pain points, to improve)	Most of it was bad. But my lowest point was knowing that I hurt that one girl because of postponing the movie plan. I keep telling myself "I am the worst ". Also, when I was unable to vocalize all of my ideas that I wanted to, this voice in my head asked me to "Just shut up"		

Mapping the Stages of a Group/Social Experience

Short description of experience
Yesterday, I went to the company I am interning for my graduation project to present the final result. After the presentations which went well I think, we had a networking party with drinks and food in the cafeteria of the company along with other peers who interned there too.

	Before	During	After
Time (When and how long?)	Was informed a month ago	A monday evening. For about two hours in the cafeteria of the company.	Left the first chance I got. It's been less than a day since.
People (Who was involved/there?)	Did not really discuss with anyone. But it was a group email.	Other interns like me. But also a few supervisors and employees of the company. Had a friend.	I've spoken in length with my friend who was there too.
Environment (Online/offline, see/hear/touch)	Was informed via an email.	Completely in-person. There were drinks, but some basic snacks which was disappointing	We discussed on the way back home while biking side by side.
Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)	Motivated / Eager / Nervous	Disappointed / Bored / Uncomfortable / Engaged	Relieved / Disappointed / Discouraged
Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)	My first thought was that this would be fun. Everything I was doing, was for this particular moment. So I felt that this would be where I would feel happy, satisfied and valued. I was not too excited though, because I usually try to not get my hopes up. But they did say it would be like a party, so I expected it to be nice.	The way the photo was handled felt so fake and I was immediately disappointed by that along with their attempt at snacks. It just felt like they did not really value us and hosted this networking for the sake of it. I felt like they were not really interested in any of us. It did not feel like a party at all. I felt like I had no idea how to start a conversation with anyone.	I was just relieved that it was all done. And since my friend felt the same way I did, i was not disappointed in the sense it was nice to feel this way with someone else. At the same time, I still do feel like I have not been valued by them.
Actions (What did you say and do?)	I did not really do or discuss about the party until I finished the presentations. That was my focus, obviously.	It started with taking a group photo together where they asked us to smile and once the photo was taken, everyone just went their separate ways, and I did not see most of them at the cafeteria after that. There were some people, but I didn't know anyone much and I did not feel confident just walking up to them. I did find offering chips to people helped, so that is what I used as an in mostly. I was just drinking, eating and taking photos for others. I did get to interact with a supervisor that I really admire.	Yeah, just discussed with that one friend back home. I haven't had the time to talk about this with anyone else yet. I am still exhausted from it.
Highlights (What was/felt good? Gains)	It was nice to hang out with my friend and some acquaintances - we also played ping pong. And they gave us a nice gift too. I am really glad I had someone I knew there as that gave some degree of comfort and confidence there - or else I wouldn't have felt good at all considering how it turned out. My comfort level kind of defines how confident I feel, which also kind of results in how much I engage in conversations.		
Lowlights (Hurdles, pain points, to improve)	I felt like I should have talked to more people. Networking is very important for me right now and I feel like despite my interest, I did not utilize the opportunity. Especially with the supervisor I look up to. Also, I really had difficulty starting a conversation - it is already difficult for me as I have to translate everything in my head. So finding the right words for the conversation was something I actually struggle with generally. Even finding the right time to say something - like when is it interrupting vs conversational. All these thoughts were flying in my head.		

Mapping the Stages of a Group/Social Experience

Short description of experience...
An informal networking event that I attended a couple of months ago. It was supposed be to talking about working in the Netherlands for people from my country, so I expected to gain a lot of clarity in regards to the job market, work culture, work-life balance, etc.

	Before	During	After
Time (When and how long?)	The plan was continuously made for 2 months	On a Sunday afternoon in April. It was supposed to start at 12:30 and be for a couple of hours. But started at 13:00 and I was there till 15:30	When left, people were still hanging out. I don't know for how long.
People (Who was involved/there?)	Some friends, acquaintances and seniors who are now working in the Netherlands	About 20 people in total. 3 friends, 1 acquaintance, rest were all new to me	I did not really discuss it with anyone.
Environment (Online/offline, see/hear/touch)	All of the planning was done through a group chat on WhatsApp.	Sunny and pleasant weather. We met at this huge table at a deck near the water.	This is the first time I am actually talking about this with anyone

Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)

Scale: 0 – 5 – 10

- Excited (~6)
- Scared (~3)
- Hangry (~9)
- Annoyed (~4)
- Disappointed (~6)
- Joy (~6)
- Okay (~5)
- Disappointed (~9)
- Relieved (~6)
- Worried (~2)
- Tired (~7)
- Overwhelmed (~9)

	Before	During	After
Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)	I thought this would be a great networking opportunity to know what it's like working in the Netherlands directly from people who are from my country who are working here. I had this image in my head that we would all stand together and talk about all the things we want clarified. I expected to gain clarity. But mainly validation - validation from someone to say that I will get a job, that xyz is hard but if you do abc you will find a job. On the day of, I did not want to go - as I felt it would be boring and not useful for me.	They were all surface level conversations but I kept hoping they would at some point be deep. But no. I was wondering why they called this a networking event - it felt like a picnic to be there. I felt left out and I did not want to be there. I feel bored if people don't talk about something I want or when someone goes on about stuff I have no interest in or don't know about, which is what happened. I felt they were all being rude. I felt out of sync with others. I kept thinking this was not what I want - I don't know how to put it into words.	I really want to know why I was so disappointed by this - that's why I am talking about this here. I want to understand it because it still bothers me. In retrospect now, I can understand their side too. It was a sunday afternoon - -why would they want to talk about work? They wanted a relaxing conversation, my expectations were different - they just want to relax, have fun and not talk about work. Maybe the setting could have changed how it went - the picnic table vibe did not help. I was also a bit prejudiced and assumed that the seniors wanted to talk only with those they knew
Actions (What did you say and do?) / (What was/felt good? Gains)	I was not in charge. I am not used to making plans so well in advance - it is not in our culture to. So that was weird for me already. But I am the one who set the location, time and date. My friend was the mastermind behind the whole plan though. I looked up people who will be attending on Linkedin. I knew we had to take our own food and god, but sometimes I was not fully paying attention to the chat. On the day of, I did not want to go - but my friend called me up and asked me to come. So I packed my lunch on a Sunday afternoon - can you imagine?!	Everyone was half an hour late, and I was the only one there, which was inconsiderate. I was very hungry and angry. There was way too much small talk. The small talk became the big talk. Like, people who were here for years kept cribbing about the weather. I did not initiate deeper conversations though as I did not know when to butt in, especially because there were too many people. I am generally clueless about social cues like these, so I find it easier to just accept it. Also, it was a potluck, and somehow I missed that - so while I just took some basic lunch for myself, people brought chips and beers. Someone even got more beer at some point as they were bored - which gave it a poor vibe for me because I do not drink. None of the topics I had in mind were spoken about. There were some people new to the country, so they had questions for me - I was not prepared, so this annoyed me.	I only talked about this once with another friend who was supposed to attend but didn't. All I told him was that it did not help me at all. He is also friends with the organizer, and I did not want to hurt her feelings. So I did not tell the guy directly that it was disappointing.
Highlights	I would say, I got to meet some good seniors, so that was good. And some seniors could not come, but the next time I met them, them not showing up was a good conversation starter for me - which is something I struggle with. Like my idea of fun is different from most people here who have a lot of hobbies while I don't - which is totally okay as I don't care what others think, but it also means I don't have much in common with others to talk about.		
Lowlights	I hated that I started it off hangry as people were late to the lunch - my time was not valued. I don't enjoy small talking at all - even though I do know how to do it. There was a mismatch of ambitions, goals and expectations of everyone else vs me - so this made me feel bitchy. I don't like some social norms - like drinking on a afternoon, which they did - so was not good for me. Overall, I felt I was out of sync with the others.		

Mapping the Stages of a Group/Social Experience

Short description of experience...

First day of University for me - I had skipped the induction. Most people seemed to already know each other - I was not too worried though. Maybe I should have been. I tried to join a group of people after the introductory class. But I felt left out, like the odd one out.

	Before	During	After
Time (When and how long?)	No preparation. Immediately after one of the introductory classes/workshop	After one of the introductory class/workshop, everyone was grabbing something to eat	I refused to (voluntarily) think about it for a month - although I kept getting flashes of it. It took me a month, to sit and reflect on it - but it still hurts
People (Who was involved/there?)	Was unplanned. Nobody invited me - I just went over to them	About 15-20 peers. Strangers to me. Mixed ethnicity of people. And then there was me	It's been a few months, but I have not spoken about this with anyone. It is painful to
Environment (Online/offline, see/hear/touch)	No preparation was required/done - all I had to be was myself, or so I thought	We were sitting around a table near the canteen. Some empty chairs, bags. Breezy noon. Loud	This memory lives rent-free in only my head. Have not written or anything about it

Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)

Scale: 10 ... 5 ... 0

Excited, Confident, Overwhelmed, Ashamed, Invisible, Lonely, Anxiety, Nervous, Left Out, Down, Uncomfortable, Delighted, Uncomfortable

	Before	During	After
Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)	I was obviously excited. Everything was a new experience for me, truth be told. Back in my country, making friends was easy for me. I just expected it to be the same here, I guess. And this group I approached seemed really cool. I wanted to get to know - I assumed they'd want to become friends with me. I was, of course, a bit nervous as I had to make an impression, right?	I was sitting there, and I remember feeling ashamed of myself - I still do. I was blaming myself and my upbringing. I found myself wishing I was born elsewhere or had studied in a better school or had better hobbies. I felt so uncool. And that got me thinking if I was unworthy of this opportunity to study here. Like am I even fit to? That's not a great feeling.	I felt like shit, immediately afterwards. I decided to not try make any friends here again. And then it was really difficult for me to digest that things were different here that in my country. I kept all of this to myself. I'm used to keeping my feelings bottled up. I don't want to be a burden. It is just who I am. At least now, I am aware of my low self-confidence. It took me time to get comfortable again and make friends here.
Actions (What did you say and do?)	I can still picture it vividly - I have nightmares about it. I grabbed some soup and simply walked towards them and sat down next to someone I had already introduced myself to	Honestly, I could barely keep up with the conversations. I had no idea what they were talking about - pop-culture references, bands, places they had travelled to, some jokes - I could not even relate to any of the stories from their school/bachelors, dating life, even their design talk. I just pretended to understand, smiled, nodded, ate my soup, held on to my bag. I am sure people could see that I was clueless - at least the ones who seemed to notice me.	I told no one and cried myself to sleep that night. For a while, forget approaching, even talking to anyone new became a herculean task for me. It was like this one thing had destroyed my confidence. Eventually, I did make new friends, but I don't know, I am always on edge in a way. But one thing is that now, I pay way more attention in group settings. I don't want anyone else to feel the way I did. It's really not a good feeling.
Highlights (What was/felt good? Gains)	Absolutely nothing was good about it. Maybe the only thing I can say is that it helped me realize that I attribute my self-worth to how others see me. But this took me a couple of months to like realize.		
Lowlights (Hurdles, pain points, to improve)	This whole experience left me with a bitter taste. I feel... felt like a loser. Like I'm the most uninteresting person on this side of the planet. When I think about it now, my expectations were not met. I am not used to not being kind of in the spotlight. And I really did not know what to say or contribute		

Mapping the Stages of a Group/Social Experience

Short description of experience...
About more than a year ago, during my bachelors, there was this inter-college event. I participated in Extempore. I was really excited and a lot of people had trust and hope in me that I would do great. But even before I walked towards the podium, I lost my voice.

	Before	During	After
Time (When and how long?)	My college signed up 3 days before. We spent an hour every day practicing.	On a weekday morning. The whole event was for 2 hours, and my part was for 2 minutes	It has been so long since it happened, but this memory comes back every time I have to do any kind of public speaking
People (Who was involved/there?)	Me and 9 other classmates who were participating. One professor who trained us. My dad who was excited for me.	Other participating classmates, my professor, other people from other universities	Immediately after, discussed with the professor, who chewed me out. My dad who still motivated me, but I knew I let him down
Environment (Online/offline, see/hear/touch)	We practiced at the University, after classes.	Happened at another university. At a large hall/auditorium with a huge stage, podium, lot of chairs	I periodically recall this during other such events and during major presentations now. Especially when I do not have clarity about the content to talk

Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)

10 — Excited   Delighted   Optimistic   Confident (100)   Cheerful   Happy   Uncomfortable   Anxiety   Overwhelmed   Ashamed   Stressed   Miserable   Sad   Upset   Ashamed   Uncomfortable   Embarrassed   Worried   Disappointed Down

Special   Confused

5

0

	Before	During	After
Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)	I had no negative emotions leading to it. My dad was excited too, encouraging me. My professor specifically asked me to join, so I felt special for the trust placed on me. I felt like she recognized some talent in me. I kept thinking - I have to win the first place, not even the runner-ups. That I will be first. There was no doubt in my head. I was cocky, I started believing that I am very skilled.	I obviously had to think on the to say something related to the topic. But my mind was a total blank. Before I could reach the podium, I was overwhelmed. I could feel myself letting everyone down, and all I kept thinking was I am disgrace for letting everyone down, and about how I would ever face everyone again. At that moment, I knew with conviction that I was a failure. I wished I could become invisible	I still have no idea why I blanked - and this is a question I ask myself frequently. I was more upset and embarrassed about letting down my professor, university and especially dad down. They had high hopes for me, and I so easily let them down. For a long time, I started believing that I should never try to do public speaking again - that I have no skills. I felt very, very, very bad.
Actions (What did you say and do?) (What was/felt good? Gains)	I was focused, I practiced all the exercises vigorously during training, and when I would go back to my room. On the day of, the topic ('belief') was given to me 2 minutes before I had to go on stage, like everyone else. And we were not allowed to use our phones or discuss with anyone, obviously.	The longest 2 minutes of my life. I held on tight to the podium because my hands were trembling and I was sweating profusely. I tried looking at the crowd, but I was so uncomfortable that I started staring at some wall in the distance. I did not say a single word	As soon as I got off the stage, my professor yelled at me in front of everyone - salt to my wound. Later, when I told my dad, he continued to encourage me to keep trying, but I felt he was only hiding his disappointment to not hurt me further. For months I stopped participating in other similar activities, like debates or even group discussions. I was uncomfortable to talk in front of others too! But since then, I make sure that I have basic clarity at least about what I am expected to talk about. If not, I tend to shut down. Being prepared is what gives me confidence now

Highlights	Since the overall impact I made is all that matters in end, I will say that everything about this was pure misery. So, no highlights.
Lowlights	In a nutshell, letting people down was the worst part. I feel my confidence has drained, and it takes a lot of effort to try building it back. I still get thoughts about how I am not fit for anything. I disappointed my dad despite him hiding it, and I have vowed to never risk making him feel that way again

Mapping the Stages of a Group/Social Experience

Short description of experience...
Networking event at AULA that my friend invited me too. There was a mix of students and companies. I attended a couple of presentations with my friend. After that, we had to mingle with other, and this part wasn't so good.

	Before	During	After
Time (When and how long?)	Knew about event two months ago	A thursday evening. I was there for a couple of hours. Don't know how long others were there	I left halfway, I think. Replayed while walking back, and then for a while too
People (Who was involved/there?)	Did not discuss with anyone	So many people talking in groups. Recognized like 5 or 6 people. Found a friend to tagalong. Everyone looked so confident and professional. Some people were standing alone	Friend and I left together, talking about how much it sucked. It was nice to be on the same boat, but I feel he had a better time than me
Environment (Online/offline, see/hear/touch)	I picked a nice outfit. I looked into the companies I may want to connect with	Professional space, was quite cold and windy as hell. Some boring snacks, some drinks too. It was quite loud, maybe.	I called my best friend after going back to my room, and he kind of cheered me up momentarily.

Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)

```
10
        Excited          Curious?                                              Frustrated              Disappointed ●
                                           Anxiety ●                                          Self-doubt
        Nervous                                               Nervous    Disappointed
 5                                                                                    Proud
                                           Overwhelmed                          Relieved
                                                                                                      Confused
 0                                                                        Embarassed
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Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)	I hoped I can make a good impression on others and do some networking. That this could be a great opportunity to learn more about working in the Netherlands. I was wondering if I am presentable and if companies would fine me interesting. I still felt quite optimistic.	I felt like I forgot how to have a conversation. I was way in my own head, getting mad at myself like it all felt too real, and I knew I had to make an impression but did not want to say the wrong thing, I think. I remember feeling like I was out of place. Like, did I even belong there? Was I smart enough? What if someone asked me something I should know about and I had no idea what they were talking about - I did not want to embarrass myself like that. I even felt like I did not belong at this University at some point, that's when I left	I initially kept asking myself when I became so awkward? If it was my, perhaps high expectations that made it so terrible. Or maybe if I had smart things to say or jokes, I would have been more interesting. I remember wishing I were taller so I could be seen. And then a few weeks ago, it kind of hit me that one of reasons was that I felt so vulnerable there, kind of naked. Like a baboon presenting itself, if that makes sense. Or maybe I am just blowing it way out of proportion - I tend to do that too
Actions (What did you say and do?)	Picked an outfit that I felt was professional and comfortable. Practiced how I would introduce myself in front of the mirror, though I think that made me more nervous though. Also, I barely slept the previous night.	We did join some groups of conversation, but I had no idea what to say. I did talk to some people, but it felt very brief, like surface level conversations. Even I was boring myself. My palms were so cold. My friend and I had a nice conversation though. We both felt awkward but he was good company. The vibe maybe. Felt so off and wrong	I tried to write the good things about it in my journal, but it only made me feel worse to relive it on paper. I still don't know if it was me like I did not try enough or if it was not my vibe - so I go from self-blame to self-pity. I still attend weekly faculty drinks - those are good though
Highlights (What was/felt good? Gains)	I had a nice conversation with a professor I admire, but have not worked with. At least I tried networking with different people in a new space, so A+ for effort. Thankful I had friend there, and glad I have friends who made me feel better		
Lowlights (Hurdles, pain points, to improve)	I was extremely nervous about approaching people, I felt boring and fake. This and my high expectations maybe had an impact? I don't know - like I manifested it. I also felt ignored and not valued to an extend. That made me doubt myself		

Experience Map

	Before	During	After
Emotions (Different emotions and intensity)	10 — Excited, Delighted, Optimistic, Confident (100), Cheerful, Happy, Excited, Motivated, Confident, Curious?, Excited, Excited, Special, Afraid, Overwhelmed, Concerned; 5 — Stressed, Focussed, Nervous, Nervous, Eager, Delighted, Scared, Brave; 0	Disappointed (12), Uncomfortable, Overwhelmed, Ashamed, Shy, Stressed, Miserable, Sad, Upset, Overwhelmed, Ashamed, Disappointed, Overwhelmed, Invisible, Uncomfortable, Guilty, Lonely, Frustrated, Hangry, Anxiety, Bored, Disappointed, Ashamed, Relieved, Anxiety, Disappointed, Joy, Nervous, Appreciated, Left Out, Tired, Confused, Overwhelmed, Okay, Uncomfortable, Engaged, Nervous, Annoyed	Anxiety, Embarrassed, Disappointed, Down, Embarrassed, Worried, Overwhelmed, Discouraged, Uncomfortable, Tired, Self-doubt, Uncomfortable, Relieved, Lonely, Relieved, Proud, Disappointed, Worried, Embarrassed, Relieved, Confused

Thoughts (What did you think and feel?)

Before

- Feeling stress helps me to mentally prepare. So I started planning ahead for the meeting - about all possible suggestions and ideas I could give, talk about vacation plans, and potential non-assignment dialogues we could have. I started mentally hyping myself up in the train. But then I got mad and upset at myself because my decision paralysis made me late again. I was asking myself "Why do you do this every time? Why can't you ever do anything right?" I have only me to blame

- My first thought was that this would be fun. Everything I was doing, was for this particular moment. So I felt that this would be where I would feel happy, satisfied and valued. I was not too excited though, because I usually try to not get my hopes up. But they did say it would be like a party, so I expected it to be nice.

- I thought this would be a great networking opportunity to know what it's like working in the Netherlands directly from people who are from my country who are working here. I had this image in my head that we would all stand together and talk about all the things we want clarified. I expected to gain clarity. But mainly validation - validation from someone to say that I will get a job, that xyz is hard but if you do abc you will find a job. On the day of, I did not want to go - as I felt it would be boring and not useful for me.

- I was obviously excited. Everything was a new experience for me, truth be told. Back in my country, making friends was easy for me. I just expected it to be the same here, I guess. And this group I approached seemed really cool. I wanted to get to know - I assumed they'd want to become friends with me. I was, of course, a bit nervous as I had to make an impression, right?

- I had no negative emotions leading to it. My dad was excited too, encouraging me. My professor specifically asked me to join, so I felt special for the trust placed on me. I felt like she recognized some talent in me. I kept thinking - I have to win the first place, not even the runner-ups. That I will be first. There was no doubt in my head. I was cocky, I started believing that I am very skilled.

- I hoped I can make a good impression on others and do some networking. That this could be a great opportunity to learn more about working in the Netherlands. I was wondering if I am presentable and if companies would find me interesting. I still felt quite optimistic.

During

- Initially, I did not talk or contribute much. I always feel overwhelmed in social settings. People were only making small talk when I reached and I stayed quiet because I feel like they would eat me. I felt quiet when I shared project ideas, but also felt like crap when I kept some good ideas to myself. Then when they postponed the movie plan to next week, I felt really guilty as one person would be travelling abroad. I ruined it for the other person

- The way the photo was handled felt so fake and I was immediately disappointed by that along with their attempt at snacks. It just felt like they did not really value us and hosted this networking for the sake of it. I felt like they were not really interested in any of us. It did not feel like a party at all. I felt like I had no idea how to start a conversation with anyone.

- They were all surface level conversations but I kept hoping they would at some point be deep. But no. I was wondering why they called this a networking event - it felt like a picnic to be there. I felt left out and I did not want to be there. I feel bored if people don't talk about something I want or when someone goes on about stuff I have no interest in or don't know about, which is what happened. I felt they were all being rude. I felt out of sync with others. I kept thinking this was not what I want - I don't know how to put it into words.

- I was sitting there, and I remember feeling ashamed of myself - I still do. I was blaming myself and my upbringing. I found myself wishing I was born elsewhere and had studied in a better school or had better hobbies. I felt so uncool. And that got me thinking if I was unworthy of this opportunity to study here. Like am I even fit to? That's not a great feeling.

- I obviously had to think on the to say something related to the topic. But my mind was a total blank. Before I could reach the podium, I was overwhelmed. I could feel myself letting everyone down, and all I kept thinking was I am disgrace for letting everyone down, and about how I would ever face everyone again. At that moment, I knew with conviction that I was a failure. I wished I could become invisible.

- I felt like I forgot how to have a conversation. I was way in my own head, getting mad at myself like it all felt too real, and I knew I had to make an impression but did not want to say the wrong thing, I think. I remember feeling like I was out of place. Like, did I even belong there? Was I smart enough? What if someone asked me something I should know about and I had no idea what they were talking about - I did not want to embarrass myself like that. I even felt like I did not belong at this University at some point, that's when I left

After

- It barely ended before I started deconstructing all the things I did wrong, which is also a normal feeling for me after every social interaction. I kept feeling more and more guilty as my brain was amplifying everything. It was very confrontational in my head. But I was also kind of glad it was over, so I could cringe at my behaviour without other judgmental eyes now

- I was just relieved that it was all done. And since my friend felt the same way I did, I was not disappointed in the sense it was nice to feel this way with someone else. At the same time, I still do feel like I have not been valued by them.

- I really want to know why I was so disappointed by this - that's why I am talking about this here. I want to understand it because it still bothers me. In retrospect now, I can understand their side too. It was a sunday afternoon - why would they want to talk about work? They started a relaxing conversation, my expectations were different - they just want to relax, have fun and not talk about work. Maybe the setting could have changed how it went - the picnic setting did not help. I was also a bit prejudiced and assumed that the seniors wanted to talk only with those they know

- I felt like shit, immediately afterwards. I decided to not try make any friends here again. And then it was really difficult for me to digest that things were different here than in my country. I kept all of this to myself. I'm used to keeping my feelings bottled up. I was more upset and embarrassed about letting down my professor, university and especially dad down. They had high hopes for me, and I so easily let them down. For a long time, I started believing that I should never try to do public speaking again - that I have no skills. I felt very, very bad.

- I still have no idea why I blanked - and this is a question I ask myself frequently. I was more upset and embarrassed about letting down my professor, university and especially dad down. They had high hopes for me, and I so easily let them down. For a long time, I started believing that I should never try to do public speaking again - that I have no skills. I felt very, very, very bad.

- I initially kept pushing myself when I became so awkward? If it was my, perhaps high expectations that made it so terrible. Or maybe if I had smart things to say or jokes, I would have been more interesting. I remember wishing I were taller so I could be seen. And then a few weeks ago, it kind of hit me that one of reasons was that I felt so vulnerable there, kind of naked. Like a baboon presenting itself, if that makes sense. Or maybe I am just blowing it way out of proportion - I tend to do that too

Actions (What did you say and do?)

Before

- All day, I was speaking to my family and friends about random things, which also made me late for the group meeting. I also took a long shower where I was imagining all the possible ways it would go wrong. I listened to some loud music in the train - it calms me

- I was just relieved that it was all done. And since my friend felt the same way I did, I was not disappointed in the sense it was nice to feel this way with someone else. At the same time, I still do feel like I have not been valued by them.

- I was not in charge. I am not used to making plans so well in advance - it is not in our culture to. So that was weird for me already. But I am the one who set the location, time and date. My friend was the mastermind behind the whole plan though. I looked up people who will be attending on LinkedIn. I knew no had to take our own food and god, but sometimes I was not fully paying attention in the chat. On the day of, I did not want to go - but my friend called me up and asked me to come. So I packed my lunch on a Sunday afternoon - can you imagine?!

- I can still picture it vividly - I have nightmares about it. I grabbed some soup and simply walked towards them and sat down next to someone I had already introduced myself to

- I was focused, I practiced all the exercises vigorously during training, and when I would go back to my room. On the day of, the topic ('belief') was given to me 2 minutes before I had to go on stage, like everyone else. And we were not allowed to use our phones or discuss with anyone, obviously.

- Picked an outfit that I felt was professional and comfortable. Practiced how I would introduce myself in front of the mirror, though I think that made me more nervous though. Also, I barely slept the previous night.

During

- I feel like the vibe in the beginning was great. People were talking about some festival, travel plans, other assignments. And then we brainstormed for the project. Then there was an impromptu movie plan for the same night, but I declined saying I had other work. But I was not mentally ready due to social anxiety and also I didn't really know anyone there. But then somehow they postponed it to next week, which sucked because some of the girls would be travelling

- It started with taking a group photo together where they asked us to smile and once the photo was taken, everyone just went their separate ways, and I did not see most of them at the cafeteria after that. There were some people, but I didn't know anyone much and I did not feel confident just walking up to them. I did find offering chips to people helped, so that is what I used as an in mostly. I was just drinking, eating and taking photos for others. I did get to interact with a supervisor that I really admire.

- [dense small text - largely illegible]

- Honestly, I could barely keep up with the conversations. I had no idea what they were talking about - pop-culture references, bands, places they had travelled to, some jokes - I could not even relate to any of the stories from their school/bachelors, dating life, even their design talk. I just pretended to understand, smiled, nodded, ate my soup, held on to my bag. I am sure people could see that I was clueless - at least the ones who seemed to notice me.

- The longest 2 minutes of my life. I held on tight to the podium because my hands were trembling and I was sweating profusely. I tried looking at the crowd, but I was so uncomfortable that I started staring at some wall in the distance. I did not say a single word

- We did join some groups of conversation, but I had no idea what to say. I did talk to some people, but it felt very brief, like surface level conversations. Even I was boring myself. My palms were so cold. My friend and I had a nice conversation though. We both felt awkward but he was good company. The vibe maybe. Felt so off and wrong

After

- After the meeting, I stayed at the University, working on a different project by myself in the same room as before. So, the ghosts of the conversation were still there. I have so far not discussed this with anybody. I don't usually write these kinds of things. Writing is only when my anxiety is high or I'm really happy and want to remember

- Yeah, just discussed with that one friend back home. I haven't had the time to talk about this with anyone else yet. I am still exhausted from it.

- I only talked about this once with another friend who was supposed to attend but didn't. All I told him was that it did not help me at all. He is also friends with the organizer, and I did not want to hurt her feelings. So I did not tell the guy directly that it was disappointing.

- I told no one and cried myself to sleep that night. For a while, forget approaching, even talking to anyone new became a herculean task for me. It was like this one thing had destroyed my confidence. Eventually, I did make new friends, but I don't know, I am always on edge in a way. But one thing is that now, I pay more attention in group settings. I don't want anyone else to feel the way I did. It's really not a good feeling.

- As soon as I got off the stage, my professor yelled at me in front of everyone - set to my wound. Later, when I told my dad, he continued to encourage me to keep trying, but I felt he was only hiding his disappointment to not hurt me further. For months I stopped participating in other similar activities, like debates or even group discussions. I was uncomfortable to talk in front of others too! But since then, I make sure that I have basic clarity at least about what I am expected to talk about. If not, I tend to shut down. Being prepared is what gives me confidence now

- I tried to write the good things about it in my journal, but it only made me feel worse to relive it on paper. I still don't know if it was me like I did not try enough or if it was not my vibe - so I go from self-blame to self-pity. I still attend weekly faculty drinks - those are good though

Highlights (What was/felt good? Gains)

Before

- Before: I enjoyed the train ride. I did not need to put on a facade, which I do with friends too. The loud train and music helped me gather my thoughts. During: I had a proud moment where I shared this idea that everyone loved, and so I felt people value me. After: I was just glad it was over

During

- It was nice to hang out with my friend and some acquaintances - we also played ping pong. And they gave us a nice gift too. I am really glad I had someone I knew there as that gave some degree of comfort and confidence then - or else I wouldn't have felt good at all considering how it turned out. My comfort level kind of defines how confident I feel, which also kind of results in how much I engage in conversations.

- I would say, I got to meet some good seniors, so that was good. And some seniors could not come, but the next time I met them, them not showing up was a good conversation starter for me - which is something I struggle with. Like my idea of fun is different from most people here who have a lot of hobbies while I don't - which is totally okay as I don't care what others think, but it also means I don't have much in common with others to talk about.

After

- Absolutely nothing was good about it. Maybe the only thing I can say is that it helped me realize that I attribute my self-worth to how others see me. But this took me a couple of months to like realize.

- Since the overall impact I made is all that matters in end, I will say that everything about this was pure misery. So, no highlights.

- I had a nice conversation with a professor I admire, but have not worked with. At least I tried networking with different people in a new space, so A+ for effort. Thankful I had friend there, and glad I have friends who made me feel better

Lowlights (Hurdles, pain points, to improve)

Before

- Most of it was bad. But my lowest point was knowing that I hurt that one girl because of postponing the movie plan. I keep telling myself "I am the worst". Also, when I was unable to vocalize all of my ideas that I wanted to, this voice in my head asked me to "Just shut up"

During

- I felt like I should have talked to more people. Networking is very important for me right now and I feel like despite my interest, I did not utilize the opportunity. Especially with the supervisor I look up to. Also, I really had difficulty starting a conversation - it is already difficult for me as I have to translate everything in my head. So finding the right words for the conversation was something I actually struggle with generally. Even finding the right time to say something - like when is it interrupting vs conversation. All those thoughts were flying in my head.

- I hated that it started it off hangry as people were late to the lunch - my time was not valued. I don't enjoy small talking at all - even though I do know how to do it. There was a mismatch of ambitions, goals and expectations of everyone else vs me - so this made me feel bitchy. I don't like some social norms - like drinking on a afternoon, which they did - so was not good for me. Overall, I felt I was out of sync with the others.

After

- This whole experience left me with a bitter taste. I feel... felt like a loser. Like I'm the most uninteresting person on this side of the planet. When I think about it now, my expectations were not met. I am not used to not being kind of in the spotlight. And I really did not know what to say or contribute

- In a nutshell, letting people down was the worst part. I feel my confidence has drained, and it takes a lot of effort to try building it back. I still get thoughts about how I am not fit for anything. I disappointed my dad despite him hiding it, and I have vowed to never risk making him feel that way again

- I was extremely nervous about approaching people, I felt boring and fake. This and my high expectations maybe had an impact? I don't know - like I manifested it. I also felt ignored and not valued to an extend. That made me doubt myself