The words “Do one thing every day that scares you. It’s good to be out of your comfort zone,” followed by a smiley face, were written nicely on a post-it note that stuck to one of the revolving doors of the ARC. Upon seeing it, I quickly snapped a picture, smiled to myself, and decided that I would follow this advice from anonymous.

As a freshman going into college, I was nervous. I did not know anyone, and I did not know how to know anyone. The first few days were very nerve-wracking. Actually, the first few weeks were nerve-wracking. I had met people on my floor, and everyone would hang out with each other, but I was afraid that I was not forming any real friendships the way you are supposed to in college. I was too afraid of rejection to do anything except sit to the side and watch. Well, one evening on the way out from a swim, that little yellow post-it note pushed me away from the sidelines and right into the game.
When I got back from that swim, I changed into normal clothing and sat down in my room to do some work. A few people on the floor were going out and loudly discussing it in the hallway. I peeked my head out to see what was going on. A girl a few doors down did the same. I had met her before but never really talked to her. She had seemed nice, but like I said, I didn’t really feel comfortable trying to make friends. I started to head back into my room when I remembered the post-it note: “**Do one thing every day that scares you. It’s good to be out of your comfort zone.**” I thought to myself: It can’t be that hard to make a friend. So I turned around and looked back down the hallway. The girl, her name was XXXX, stood a few feet away. I asked if she was going out. She replied by saying she was not sure, then asking if I was going. I told her no, and that if she didn’t want to go with the rest of the group, that we could hang out for a bit. We did hang out, and there marked the beginning of a beautiful friendship. My biggest fear of talking to people didn’t seem so terrifying anymore. XXXX was social, so eventually I grew used to meeting other people. Actually, it was how I met a group of some of the best friends I’ve ever had. So all in all, I would say it was good to go out of my comfort zone. **The advice from anonymous on that small yellow post-it note worked, and I had promised myself I would continue to follow it.**

Later that week, I was sorting through the flyers I had gotten from Quad Day, and separating them into three piles: service, academics, and random fun things. My comfort zone lay in service and academics. That being said, the memory of the post-it note pushed me to look out of that comfort zone. There in the fun RSOs pile lay a flyer for Illini Dancesport Ballroom Dance Team; all levels welcome, no experience required. I thought to myself that I was being ridiculous, I did not know how to dance, I didn’t like people being close to me, and I didn’t know anyone who would do this with me. This was not exactly an ideal combination for ballroom dancing. But somehow I convinced myself to go to the open house, alone and terrified. What I didn’t realize then was how great of a decision that was. That team has helped me learn and grow in more ways than I can account for. One short year later, I can (sort of) dance, I am okay with people being
close to me, and I have even found a dance partner to work with. **Yes, when I started, it scared me, but I’m glad I tried it anyway.**

Soon it came time to choose classes for the next semester, and I found that for the first time, I was afraid of choosing my classes. I had always done well academically in high school, and had even kept up a good standing my first semester. I started to become fearful second semester would not be the same if I chose more difficult classes. But I chose to apply the advice of anonymous to my academics and go for it anyway. Yes, I took that Behavioral Neuroscience course, and it was a disaster, but I am happy I took it anyway, because it was one of the most interesting classes I had. And for the first time, I realized it wasn’t the class that scared me, but rather the idea of failure. And as it turns out, whether we like it or not, failure will happen. **By choosing to take a course that scared me, I instead learned how to accept the idea that my academics won’t be perfect every time, and that it will be okay if I don’t understand something right away.**

Throughout the rest of my freshman year, whenever an opportunity presented itself that I was hesitant on, one that I know the old me would have hidden away from, I would try to remind myself that it’s okay to be scared. It’s okay to not know how to do something, because it’s a good thing to be out of my comfort zone. I have learned so much more by trying things that scare me as opposed to sitting on the sidelines. I learned not to be afraid of people, I learned how to dance, I learned how to teach in a classroom, I learned how to ice skate, I learned how to lead an executive council, I learned how to sing in front of people, I learned how to make friends, I learned it’s okay to not be okay, I learned to play my music loud, I learned to be who I am, I learned to accept the things I cannot change, I learned to trust, I learned to appreciate life, I learned to find what makes you happy. **But most importantly, I learned to do something every day that scares me, because it’s good to be out of my comfort zone.**