

It's no secret that rivers have been the love of my life for a long time; more than half my life. What I love about rivers is that they don't judge. They don't care who you are; what your hopes and dreams are; what your fears are; if you are having a great day, a bad day, or a neutral day. Rivers are just there, doing their thing, flowing downhill. Merging myself with their motion for a short time is my goal, and the rivers usually let me. They embrace me as one of their own letting me share in their magic. Then, I walk back to my car, back to my worries, back to people who do judge, back to work, back to life and all the ups and downs that it carries with it. The rivers keep on flowing, unmoved by presence. Some might wonder, "isn't such a one-sided relationship unhealthy?" But it's not one-sided. There is a long list of what I take from the river:

Joy

Fun

Challenge

Escape

Self-reflection

Time to think (in easy rapids)

Time not to think and just to focus exclusively on what's right in front of me (in hard rapids)

Relaxation

Making my body stronger

Making my mind stronger

Getting out of my comfort zone

Pushing my personal boundaries

I was recently acquainted with the San Miguel River outside of Telluride, CO. I've paddled close to hundreds of rivers around the world and I get increasingly excited when I can find a new stretch of whitewater to paddle. The water was low and the rapids mellow, but the San Miguel came to me in a time of profoundly challenging things happening in my life and the momentary escape it offered me set my head straight for another day to tackle the obstacles that life had put into my path. For this, I will be forever grateful.

By Darcy Gaetcher

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