

Emma

4/6/14

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*This I Believe* essay

I believe in finding people who appreciate you for who you are.

The experience from which this belief stems began in seventh grade. I had transitioned to a brand new group of friends, and through a lot of drama, none of which directly affected me, most of us remained close. The problems began when I noticed something strange happening: I was being excluded. Those friends would congregate without me, and they would be whispering and talking while I sat oblivious to the content of these secret discussions. Eventually, it progressed to the point where I was being completely ignored.

It all boiled over one fateful day at lunchtime.

I sat down at the lunch table amidst my friends and angrily demanded to know what was going on. They exchanged glances. Then they presented me with a piece of paper: "Emma's Problems"- a list of everything that was wrong with me.

Seeing this paper was surreal. It was the explanation for everything that had been occurring in prior days, and yet, I couldn't even acknowledge its existence. They watched me examine their handiwork- their typed, rainbow-colored, part one of two, list. The matters on the paper may have seemed trivial, but to me, they were anything but. It was my personality completely dissected, and converted into a numerical list of what these people deemed *problems*. I read each point until I could no longer decipher the words- my vision had become clouded with tears. Yet, I continued to stare at the 8.5 by 11" sheet

to hide my lachrymosity, and I bit my quivering lip and I ordered myself not to cry- I couldn't let them see me cry. It wasn't until I raised my head that I lost it: all the anger and sadness and betrayal I felt manifested itself in the form of uncontrollable sobbing, sending me running from the cafeteria and towards a place where I could hide my face.

This incident was one of many that occurred that year, and it was the worst because it came from the people I considered my closest friends. It made me question everything about myself; it made me *hate* myself. In addition, I trusted no one around me; even the people who came to my side during the occasional teary outburst were just pity friends, who didn't care about me under any other circumstances because I was not good enough for them.

It took a long time for me to realize that maybe I wasn't the problem- they were.

Retrospectively, what the bullying in seventh grade really taught me was not that I was worthless, but that if I surrounded myself with the wrong kind of people, they would make me *feel* worthless. In the quest to find quality friends, I struck gold: my friends today have been such since middle school. They accept me into their lives with open arms, and together, we laugh until we cry, have philosophical conversations, share secrets, and create positive memories that seem to replace the negative in my life. Now that I have amazing friends who embrace me for who I am, I have learned to embrace myself. It is because of this that I see that true friendship, or a lack thereof, can have a momentous impact on one's self.

I believe in finding people who appreciate you for who you are.