

## Noise

Imagine a classroom, filled with seven and eight year olds, hunched over their computers about to send rockets into the air. You could feel the excitement in the room. This is where it all started. Approximately, a dozen excited boys surrounded me, all desperate to launch their rockets for the first time. Before I knew it, the technology teacher told us to start, and we all pressed the lift-off button. The room burst out into chaos and I was stuck there, trying to concentrate in all the commotion. Suddenly, I couldn't take it, and I disintegrated into tears. Only a few people noticed, including my friends and the teacher's assistant. She quickly pulled me away and tried to calm me down. Then, when the teacher saw this, she rushed over. I expected her to feel some sort of empathy towards me, however, I received the exact opposite. Also, she didn't try and quiet the rest of the class down either. Instead, she told me that I could control my emotions because she could control hers.

This statement hit hard to me, because as a teacher, she should realize that we are all different, so when faced with the same challenges, we all react to stress differently. Maybe, she was able to bundle up her own emotions and not show that she was frustrated, but I couldn't. It really bruised me and I felt betrayed.

After this moment, any time a class gets too loud, I can't control myself, and I start crying. It happened two more times in fourth grade, and hopefully I won't cry at all in the 5th grade (knock on wood). In my fourth grade class, we were in a bungalow, with thirty-five kids. One time, I was working on a project and it got too loud. I couldn't focus, and, you can guess what happened next. Yep, more tears. This time I felt more supported by my teacher and was able to work through it.

I don't really know why my body reacts the way it does, it just happens. I think it is a mix of the loud noise and me being over taken by the sound, like it is consuming me and making my mind go blank. While it's happening, I am unable to focus, I can't get my work done, and that's what stresses me out. I start to feel like a puppet being controlled by strings, and I am just close enough to get the scissors and cut myself free, only to be pulled back again.

I think the part that really frustrates me the most about my reaction to noise, isn't even the crying—because that feels good—and not being confined in my mind, expressing my emotions however I want. The part that affects me the deepest inside, is how people react to me. What is really hurtful is how people treat me before and after they know I have cried. Before, they treat me like a normal person, but after, more than once, I have been told that I need to be less sensitive, and I need to learn to deal with noise. This really annoys me because they are suggesting all these things that they think I should fix about myself, even though they should help themselves first. This may sound mean, but when I am crying I am very vulnerable and anything people say about me in that moment will affect me more deeply than it would normally.

Scientifically, it has been proven that noisy environments make it challenging to get work done. In fact, disruptive areas are also known to cause stress. Crying, on the other hand, relieves stress and is the most natural way to do so for me. Since I first started crying during school, I have been told it's my problem. But now I realize I am reacting the best I can to the situation at hand, and as of now, it is best thing for me. And that is all I can do.

## Anxiety

Anxiety gets to me as fast as a gun shot. A person holding a gun almost pulling the trigger and, "BAM!" That's how fast it gets me. It's like when my teacher, Mr. Norr, says, "By... the... way... you... have... a... test... on Friday." That's when the bullet hit. "What!" my brain screams loud enough that I almost said it. Anxiety spreads throughout my body as quickly as light travels. Sometimes I feel like I'm about to have a panic attack. I feel nauseous and sick. That's just one of the *many* anxiety or panic attacks that I have.

Anxiety is a huge wall for me. For some reason, unknown, I can't break through it. For example, I *don't* like public speaking. Even though eventually, I get up to that stage and speak, but I really don't want to. A reason why I don't like public speaking is because i'm afraid that the people in the audience will think differently and badly about me. If people think badly about me, then I won't have any friends. It's because people these days are very judgmental.

Anxiety pushes me down really hard, but for some reason, I always end up getting through it. Like when in the second grade, we had to act like we were a hero. Not like a super hero that has super powers, but like an activist, a engineer, or even a mathematician. A few examples of some heroes would be Martin Luther King Jr., Elon Musk, and Albert Einstein. I dressed up and acted as Rosa Parks. I had to write a speech about her life and pretend that I was Rosa Parks. We had to read our narrative when people pushed our button. Once, I accidentally left my papers upstairs. People pushed my button and I didn't know what to say because I didn't have my paper with me. I felt so embarrassed. I had to tell them that I had to get my paper. I felt like I let down everyone pushing my button and I let down Rosa Parks. I was crying. Sobbing. I couldn't stop crying. My tears were gushing out of my eyes. I almost couldn't handle how much tears were pouring out of my eyes. It almost seemed like I was crying out a whole ocean. I ran upstairs to my classroom and tried to make myself forget that I just let down everyone wanting to see me and what I did. I felt so horrible. I felt like I ruined everything for everyone. But eventually I got the courage to get back down there and read off of my paper. When I got down there, people started pushing my button. I apologized to them, but they didn't really care about the mistake I made. I suddenly felt all the sorrow that I had, empty out of me like rain pouring out of a humongous, massive, cloud. I felt like a star proudly shining it's light.

I realize now that anxiety is pretty good to have. Anxiety happens to mostly everyone. But for me, anxiety happens a lot. Anxiety makes me fall hard and fast, but I have to always push through to the very end. Anxiety seems terrible to have, but to me, anxiety makes me who I am today. Sometimes you have to feel sadness and sorrow to have a happy ending. Oh I almost forgot, I blame all of my anxiety on Mr. Norr.

## Locked Chest

Sometimes I feel like a locked chest filled with loot who's key is lost. Impossible to open, it's secrets always hidden. My mind is filled with ideas I can't share. If I try, nothing comes out and all my thoughts disappear. When someone asks me about certain topics, I often lie, feeling embarrassed about the truth. Because of being shy many of my thoughts don't ever come out.

However, some people don't understand this. They are comfortable shouting out all of their thoughts for the world to hear. For other people, like me, it isn't quite as simple. I always feel like people will judge me for what I say, and if they were ever to see me again they would remember what I told them. In reality, if it's someone I don't know too well then the chances of me seeing them again are so impossibly small that if I did I would probably get an award for beating the odds. Even though I know this, I am still worried that the impossible will happen.

When I was little I used to share all my thoughts and opinions, until I found out how a simple little sentence can hurt someone's feelings.

My parents would sometimes argue, and I usually had an opinion of who was right. When I told my father that my mom was correct, he simply stopped talking to me and walked out of the room. I had never seen my dad ignore me like that before. But later I wondered if he hadn't actually ignored me, but listened to me and took what I had said as an insult. Then I realized that I had to be more careful with what thoughts I expressed. Now I've come to realize people think they know me even though they don't.

An example of how I act these days was from yesterday. I was in the car riding home from school with my mom and my sister. The ride was silent and my sister decided she wanted some music on. "Can we put some music on?", she said as she reached for my mom's phone. She then put on the same song she had played twice everyday for the last week. "Please, not this song again!" I begged her. Then she suddenly broke out in anger and told me, "You always do whatever you want and you know it!". When I looked at my mom she said, "Don't shout." in a tired voice.

"I can't believe she just let her bad behavior slip." I thought, "I think shouting in the car should not be tolerated and is bad manners. She should have told her off!" But I couldn't bring myself to say this. "What if she takes it as an insult and thinks I was judging her." I thought. Even now I wonder why I couldn't say anything. Why am I so worried about how people will react to my thoughts?

I wonder if it depends on what person I'm talking to? Could this be because I respect my mother, or is it because I'm secretly scared of how she will react? I guess we can even hide secrets from ourselves because we are scared of the plain, simple truth.

This makes me think that being overly worried about how people will react is for the better, especially when you don't want to hurt someone else's feelings. On the other hand, it can be bad because then you are keeping your feelings locked inside of you, which can eat you up. So this is why I don't always express what I really feel. Sometimes I think that most of my friends and family don't really know who the real me is. Worst of all, I might not even know myself.

The real question is should I be proud of my thoughts or not? Why should I not feel like my thoughts are good enough? I often think that if I gained more self-confidence, everything would be a piece of cake.

Sometimes I feel like a locked, chest filled with loot who's key is lost. But I know my deepest thoughts are worth presenting, I just need to find the key.

## Home Sweet Home

As Dorothy says in the Wizard of Oz, “there’s no place like home” which meets the spot of accuracy. Home, has a garlic tomatoey fragrance as of mom always cooking her Italian pastas on the weekends. Home has a small back yard where my sisters and I used to race on our scooters and yell when we didn't get turns, but then end up breaking out in laughs. And home welcomes me from the minute the key rotates through the key hole and the door opens. I sometimes refer to my home as a three layered cake. The first layer symbolizes my family. The second layer exemplifies the good and bad memories from since the day I was born, to momentarily. And last but definitely not least, my comfort zone. Home is always there when I need it to be.

What I love most about home is the people I share it with. As I come to think of it, without my family in my house, home wouldn't be as comfortable. My family is like the three fourths of my home. My family of six includes my 45% deranged dog, my 99.9% sassy and stylish sisters, and my loving disciplining parents. Those crazy people sometimes make you feel like your on a bomb on a three second countdown to explode as of their annoyance. But other times they make you feel like if they had just hit the jackpot in the Powerball.

Home contains my parents who are sometimes overprotective and a little nosy but afterall, they love me and give all the support they can to me since the day I took my first steps to now when I run out on the softball field to play. From when I would learn how to walk my parents would grasp my hands and give my palm a tight squeeze as they would guide me around the house. I would waddle like a little penguin looking for food, as in reality my knees would shake as my hands would tremble and I would lean back to keep my balance steady. Now my dad comes to all my softball games and encourages me while also gives me tips to have an efficient outlook on the game. Even though the fact his phrases to do good are redundant, they still really help and give me more confidence for when the game comes, while my mom always makes an amazing Italian pasta dishes and sautéed chicken on the weekends.

Home contains those old memories in my unique sister hood when my younger sister and I would attempt to untangle infinite strands of barbie doll hairs while singing along to Katy Perry. Or when we would cut off about four inches of our barbies hairs and make a huge mess, which then led to my mom getting pretty frustrated. It also contained memories like smearing my moms brand new red lipsticks all over my face and dressing up in weird Halloween costumes and 80's themed wigs. Weather the good or the bad, all the memories add up. The memories are stuck to all the walls in my house. And without them, well my home would be pretty boring. Home is also where I was brought right away when we got home from the hospital. Where about fifty pictures are snapped into printed photographs of my older sister trying to hold me while also having an annoyed look on her face as she had to experience the fist day of not being the only child.

Home is my safe haven. A place where even though I have had to experience many times where I get tired and bored of staying home all day and I say its the last place I want to be, if I think twice about it, my home is mostly the only place I want to be. For instance, when I'm not having a good day, the only place I want to be is with my family in bed at home.

“Oh home sweet home, home sweet home...” My safe spot where my family thrives. Where laughter fills the rooms like a full beaker. Or where memories ascend throughout the border of my home. As Oliver Wendell says, Where we love is home - home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts.

## Brave Heart

No matter where you go, who you meet, or where you live, there will always, always be somebody better than you there. Somebody you can compare yourself too and you will always come up with them being better at something than you are. At the same time they could be comparing them self to you and coming up with similar results, but for you, it doesn't matter. In your brain, in your thoughts, you just know that they are somehow better than you and you will never even come up on the ranks beside them, not even close.

I sit next to an overachiever- in fact, an extreme overachiever. I can study for 5 hours a day and somehow she will have studied for 6. If I get a 40/40 on a test, she'll get a 42/40. I can try and try and try and if I get a a perfect score, she'll make hers seem like a much bigger deal because, well, according to her, it is. She doesn't realize that she's great in everything. She doesn't realize that she has a friend who sometimes feels as if she got a 0 instead of a 4 because her friend's is, apparently, a much larger deal.

There's then the factor of getting mad at people for a reason they can't identify because it's your personal anger- you think they're better than you are. You can't exactly tell them that because they're immediately going to say a variation of, "Stop thinking that! You know you're better than me." And they could be fishing for a possible compliment there from you, or they otherwise are simply unkind and agree to your saying that they're better than you are. But most people can relate to the first reaction more. And somehow you just can't put a lid on that can of anger, and it can sometimes ruin good friendships and hurt someone else's feelings. And that can feel awful to you.

I'm considered tall- at least, that's what my doctor says. I feel as if being tall adds an element of having to be exceptional to your life as well, beside other things. Since you're tall, you have to be at a high reading level or high whatever because, hey, you're higher than others. And then being tall also adds the element of not blending in whatsoever, even if you don't happen to be that tall, just a bit hovering over everyone, like myself. Whether in a crowd or at a concert, the manager of the group will usually notice you. Somebody's eyes with flit to you and make you feel uncomfortable under the spotlight. And then you are wishing to be smaller and thinking everybody else is better because they are smaller. And that just seriously sucks your self confidence away, if you started with any at all.

There's also the times when you just feel like sobbing because you think everybody else really is better than you. You notice your friend singing with her heart and belting out such a good rhythm or somebody putting down their self much better on the dance floor. They're better than me. That's the first thoughts swimming into your brain.

And then the last thing: internal versus external. I may appear as a strong girl who debates to get everybody on her side and doesn't matter if she appears not knowing something or looking dumb because she can immediately fix it. That's the external. But the internal is something else, someone who can't fight the feeling that someone will always be there to be better than yourself. Someone you can't change no matter how hard you wish. They'll always be there. But sometimes you just have to go into life with a brave heart and think: they're not. They're really just not. Even though you know that the bigger part of you is always saying: Yes they are. They really are, and you can't change it.

## Zia

Sometimes change comes and you have nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. It covers everything like a layer of ash. It's not going away for a while. Change. It takes days, weeks, months or even years to get used to. Still, nothing's ever the same. Change. It stabs you in the back when you're not looking and it takes a while to heal. Change. That's what happened when my adopted aunt passed away.

My adopted aunt, Zia, passed away in 2014, and nothing has been the same since. She was always there to pick me up on the Mondays and Tuesdays and Thursdays and whatnot. Every day she would wait outside the classroom door to pick me up to take me on the bus to go to her apartment that sat in a bed of shady trees.

Zia's house was bustling with cats. They walked around the house, on the windowsill and on the air conditioner. Zia's old TV blasted old movies every time I looked. Rolling pins were left scattered on the kitchen table with a carton of buttermilk and a bottle filled halfway-up with vanilla extract. Old photos from tens of twenties of thirties of years ago hung on the walls like leeches. The green tiles on the bathroom walls started to decay and fall off.

However, as messy as it was, Zia's house was fun. Doctor Who was my favorite show and I watched day after day after day. Zia's baking smelled like heaven from the living room couch. Long summer days passed by in Zia's house and every day was different in it's own way. Some days we'd bake a cake while some days we would sit around watching a Doctor Who marathon. Every winter we would make tons upon tons of sugar cookies. Every Halloween the decorations would be put up and for Thanksgiving we'd have a big feast. Oh, and don't get me started on the birthdays...

When Zia passed away, however, I couldn't go to her house on Tuesday or Thursday or any day.

I remember a day when my parents couldn't pick me up until two hours after the end of school. The "end of school" bell rang and as many kids went home, I plopped down on a chair. I sat there motionless in the hallway, waiting for my parents to come. Echoes stretched through the hallway while I stared at the doors, the walls, or anything that could make me slightly entertained. Nothing did. Boredom filled my head like poisonous gas, something that never stops coming no matter what.

"Where are they..." my brain thought as minutes and minutes and minutes went by. "Where could they be?"

I sat there for (what seemed like) hours and hours. Every step I heard gave me hope that it was my parents, but they weren't there. Eventually, after two hours of one of the most boring moments of my life, my dad came to pick me up.

None of this would have happened if Zia was still here. If she was, she would be five minutes early to pick me up and we'd ride on the bus (she never drove) to go to her house and do something fun. More fun than poisonous gas, that's for sure.

I miss the cakes, the cats and the purple glitter-covered miniature christmas tree that Zia put on the table by the TV every year. I miss the Fridays when I would go to her house and I would sleep over. I miss the Tuesdays when I would go to her house and for dinner we'd eat her amazing chicken cutlets or the delicious turkey burgers.

But most of all, I miss Zia.

## The Series of Uneventful Events

My parents always tell me how “great” it is to relax, but in my world the word relax actually means bored. I am constantly bored, I don’t like that down time to just sit, read, or take a nap. My parents do not tolerate the word bored, they tell me to play cards or draw. I even get bored of watching videos or playing Xbox! I can’t stand being bored, I want to be skydiving, shooting zombies in the zombie apocalypse, or scuba-diving in Hawaii. When I am bored, I sometimes even wish that I were at school! People don’t understand.

Last summer I asked my mom if I could just have one week completely free, no camps or activities, I wanted to have just one week of summer to chill. That was not a good idea, the whole week I just sat at home and occasionally went to a store. I was extremely bored, I didn't know what to do. I have a million books and million games, yet I was still bored. I played a video game or two, I read a few books, and I drew a couple of crazy comics. I felt bored the whole entire time.

Why am I bored? This is a question I always ask myself, and I don’t know the answer to it. I guess everybody has been bored at least once in their life, like those times when you make a reservation at some place for dinner and you are sitting at the table waiting for what feels like forever. I can be patient, but if I get bored I feel like I just want to flop around and squirm like fish out of water. I can’t stand being bored!

Sometimes when I am bored I think about my parents when they were kids, they seem fine now, but how? Back then they didn’t have an iPad to play on or anything that cool. I guess they just learned to deal with it, also it’s not like they knew an iPad would ever be a thing in the first place! Maybe in a few decades I will be thinking: “How did I survive back then when I was a kid? I didn’t even have a jetpack!”

When I am not bored I don’t think about being bored, like if I’m doing something exciting. Think about what happens when your having fun, time goes by faster. So fast that it feels like a roller coaster! When you are not doing anything besides slowly breathing and just sitting there, you are bored, and five minutes feels like five days in the middle of the hot, sandy, dry, and boring dessert. How come my parents don’t feel like that now?

Since my parents don’t get why I’m bored, I wonder if their parents didn’t understand why they were bored! (I don’t know for sure if they were ever bored, but they had to have been bored.) Since they had even more boring things to do when they were kids, I wonder how they dealt with it. All I know is that they are like robots now. They can just lay in bed or relax, my parents can sleep in all day long, they could sit on a bench at the park and just watch me play! I can’t do any of that, I wake up and I am ready to start the day whether I am going to go to school to learn or to the hunger games to kill.

This is a problem that I want to solve, but I guess I will just wait until I am a standard adult so I can be more mature and have the patience to not get bored. Nobody really cares if I am bored or not. I wish that there is some little gadget that just keeps you entertained, I’ve tried Rubik’s Cubes and I’ve tried putty, but it doesn’t keep me from getting bored! Why isn’t there a little game that you can put in your pocket and take anywhere that guarantees satisfaction?

I’m trying to figure out why sometimes you have to wait things out by being bored. It’s very weird. I’ve realized that time actually goes by fast and that everything is limited, so I have to make something out of it! Maybe I shouldn’t make down time a burden even though it’ll be hard, but I will always be me, the guy that can’t stand being bored! That is how life works, it is slow like a sloth, and at the same time fast like a ostrich.

## Has Anyone Invented A Shrink Ray Yet?

I have always been the tallest in the whole grade. For so many years I hated it, but I didn't think I would hate it as much as now. Before, when there were kids older than me at the school, some of them would still be a bit taller than me. And I enjoyed that. But now I'm in 5th grade and things changed. Instead of being the tallest in my grade, now I'm the tallest in the whole school, and I absolutely despise it. I would go around the school, and people would refer to me as the tallest girl in the school. I just feel so uncomfortable with them calling me the tallest girl in the school than my actual name. I don't know, but what I do know is that I don't like being the tallest. I'll just have to wait till middle school so I can be shorter than some people. People always say that they would rather be tall than short. I guess we just all want what we don't have.

People think I have an advantage because I'm tall. I mean just because I have long legs does not mean I'm flexible enough to use them. Try going pants shopping when your legs are this long. I can't even buy clothes for my age, cause people would start staring. Or like when I go to IHop, I actually have to pay for my food. Kids are supposed to be able to eat free. But of course no one would ever believe me. It's definitely not an advantage. My sister takes advantage of my tallness. Like every time she can't reach the tea bags on the top shelf of the cabinet, she always says, "Lena." And I go, "Ok, ok." Like seriously. Get a chair or something.

Sometimes it's embarrassing. When I'm with the class I stick out so much I'm like a head taller than all of them. I feel like I stick out (literally) :) This one girl once came up to me and asked me a question. She thought I was a teacher. I'm even taller than some of the teachers! It's so embarrassing.

I remember when I was on summer vacation in Japan, and we went to a restaurant, and they were passing out lollipops to the kids. The restaurant lady gave the lollipops to my mom's cousin's son's son, to pass them out to the kids. I was waiting for my lollipop, but I didn't get one. When someone told him that I was a kid, he gave me a strange look. In the end I got one, but how embarrassing. I get it if I was a complete stranger, or a friend, but seriously? Even someone related to me doesn't know I'm actually a kid?

Being tall is not the best. I never liked it. I have found some good out of being tall, like when I'm trying to find my parents in a big crowd of people, or when I'm trying to pass as someone older for some apparent reason because my family is very weird, or mocking my sister for being short. Maybe someday, I'll find some more perks to being tall, but for now I'm gonna continue trying to make a shrinking ray.



# Living In the *Shadows*

You could live your whole life unnoticed. When you are *just* the friend, with no recognition. You think you are invisible and you wish you weren't born. The world only likes a few people. You have great friends from the start , but half way there is a big obstacle. New people=new friends+the friends you had before=the more friends you have=the more fights=painful times. The drama storm has finally come to start. Waiting to hit and hit hard!

You used to be a person, but when they came you became a shadow. Always following. Looking for a way to be heard or be seen. Sadly waiting. What do they think of you? Do they know you live in their shadows? Are you *just* the friend? If you help them, do you get credit? These questions keep buzzing in your head all day, all week, 24/7! Eyes watch like a hawk on you. You always feel like someone is watching you. Quietly watching!

The world only likes a few people who are well known, but you are left behind, in the shadows. Coughing with the dust in your eyes, watching them ride away in fame. Not wanting to cry in front of them. Sometimes I drown in shadows, dead before I know it. Trying to come up of air and to be save, but you gasping your last breath. You just want to fly away from reality. It is like a disease, hurts, and makes you feel horrible!

Your friend spreads drama around like a weed taking over a garden They don't notice that you are dying inside. Slowly and painfully dying. They devil, wearing a angel costume! That's how you see it! I try to be the better person, but I end up ashamed. The world only forms around you for a bit, then follows someone else. There is no way out of the fear of them turning on you, as the light starts to fade between you. And you are left with sleepless nights, breathless times, and thinking you are nothing more than a shadow.

## Insecurity

Everyone has felt insecure once in their lives. No matter what it was, being alone, or living with little money and with no shelter. For me, it's my allergies. They were there when I was born, and I still have them. Thinking about them makes me cry. Knowing that there are billions of people that are usual, they don't have allergies like me. They aren't allergic to ALL nuts like I am, or they aren't allergic to poppyseed's, or Sunflower seeds, or nutmeg. I feel like someone from a book. Wonder. There is a boy in the story named Auggie Pullman. He has a deformed face. I feel like him in a way. Not the same.

Later in the book, it goes to someone else's perspective. They thought if Auggie had a 1 in 4,000,000 chance of having the same deformities, then life is just a big lottery. Most people end out normal, the rest have problems, little and small. For some its birth defects, for other its allergies. Many people think oh it's just a normal kid, or when your son brings a friend over from school, they think he's just a normal kid. Once they know, they'll say, "Oh well I'm so sorry!" or "Oh you'll grow out of it eventually." Although the people that have it know they most likely won't.

Life is a lottery you can't get out of. Although in this case, most tickets end out good. It shapes your life. If I didn't have an allergy, I could've eaten as Many Peanuts as I wanted, as many walnuts as I wanted, as many pistachios as I wanted, or even as many Sunflower seeds as I wanted. I could've done it without freaking out, or having a mental breakdown if I do end up having it.

Nobody I know thinks I have a serious problem, but deep down, they see a child, and they say "I feel bad for him" or, "He would've probably liked a peanut butter & jelly sandwich." I take a lot of self-pity for the fact I have allergies. I sometimes silently cry myself to sleep some nights because of the thoughts in my head. Will my allergies go away? Will they come to an end? These same thoughts come over and over again in my head no matter if it's late at night, or when I wake up. I think it, and it hurts.

Having allergies is an unnoticeable thing until it stabs you, right in the gut, saying you can't have the pie, it's a pecan pie, or you can't have that cookie, it has nutmeg in it. It makes you act like a butterfly. Very delicate. Sometimes people say things totally unrelated to the problem you have, and you start crying. You then think about allergies. You don't know why, but you just do. If you go to a bakery, you see a cake. You think it would be delicious, so you ask someone to get it for you. For me, what happens is I get a cake, my mom takes a bite, and says, "This has peanuts in it."

I remember the day I went to a restaurant, and we ordered a dessert. It was an Italian restaurant, and they had an interesting ball of Ice cream covered in Cinnamon. When I got it, I took a big bite of it realizing there was something crunchy in the ball of ice-cream. My dad took a bite, and he said, "There are walnut's in here." That was the moment I felt Insecure, I felt that something bad was going to happen, and I thought there was nothing I could do. I thought I was going to die. Luckily, there is this thing that almost everybody knows of called Benadryl, which I was able to drink and luckily I didn't break out in hives.

Everyone has felt insecure in your life, no matter what it is. Knowing that you have a problem sticks with you, and you see the world differently. The way the world works around me works a lot differently as a lot of people. I always have one thing on my mind when I eat, while others always can just eat however many pies, cookies, cakes, or other baking things you can eat. The words go over and over in my head. Life is just a lottery you can't get out of.

## MY FOCUS ISSUE

Focus. This is a big problem for me. At home, at school, at sports, its everywhere I go. It's like a scab, you want it to fall off but if you pull it off, you get a scar. That is the way it is with focusing for me. If I am in my seat at school focused, five minutes later I will be in a daze. It's like there's a switch and someone is controlling me. My parents yell at me for not being focused and so do my coaches.

One minute I'm typing a Memoir and the next thing you know I am smelling flowers on the dining room table. No one understands that I try to be focused. I can't control it. Being unfocused makes me super angry because people get mad at me when I daze off and they think that I am not listening. I might be looking away at something but it doesn't mean that I am not listening. I can multitask. For example when my dad is trying to teach me math I will look away at something else and he says, "Pay attention!" and I get startled and it is so annoying because I am trying and he doesn't understand that I am listening just not looking at him.

I was held back in my sport because of not being focused. I had to repeat the Novice level this year. Only one other girl and I were unable to move up and the other 6 of my team members went to the intermediate level. When I found out that I was held back my stomach twisted and turned I felt so angry like I could punch my fist through the pool deck. IT WAS SO EMBARRASSING!!! I stomped into the locker room and all I heard was a thunderstorm whirling up in my head my eye balls were coated with water ready for tears to pour out. I was completely mortified, humiliated, sad and angry.

Being held back was emotionally devastating. My coaches said that I was held back because I wasn't entirely focused in practice. I would go underwater a lot while they were giving instructions and I talk a lot when I should be paying attention. I wish they had just looked at how I performed in competition, if they did then I would have been invited to be an intermediate because I am super laser focused in competition and usually win 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

So the question is why am I so laser focused in competition and not in practice? Why, because practice is boring and competition is fun! Competition is fun because I get hyped up about performing in front of an audience. I get this really nice feeling when I perform about helping out my team and being a leader! But unfortunately I've learned is competition isn't the only thing you are judged by as an athlete.

The entire year of being held back has been horrible. I have wanted to quit and run away from the situation so many times. My mom wouldn't let me quit also because she said the equipment was so expensive that we can't give it up. I had to convince myself that quitting would just make me and my friends grow apart even more and I love the sport. Synchro is my sport!

The "experience" was very personal and I have had a hard time dealing with it. But being held back because of not being focused has taught me a lot about myself. What I have learned is that it sucks to not to be with your friends but I'm also the one who stands out. Take this for example, when you compete in a competition, you count on all the girls, so being the one who looks the best out in the water, is helpful to the team. I have become a leader. Since I have been on this level I can guide the girls through practices and competitions.

I've almost made it through the whole season and I have learned I am not a quitter. This situation has actually taught me how to be more focused because I don't want to be held back again. So therefore I have trained myself to be better at focusing and staying above water when my coaches are talking to the team by saying to myself, "I can do it, don't disappoint your mom and dad". I have also learned that focus does not define me as a person it is just one word that describes a challenge I have in my life, but there are so many other words that describe me too like funny, happy, kind, respectful, smart and creative.

What I do know is that I will overcome my focus issue and eventually move on.

## Afraid of The Mirror

Mirrors... those shining silver plates in which you can see your reflection. We all have a face, we all know what we look like, but at one point or another we end up judging ourselves, due to the way we look, due to the way we act or even due to the way we feel or look on the inside. What if I'm not good enough, what if I didn't do well on my exam, what if I disappoint my family, what if (beat) I feel like a failure? I ask myself these questions each and every day and I don't feel good about it after, I want to talk to somebody. I want to let it out but something always stops me from doing it, and it's that special little emotion that hits you like a freight train when you least expect it...*fear*. I am afraid of what people will say or even what they will think.

Will they give me a superficial, "Don't worry it will all be fine", or will they wonder is she insane? But you know the one thing they won't bother to do? Listen. They won't bother to listen to what I have to say. They won't try to understand that I'm talking about the internal instead of the external. I don't know whether to say never mind or to continue talking, but either way they won't listen. They're going to be on their phone looking at Instagram or Snapchat and then have the audacity to say, "I'm sorry... what did you say?"

Everyone acts like they understand what I am going through but they don't. The speech sounds little bit like this, "I completely understand what you are going through. I've been your age once and I know exactly what is happening with you, your friends everything..." and it goes on and on and on and on and on and on, but let me ask you this, have you had test anxiety so bad that you felt like you were going to die of fear, have you gotten so mad at yourself that you wanted to punch a wall just to distract you're self for the pain for just a split second... no you haven't because you have no idea how high the standards are; This doesn't only apply to adults it applies to my friends as well.

If I do bad on a math test, and I try to tell them hoping they will listen and just comfort me. They won't listen either. Their speech goes little like this "don't worry almost everybody here got a bad score on the test; if anything your mom won't be mad at you she will probably just say its ok, maybe there will be a make up test." That isn't how she will respond. She will be *disappointed* and wonder how I did so horrible on a test. Everyone on my mom's side of the family got straight A's all of their life, and everyone on my dad's side of the family got B's all of their life. I have gotten who knows what so far. I feel like I'm the screw up between clans, The odd ball out, the runt of the litter. I feel like I don't belong, I feel like I'm letting everyone *down*.

I clam up. I won't open up to any one. Sometimes I tell people nothing's wrong but they can clearly see that I'm not ok. This happens to everyone. The thing is that it just makes the problem worse. It is like that moment when you finally start to brush off the pain of what just happened on your end, then when it finally seems it sneaks out of your mind some one says... are you ok? All the memories keep rushing back pain, agony, hurt, heartbreak, love, hate, fear. Its all there once again rushing through my mind. You being pulled underneath the waves dying over and over again growing and waiting to be set free.

I ask myself why am I horrible at everything and I just can't seem to answer it. You know why I look at myself, you know why I have to get the tiniest glance of what I look like, because I don't know what I look like every day I look into the mirror hoping to see some one different, only I don't. This never ending cycle of let down, failure self-doubt, regret, hatred, fear. Think of it like a virus, do viruses disappear after awhile do they know what they're doing to your cells... no! All they know is eat, kill and multiply. It feels like a giant pit in my chest. I get this burning feeling in my body and the fire doesn't die down, it just burns, and burns, and burns until I'm nothing but a smoked pile of ash.

*Mirrors... those shining silver plates in which you can see your reflection. We all have a face we all know what we look like, but some times no matter how bad we want it we can't change.*