

An underwater scene with several fish swimming in clear blue water. A large, semi-transparent circular graphic is centered over the image, serving as a background for the text.

WONDERMENT

by Journalism



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OPINIONS ARE NOT PERMANENT

By Renee
M20205




Source: taishika.com

Sometimes we may feel old and experienced. We think that all our current view and opinions are permanent and correct. I certainly thought that way. I believed that other people were just actors in a world that belongs to ourselves.

Some may say that adults are actually the less wise for they always don't seem to get it. That feeling of exasperation when Mom just does not get that A has to happen cause of B. I think that the majority of young people know this feeling. It is a part of life.

Even the adults and the elderly think they are always correct. Some wiser



people may say that 'we can't always be right', but what do they know? They could be wrong as well.

Our viewpoints seem like they will last for eons. I think this way now and I will still be myself in the future, so why would my opinion change? I think it is not that our judgment changes, but rather the information available to us gets refined. Maybe it is a bit like repeating an experiment, to minimise random error. Sadly life is not as well-controlled, so we may form the 'incorrect' opinion even after we think we know everything. Yet, foolishly we beat on, trudging through life with our timeless opinions. I certainly felt like that and in a way, I still do.


After a traumatic or eye-opening event, we may change our opinion. I have changed my opinion of people and places multiple times in the past few months. I take my current opinion as an absolute truth and blindly I shall continue to do so until the next traumatic event occurs. The funny thing is, we may all laugh at our past selves for being so silly and pat ourselves on the back for knowing so much in the present but our future selves will know better. They would have reformed their opinions since and think the current us as the stupid ones.

One excuse many people use more frequently as they get older is 'I'm more experienced than you are'. Well, experience is a hard thing to quantify; a seventy-year-old may be more experienced than a nine-year-old, but the latter is the one who is most sure of their opinions.

I remember distinctly being in primary 6 and thinking that twelve was a great age to attain. Now that I am thirteen, I can feel the 'oldness' creeping up on me. I am a teenager now, a stage of life I felt was centuries away. Now that I am so 'old', my opinions are even better than before and even more correct, I think to myself.

"Girl, don't do this. I know more than you, listen to me." a relative says.





We all agree that just because someone is older does not mean that they are wiser, before laughing at all those kids for being so dumb. We love to find those flaws in people.

I think I am correct, yet at the same time I know that in other aspects I am very, very sorely mistaken. I do not know in what way but I suppose I shall find out someday. Humans are great philosophers as well as hypocrites. We shall always find ourselves deceived by own opinions. That is an eternal truth.

LIVING IN THE MOMENT

By Aditi
M20202



Source: Pinterest

"Oh! How I wish I was your age again..." When we hear this, we know that someone is going to go all out in reminiscing about the 'good old days'. Wishing to go back or forward in time is not rare in us human beings. Young children, with admiration and awe, wish that they could be grown-ups, follow their passions and most importantly, not be told what to do. Older people, on the other hand, enviously wish that they could be young, stress-free, with fewer things to focus on once more. Frankly, I am no stranger to this feeling. In fact, this feeling was involuntary and I did not notice this in me and others until the realisation came and hit me square in the face like a 20-pound sledgehammer.

I asked myself just a week or two ago, "Why do I always want to grow up? Why can't I be happy with my life right here, right now? Why can't I be grateful for what I have, for what I have always been receiving?"

As usual, this issue ties in with my generation's utter lack of gratitude. We tend to take many things for granted, what with easy access to technology and its developments and other things that we unwittingly enjoy.

Anyways, getting back to the point, This mindset, the thoughts that the grass is always greener on the other is a very shallow one to have. Just a few of these thoughts could invoke in us a gargantuan amount of jealousy and discontent. Instead of these emotions, we should have gratitude and kindness in abundance. We, as human beings should learn to live in the moment, to enjoy the path of life, and gradually let it unfold beautifully in front of our very eyes. Undoubtedly, there would be some parts where life takes a turn and goes downhill, but we should know that this is an inevitable truth that everyone has to face. In this sense, everyone is on the same boat. We just don't seem to realise this and it only brings about much envy and an agonizing feeling of longing for something that we once had or something that we will eventually get. If we all make sure that the best moment of our lives is every moment, and we enjoy life to the fullest, the world would become a much warmer place with less envy. What a lovely place to be in!

The next time I ever feel that I want to grow up faster, I will be sure to think about how important living and enjoying each moment of my life is. After all, it is these dear, sweet moments that we have to treasure. In reality, we'll never get them back.

So, live the life you love and live that life to the fullest. Treasure every moment and you will definitely become a better and happier person altogether.

BEING DIFFERENT

**By Michelle
M20206**



Source: Pinterest

It would be inappropriate to say that being in an elite school was without its merits. But it would also be heartless to say that students were getting all special opportunities without working hard. In fact, students in all schools, whether “top” or not, experience some sort of trauma in their school lives.

Yes, it is true that students in ‘top’ schools were offered more competitions to participate in, more immersion programmes to participate in, more trainings in special fields like Math Olympiads etc. but these opportunities were not offered to all students in the school but only those who deserved it. For example, students who do not perform



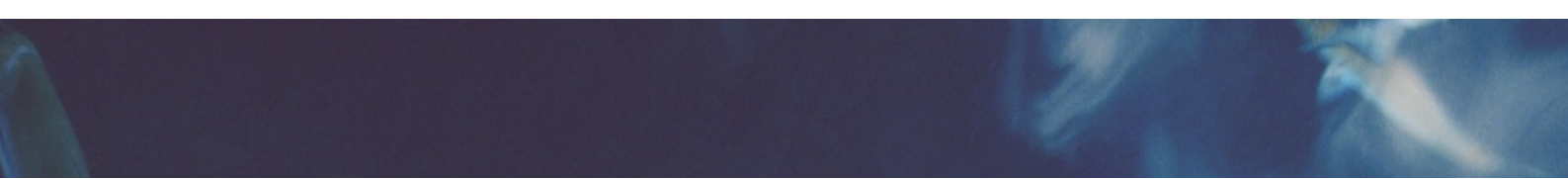
well in elective modules were not allowed to continue taking the module.

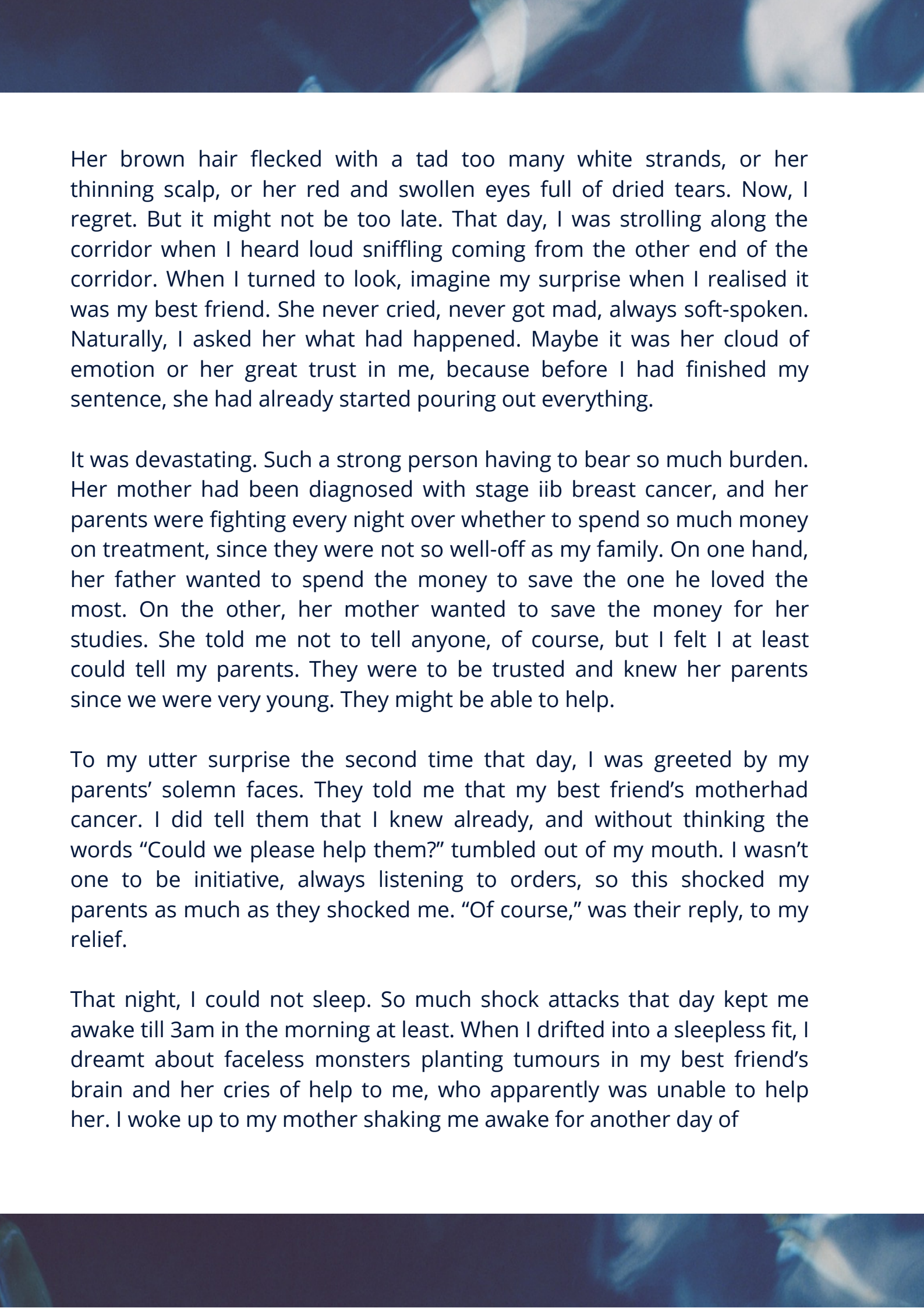
Does everyone seem as what they look like? We have been told not to judge people by their appearances, but it is just a natural instinct to recoil in disgust when we see someone wearing rags and smelling bad. It is an instinct to not befriend someone with Down syndrome and ostracize those who do.

There are teenagers who think about death and graveyards instead of homework. There are those whose fantasies go beyond dinosaurs and ponies. There are also those who worry about hospital walls instead of grades. It was hard. I knew it was. The year had already started off on a tense note, for one. With the long-awaited Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) coming up in late-September to early-October, and Direct School Admission too, which was especially important to me as I had prepared a hectic two years for. There were three mathematical competitions coming up in February, late-February, and mid-March. When I saw the amount of work my teachers were assigning to us every single day, I thought that that was it. That was the maximum amount of stress I could handle. When in reality, I was only getting started at being stressed. That was just the beginning of my troubles.

I have a best friend. She still is my best friend, even though we had gone to different schools. Naturally, on the first day of school, we started chattering about petty and small matters like boys, studies, holidays, even the weather. But there was something very off from her normal style. I could not place the oddity. She was still as bubbly and cheerful as ever, and her sense of sarcasm and humour were still there. So, what was it? I didn't find out for myself, till the unexpected happened.

I told myself, nothing happened. You are just imagining things because of all the stress. And I did believe myself, maybe a little too much. Even if we did everything together, I never really noticed anything about her.






Her brown hair flecked with a tad too many white strands, or her thinning scalp, or her red and swollen eyes full of dried tears. Now, I regret. But it might not be too late. That day, I was strolling along the corridor when I heard loud sniffing coming from the other end of the corridor. When I turned to look, imagine my surprise when I realised it was my best friend. She never cried, never got mad, always soft-spoken. Naturally, I asked her what had happened. Maybe it was her cloud of emotion or her great trust in me, because before I had finished my sentence, she had already started pouring out everything.

It was devastating. Such a strong person having to bear so much burden. Her mother had been diagnosed with stage iib breast cancer, and her parents were fighting every night over whether to spend so much money on treatment, since they were not so well-off as my family. On one hand, her father wanted to spend the money to save the one he loved the most. On the other, her mother wanted to save the money for her studies. She told me not to tell anyone, of course, but I felt I at least could tell my parents. They were to be trusted and knew her parents since we were very young. They might be able to help.

To my utter surprise the second time that day, I was greeted by my parents' solemn faces. They told me that my best friend's mother had cancer. I did tell them that I knew already, and without thinking the words "Could we please help them?" tumbled out of my mouth. I wasn't one to be initiative, always listening to orders, so this shocked my parents as much as they shocked me. "Of course," was their reply, to my relief.

That night, I could not sleep. So much shock attacks that day kept me awake till 3am in the morning at least. When I drifted into a sleepless fit, I dreamt about faceless monsters planting tumours in my best friend's brain and her cries of help to me, who apparently was unable to help her. I woke up to my mother shaking me awake for another day of

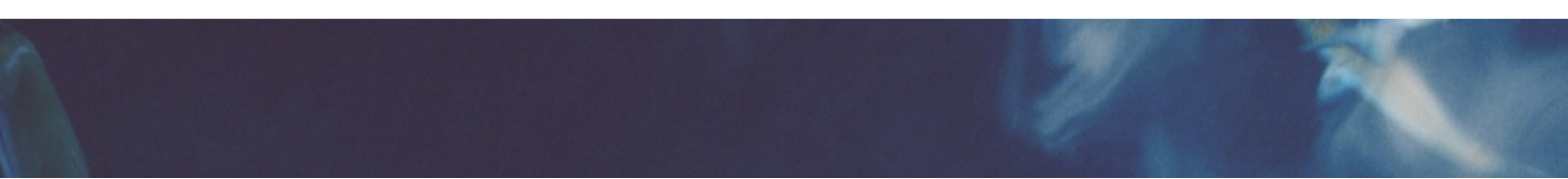


school. I drifted off during breakfast, thinking of how I would feel if my mother were to die. I imagined mangled bodies with tubes connected to it. I imagined a still chest and blank eyes. I imagined a huge lump on chests. I tore myself away from those visions and slammed my hand on the table, heaving heavily. My mother, ever so understanding it was creepy, hugged me and told me that she and my father had already planned to send a large sum of money to my best friend's family.

With that in my heart, I was still not happy in school and not my usual self. I stayed in the classroom with my best friend while she cried her eyes dry on my shoulder. While she talked about how her parents even threatened to divorce each other, enoughenough. I held her firmly by the shoulders and told her that my family had already thought of a plan for her family. Her eyes lit up momentarily, but immediately dropped back to their recent gloom. "How can that be?", she had said, "It's such a great amount of money for surgery and chemotherapy and rehabilitation afterwards!" At that, a fresh wave of sobs racked her body again. It was pretty hard to watch, but being a friend, this was my job, and I believed strongly that my parents would be able to help to pay at least ninety percent of the medical fees.

Best of luck to both our families.

My mother brought her mother out of walks after surgery while the dads talked about things that "were inappropriate for youthful ears". Fortunately, after the surgery, her parents never once fought, and she even shared a better bond with her mother when she was tasked to take care of her mother after school. It was great. Of course, chemotherapy was a more terrible thing than surgery, but at least the big bulk of the money was already settled well. I was happy for my best friend, her mother and father, but most of all, very proud of my own parents for giving up so much for their long-time friends.



LEARNING TO LOVE WHAT I HAVE

By Skylar
M20204



Source: baltana.com

Whenever somebody asks me if I need anything new, I will usually answer with “no, I already have everything I need” no matter how old my belongings are. Although this strange behavior of mine seems as old as time immemorial, it hasn't always been this way for me.

Judging from the stuffed toy box in my room, I most likely badgered my parents to buy McDonald's Happy Meals just for the extra toys when I was small. However, looking back at this now, I really find it a waste of money and space. Most of the toys were just left to collect dust without



ever seeing the light of day again for nearly a decade.

What really triggered my curious behavior was oddly enough my clothes. That year, I had started receiving pocket money and was taught to spend it wisely. With no sense or care for fashion either, I would just keep my rapidly shrinking clothes, not wanting to just waste money by throwing them away so soon. It was not long before this small behaviour started to take over my life. This helped me to appreciate everything that I already have. As such, I now believe that once in a while, instead of wanting something we don't need, maybe we can stop and appreciate everything that we already have.

CHILDHOOD TANTRUMS


By Lokesh
M20204



Source: [huffpost.com](https://www.huffpost.com)

I am an average teenager in my eyes, amazing in my mother's and a hero in my two cousin brothers'. It depends who is observing me. Well, I guess no one really knew and judged me that much. It has just dawned upon me that I might have had a somewhat horrible tantrum problem, which, thankfully, is under control now. Why me? I will never know. I never realised that I might catch this deadly virus – I know it is not an actual virus but that is how it seemed to me, in the past. So annoying, greedily devouring all your sanity, just over trivial matters.

When I reflect back, I think that the first time I realised that I had tantrum problems was when I was in primary school. It started in Primary 2 when



I had a major argument with one of my classmates and the teacher had to step in. That was my earliest memory of my temper tantrums. When I was around Primary 5 I started to be able to detect the symptoms before I had a temper tantrum.

My palms would become sweaty and then I would start clenching my fists. I would then feel very insecure and in serious situations, tears would spring out from my eyes. No matter how hard I tried to control myself at that time, I failed. It was actually kind of annoying to be so hot tempered. When I think back, I realise that I must have hurt many people's feelings, and I am sure that I regret it. Now that I think about it again, I could compare anger to a demon craving for victims to extract all the happiness and satisfaction from them and replace it with hatred and melancholy.

I never realised that I would think back and reflect on these incidents when I have grown up slightly more. It is kind of embarrassing when I recollect how babyish I was back then. Now it seems to me that I had something similar to split personality back then. It has never seemed so. Just imagining the severity of my mood swings in that scenario makes my head spin. I have now turned over a new leaf. I am definitely able to keep them under control and I think it should stay that way. I never want that to change.

I have somewhat experienced what it is like to have a volcano-like flaring temper, ever so intense and believe me, it is not easy at all. "Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts." This is what Charles Dickens once said. I am still working on it, but I am sure that this is a real need for everyone to have a good life with no regrets, no sadness. I end this reflective essay with a quote that I think is very meaningful. "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned."

- Buddha



GROWING

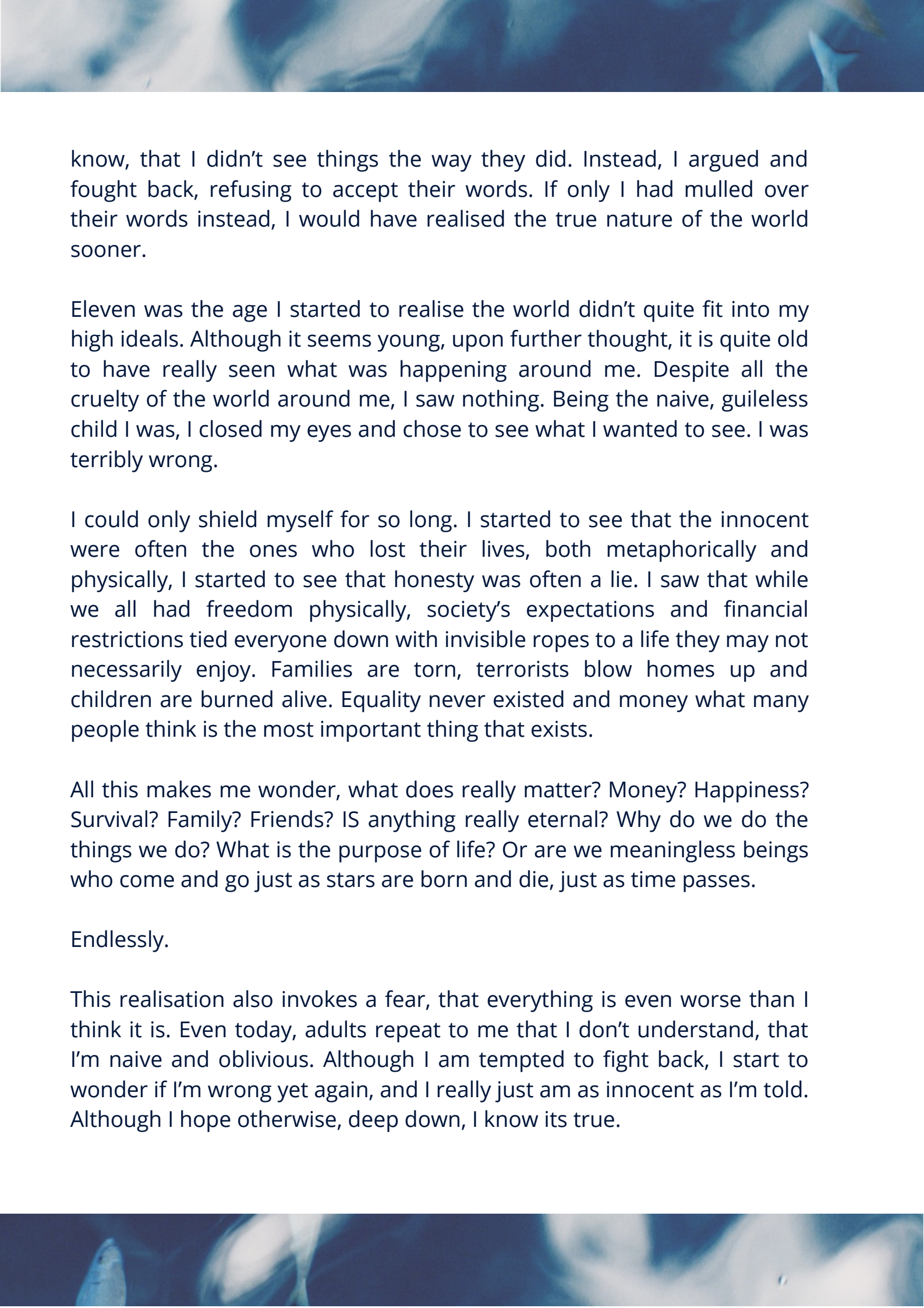
**By Janani
M20302**



Source: horizon8.com

I was a child with the greatest ideals. I believed achieving freedom was just a matter of growing up. I believed everyone was honest and true. I believed life had heroes and villains, that everyone was on either side of good or evil. To me, life was crystal clear, with a straight path towards success or failure. And of course, the good triumphed and the bad faced trials. In the end, everyone died happily, didn't they? Wasn't that simply how life worked?

I was young and confused. I never understood when adults said I didn't



know, that I didn't see things the way they did. Instead, I argued and fought back, refusing to accept their words. If only I had mulled over their words instead, I would have realised the true nature of the world sooner.

Eleven was the age I started to realise the world didn't quite fit into my high ideals. Although it seems young, upon further thought, it is quite old to have really seen what was happening around me. Despite all the cruelty of the world around me, I saw nothing. Being the naive, guileless child I was, I closed my eyes and chose to see what I wanted to see. I was terribly wrong.

I could only shield myself for so long. I started to see that the innocent were often the ones who lost their lives, both metaphorically and physically, I started to see that honesty was often a lie. I saw that while we all had freedom physically, society's expectations and financial restrictions tied everyone down with invisible ropes to a life they may not necessarily enjoy. Families are torn, terrorists blow homes up and children are burned alive. Equality never existed and money what many people think is the most important thing that exists.

All this makes me wonder, what does really matter? Money? Happiness? Survival? Family? Friends? IS anything really eternal? Why do we do the things we do? What is the purpose of life? Or are we meaningless beings who come and go just as stars are born and die, just as time passes.

Endlessly.

This realisation also invokes a fear, that everything is even worse than I think it is. Even today, adults repeat to me that I don't understand, that I'm naive and oblivious. Although I am tempted to fight back, I start to wonder if I'm wrong yet again, and I really just am as innocent as I'm told. Although I hope otherwise, deep down, I know its true.

OLDER

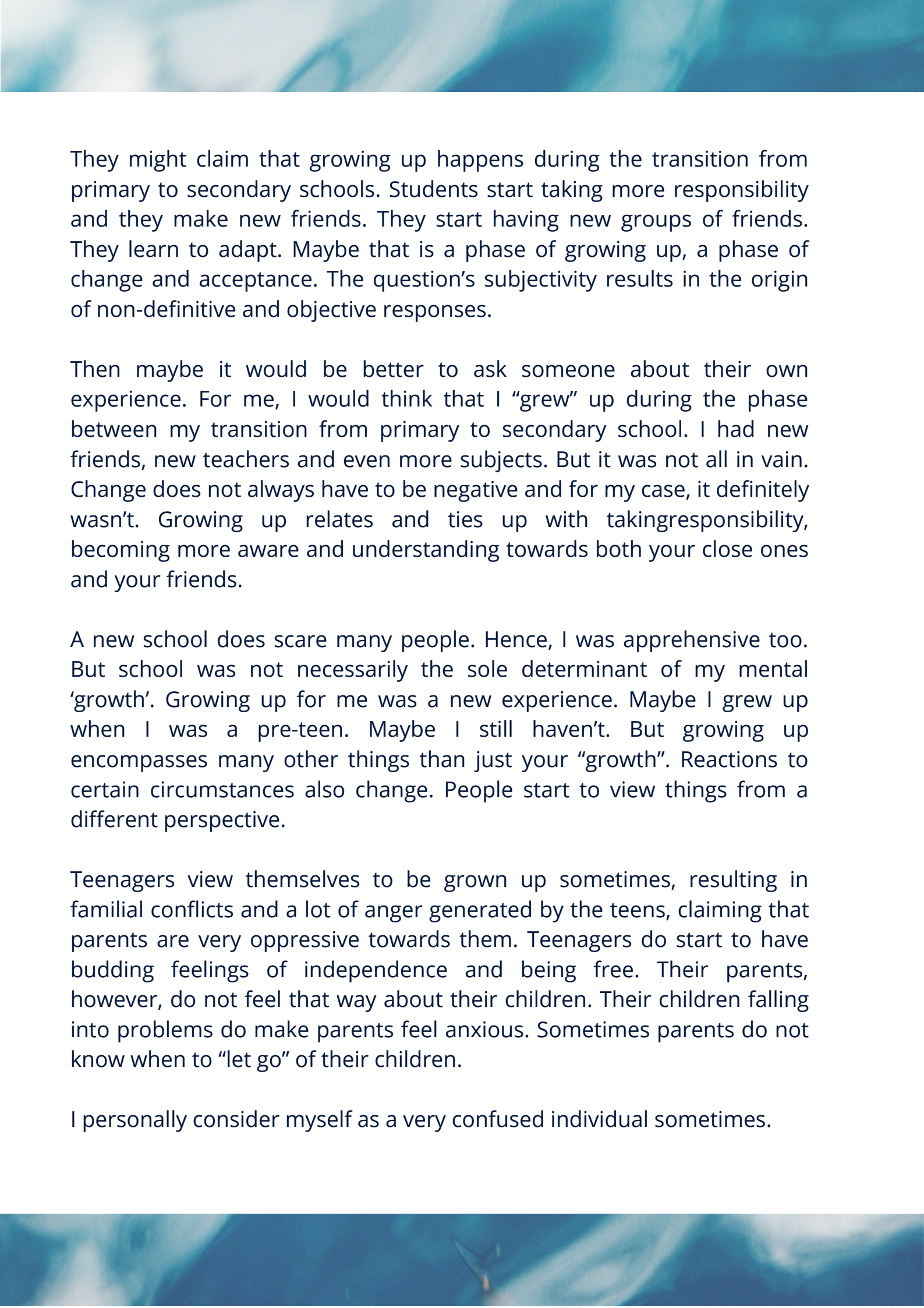
**By Debraath
M20306**



Source: Pinterest

Perhaps one might say growing up equates to becoming a more responsible and mature person. Perhaps some might claim it is a transition, a slow but subtle change. However, sometimes it seems that graduations are one of the most visible celebrations of young people transforming into adults. But leaving school after graduation does not necessarily mean that it is the start of a person's adult life. Some graduates may start a family right after graduation, while others may keep on switching around between internships for various companies.

Some others might say that graduation is a minor 'phase' of growing up.



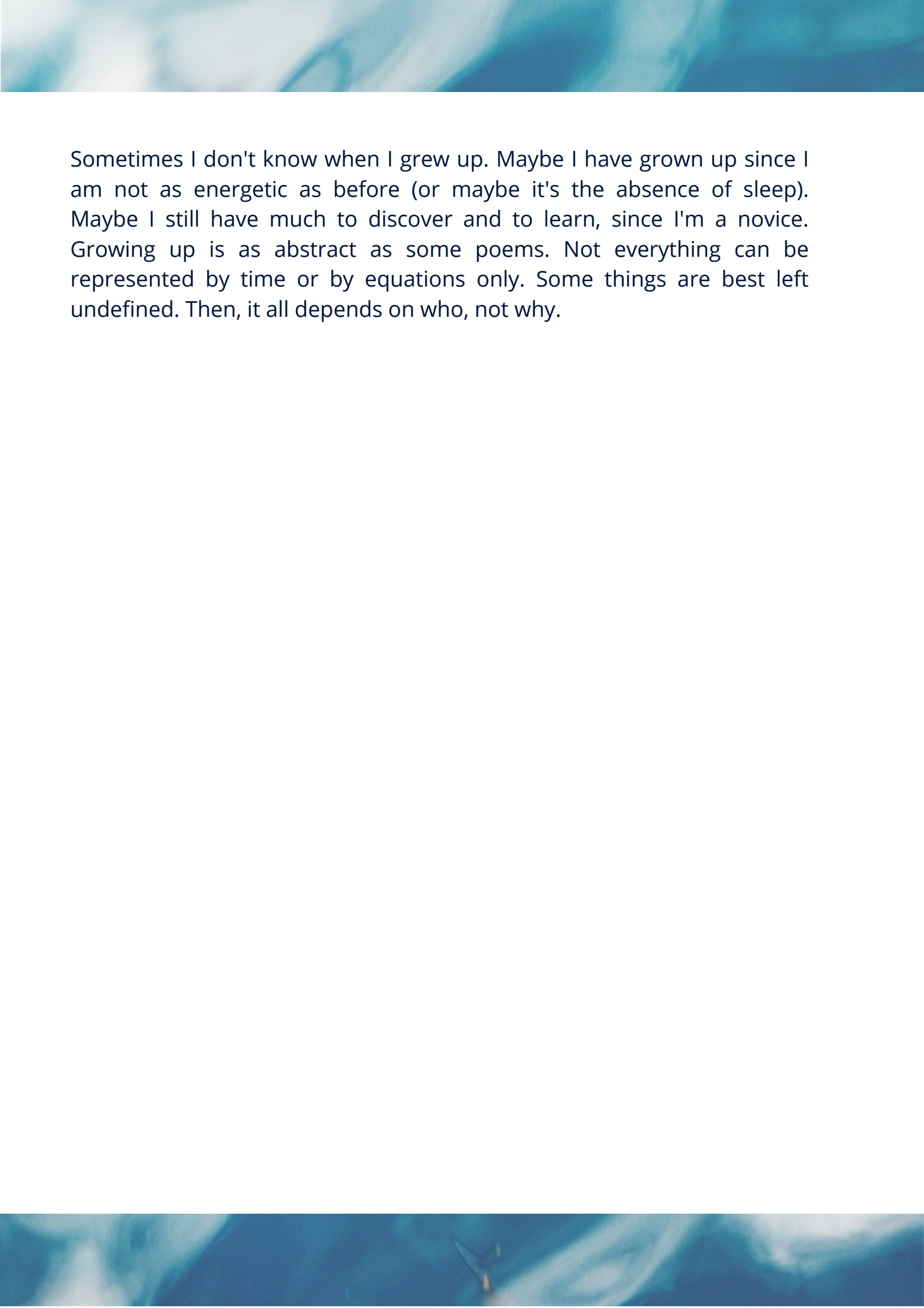
They might claim that growing up happens during the transition from primary to secondary schools. Students start taking more responsibility and they make new friends. They start having new groups of friends. They learn to adapt. Maybe that is a phase of growing up, a phase of change and acceptance. The question's subjectivity results in the origin of non-definitive and objective responses.

Then maybe it would be better to ask someone about their own experience. For me, I would think that I "grew" up during the phase between my transition from primary to secondary school. I had new friends, new teachers and even more subjects. But it was not all in vain. Change does not always have to be negative and for my case, it definitely wasn't. Growing up relates and ties up with taking responsibility, becoming more aware and understanding towards both your close ones and your friends.

A new school does scare many people. Hence, I was apprehensive too. But school was not necessarily the sole determinant of my mental 'growth'. Growing up for me was a new experience. Maybe I grew up when I was a pre-teen. Maybe I still haven't. But growing up encompasses many other things than just your "growth". Reactions to certain circumstances also change. People start to view things from a different perspective.

Teenagers view themselves to be grown up sometimes, resulting in familial conflicts and a lot of anger generated by the teens, claiming that parents are very oppressive towards them. Teenagers do start to have budding feelings of independence and being free. Their parents, however, do not feel that way about their children. Their children falling into problems do make parents feel anxious. Sometimes parents do not know when to "let go" of their children.

I personally consider myself as a very confused individual sometimes.

The background of the page is a light blue gradient with abstract, swirling patterns. At the top and bottom, there are darker blue horizontal bands. In the bottom band, a small, dark silhouette of a bird in flight is visible, facing left.

Sometimes I don't know when I grew up. Maybe I have grown up since I am not as energetic as before (or maybe it's the absence of sleep). Maybe I still have much to discover and to learn, since I'm a novice. Growing up is as abstract as some poems. Not everything can be represented by time or by equations only. Some things are best left undefined. Then, it all depends on who, not why.

CAYDEN SPILLS HIS LIFE STORIES

By Cayden
M20307




Source: Pinterest

Cayden is currently not thinking straight. Cayden has thus decided, against his better instincts, to spill utterly and completely his life story, including the most random expressions and thoughts, to strangers he will most probably never meet.

Cayden hopes Cayden will find it in his most kind, benevolent heart, to forgive this unworthy one. Cayden will now switch to speaking to first person.


I have always hated mirrors. Not the item itself, but the concept, he idea



of a mirror being representative of us, able to allow us and others to be judge and jury of ourselves. Mirrors are uneven, in purity and smoothness, inconsistent in reflection and showing accurate images. Our body continually changes, such that looking away from it or blinking is sufficient time for your body to change, and for that image of you to be obsolete. That applies to our personality. The softest noise alters our psyche in minute but irreversible changes, so that an impression, like a mirror image, is nothing but a bare approximation of us as a person, as a thinking entity, and a being capable of creativity and change. Accuracy, in execution, is lacking. Why would such an item be linked with such a concept?

You know, I just realised, this is a very hypocritical and odd stance for someone this inconsistent in his day-to-day life, work, and actions. After all, seeking to surprise and catch people off guard is not the actions of a responsible, upstanding student. Then again, is it unpredictable and inconsistent if one always strives to do so? What if I am the most predictable and dull person of them all, based solely on my overwhelming need to cause joy and laughter? Although perhaps different to different people, I find it highly terrifying, that I am, in fact, extremely boring. I...must think on this.

That was a very long first-person shift for Cayden. Cayden finds it very odd to be in such a position for an extended period of time. Cayden wonders how other people cope with such self-centeredness.



DAMPENING THE COMPETITIVE SPIRIT


By Yvette
M20407



Source: medium.com

It would not be inaccurate to say that NUS High is full of competition. Being smarter than your friends and peers has benefits- this is true no matter the situation, or school. Being better, or simply the best, opens doors for you that are closed for others. With contests, Olympiads, scholarships, our school is jam-packed with opportunity to prove yourself to be above the rest. In an environment such as this, it's easy to get caught up trying to prove your worth.

I'll be the first to admit that I have a competitive streak myself. Exams, tests, even graded tasks-- I aspire to be score higher than those around me. It's come to the point where doing well simply does not suffice



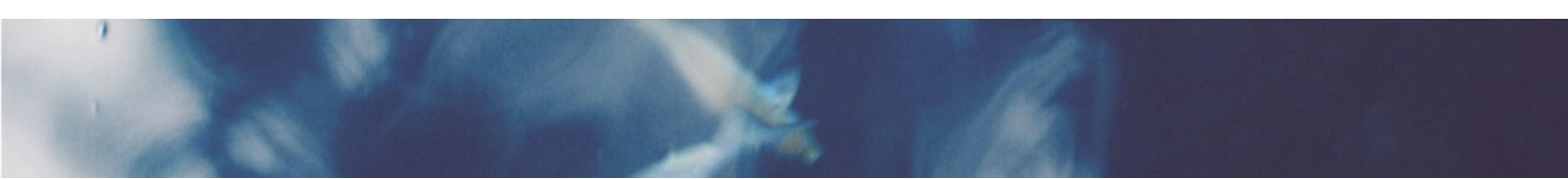
anymore, I need to do better. And I'm no stranger to the feeling of frustration and defeat when you find out your friend did just a little bit better than you. Though many a times I harness these emotions to push myself to improve the next time around; I recently asked myself a question that I had never considered before.

Why did I have to be the best?

Is there no merit in doing well, in being just okay? Why do I feel the need to rise above my peers? Why does the voice inside my head tell me that scoring lower than someone, "losing" to them, makes me inferior to them? I think that this is a problem for many NUS High students. We get so caught up in the spirit of competition then we forget to slow down, take a breather, and ask ourselves: Do we really need to be at the very top?

This is not meant to discourage from students from putting their best foot forward; or striving to become better. In my humble opinion, a little friendly competition is fine, beneficial even. But when you find yourself upset at having scored lower than someone, it's time to take a step back and reconsider what it means to be the best. To be "better" than someone. Scoring higher or lower than your friend doesn't change your competence in the subject, nor your intelligence. Use it as a gauge to see where you stand, but not as a marker of your success.

At the end of the day, the stifling competition at NUS High doesn't seem like it's going anywhere anytime soon. You'll always be seeing those with the magical 5.0 CAP receive awards and prizes while you sit on the hall floor, looking up at them. But the next time you find the question "How much did you get?" sitting at the tip of your tongue, ready to pounce, take a moment to ask yourself whether it really matters.



SADNESS IN THE NIGHT

By Shina
M20601




Source: microsoft.com

She knows all about the sadness that hits in the night.

It is the dozen of thoughts a second that race through her mind, disjointed and nonsensical. They flit from one image to the next, a slideshow constructed by fear and anxiety, built from images and words carefully curated and stowed away in the day, only to be withdrawn in the darkness of night.

It is the sinking feeling of never being good enough, the hole in her gut



that gapes and gapes and never feels full. She finds her ways to ignore it in the day, to fill her life with love and laughter and people, but in the isolation of night, she is hungry.

It is the mindless tossing and turning, the sleep that eludes her. She chases it through the sunset and moonrise, into the silent hours. She succumbs to her exhaustion as the black sky splits into bluish grey, dreading the feeling of waking up to nothing.

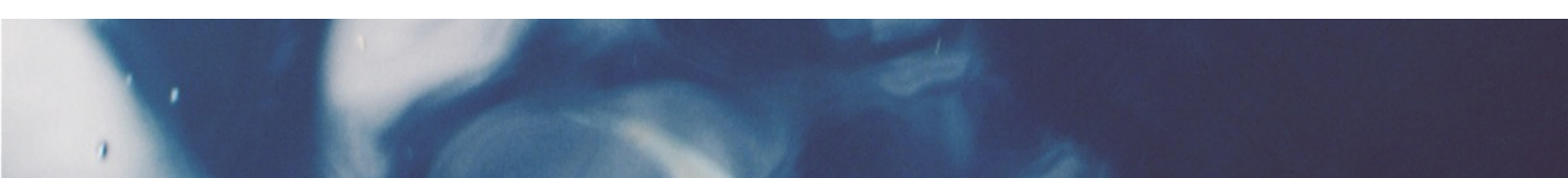
The sun is her protection, and it gives her warmth and comfort and hope.

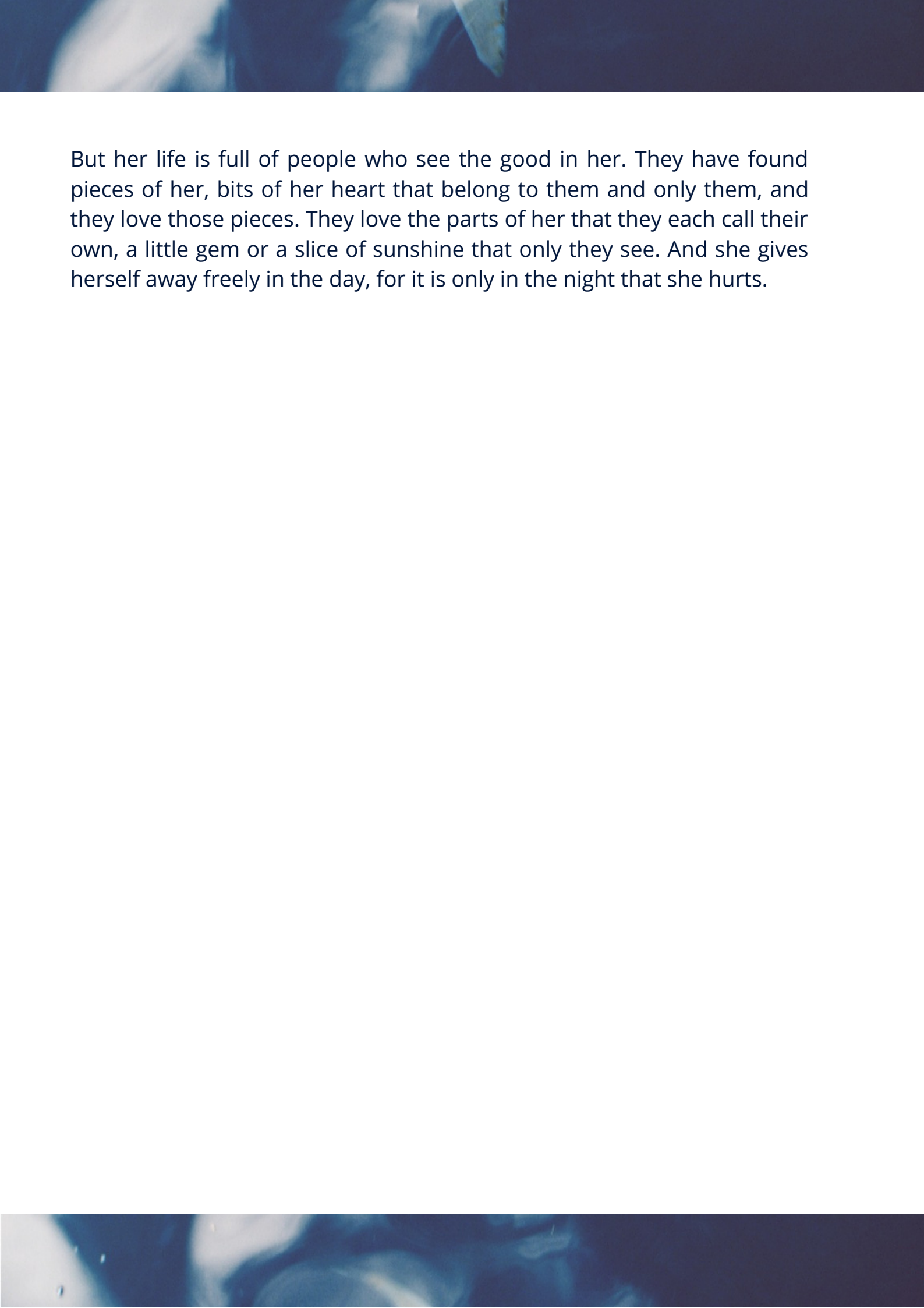
The city bustles, and she remembers in the morning that she is loved. Some mornings, she pointedly ignores the mirror as she dresses, hands smoothing her clothes over the curves and angles and bumps of her body and hating every soft flab and every too-sharp tilt. Other times, her eyes cannot leave the mirror, studying every blemish and every flaw with a critical eye, and she bathes in the sound of her anger and shame.

She feels the burning of her skin as her friends discuss her clothes, her hair, even as they fawn over her. She feels the sharpness in the back of her throat, the voice that wants to cry out I'm not perfect. But for now, for just a moment, she'll let herself believe it, and the laugh that escapes her is full and bright.

Maybe she is beautiful. They say beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. They say true beauty comes from within. But who will love it?

She knows the person that she is under her skin, and she knows there is no beauty to be found there. She hears herself speak, lives in the thoughts that run through her mind and the anger and fear that bubble in her chest. She is wretched. There is no good to be found there.





But her life is full of people who see the good in her. They have found pieces of her, bits of her heart that belong to them and only them, and they love those pieces. They love the parts of her that they each call their own, a little gem or a slice of sunshine that only they see. And she gives herself away freely in the day, for it is only in the night that she hurts.

SCHOOL

**By Madeline
M20601**




Source: Pinterest

Hard work pays off.

We are taught that since young. As long as we put in the effort, we will succeed.

Doing well in school was always something I could say with confidence in primary school. However, when I entered NUS High, that quickly changed.

NUS High's fast-paced curriculum and highly competitive culture quickly



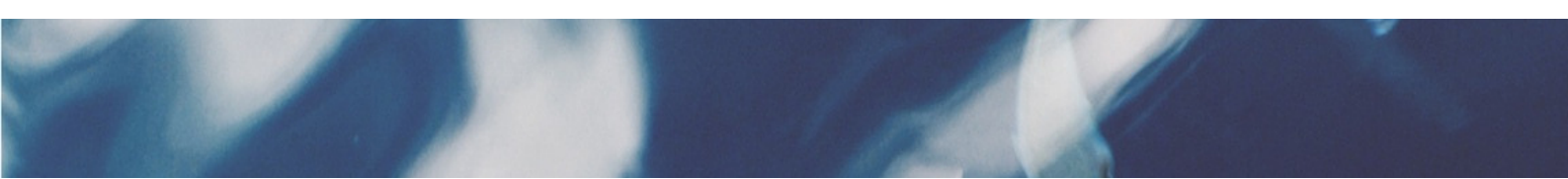
exerted a toll on me. A common sound after every returned graded assignment is: how much did you get? Slowly, the culture poisoned me. I started comparing myself to my peers, putting in more hours into studying, and eventually, became a mugger. Looking back at it now, I wish I had learnt from that script checking day. However, I was fixated on my motto: hard work pays off. It had to. If it does not, I do not have an alternative plan. Hence, I continued my relentless grinding. Practice questions followed by practice questions, cue cards followed by cue cards. By the next exam, I was exhausted. The exam week passed in an adrenaline-fuelled haze.

I thought that this semester, I would definitely score better. My thirteen-year-old self was in for a shock, I did not do well on that exam. Not even better than my first exams. I cursed at the unfair system. I did my best, I worked hard, why was I not getting the results. My teacher pulled me aside to speak to me. Her following words made me rethink my whole strategy of studying - sometimes the problem is not the effort, but the method. My mugging was heavily based on memorization, which caused me to stumble in the application questions filled exams.

Now, I have changed my studying method and I am glad to say that my grades are improving. Hard work does pay off. However, hard work using the wrong method is only to our detriment. Through that painful year, I learnt that hard work without direction or in the wrong direction is only a waste of time. I wasted a whole year on that, but it set me in the right direction for the many years to come.

Hard work does pay off.

Its rewards come in many forms. They may not be conventional success stories, they may not result in great breakthroughs and astonishing discoveries, but hard work does pay off.




ATTITUDE

By Tricia
M20603



Source: Pinterest

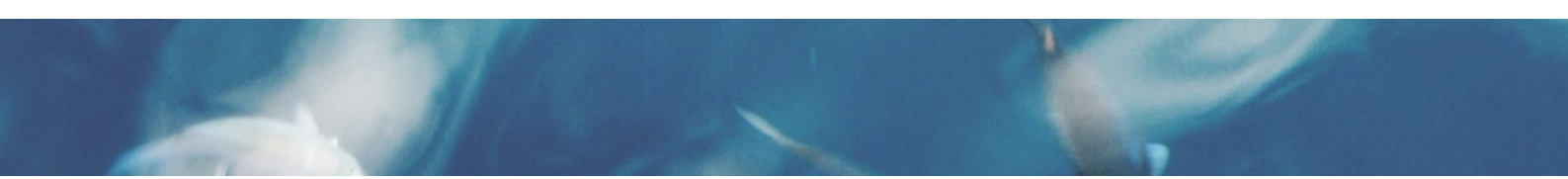
Have you ever felt that it was worthless to work towards something simply because you were unable to do so? Perhaps a failed test that you burned the midnight oil studying for, or simply missing an 'A' grade by a small margin. What thought may come into your mind then? Is it lamenting the fact that you should have tried harder, is it blaming the fact that you were simply not smart enough and thus received this underwhelming result, or perhaps you simply accept it as whatever it is




and move on with your life? Whatever your answer, the things that may jump into your mind is a reflection of your attitude, whether good, bad or somewhere in between. Our attitude determines many things in our life, such as how we view things, and how we react to these things after experiencing things. Our attitude can sour one's experience, or paint it as a beautiful memory, and all this just comes down to how you take things.

I remember a particular ACE lesson in one of my earlier years in the school, where the topic covered by my mentor was attitude. At that time, I wasn't particularly concerned about the contents of the lecture, and all I wanted to do was to go home and have a good nap. Now, I do regret not taking these lessons more seriously, after all, they are put into the curriculum for a reason, and if I had not joked around with my friends and paid more attention, I would have learned some valuable life lessons earlier on. During that lesson, my mentor mentioned that there were two types of mindsets – the growth mindset, and the fixed mindset. In a fixed mindset, people believe that qualities are fixed traits and therefore cannot change, and that talent alone leads to success, while disregarding hard work. Meanwhile, in a growth mindset, people believe that one's learning and intelligence can grow with time and experience. They understand the fact that effort has an effect on success, leading them to be motivated to work harder. Which group do you think you belong in, was a question that was posed to me during that ACE lesson.


Back then, I jokingly mentioned that I fell under those with a fixed mindset, and never thought about it again. But now, when I look back at my past self, I realised that I was right. I did have a fixed mindset. In primary school, I barely had to work hard to achieve the results that I received, gaining A grades without even putting much time into revision. However, once I entered NUS high, I realised that I was unable to keep maintaining my grades without putting in some effort. Then, I believed that perhaps I was simply just too stupid for the school, and that even if I worked hard, I would never be able to do well and surpass those at the





top. With this, I scraped through every quiz, every test, without trying to better myself by studying a little more, without paying a little more attention to the teachers, without putting in any effort. With this, my grades were atrocious, and I simply decided to not do anything about it. After receiving my grades at the end of the year, I finally realised that I could not continue like this forever. And perhaps, it was at this moment, that my mindset slowly started to shift.

A few years later, I am glad to say that due to my change in mindset – my grades have improved dramatically since then. Perhaps I would say that I am lucky to have learned that lesson when I did, before it was too late. My only regret that I have is that I did not do so earlier, but one cannot change the past, and can only look towards the future.



VALUE

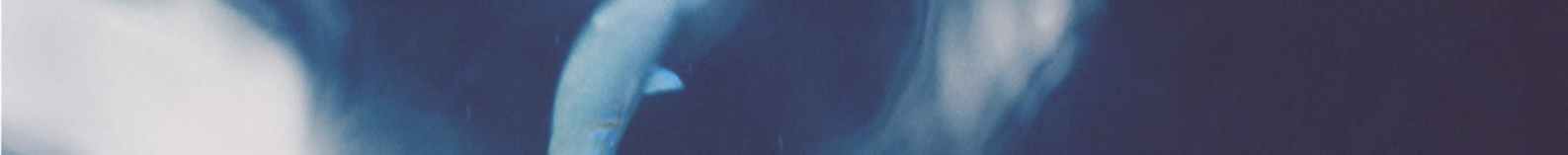
**By Sean
M20604**



Source: worth.com

What is the value of a child? My parents used to tell me that each family member had a role and duty; theirs was to work provide for me, and mine was to study.

International schools, at least the ones I went to overseas, must inherently be accommodating. Children of expatriates from many different countries and local students have had vastly different education backgrounds and experiences before entering the same school. They cannot all be expected to fit into the same rigid mold,

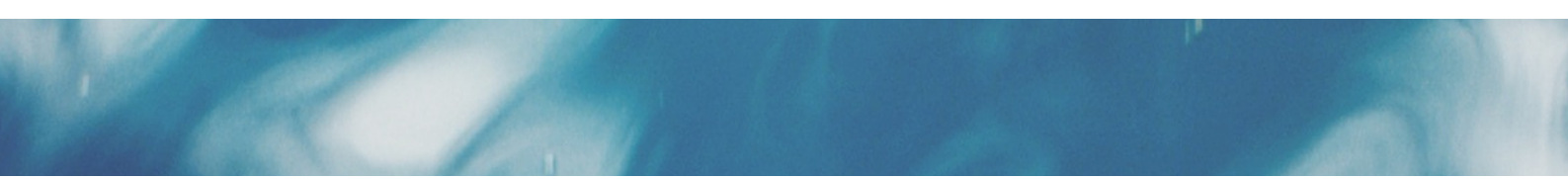


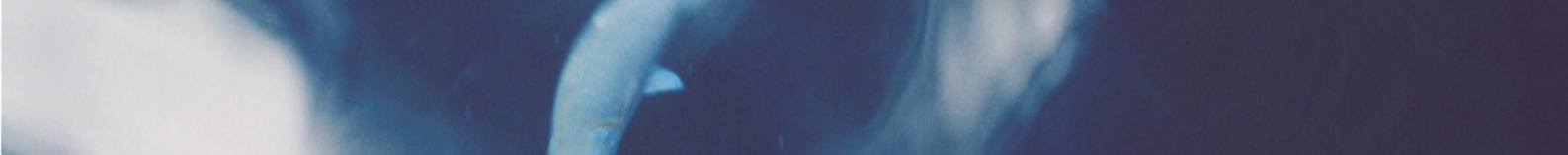
and the disparities in their natural paces of learning must be accounted for. Classes were largely activity-based rather than lecture-based, which meant that although I had already read about many of the things taught in my own spare time, I was still actively engaged in learning.

Transitioning from an international school to a Singaporean school in Primary 5 was quite similar to what I expect entering National Service will be like. Gone were the simpler days of flexible teaching and unconstrained learning. Suddenly I was struggling to adapt and conform, drowning in the mountains of graded assignments and tests for every subject. Every student was compared with each other; our math teacher lamented how our class had gotten fewer A*s than the students of the previous year, and how we needed to set our sights higher than a measly A. I also participated in academic competitions; at first for enrichment and out of interest, but later because I felt an incessant, burning need to prove my own intelligence. Anything less than number 1 was an abject failure, a reminder that had I worked harder or somehow been smarter, I could have performed better and achieved more. Yet the opposite was not true; even on the rare occasions where I was satisfied with my results, the happiness was fleeting. The temporary validation was quickly replaced by an awareness that I had to set my sights higher.

High school was simply an intensification of the vicious cycle, with I felt utterly worthless when I had "failed" by my own standards. More pressure to reach more arduous academic goals; but in truth, I cannot tell how much of it was self-imposed and how much was due to external obligations. My mental health deteriorated throughout the years. I spent many nights paralyzed by stress, feeling lost yet trapped simultaneously.

I remained blind to the source of my troubles until the year 4 end-of-year exams. I had been wracked with anxiety that I would fail to meet my own expectations, and was pleasantly surprised to see that I had surpassed them, albeit only by a few marks.

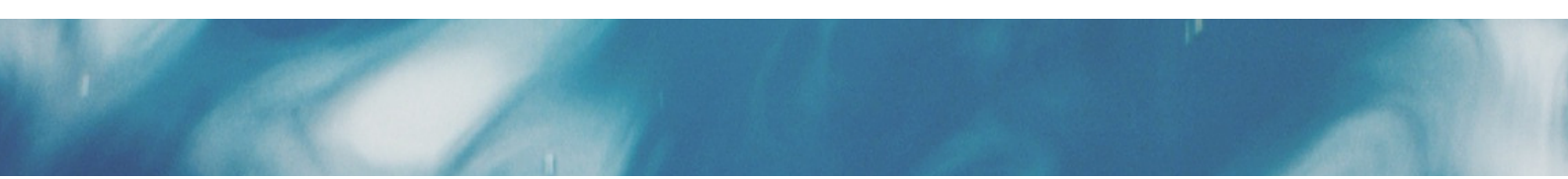




It was then that I began to wonder; would I be feeling so relieved if I had scored only a few marks lower? I thought back to all the times Why was there such a disparity between two sides of a completely arbitrary threshold?

I asked myself why I was worrying so much about a few marks on a paper, why my sense of self-worth was based on how many lines I had on my transcript. I couldn't answer my own questions.

The education system is set up for us to fail. Those whose primary goal is to obey it, to rely on it for validation and happiness, will be crushed and will crush themselves. It is those who develop other interests and live and grow as people first and students second, who can find substantial meaning in their lives.



CULTURE


By Cherry
M19602



Source: the Wall Street Journal

Like many other 12-year-olds during Open House, I was sold by the enticing idea of a small cohort size in NUS High. Smaller teacher to student ratios, a much closer bond with my level mates - you practically knew everyone's name - and more opportunities for students everywhere. While all of these are true, and of course, great, I cannot overlook a major consequence of this small cohort size in our students: we are lacking considerably in social awareness.

This trait was not so apparent to me before. I mean, I knew some of their



incoming leaders that I witnessed. It was the way they carried themselves with professionalism, the way they spoke with confidence and their general awareness of the people around them. Granted, I interacted mostly with their student leaders, so it could have been biased, but there was a noticeable difference in the manner in which they socialised with us.

It was then that I realised it: generally, students from our school lacked social awareness. When I think about past instances, I came to recognise a similar trait amongst them. The reason why they occurred, was because we could not empathise with the other party, and had a poor understanding of social cues around us. As a result, we do things are rude, and at times, socially unacceptable.

But at the same time, I cannot blame our students entirely. Often times, we are a product of our environment and I believe it is our environment that has normalised this otherwise social unawareness in our school. When we make cynical remarks, intrude excessively into others' activities, we aren't taught or told that it was wrong, or socially unacceptable to do them. Sometimes, we are even validated by laughter from other students. And ultimately, it fuels our behaviour. With our small cohort size, we end up staying in this bubble, without getting to know people or experiences outside of it.

I don't expect that we can change this sort of "culture" in our school so easily, but with the realisation I do try to look beyond our bubble now, to empathise with others and to understand where they are coming from. And I've learnt a lot.

