

## **FEARS**

**By Varsha Venkatanathan**

Conquering the impossible has always seemed, well, impossible. Sometimes it's the trivial things that limit ourselves from reaching our highest potential. A problem that once started as a seed, blossoms into an enormous tree, and you may find yourself rooted in the ground, firm with no escape.

Picture this. An awkward preteen trying to figure herself out, and explore the world around her simultaneously. That was me. From a young age, I was always shy. I was never one to mingle with every individual I came across. Crowds scared me more than anything, and I was always content with being alone. I loved the routine: waking up on the weekends, staying at home and being unproductive. Growing up with some of my best friends to this day, I never faced an issue of being new or in uncharted territory. There was never an element of surprise in my day, and if there was, I was sure to find out about it in some way or another. Shyness didn't seem like much of a problem at this time, but later on it became one.

After moving to a new state and having to start from scratch, things were hard. Wanting to share my opinion with the world, but not being able to because of a mental block, hurt me more than anything. My mind and my heart were in a constant battle. I'd downplay how I felt, and give no regard to the storm that was brewing inside me. Expressing my feelings would feel wrong and selfish, so I refrained from doing so as much as I could.

At this point, it felt like everything came crashing down. Being in a constant struggle of wanting to make friends but not knowing where to start or how to for that matter, took a toll on my mental health. Putting up a facade to gain more companions was very unhealthy and severely failed me. Before entering my new highschool, I prepared myself. Re-watching Mean Girls over 15 times seemed like the perfect solution to any dilemmas I would

face. I failed to consider that I was nothing like Cady Heron, and it wouldn't exactly pan out like I had hoped.

Sticking out like a sore thumb, I was obviously noticed the first two weeks of school. Being extremely shy, I barely spoke a word and my heart would start to pound in my chest just thinking about muttering my name when roll was called.

These past 6 months have definitely been a rollercoaster. What felt like a dead end, was only the beginning. Life's a journey, and sometimes you feel like it's over. It's never over. We are thrown curveballs as a test of strength, and getting over them truly defines our character.

Every story has a cliché happy ending, but the truth is I'm still finding mine. I am growing as a human being, and discovering myself each and everyday. So, with all this being said, I coax you to never give up and look for the light no matter how dark it gets. You will go at your own pace, but one day you will find your destination. Don't set expectations for life to be a certain way, because it's more complex than words can describe. I wish you the best for your journey, and conquering any fears that you may face. Whether it be social anxiety or heights, I believe in you. You CAN overcome this if you set your mind to it.

*Varsha Venkatanathan is a teen volunteer with Be the Star You Are!® charity.*