

Anonymous

[Assignment: Write an essay narrating a personal experience or turning point in your life which, in retrospect, taught you an important lesson.]

(1) "Hey, fatso, move out of the way--you're causing an eclipse!" "You're so fat that every time you take a step it registers on the Richter scale!" As a child, I was daily confronted with bitter remarks such as these and cruel treatment from other children due to my weight. I can vividly picture the people who ridiculed me and clearly remember the jokes that were not humorous. I see their wicked grins. I hear their laughter and the sarcasm in their voices. I continue to feel the sharp pains of humiliation. This form of mental abuse, however, does not show obvious physical effects, and oftentimes goes unnoticed and untreated. Thus, the teasing that I experienced was brushed aside as "child's play." Yet it continues to plague me to this day, and as a result I have suffered from eating disorders for the past four years.

(2) In high school, my sophomore science course was my favorite class of the day. Fascinated by human biology, I was contemplating becoming a doctor. My teacher, Mrs. Richards, loved what she taught. Her love for the subject was contagious and every student listened enthralled by her every word. One day, however, this all changed and from then on I would shudder at the very thought of attending her class.

(3) The topic for that day was the food chain. Mrs. Richards started explaining how every living creature is dependent on a food source for survival. She asked the class to name animals in the food chain. Chipmunks, squirrels, wolves, giraffes, horses, and cows were a few of the examples provided. The class was progressing well until someone yelled "Dana," as an example of one of the animals. The class giggled until Cindy Alvarez exclaimed, "We already mentioned cows!" The class was in an uproar. Humiliated as though my inner soul had been exposed and violated, my face prickled with heat and I used all my strength to hold back tears. My tonsils felt as if they were tied together in a solid knot. The teacher never said a word to Cindy, and neither did I. After all, Cindy was pretty and popular and I was afraid that my saying something would only turn more people against me.

(4) That night I cried for hours. I rehashed in my mind the events of that day and remembered as well the other times I had been hurt. I also made a promise to myself that I would not accept myself until I was skinny. I would diet until the day I died, if that's what it would take. I dieted and exercised for three months and I lost twenty-five pounds. I looked and felt great. I was a perfect weight for my body frame. Friends and family members complimented my new appearance. But as

time passed and as people became accustomed to my looks, the compliments halted. So I decided to lose just a little more weight. I exercised more and ate less. The pounds dropped slowly, but I kept at it because as starved as I was for food I was even more starved for attention.

(5) School ended for the year and summer came and went. When I returned that fall I had lost a total of forty pounds. Few people made mention of my weight, however, so I figured I must still be fat. Even when swim season started (I was on Varsity) and I was working out for nearly four hours a day, my caloric intake was not more than 1,000 at the most.

(6) Naturally I lost more weight. Finally my family became extremely concerned, but they showed their concern in unhelpful ways. My father's favorite joke was "Don't feed her food, bird seed will be enough!" My mother started to call me "Annie the Anorexic." Regardless of how I looked, even my own family continued to call me names. Eventually my parents began nagging me to eat. I said they were just trying to make me fat again. Between their nagging and my starving, all I could think about was food, so I took up a new hobby--cooking. I would prepare a five course meal for my family and eat only a few morsels.

(7) I was cold all the time and my hands and feet were always a pretty shade of purple. One day I was taking a shower when I suddenly felt ill. I began to vomit but nothing came out. I felt dizzy and light-headed. The next thing I knew I was attached to a heart-monitor in the hospital. The hospital would be my home for the next month. I had passed out from malnutrition and was diagnosed as having Anorexia Nervosa. This is a disease which afflicts mostly teenage women, a disease wherein they starve themselves in order to attain the perfect body.

(8) Rehabilitation was slow, painful, and scary. I gained weight slowly and felt stronger. While in the hospital I spoke with psychologists. I learned something I had really known all along, but I had just never believed. I am who I am inside regardless of how I look on the outside. I finally realized that those who made fun of me were so insecure that they had to bring me down in order to bring themselves up.

(9) I'd like to return to that hospital some day, and fulfill my dream of being a doctor, or I'd like to be a dietician. I want to help others who suffered like me.

(10) The healing process will still take some time, but for once I like who I am and I don't feel the pressure to be skinny because of what people will think and say. I'm free at last!