

Student 6: High Not Achieved

NZQA Intended for teacher use only

“Let’s make the world a better place.”

Most of you will remember something from your first day of school, not all of you will. Chances are you remember something whether it’s your mum crying and taking photos, or your cool new lunchbox you got to use for the first time. Personally I was really excited for my first day, although now I look back and wonder why exactly I was so keen to get up at the crack of dawn every day for the next 13 years. My first day was pretty good. You all probably remember how little kids just made friends right? “Hi! My name’s Emma! Will you be my friend?” and BAM instant friendship. This was how I made my first best friend at school. We were best friends for a whole two weeks! Until... I got a tummy bug and spewed all over her shoes. After that she didn’t talk to me again, not even once! That was just the start of all the friendships we would make throughout school... we didn’t yet seem to understand how important good friends could be back then. It seems as though many of primary school memories revolve around vomit. In year two there was one boy who decided to spew all over the...

There is one primary school memory that doesn’t have anything to do with vomit however. It was getting my first pair of glasses. I was in year four and I just could not see the board no matter where I sat in the classroom. And after complaining to my teacher which resulted in her screeching at me to “Go get your eyes checked then!” Me and mum were off to the optometrist. I got told that from then on I would have to wear glasses to help me see. At the time I thought I was sooo cool, and my friends used to say that with my hair in pigtails I looked like Suzie Cato off Suzie’s World. But that was at the time and things have changed a lot since then and now I have worn either glasses or contacts everyday unless I feel like tripping over everything in my path. So how did all this make me who I am today? Well this is difficult to answer, because I’m still trying to work this out myself. One thing I know for sure is that it has led me to have an insane phobia of vomit. When I say phobia I mean that if I see, hear or smell vomit, I start crying and shaking uncontrollably, without fail.

But really there is much more to it than that. As I grew older, school showed me that people are judgmental and there is no way to escape this. You just have to learn to accept people’s opinions and move on. But still I find it unfair that because of something completely out of your control, such as wearing glasses, people can be bullied and excluded. If you have glasses then you will know exactly what I mean when I say that people judge you instantly for wearing them. I am the biggest hypocrite of all, I judge people for wearing glasses and I need them myself! It is how society has shaped me and every one else and is also why I resent glasses so much myself... I was instantly labeled as a geek. It is purely because of other people that in year nine I started wearing contacts”

Many of you will agree with me when I say that a large portion of your happiness and confidence comes from having good self esteem and right now it seems as though your self esteem is either good or bad depending on other people’s opinions of you. I’m not saying this goes for every one, some people don’t care at all what others think of them. However I think that even those people have a tiny part of them that does care, and unfortunately there is always some one who knows exactly how to crush it. Any one who knows me knows I’ve done swimming my whole life, and competitively for the past four years. Of course because I have done swimming for so long you assume I must really love it right? Well for fourteen out of sixteen years I’ve done it, I hated it. At first I only swam because Mum made me, but then I realised once I started it competitively that a lot of people were impressed by the fact I trained sixteen hours a week, not including weights sessions. So I kept swimming. Not because I liked it, but because of how other people saw me. There were a couple of years where I did actually love it; I was getting really good results from all the training, I had heaps of friends and a really good coach. But this didn’t last. A few people in my squad and I were on bad terms, and then I got a long-term shoulder injury, as well as a new coach I didn’t agree with. This made it even less enjoyable, but in the end my shoulder was what forced me to quit.

Society nowadays is extremely unforgiving. People get judged for absolutely everything about them. And it’s getting worse. Now that every one has mobile phones, and is a part of websites such as facebook or tumblr, there are so many different ways for people to bully others; there is no escape. (2) If we can change the way our generation sees other people, and change the way they act towards others, then eventually it will come right; but trying to change every one will be near impossible. That should not deter you because it will be worth it. It will be worthwhile living in an anti-bullying, non-racial, non-homophobic world where you can be yourself. Imagine the world this way; it would be a huge step towards world peace. Not only that but it would lower the suicide rate as well, something that of current times is becoming a huge world issue.

Currently in America the overall suicide rate per 100 000 people is 11.3. And in New Zealand, it’s 13.8. That’s almost half this class. Per 100 000. In New Zealand we have 4 000 000 people. Add that all up and approximately

- 2 8 552 people in New Zealand die from suicide each year. That doesn't include attempts or people who may feel that way but don't choose that option. People ask, 'if they felt this way, why didn't they say something?' the answer is simple. People like you tell them they are attention seeking.
- 2 7 Bullying is a leading cause of suicide. It occurs at all ages; from kindergarten, through school, right into the work force. Whether they are bullied for their appearance, race or sexual orientation, in the end it doesn't matter. It still hurts. And unfortunately it hurts some people more than others to the point where they feel they can't take it anymore. You could be the person that pushes someone to that point. You could force someone to be so unhappy that they choose to kill themselves. You could be a murderer. All because of that one small comment you made towards them. Sometimes people can bully themselves thanks to today's society. Society feeds us images of skin and bone models and filters out any photo of normal sized people, making some people feel as though they are not good enough. I know you have all heard of this before, but we are shaping the world this way, we are making people unhappy, yet we don't try to fix it. Doing something about this could save at least one of those 552 New Zealanders, possibly even more!
- 3 I once read a story that made me realize how much our actions really affect other people. It talked about two American boys in high school, one being your typical stereotype of a 'geek', and the other a jock. As the first boy was walking home one day carrying the entire contents of his locker, he tripped and dropped it all. The other boy saw what happened and came over to help him carry all his books. They ended up walking home together and becoming best friends. A few years on the boy who was the jock was getting married, and the other was his best man. Of course this meant he made a toast to the groom. What he said was something along the lines of this: "I owe my life to my best friend. That day we met I was carrying everything home from my locker to save my mother the hassle of going and doing it; that night I was planning on committing suicide. But as I was walking home you smiled at me and helped me and became my first friend and so I decided to stay." No one, not even the groom himself had known this. This story proves that we don't know how our actions may affect other people, whether good or bad, and they can be the difference between life and death. We don't always know the truth behind people, or how they really feel, so we do not know the real harm of what our words can do.
- 3 All I ask is that you think about what you're saying before you say it. Not just next time, but every time. You never know the affect your words could have on someone else, no matter how old they may be.