

A comment I have heard a million times before in life is “she is so quiet”. Growing up I have always been considered as someone who is quiet, the observer in the background. In group settings I never felt the need to express myself, when having conversations with friends I always said enough to get through the conversation and when needed to I never felt like speaking up. This wasn't because I was scared to but it was because I grew comfortable in my silence.

Until one fateful day in middle school, in the cafeteria that smelled like questionable food and the room filled with chatter and laughter. As I was speaking with friends the most embarrassing thing happened. I stuttered on the most basic word in the English language and my friends laughed and mocked me and the conversation continued. I sat there in complete silence, heart pounding, replaying the moment in my head trying to figure out how I would mess that up. However I didn't dwell on this for the rest of the day and convinced myself that this was just a stumble that would never ever happen again.

Till later on that day things would only get worse. I had come home from school, changed and was looking forward to the leftover chipotle I saved from the day before. Just thinking about it made me excited. I had opened the fridge and at first I thought my eyes were deceiving me. Until I smelled this familiar smell coming from the living room and saw my brother sitting on the dining room table on his phone watching a youtube video completely oblivious to my presence devouring my left overs. I completely snapped “wh-wh-why you eat m-m-my food you kn-kn-knew it wasn't yours”. I stood there angry yet embarrassed at what had left my mouth at such a serious moment then I stormed off into my room crying that my food had been eaten and that I had this dreadful stutter that I was probably going to be stuck with forever.

Over time this stutter became something I did, often creeping into my speech like a shadow over me all the time. Whether that was in school with friends, their laughter faded into acceptance, but I always thought they saw it as an embarrassing flaw I had, and since we were close, they were patient with me and chose to be understanding, or at home, where they had no choice but to be patient and waited for me to find my voice. I carried the weight of my stutter heavenly on my shoulders and wanted it gone. One doctor visit I had, I thought doctors could fix anything until I grew up and realized how delusional I was. My doctor in particular radiated kindness, her warm smile made me feel like I could trust her to get rid of this madness. She took vitals, and the check-up went smoothly. The anticipation grew inside of me. Eventually I knew the question that I get asked every single visit would come up, and it did: “Is anything bothering you?” and I told her about my stutter with a childish hope that she would give me medicine, and within a week, all would be fine. But nothing was that simple; she had told me that I needed to speak more and eventually it would go away. I was baffled that the solution would be that simple. The idea of embracing my stutter felt daunting yet liberating. So from that day, I made it my mission.

As the years went by, I transitioned into high school, and I rarely thought about my stuttering because I had barely experienced it, and I knew I was cured. I began to use my voice like never before and signed up for so many clubs and programs where I had to use my voice, not only because my stutter had gone away but because I was on a journey of self-growth. This setback of stuttering was only temporary despite the barrier of learning to come out of my comfort zone but that was just the beginning to becoming a better speaker.