

Taking a Closer Look at Your Life and the People Who Surround You

When the subject for this year's writing contest was released, I didn't really know how I was going to write about it. I brainstormed scenarios, yet nothing really clicked. Then fast forward a few weeks later and something clicked. I was taking a close look at my friends at school and thinking to myself about the good times I have every single day. This made me want to write about friendship and the journey it takes you on. So, from personal experience I know what taking a closer look is and how it affects the future in more than one way.

Making friends is an easy thing to say, but it can dig far deep down inside you and release fear; not in a scary way, but in a way of thinking that you're going to be lonely forever. We've all felt it. None of us can deny it. However, sometimes when you make friends it unlocks a whole new level of fear. Will they like your style or *swagger*? *Am I good enough*? But once you finally find your "people" or your real friends, you'll know. You'll know because you won't have any fear around them. You don't need to impress each other, because you're just being yourself. And that's the best part about having a friend!

When I was younger, I was friends with a girl named Corrie Ann*. We were friends for about 2 or 3 years, but that all changed in 3rd grade. You know how school is-there are many different groups of friends. Back then I thought I had a friend group, but some of them were phony friends. Plus some of the people who I thought were my friends were actually back stabbers. Corrie Anne hurt my feelings so many times that year that it felt like I had scars. It wasn't really a healthy friendship with me and Corrie Ann. She would tell the rest of the girls in the group not to hang out with me on some days. She would run away from me a lot. Now that I look back, I don't think she spoke English; I think she spoke DRAMA. What I learned from the past is to look closely at your friends. The scars from Corrie Ann healed because I made new friends. I learned that a good friend isn't

someone you just joke around with or sit with at lunch. They are someone who has your back through thick and thin. They are someone who wouldn't betray you. They're someone who's going to make mistakes (because it happens), but they say sorry and mean it. No matter what, everyone has different personalities and different qualities and a friend accepts the differences. No best friend should make you feel unwanted, lonely in a crowded room or not seen, felt or heard.

When you think you find your friends, but a closer look shows they are unkind, please don't get down. Take a closer look at the good people in your life and count your blessings, not the number of times you got stabbed in the back. These are some life lessons you can use along the way even when you are getting to be older. You always need to remember to take a closer look at those in your life, and surround yourself with people who make you happy!

*Name has been changed.