

I was 7 years old when I was diagnosed with type one diabetes. At that age I had no idea what was happening when I saw my mother's face after getting the news from the doctor. After being diagnosed I was one of the lucky ones that was able to catch the signs early and avoid the hospital. Despite that, my journey has been anything but easy.

When your in elementary school you're always told not to judge a book by its cover. This same thinking comes into play when you look at a person you don't truly know. You may have no idea what the person is battling with or what they are going through in life. But even after thinking about this I still had an irrational fear that people would look at me different, judge, or be afraid of me if I told them I had a disease called diabetes. I started to look at myself differently right around this time. I still had a whole life ahead of me but I didn't see it that way then.

As I first walked into the classroom since I was diagnosed I realized nobody was looking at me any different then how they did before. They still saw the same me. The same relatively quiet kid that never raised his hand or was much for talking. They had no idea I just made massive alterations to my life and learn to handle the challenges that come with diabetes. They all just saw me the same as they did before and I thought to myself, "This is the way it is always going to be".

Even now, as a junior in high school, I still find myself asking *why me?* Why did I get diagnosed? Why did I get the short straw in life and have to deal with this every moment of my life? The more I think about it though, the more I see it as a blessing. I know that things could be drastically worse for me.

Diabetes made me responsible for something most kids and teens could not even imagine dealing with. It made me closer to people I never thought I would be friends with. I began to tell people because they wanted to learn what diabetes is and what I have to deal with every day. These people, that I now call some of my best friends, were actually interested in this disease that I was so afraid of showing for so long. This brought me out of my shell as a kid and really showed me that everything would be okay.

Without diabetes I could still be the quiet kid in the back of the class that doesn't talk much. I gained valuable knowledge from a young age about personal responsibility too which I don't know if I'd still have today without diabetes. "Why not turn my experience into a positive one?" That is the question I continue to ask myself every day. I really don't see diabetes as even a challenge now a days. After almost ten years with the disease it's more like brushing your teeth everyday to me. I make jokes about it and my friends do too and most people when they hear the jokes freak out and say, "you can't say that!, That's horrible!" but I just laugh and reply with "It's okay, it actually helps to hear jokes about it." Most don't understand what it's like and that's okay. I just want to be seen as an average kid to people that don't truly know me, but if you get to know me you'll find out quick that I am anything but average and truly extraordinary.