

## A Pause I Didn't Know I Needed

By Katherine Meadowcroft, 13 years old.

School is always a challenge. Not because it's hard, but because of the constant stress. What if I get a question wrong? What if I fail a test? What if my grades plummet? Not just the work, what if one day my friends decide they don't like me and suddenly, poof, I'm all alone with nothing but my thoughts. What if, what if, what if. The list goes on and on for miles.

Math is especially hard because I'm in an advanced class with my friends. We joke and fool around while doing our work and it's like the world is at my finger tips, spinning at my own speed and at my own will. And then a test comes and the world abruptly stops to stand still for eighty minutes of pure agony. When that happens my hands shake, my heart beats fast, and my face flushes tomato red. Grades are everything to me, they shouldn't be, but they are.

When the day ends at last, I empty my lunch box and disappear into my room. My room is my sanctuary, although it's messy and disorganized, it's home. My homework is usually from math class so I'll throw on a *Killers* song and struggle through it on my own.

One particular October afternoon I decided to take a break and ride my bike around the 'parent approved' bike route in my quiet neighborhood. I put my headphones on and connected them to my phone. I just hit shuffle on my playlist and went on my way.

October was my favorite month, not just because of my birthday at the beginning of the month or of the free candy at the end, but because of the cool breeze that battled the warm summer air. The way it shook the branches of the trees and blew my auburn hair in every which way was something no other month or season could compare with. There were also the leaves that turned rare colors of yellow and red. It was an eye shattering site.

I had been riding for at least ten minutes just in circles until I found myself at a small playground that sat beside my house. The playground could barely be seen because of the thick brush that sat in front of it. I parked my bike in a patch of grass that was next to a mary-go-round and walked over to the swing set.

I sat on the swing in the middle of the set and wrapped my hands around the cool metal chains that held the swing to the blue bars of the structure. I took off my headphones and tossed them aside into the mulch. My feet kicked off the

ground and the swing made an awful groaning sound. I quickly and firmly put my feet back on the ground to try and stop the piercing noise.

I hopped off my swing and ran to grab my headphones and my phone which was stationed next to them. I took them and put on *Telescope* by Cage *The Elephants* and sat back on the swings. Once again, I kicked off the ground. The calming tune of my song blocked out the squeak of the metal chains.

I let it all take me away, the music, the swing. It was all so calming, I could almost swear I was flying. My thoughts overtook me, not the bad and anxiety induced ones, the ones that gave me a glimmer of hope for the future. The thoughts that said, "take one day at a time."

In those moments of freedom, all my worries were pushed away, shoved out of sight. New things flooded my brain, new what ifs. What if school isn't just about grades? What if I could just let loose a little? What if I could just not care what others thought? What if, what if, what if?

After what had to have been an hour, I jumped off the swing. I flew through the air before landing on the mulch and putting my hands in the air like a gymnast during the Olympics. I giggled to myself and walked over to where I threw my bike. I hopped on it and rode up the bumpy pavement hill and to my house.

I felt refreshed, more confident and ready to face the unknown. I stood upon the pedals of my bike and felt the autumn breeze blow in my face. The swings, the music, the sense of peace. It was like a break from reality. Like a pause that I didn't know I needed.