

What if?

Picture this: A 5ft 10 girl, who always slouches in school photos, and stands next to the tallest person she can see to avoid standing out. Her hair is always tucked behind her ear, although it looks better when it's just natural. Her nails are always bitten short, despite years of trying to break the habit, and can almost always be found with a furrowed brow and slight scowl on her face. And no, she does not have a posture problem and a miserable personality. It's because She, well I, have anxiety.

Now in fairness, my life is pretty great. I have two funny and, underneath it all, caring brothers. My dad is a stay-at-home dad, because my mum has such a good job that he doesn't need to work. I have amazing friends who can brighten up my day, even when I'm having the worst one possible, and at the ripe old age of 16, I have a job that not only earns me money but helps me meet new people and gives me a bit of independence. But that doesn't mean it can't also be crap. And I mean miserable, roll up under the covers, I'd-curse-but-this-is-a-school-essay crap. Because of this anxiety.

Because of this anxiety, my days are just a little bit harder. Not always awful, but just harder. For example, I recently had to present an Irish project to my class. It was about my favorite musical, and I really enjoyed making it. However, when it got to presenting it, just the thought of it made my stomach turn. Even as I type this, my palms have started sweating. However, I decided to just put on a brave face and present it. As I stood up in front of my class, my cheeks flushed red, and I started tucking my hair behind my ears. Despite this, I started to speak, and it was all going well. Until, I heard two girls at the back of the class laughing. Now of course, they were probably laughing at a joke one had made, or something that happened earlier that day that was particularly amusing, but to me, it was like a dagger to the heart. Were they laughing at me? Was I doing something wrong? Did they think this musical, one I loved with all my heart, was stupid?

Another example would be playing hockey. Now I don't want to toot my own horn, but I can be quite good at hockey. I play as a sweeper, so I am the last defence before the goal, and I tell people where to go. However, before every training session, and before every match especially, without fail, I start biting my nails, and my mouth gets drier than the Sahara. I am constantly wondering if my skirt is too short, if people judge me for running too slow, or if people dislike me because I let a goal in.

One final situation would be when I was eleven, and I would shush my class whenever the teacher left the room, and they started to talk. As you can imagine, that did not go down well with a group of tweens who just wanted to chat with their friends. Even I knew they hated it, but that never stopped me. Why? Because of the same reason that made me think those girls were laughing at me, or that anyone cared how fast I ran, or why I would always slouch in photos so I wouldn't stand out. The constant wondering in my head; "what if?"

What if they did think this show was stupid? What if they were judging me for how fast I ran? What if they thought I was too tall, or they'd get mad when we were talking?

Of course, in my heart of hearts, I knew that no one thought these things. They weren't laughing at my presentation, no one would judge me for my height, and the teacher wouldn't explode at us if we were chatting. But that little bit of doubt, those little "what if"s, is what can lead to me thinking the most horrendous things over the tiniest little detail, and what makes my life a little bit harder.

So yes, my life is pretty great. I have a great family, amazing friends and a good job. But like so many teenagers these days, my life can also be a struggle. Not due to money issues, or fights with friends, but by constantly wondering "what if?"

