

Name: Dr. Audrey Newsome

Country: USA

Organization: The Bully Suicide Project.

Solution: Pres./CEO,

The Bully Suicide Project - Survivor Stories(11)

My name is Matthew, and I was born and raised in Ontario, Canada. I'm almost 29 years old, so I've been out of school for a number of years now. I'm currently working a job that involves a lot of customer service, but my real passion lies in writing. Ever since I was a small child, I've always been fascinated by books and literature, and have had a desire to become a published author for several years, hoping that I can have some success with it.

2. Tell Me About Your Personality

I would probably describe my personality the same way as I would my taste in music...very eclectic, and very hard to understand. Ever since I can remember, I've always been one of those people who have thought "outside the box", which probably fueled the excessive bullying I went through my school years...LOL. Regardless, I think I'm wordy, inquisitive, and thoughtful. But, it also takes a LONG time for me to get close to people, because I can't help but feel guarded in some ways due to my experiences in school. As a result, my dating life isn't as active as I feel it should be at 29, but I am trying to move past it.

3. Tell Me About the First Time you remember being bullied (where, how you felt, the names, you were called, how you dealt with it)

Well, I was more or less bullied during my whole school career, so it's difficult to pinpoint what the first exact moment of bullying was, but I can definitely remember the worst year of it. It was eleventh grade, and in that one year, I had people plastering posters all over the school with lies about my personality . I also had my locker torched three times, of which in the process I lost some personal belongings and some of my school supplies. Perhaps the most disgusting event happened during one of my computer classes. Although I attended school before the invention of social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter, e-mail proved to be just as vicious. I remember one e-mail in particular that said "you're fat and stupid, so why don't you kill yourself so you can make the school a better place". Yeah. I went to school with some REAL sweethearts. Of course, now that I'm older, I can laugh about how badly spelled the note was...but at age 16, I was mortified and wanted to never go back to school again. You know, after that incident, I basically retreated from society in general. Hardly left my room...spent my Friday nights with Betty Crocker as my date for the night, and ballooned up to 300 pounds as a

result. Definitely the worst period of my entire life.

4. Names you have been called

In my case, it was more about the actions that hurt more than the words did, but I did have my fair share. One kid actually insisted that I ate a Volkswagon. Another kid tried to be oh so intelligent by singing "Matty Matty 2 by 4, can't fit through the barnyard door.", but it was more humorous than anything because a 2 x 4 is a thin plank of wood...so in a way, he complimented me! :D Oh, and there was the standard typical thoughtless insults like dick, fat, tubby. You know...names that don't require a whole lot of thinking but still sting all the same?

5. Tell Me About how bullying has effected you

Okay...here we go...the million dollar question. I think bullying affected my self-worth the most, as well as how I deal with social interactions. Whenever I'm in a social setting like a bar, or a party, I am more often than not the person who stands in the corner, sampling cheese crackers and non-alcoholic fruit punch. See, when you go through people hating you and making your school life a living hell almost daily, it certainly didn't make me want to approach people with a positive attitude. In fact, I spent so much time trying to avoid my classmates that I ended up not learning basic social skills until much later in life, due to my feeling that I wasn't worthy enough for anybody to know. As I mentioned before, my dating life took a nosedive, because let's face it...if you can't love yourself, it's practically impossible to show love to anybody else. Girls were just as mean to me as guys were, and who wants to date someone who is always mean to you, right? My grades were not the best, because I simply was too stressed out and worried to concentrate on schoolwork, although I did end up getting my high school diploma. But, I think the worst part was that I holed myself away from everyone because at the time, I never really did have that best friend to confide in, nor did I have siblings close to my age who could defend me against the others. I guess in a way, I was ashamed to face people because I didn't want to be known as the eternal victim, or the kid that nobody liked.

6. Have you thought about suicide? If so, what did you do about it.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't. In particular, when I got that horrible e-mail message, I wondered if the school maybe would have been better off had I done the deed. Of course, I couldn't go through with it, mainly because the thought of death or dying scares me too much, and I would have been too chicken to go through with it. But, that's how much that note shook me up inside. I of course tried to stay strong as the rumours spread through the school, but I cried myself to sleep so many nights stressing out about it. You know what the really ironic thing is? I'm probably more upset about the fact that the school administration did NOTHING for me when I was going through so much pain at school. They looked the other way, and expected the problem to sort itself out. Problem was, aside from a couple of incredibly sympathetic teachers who fought on my behalf, nobody cared at that school, and I think that angered me more than the abuse I suffered.

7. What are ways you have dealt with suicidal thoughts?

I know it probably seems like a rather ironic answer, but I actually used humour and sarcasm to get through it. Just recently, I used my Facebook notes section as a kind of a venting post. Each day, I'd just write out SOMETHING about school for a whole week, and I found that venting about it helped me get rid of a LOT of demons that were inside me, including any thoughts of suicide. Words can be used for hatred, but I choose to use them for therapeutic measures...and peppering my experiences with a newfound sense of humour and sarcasm really helped me sort out a lot of things.

8. What makes you a survivor?

The fact that I'm still alive and kicking just goes to show people that despite everything I went through, they DID NOT BREAK ME!!!

I think it's also important to note that this past year (2009) was one where I REALLY decided to break free from the self-conscious, broken me. With the help of some amazing co-workers who have basically become members of my extended family, I had the courage to stand up for myself, and break free from all the pain that shackled me down. In just one year, I ended up losing 70 pounds, and walked my first 5K walk for charity. I'm also starting to realize that I can be the type of person that people can grow to admire and respect.

9. What is your message of hope to the person just like yourself?

I guess the message that I want to give someone who may be in a situation that I was in would be to find some way to get the pain out. Paint a picture, keep a journal, perform an interpretative dance, anything! At any rate, get that story out there. Nobody should suffer in silence because of bullying. You'd probably be amazed at how much weight is lifted off of your shoulders...I know I was when I first started talking about my story. Just as an appendix to this question...some of the most thoughtful, well-rounded people I'm lucky to have in my life were the so-called "weird" people, who were always picked on by bullies and the like. Personally, it's the ones who delight in making others miserable that are truly "weird".

10. The quote that you live by today because of your experience is....

I actually have two. The first is "Never stop laughing", which was uttered by Emergency star Randolph Mantooth, and it's so true. Despite all of the bullying I went through, I never completely lost my sense of humour...in fact, it's been very helpful towards my recovery purposes.

The second comes from a lyric from a Kylie Minogue song, and it goes "Every heartbeat babe is a soundtrack to your life", and I also live by this quote, even though sometimes the heartbeats may sound off because of it being broken, I have found that by making good choices about friends and life in general have gotten my life soundtrack rockin' again. Keep on rockin', everyone!

The Bully Suicide Project :

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