

## Inhale Confidence Exhale Doubt

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It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single girl in possession of doubt towards herself must be in want of confidence.

Is there a day that goes so perfectly right in my life? A day where I feel right, being me? Negative thoughts seemed to constantly float in my mind, threatening to come out of my mouth, to pour out of my soul and pollute what is left of me. That was until I was able to truly accept myself with the influence of words from books and freeing myself through music.

When I look around my room, the first thing that catches my eye would probably be my bookshelf. Reading has always been a hobby of mine, though it has had positive and negative influences on my identity over the years. When I hit my teenage years, I started to realize my obsession with wanting to be like a character from a book. Their flawless lives stood out in front of my own bumpy one, and more importantly, felt like something worth having. As a teenager and a girl, I felt as though if I did everything a hundred percent correctly, I could become perfect. Characters seemed to taunt me with every turned page. Except as obvious as it is, there is no such thing as perfection. Living in this Japanese society, I am forever reminded of leading an ideal life. Looking around, I see girls trying to be thin, smart and talented with every power they have. From television ads to my school life, I see it everywhere. The pressure is real. The feeling of knowing you are not enough made me miserable. I truly wanted to be something I was not.

Reading books was making me into a different person and my own life was turning fake. Though one day, everything changed because of one book that contained a life-changing quote. "Life is not a neat equation to be solved.... It's messy and wild and unpredictable. That's the heartbreak of it, but that's also the glory of it." (*Fredrick, The Education of Patience Goodspeed, 232*) I met this quote when I was browsing through books at a store. Ironically they are words from a book, but never had I felt so much power and felt

genuinely content with my life.

Music has always been a way for me to escape from society, even if it may only be for a short time. This is why, I did not find it surprising when music helped me realize my mistakes and find confidence in myself. When I listen to music, I feel the love or hate, some kind of feeling behind everything. Listening to traditional instruments being used, sleeping to a soft lullaby in a different dialect, imaging myself on the streets of a place I've never been to, all these things are full of emotions. No matter what country we're from, we all share a heart. Being able to empathize to the singer and relate to them is something you can do even if you may not understand the language. Through music, I have also learned about freeing myself. Being a dramatic person, I cannot control my feelings well. I used to let them stir inside me and tried to swallow any that bubbled to my mouth, but now I have decided to let them go. Although feelings may be part of me, I cannot control something that is so unpredictable.

For a long time I felt as though my nationality defined whom I was and how I should be. I have come to finally realize that country isn't important. I am who I am, and nothing can define me. Going through our teenage years is a very exhausting experience, and if you are struggling from insecurities than I would look out and peer into the horizon where unlimited possibilities seem to lie. This past year, I have searched for answers outside of my small world and found hints. Hints to find myself were found in the words in literature and the emotion in music. Now I can proudly say that I have much more confidence than I may have had before. It is a "truth" that is known to the world, that everyone wants to feel good about themselves.