

**Honorable Mention
Debbie Maldonado**

10th grade

John Marshall High School, Cleveland City Schools, Cleveland

Title: *There is Harmony and inner peace to be found in a moral compass that points in the same direction regardless of fashion or trend.*

I chose the quote by Ted Koppel. There is harmony and inner peace to be found in a moral compass that points in the same direction regardless of fashion or trend.

To find peace within yourself is not easy. The world expects you to be skinny, tall, beautiful, and fashionable but that is not what life is about. I chose this quote because it is a reflection of my life and who I am today.

I never grew up in a fancy neighborhood or had nice clothes. I would go each day to school but only to live another day of torture. People made fun of me. As a child all I wanted was friends. I longed to be part of the crowd so that's just what I did. I became someone who I was not. Nobody knew who I really was. I told everyone a story that I had a perfect life. Which was all a lie.

Around last year is when my life fell apart. I was sitting in homeroom when channel one came on it was a story about a boy with an eating disorder. He was Anorexic. When they said those words it was as if everyone in the class turned and looked at me. I knew then that I had a problem. My mother took me to the hospital the next day. There they told me that I was 45 pounds under what I was supposed to weigh. I was anorexic.

My life crashed before my eyes. I did not know what to do, so I secluded myself from everybody. It was about 4 months later that while I was in my room; I was thinking why do I do this to myself. No one was making me be this way. I had taken my own life away and locked myself in my room. Why was I doing this to myself? I was just proving everybody that ever made fun of me that they had control over my life. I could not let them win so I got it together. Little by little I gained weight, but it was worth it. I finally got control over my own life.

It took a lot of pain to learn that after every one is gone you are only going to have one person left and that is you. Do not pay attention to what other people have to say, because when they realize how miserable their lives are you have already found your peace. Your clothes and your appearance do not matter. What matters is the person you are.

I am still skinny but that is part of life. You have to work hard to be happy. I am happy to have been Anorexic, because I learned a lot about myself and how happy I can be. I have found my moral compass, and it is I. I am always going to be the same even throughout my trials because I know I can make it.