

2013 *What Matters?* Competition

YEAR 7/8 WINNER TASMANIA

Anna Stocks, Clarence High School

Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones but Words Will Still Hurt Me

Growing up, along with many others, I was a victim of bullying. We were surrounded by kids who used to say that rhyme about sticks and stones. Don't tell me a broken bone hurts more than the names we've been called. So we grew up believing that we would never have someone in our lives that cared about us, that no one would ever fall in love with us and that we would probably be lonely.

Forever.

School was a just battleground where we were outnumbered by kids who thought they were better than us. We felt like books, being judged by the cover. They saw what was on the outside without bothering to read what was inside of us.

So as the horrible remarks chipped away at our confidence, we started building up a disguise. And as the comments got nastier and nastier, our disguises got bigger and bigger, until we were no longer what we really were on the inside.

We made ourselves into something we hated. We made ourselves into the people we never wanted to be, and we made ourselves into the people who lowered our self-confidence until we had none. But the rude comments kept coming and coming. All we ever wanted was for people to like us for who we are. For people to stop bullying us. All we ever wanted was to believe that all the things they said were wrong. They had to be wrong.

But now, we have to face the ugly truth.

An estimated 200 million children and youth around the world are victims of bullying. That's 200 million children getting called names every day, being led to believe that they are worthless piles of nothing. That's 200 million children getting picked on and harassed because of their race, their skin colour, their gender, and even their sexual preference. We are all human beings, so why should a hint of individuality be such a negative thing?

Bullying is happening everywhere. In classrooms, in the playground, on the internet and even in some homes. Our society is filled with many different ways to lower others self-confidence, and make them feel worthless.

Why bully? Does the name 'bully' take your fancy? Surely there must be other ways to make you feel good about yourself. Our world, the world we have modified to fit our everyday life, is filled with people thinking that it is okay to bully. They think it's okay to make someone feel so terrible about

themselves that they want to end their own life. To be completely honest, it's not. And it never will be.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death amongst young people. A study in Britain found that at least half of suicides among young people are related to bullying. It makes me so sad to think that someone could be so hurt by another that they have suicidal thoughts.

We need to step up against these people. These bullies. We need to show them that we are strong. Because there's been that something deep inside that's made us keep trying, despite everyone and everything that's been bringing us down. We need to show them that nothing they can do will hurt us. Because we all have people in our lives who care about us. People who would suffer from our loss. Even though that rhyme about sticks and stones may not be true, we need to believe it