

To accept rather than tolerate

Experience, Personal Experience



I was an ugly baby. I have been underweight my entire life. The day I was born my uncle recalls telling his wife how scary I looked with my eyes sucked back into my skull and my ribs clearly visible. I wasn't adorable as a child and have almost no pictures of that age. By 5th grade, my face was smaller than my elder brother's hand. Maybe it was due to the fact I was born prematurely that I spoke like a baby. At a certain age that stops being cute. Apart from the constant jabs that my class fellows would take at mimicking my speaking styles, I was unable to qualify for debates. Every year I wrote a speech, memorized it and every year my teacher rejected me on the basis that people wouldn't be able to understand what I was saying. In 6th grade, I lost the main role in our school play when the headmistress came to know of my flaw. I couldn't participate in poetry competitions, debate or role plays anymore. Seeing what a problem this was becoming I took speech therapy for 1 year just so I could speak like a normal person.

As for everything else, I can still count my ribs in the mirror, and every new person I meet feels the need to point out my resemblance to a human skeleton. I have to clarify to people that I am not anorexic but just have a really fast metabolism, I love food particularly pizzas and anything with chocolate in it. One thing, however, that is harder for me to accept is people who don't know me, underestimating me. I understand how people make assumptions based on how you look, and I spent a lot of my life proving people that they were wrong about me.

My teachers would tell me how I couldn't get more than 1300 on my SAT's, I couldn't possibly succeed at giving 12 Olevel subjects in a year, I couldn't be part of the basketball team because I lacked the stamina, and other '

couldn't's thrown at me. I would try my best to listen to their comments respectfully but it always bothered me how people who were supposed to be my mentors could so easily set limits to my potential. Not only did I refute their presumptions I accomplished much more than anyone's expectations.

Luckily I found mentors in my Internships, places where I was needed and judged based on my performance rather than my size, where my superiors encouraged me to pursue my interests, mentors that helped me began startups like Khidmat welfare, challenged me to think and didn't doubt my potential. I learned to not let people's remarks about my size get to me anymore, instead, I laugh it off with a shrug. It's not all bad either, I have never had to diet, or join a gym, I get some entertainingly jealous looks from people when they see me finish entire cakes. I deal with the heat better, look great in dresses and am a fast runner.

My size does not define me. I have a personality that took 16 years to build for that. I can't prevent people from having first impressions about who I am, because I was guilty of this norm myself, I have made wrong assumptions about people based on their looks. It took me a while but I finally managed to see beyond my first impression and get to know a person before making any assumptions. To accept rather than tolerate.