

Emma Brand's Monologue

When I was in fourth grade, I was officially diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, ADD... or ADHD... or Primarily Inattentive ADHD, whatever the DSM-5 is categorizing it as of now. And that's when I began to notice that others acted differently around me.

I could feel their words crawl on my skin, the hushed whispers in the back of the classroom. The kids behind me let it savor in their mouths before they said it... "retard". No one ever said it to my face, but I've always known that that word was thrown around behind my back, every time I got an answer wrong, whenever I squirmed and fidgeted, whenever I made my comfort noises or spaced out, whenever I acted "weird".

I had once tried to tell my computer science teacher in 6th grade that I had difficulties understanding her instructions, and said it might have been because of my ADD. I was easily distracted, too overstimulated by all of the students talking, talking, talking, and unable to comprehend the wording of her instructions. My teacher then told me something that I would never forget.

"Don't try and use it as an excuse."

And thus an ugly, little seed was driven into my brain, and even deeper into my soul. If I ever failed, it was because I used my ADD as an excuse. If I did anything and it was less than perfect, that meant I allowed my ADD to drag me down, and that was unacceptable. If kids bullied me, verbally and physically abused me, pulled my pants down, slammed my head with a locker door, it's only because I acted odd and put them off. It had to be my fault, because I was the one with the problem.

But that was nine years ago. I've paraded around in this facade of normalcy, of quiet complacency for so long, but I can feel my fidgety, distracted, noise making, funny face pulling ADD tendencies beginning to boil over. I've been debating if I should open this Pandora's box of untapped, manic energy, when I've had the weight of my teacher's words hanging on my neck for so long. I'll open it soon, and I hope that, instead of seeing my ADD as a burden, I'll greet it as an ally.