

## This I Believe

David

I believe that everyone should have fun. Now, I could just be saying this because I have been grounded for the last week. However, this is a good idea, so I'm gonna run with it. So while being grounded, sitting in my room, doing nothing but reading, I started thinking about my shy, anti-social, indoors-y type friends who do just that, sit inside and read. My thoughts on this went something like Are they always grounded!? No, that can't be. They must.. LIKE... to do... that? Wait! Hold on! Read!? How could these people take something that was used on me as a punishment and turn it into something fun, something that they like to do?

My mind was blown. I always thought that fun was running, jumping, doing something I probably shouldn't, because, well, that's what I've always done. I would tell you all in detail what I like to do, but my mother is in the crowd and I just got un-grounded.

So...let's define fun... Google says that fun is enjoyment, amusement, or lighthearted pleasure. For example: "the children were having fun in the play area." But that's too basic, everyone knows that. This is about different kinds of fun, something that's your choice.

Everyone in the world deserves to have fun. However, this is not the case. according to Google there are somewhere between 37 and 40 million slaves in the world, more then there were in the 1800s! These people do not have any fun at all. Think about that. Take away, not just your wants like phone, computer, and TV, but also your Human Rights...rights you get for just being born. Now these rights are not enforced, but are merely recommended, so many countries can get away without abiding by these rights.

Everyone needs to have fun, if you don't have fun after awhile you will get depressed, and if you get depressed you will start to self harm, and self harms leads to suicide! It's terrible! If no one has fun everyone dies and the world is over!..... Okay.... That was a little bit to intense. I probably could have said that better, but the message is still there. We need fun. This I believe.

## This I Believe

Maddie

I believe in the power of change.

Change has always played an important role in my life, ever since I was young. The changes that have occurred in my life have been both good and bad; from when my dog died, to when I moved, to when I decided I no longer wanted to take piano lessons, but focus on singing instead.

Many people fear change. At times, I do too. Change can be exciting and scary at the same time. It's something we all are constantly dealing with. Change shapes and defines each and everyone of us. Our experience and our changes make us who we are. Changes shape our personalities and they way we approach life, because of course, change changes us.

Throughout my Coming of Age experience, I've learned that my thoughts, feelings and ideas about god, the afterlife, or any of these huge spiritual aspects are and will always be changing. What I believe today could change in a week, or in a few months, and definitely in a few years.

I'm confident in saying that I don't know what I believe today, I may have a few ideas here and there, but I can never be certain because my ideas are always changing.

Change is both a beautiful and difficult thing, if only we all can learn to accept it. The ability to change and grow is very important. Last fall when I signed up for coming of age I had planned to go on the Boston trip like everyone else, and I was really looking forward to going. Early this year, I auditioned for the school musical Peter Pan, not even thinking about the date. When I got the part of Wendy...suddenly my plans for the the Boston trip had to change. The trip was on the same day as the play. I had to choose. I missed the trip, but I got to be the star of the show.

No matter who you are or what you're doing you can always change to make yourself a happier person. Whether you believe it or not, it's never too late to change. Just make sure you're changing for yourself and only yourself. You can change yourself to something or someone else, if that makes you happy. Change and happiness go hand and hand.

Maybe you don't feel the calling of change within yourself. Maybe you feel it in the world. One of my most famous quotes is, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." I think this quote speaks to all of us, because I know for certain every single one of us has something we'd like to change in the world. But we are always held back by fear. I know it can be scary at first, but if we all just take one little step to changing something about ourselves or about the world, I know we can make a difference.

So take a risk, be that change you've always wished to see within yourself or within the world. Dye your hair pink. Join a club that picks up garbage. Whatever it is, I encourage you to do it. Take a risk and change one little thing, no matter how small it might be, to make the world a better place. Because after all, we all have the power to change. This I Believe

## This I Believe

Ruby

If you believe in yourself then you've made one more step towards making the world a better place. Believing in yourself means that you believe you are doing your best. This confidence can lead to greater accomplishments. For example finishing a tricky dance move, accomplishing a hard mountain bike trail or just being extra kind to a friend or family member. It may not seem that these things can lead to helping the world but they can.

One snowy January morning in Plainfield Vermont one of my mentors, a friend and I set out to go tracking. As we were walking I came upon some gray fox tracks. We eventually followed them for over three hundred footprints. Then we found the den, we put some bread near the den and came back later to find the bread gone. This experience really made me feel like I could communicate with the natural world and it inspired me to see my role in preserving its natural beauty. Tracking the fox made me believe that we can educate the world about the outdoors and share the wonder of nature with other people.

Believing in yourself and having confidence has a domino effect. If you think you can do something and you encourage others to do the same, then they will encourage other people to do it and it will spread into the whole world.

Earlier in the year, our coming of age group did a ropes course. One challenge was really hard

for me. It was a large wooden beam probably the size of a telephone pole with very small metal steps sticking up in the air. We were hooked into a harness and were told to climb up. The people who held me up with a rope, also known as a bellay team was all of the people in this group. I really believed I could climb up to the top. Since I believed in myself, my group believed in me too. They had confidence in me because they were the ones who were holding me up. Doing the ropes course and this particular challenge made me believe I could do anything and because of this my group did too.

Lack of confidence in yourself can lead to missing great opportunities. Ever since I was younger I struggled at spelling. I had no confidence that I could one day be a good speller. Even some of my teachers thought that. One teacher told me that some people just aren't good spellers. As the years passed I just accepted that. But this year I tried hard and got into the school wide spelling bee and I actually won! This just shows that if you fail you need to try again and believe you can do it because you learn from mistakes.

There are many examples of people who succeed in life because they believe in themselves and stick to their principles. These people are also happier in life because they accept themselves for who they are. I am inspired by these people. The other day, I was listening to the radio and a story came on about a woman who was 3ft 5 inches tall. When she was younger she had a choice to get surgery that would make her taller but, she didn't get it because she believed in who she was. This woman believed in herself and had enough confidence so that she became an elementary school teacher. This is an example of how even though you might look different or feel different you have to accept yourself for who you are and move on.

If you believe in yourself then you've made one more step towards making the world a better place. Confidence in yourself leads to great opportunities. These can be life changing experiences and when you are there living those great opportunities you just have to think to yourself, I can do it and I will change the world. This I believe.

## Deliberate Practice

Jacob

I believe in deliberate practice.

This can relate to everything you do, and it should. Deliberate practice is when you set a specific goal and strive to do that goal better. This can be related to anything you want it to be related to. I believe that deliberate practice can make people and the world a better place.

Do you ever wonder why your sports heroes are so good? The answer is deliberate practice. For example, future Hall of Fame basketball player Kobe Bryant wouldn't just shoot baskets and lift weights when he worked out. He would set a specific goal each session. One of these goals was to make 50 mid-range jumpers in a row while dribbling to his left. He would then work and work at it until he couldn't get it wrong.

In my life, deliberate practice relates to soccer. A goal that I have set in the past is to be able to score 5 bar downs (a certain shot in which the ball is purposely shot off the crossbar and deflected into the goal) in a minute. Like Kobe, I worked by shooting at the goal I couldn't get it wrong.

Another aspect of deliberate practice in my life is when I ski. A goal for skiing that I've set is to do a specific trick off of a specific jump. This goal in particular was a 180 tail grab. I kept going at that jump until it was natural and fluid for me.

Deliberate practice is a way of helping yourself. Challenge yourself to set goals and reach for them. It will come. It will make you a better person because you can now confidently try something out and go for it. So what are you waiting for? Go be deliberate!

## This I Believe

Erin

I believe in the power of human compassion, both in one-on-one relationships and in community. I feel that compassion can have many different definitions depending on the person you ask. To me it means caring for one another. I've noticed that in our church community, even though we have slightly different beliefs, we all care deeply for one another. We also tend to care for people we don't even know.

In my religious education class, after learning about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, we had a bake and craft sale. We earned an astounding amount of money, in both purchases and in donations. It was all for people we will never know on a personal level, to help make their lives easier.

On Easter Sunday, my RE class walked around town to write what hopefully were inspiring messages in chalk. It was a lot of fun, especially because I absolutely love working with chalk. It also felt really good to see people stop to read what we had written and smile as they walked on.

In school we're also practicing compassion. Sometimes it might be sitting with someone who feels left out or it might be larger. For example my friends and I have found a way of practicing compassion that I think is cool. We are creating a Queer Straight Alliance group to make people feel more included and to help people recognize things that are not necessarily inclusive.

An awesome thing that team Sirius, one of the 7th and 8th grade teams at my school, has done is help create awareness of hunger in Vermont. We went to the statehouse and put hundreds of spoons into the ground representing hungry people. We also made a bunch of applesauce and apple cider to donate to places in the community. Some of what we made even went to the Monday community lunch here at UCM. And speaking of community lunch that's another great example of caring for others. I mean, a lunch that will feed anyone in the community, that's amazing.

Although these are all examples of community compassion it also happens on a much, much smaller scale, too. Sometimes my mom and I read books out loud at night while cuddling (I'm usually the one reading to her). Often doing things like this are fun and easy, but sometimes it can also be hard, like if I'm stressed about school work and I just want my brother to be quiet I'm doing my work and your breathing is too loud. Compassion takes practice, especially with siblings, but is it always worth the trouble.

I believe that compassion is a power that binds us all. I tend to surround myself with very caring friends and community members whose actions speak for them so that words don't have

to. Compassion is the power that changes the world for the better.

## This I Believe

Jack

"I believe that people are nice, that everybody is equal and that no one is perfect. I believe that if you believe hard enough it might happen, that if you brag people might not want to be your friend, I believe you should never give up and that you should follow your dreams. But I don't believe that war is good or that slavery should be aloud or that anybody is perfect. I believe in god, jesus and kindness. And I believe that if you keep trying you will get better."

I wrote this when I was in second grade. We had an assignment to write a Credo poem. My beliefs have changed a little. I still think that war is bad and slavery shouldn't be aloud but i've learned more about what's going on in the world and about myself and what believe I decided to make another Credo poem saying what I believe now.

"I believe that if you give people a chance you have a lot more friends, I believe that if we all work together we can accomplish anything.

I believe in helping others, that if you brag people might not want to be friend and if you try hard enough you will succeed.

I believe that nobody is perfect and that everyone should be given a chance.

I believe in many things, but one of the most important to me is helping others. When I was younger this wasn't even in my poem, but now it is really important to me.

Every Wednesday Emma and I and a few of our other friends go and help out at the food pantry in the basement of Trinity Church. We restock all the food, bag groceries for people and help them carry their packages of food up the stairs. It's a lot of fun because we all get to hang out and we're doing something good for the community. I love the feeling of helping others. I meet a lot of new people every time and they're all very nice.

As you can see my beliefs have changed since second grade. Will they change again? Probably but there are some that will always stick with me.

## This I Believe

Kai (Emma)

What do you believe? It's a tough question to answer. I believe many things. I won't be able to get into everything I believe in this short amount of time, but I'm going to try to share just one of the things I believe. I'm also going to try to get through this essay without throwing up into the front row. Sorry guys, public speaking isn't really my thing, but here goes.

After a long time, my whole life really, of not feeling completely comfortable with a female identity I came out as genderqueer.

I never have enjoyed dressing femininely and never felt 'like a girl'. I felt limited by traditional definitions of binary gender and didn't feel like I belonged in any one category. With the help of various resources I found a word for how I felt...genderqueer.

As I explored my identity more and more I spoke with my friends about how I was feeling and what I was learning. All of them were amazing about it. They accepted me without a second thought and asked me what THEY could do to make ME feel more comfortable.

I began attending the LGBT group, that Outright Vermont, hosts here every other Friday with one of my friends. This group helped me feel less isolated, and like I wasn't the only one who felt this way. Through the Outright group we became inspired to help others, who wanted something similar to this kind of support but were unable to attend that group for various reasons.

With the help of Mrs. Bravakis, our school counselor, we began the process of starting a QSA, that stands for queer straight alliance by the way, for the 2016-2017 school year. Some people can't or don't have a voice. We need to help them, have one.

No matter who someone is or what their opinions are I will respect them, until those ideas start to hurt others. Once those beliefs put another person in danger, once beliefs are intentionally used to hurt and put down others, then I have a problem with them.

Everyone deserves to feel safe, accepted, and like they can be themselves. Everyone deserves a voice but that doesn't mean they have one, and those of us that have one, need to be there for those that don't.

This I believe