**Reflect on how your physical and virtual environment has shaped your identity.**


**Jada Martin**


Being a young woman at the age of twelve is far more *difficult* than most would understand. Life hasn't always been easy growing up, but no matter what I've *always* held on. But, it's hard sometimes wondering if someone *cares* or *loves* you. I've always wanted people to see the *good* in me, the *kindness* my heart holds. My actions and words can define who I am as a person. I mustn't treat people wrongly because of their actions towards myself.

Since I was around the age of two, I've always lived with my grandmother the same with my brother. My brother has autism; meaning he's *a bit* more different then other people like me and my peers. He learns and acts *differently* than most thirteen year olds probably would. Me on the other hand I am just a *normal* girl, I've grown up to the age of twelve and became *very* mature for my age at the moment. Yes, I do have my flaws and imperfections, but I am me. Living with my grandmother has made a *big* impact on my life as well. People don't understand exactly why I do live with her. Nor do they quite understand the *full* reasoning. It's always been tough seeing peers with their moms and dads. But it's better for me to live with her rather than my mom. If it weren't for her, my life *wouldn't* be the best right now. She saved my brother and I from a *toxic* household; involving my mom along with my mom's 'boyfriend'.

This has *helped* me form my identity because it shows I'm *much stronger* than most. I have scars and I suffered from pain. But it's helped me become less afraid and happier with my life. Sure, I relive those memories, over, and over, and over again.

School and my 'job' has helped out with being quite mature. Middle school is one of the *worst* places I've been *dreading*, people become more *mean*, yet *immaturity* is another thing that teachers *don't* want. Most teachers *believe* that middle school is the time where you *grow up, focus more, and become mature and independent.* Yet, I believe that middle school is the time where you truly *find who you are*. You make jokes, get in trouble with the teachers, you do dumb things to make your friends and other classmates laugh. *You have fun.* But you still *must* be *respectful, mature, and complete your goals and tasks on time.*

I was always told, *stand up tall, back straight, with your head up higher than ever. Be confident and not care what other people think. Become intimidating so people don't mess with you. And when someone strikes first, always strike back.* I've never actually ever *'struck back'* when people say or do things. I usually get upset and try to ignore it. I try to avoid telling a

teacher because then it's like, I'm the, *'teachers pet'*. Or a, *'tattle tail'*, which calling me those bugs me.

I don't cope well with *change*, or with others. It's still hard for me. In school I don't have a lot of friends. Sure, at times people talk to me, which is then a *great opportunity* to make friends, but I just can't. Having social anxiety causes me to be afraid to just present in front of the class. My heart beat *speeds up, my face becomes red, I begin breathing heavily, my words jumble up.* But feeling the eyes of my teachers and classmates feels like they're judging me. Telling me just with their eyes that *my presentation sucks and to do better next time.* When I am presenting and I hear peers *laughing* or *mumbling*; is it because I *said something funny?* Or are they *laughing at me?* Anxiety makes me think about all of this stuff, which probably isn't true yet it still maybe.

I don't know how a lot of people *think about me*, or *what they say*. But as long as I keep my head up, and not care what others think or say about me, just being myself. *Things aren't supposedly as bad.*

On the other hand, my virtual environment is just as *bad*; probably *worse* than how I look at life just from my physical environment. Seeing other people, specifically girls, *makes me feel insecure about the way I look and my body shape.* Sure, I haven't always been the *skinniest*, and when I walk my *thighs rub against each other and move in an uncomfortable way,* but I just have to deal with it. Yes, I do understand - *I can change myself i*n order to be the image I want, and to be the person I want to be. *But, I feel like if I change myself, I won't be me.* I'll be someone I want to be, not me. And of course, I can still change myself and still be me, but, *what if I change and I'm no longer me?*

Seeing other girls one social media like; Instagram or Pinterest, makes me wonder if I'll ever look like them. *What if I just wait?* Maybe I'll magically become skinner, my thighs will shrink, my acne will go away, and I can finally be confident in the way I look. *But no. It doesn't work like that.* But, it's not only girls on social media, there are people in real life too.

Yes, I fully understand that there are other girls; even boys dealing with this, worse even. But, me being able to tell others that they're not alone is a chance people don't get as often as most people would think. That could be because they are too afraid to tell people because they think that even if they do tell someone the important things, they won't care, or they'll get judged. But still telling people that they are not going through this alone can change their perspective.

I have social media, like Snapchat and all that. I've made online friends, and sure, some of them I've never seen and yes they haven't seen me either, but I'm friends with them because they have a broad, amazing personality. They clearly treat me well and with respect. I know I may not be the best friend or person in the world, but I am trying my best to live up to expectations and complete the things I want to do in life. But, still be happy with myself and not care what other people think. I don't want to change everything about myself because someone doesn't like me. I want to be me because one day, it'll only be me.

I will always be me because that's who I want to be, that's who I was meant to be. My virtual environment doesn't matter. Who cares if someone is prettier than I am? I am happy with who I am right now. This all is why I am who I am today, because I've been through so much since I was born. That is why I will always be me no matter whether I change or not. No matter if I finally change my body image to look how I want. Deep down inside, *I will always be me.*