

## Demons

I've always identified, on some level, with the song *Demons*, by Imagine Dragons. The song tells of a person struggling with his thoughts, and telling other people to be aware of the demons inside of him. When I really started listening to this song, I was dealing with my demons.

I remember one of my first major anxiety attacks very clearly. It was during fifth grade science class. I don't remember what led to the topic, but a boy in my class told a story about a huge snake who had eaten a little girl. As awful as this was, it's not something that would usually scare me. I don't have any fear of snakes, but when this boy told the story, it terrified me. I was so scared I was reduced to tears, and I was embarrassed of that for awhile until I realized why I had been so horrified.

For a while after that, I was scared of anything relating to death. It's difficult to explain, but the feeling is one of the worst. It's a hopelessness that grips onto your mind, making it hard for you to get rid of. A lot of things would trigger it, sometimes it was talk of diseases like cancer, sometimes it was learning about people who died unexpectedly, and sometimes the anxiety attacks were completely out of the blue. I couldn't watch the news without freaking out, and I would stay up late thinking about what happens to people after they died. I didn't necessarily fear the unknown, I feared the what-ifs. What if I go to Heaven, but it's not a heavenly as it's made out to be? What I feared even more was what if there is no heaven? What if death is truly nothingness? This was my main fear.

My parents realized what I was going through very quickly, which I am incredibly grateful for. This was the first part to helping me overcome the anxiety. They suggested therapy, which I resisted for a little bit, thinking about the negative connotations that come with going to therapy. Eventually, I agreed. This was easily one of the best decisions I'd ever made. Although I dreaded therapy at the time, I think it really helped me control my anxiety and keep it from taking over my life. My therapist taught me breathing techniques and ways to distract my mind from what I was thinking. She also helped me realize that the best way to stop an anxiety attack was to read. I've been reading since I was very little, and reading books has kept me from having who-knows-how-many anxiety attacks.

After the summer before sixth grade, my anxiety attacks were becoming few and far between, although they still happened from time to time. Then, only 2 months through my first year at Longfellow Middle School, a boy in my grade, Quinn Richardson, passed away.

All of sudden, my fear of dying young was so much more real. This was a boy that, although I didn't know well, was important to a lot of people. He was even in my art class. I thought that this tragedy would make me even more scared than before, that it would make my anxiety worse, but it actually helped. The realism of it shook me, but also made me realize that there was no point in worrying. Some people don't live long, and some live to be eighty, but neither would be worth much if I spent all of it worrying. The fact that Quinn seemed like such a good guy also reinforced my idea that Heaven must exist. I started to really believe in God, and I prayed too. My newfound faith was almost like the cherry-on-top to getting over my anxiety.

I can't say that I never have anxiety attacks any more. I still do, and probably will always have anxiety attacks. But they're so much smaller, and they don't happen often. I can tell when

they are going to happen and stop them in their tracks. When I don't stop them, they aren't nearly as severe as they once were.

I still love the song *Demons*. Whenever I'm asked what song would fit into a story of my life, that song is one of the first that will appear on that list. It's a beautiful song that I'm sure not only spoke to me, but anyone with anxiety, depression, and other mental issues. My demons may still be inside of me, but thanks to so many people and things, I can control them now.