

# A Tale of Middle School Bullying

Courtesy of [Anne](#)

It's never too late to say you're sorry.

On Wednesday night, **I had dinner with an old friend from middle school.** We hadn't seen or talked to each other since I moved away after 7th grade – over 15 years! Through a random friend in common showing her my blog, she saw I was back in the area and emailed a couple weeks ago asking if I'd like to meet up for dinner. **It was fun seeing her** – one of those **“So... what have you been up to for the past 15 years?”** sort of dinners. We had a blast reminiscing about old memories, gossiping about what our other friends were up to now, and catching up on each other's current lives.

And then, just as we were finishing dinner and drinks, she turned to me. **“There's actually another reason I wanted to meet up with you tonight,”** she said. I waited, confused. “Do you remember...” she paused, looking uncomfortable. **“That note in your locker?”**

Did I remember? **How could I forget.**

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My family moved around a lot when I was growing up. **In 2nd and 3rd grade, I lived here in the D.C. area.** I made **an amazing group of friends**, including the girl I met for dinner on Wednesday. I was devastated when my parents told me we were moving again at the end of the year, and I would have to leave all my best friends behind. Flash forward to **7th grade – we moved back to D.C.** and I could not have been more thrilled. My friends threw a surprise welcome back/birthday party for me, and I felt like I was finally home again.

**But things had changed, as they often do at that age for groups of girls.** There were a couple new girls in the group that I didn't know. You wouldn't know it meeting me now, but back then I was actually really shy. A few months into the school year, the new girls decided that for whatever reason they didn't like me. And if they didn't like me, that meant no one else could, not even all my former best friends. I'm sure some of you can relate to what happened then. **I remember everyone avoiding me. I remember sitting down at lunch tables only to have everyone get up and leave.**

And then there was the note.

One day during school, **I opened my locker to find a note lying on the floor.** Passing notes was very popular back then (I assume replaced by text messages nowadays), so I was excited, assuming it was some gossipy tidbit from a friend. I opened it. **And I was paralyzed by what I read.** The note was hastily scribbled and said something along the lines of:  
**Die. Nobody likes you.**

I know this might seem silly now, but **to a 7th grade girl, getting a note like this was the end of the world.** I vividly remember just standing there, staring at the note, reading it over and over again. My heart started beating faster and I felt the blood rushing to my face. I had no idea what to do. Was anyone watching? Were they waiting for my reaction? Should I just close the locker and leave? The note wasn't signed. I had no idea who had written it, but I figured the new girls were behind it. I don't remember if it was the end of the day, and I was able to go to home and

cry in peace. I don't remember if it was just before first period, and I had to sit in class all day with my head down, wondering who else knew about this ultimate shame. But **I do remember how I felt**. And I felt horrible. And betrayed. And sure that nothing would ever be good again.

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And then, on Wednesday night, **my friend told me that she was the one who wrote that note so many years ago**. She had asked me to dinner because she wanted to say she was sorry. She said she has thought about that note often over the years and cringed at the fact that she had done something so horrible. She said she regrets writing it, and that she didn't even really know why she did it. It wasn't that she didn't like me. She did. We were friends. It was probably just that **she was trying to look cool**.

**This post is not meant to make my friend** (and yes, I still call her a friend) **feel bad**. On the contrary – I'm impressed that she had the courage to apologize, so many years later, for something that I didn't even know she was behind. It's clearly water under the bridge now, and as I told her last night, **I know that peer pressure and wanting to be cool makes girls do and say stupid, mean things**. I don't blame her for wanting to fit in. I know now that she didn't really mean what she wrote.

But I didn't know that then.

**It's sad how common it is for girls to put other girls down to make themselves feel better or look cool**. I'm certainly not immune to the pressure – I'm sure I've snubbed others (thought not nearly this harshly, I'd hope) in the past, too, in an effort to impress others. **But that doesn't mean it's okay**.

**I'm hoping that by writing this post and sharing my story, it will encourage others**, especially those that might still be going through those hard middle school and junior high years, **to really THINK about how your actions will affect others**. Looking cool is not worth making others feel badly. Obviously I'm very happy now, and made a great new group of friends in high school, but it doesn't mean I'll ever forget about that note or how it made me feel.

And to those of you that are the current victims of bullying – know that **you are NOT alone. It will get better. I promise**.

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**I decided that the perfect way to end all of this was with another note**, left on the bathroom mirror at school yesterday and inspired by my friend [Caitlin](#)'s wonderful [Operation Beautiful](#) movement. In fact, **I wrote two notes**. But this time – **they were happy**.

SOURCE: [www.operationbeautiful.com](http://www.operationbeautiful.com)