Cyber Bullying

I grew up with the recognition that sticks and stones would break my bones, but words would never hurt me. How ever, what was supposed to be a comforting rhyme only reminded me that no one understood my problem and I was on my own. Bullyingstatisticsorg states that 7% of teenagers have attempted suicide due to being cyber bullied. I'm one of those teens. The bashing and criticizing of me on social media started about three years ago, when I was in sixth grade. Describing myself, I was the average sixth grader. I had a few pimples and had just received braces; however I still had confidence in myself and thought I was fairly attractive. I also was very intelligent for my age and relatively mature. I don't exactly remember why or how the mockery of me started, but I do clearly remember that it did not stop. That's one of the worst characteristics of being cyber bullied. Everything becomes a blur. It's a never ending commotion of searching the internet to see who's bashing you, what they're saying, and who else liked or commented on a post. Checking for information is an addiction, and every victim becomes an addict. I was only cyber-bullied for about 6 months, however it left a lifelong impact on me.

I can still clearly remember the first snide comment written on my Facebook page by an upperclassman about how the freckles on my cheeks looked like moles. I reacted back with a rude comment, and from there it only escalated. I don't know what aggravated all of this hate that appeared upon my Facebook or why random numbers were texting me telling me to kill myself. However I do know that it extremely hurt my feelings, destroyed my confidence, and shattered my inner peace. That's why I advise young, vulnerable teens not to join Facebook or Twitter. If you're just starting to adapt to a new school and you're searching to make friends, talk to people in person. No one insulted or confronted me in the hallways at school or at public social events. Participating in social media sites can only make your self-esteem more susceptible to cowards who hide behind an anonymous post. You will most likely have a more positive social experience if you ditch social media.

During this horrific six month period, I endured Cyber-bullying that included YouTube videos that made a mockery of me, telling me I was worthless and ugly, and I didn't deserve to live. I also received restricted phone calls, and hateful text messages saying I was going to get jumped, and that a gang was going to kill me. I can honestly say that all this revulsion hit me out of the blue, which made me the most upset. I was a well-behaved kid. I had straight A's, was in advanced classes and overall had always socially excelled. I wasn't a nerd, and I wasn't a mean person, but I questioned my worth as there must be a reason why everyone hates me so much. All I wanted was for people to recognize how much I was hurting inside & how much this hate was hurting me. I looked for escape from the pain, so after a month of torment, I burned myself with a curling iron on my wrist. Somehow this was like a release, and I felt a bit of relief as I stared at the bubbling skin on my body. Little did I know that the burn would only become the beginning of my self-harm addiction.

Fast forward a few months and there were cuts and scrapes and burns all scattered on my body. I thought I deserved this. Somehow my parents questioned my long sleeved shirts and the constant sweatpants worn around the house, and one day they made me take them off. Shocked with what they saw, I was quickly admitted to the Crisis Center to treat my wounds which had become infected from the dirty razor blades I was using to release my anguish. My parents rushed to school and met with the school principal. The word got out that I was an "emo freak", and my bullies were suspended from school for a week. This was no closure to me. I still felt like an outcast, and like I didn't belong on the absurd planet lived.

To this day, I still feel guarded. Everyday thousands of children are harassed and bullied online. There really is no way to end cyber-bullying. Even after my bullies were suspended, they still didn't stop tormenting me. Punishing them was like adding fuel to a fire. The word "snitch" has been scarred and sliced into who I had become, which led me to countless suicide attempts. Being cyber-bullied also comes with an expensive cost. My parents have spent thousands of dollars in therapy sessions and antidepressants to help me heal and recover from my tragic six months. I've battled the consequences of cyber-bullying for almost three years now, however I am glad to say that I have become stronger against bullying.

There really is no absolute way to escape cyber-bullying. Society is so wired into social media which is brought into our homes, where our safe spot is supposed to be. A method I used to ease my social anxiety was to create a "safe zone" in my house. This is an area where you can relax and spend time by yourself. When using this zone, I encourage you to write in a journal to release thoughts. Whenever you're feeling low self-worth, write a list of all the people that care about you and love you. Life is always worth living and it does become better. I'm one of the many survivors of cyber-bullying, and because of this I've been diagnosed with Depression, social anxiety, and bipolar disorder. I believe I'm living proof that words can hut, sometimes more than sticks and stones can.