

Essay by Emma Puckett

## **The Importance of Reflection in a Chaotic World**

In my mind, the past two years of my life has been split up into “before” and “after.” Before the world shut down, and now - where every step back to normal is tentative yet has the potential to be problematic. It’s an understatement that this year has changed a lot, but personally, I’ve reached a time of metamorphosis.

Before the world shut down, I was struggling to find myself amidst all the noise. Those teenage blues had arrived, along with feelings of stress and insecurity. But as weeks turned to months, I discovered that while I couldn’t control a pandemic, I could control how I reacted to it. So I chose to take the opportunity to better myself. Not having to care about the way I looked or stress about school or worry about what people would think of my soon-to-be prominent “hillbilly” side allowed me to take time to reflect. We were all stuck at home, but had the freedom to explore who we are as individuals. I baked 20 different kinds of cookies, practiced volleyball, and grew closer to my brother. I discovered my passions, and rooted myself in my faith.

From that time, my confidence and identity continues to grow. I have a better idea of who I am, and what kind of person I want to be. Newly found self-awareness has allowed me to step out of my comfort zone, because I know I can trust my abilities when trying new things. About a month ago, I competed in a public speaking contest, something I would’ve never considered a year ago. Noticing yourself improve and gaining confidence is an incredible feeling.

Additionally, I tend to have a “why not” attitude now that makes life so freeing. I’d rather use the opportunities I have, now that things are opening up again, to branch out. Joining the FFA: why not? Leading worship at youth group: why not? Having important discussion with friends about current events when I usually avoid potential conflict: why not?

I’ve also become more aware of the world. Before, I thought that paying attention to politics and keeping up with current events was a waste of time. Now, I’ve realized that events happening today will affect my life in the future, and I don’t want to stay quiet about that. This kind of growth, gaining a voice in a world full of loud opinions, has pushed me to become an informed member of society and is preparing me for adulthood.

We’ve reached a point where we have no other option but to take this catastrophe of a year, and make a stand for positive change. Things are never going to be the same, but if we take the time to reflect on the past and look towards a better future, maybe it won’t be such a bad thing.