

Committee for Integrity Enhancement

1st Place Middle School Division 2014

Kennedy Little

North Side Middle School

6th Grade

Mrs. Turner, teacher

W. Clement Stone said, "Have the courage to say no. Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity."

While I agree with Mr. Stone, I don't know if there is a magic key or if a life with integrity is so easily obtained. Maybe it is a lack of courage, or a courage that's gained over time, that holds me back. I am very polite and I always consider others feelings before I speak; that is not now, nor has it ever been an issue for me. My problem is not with others, my problem is with myself.

There are many ways to live a life of integrity; however, being honest in what you say and what you do is a big part of it. Speaking up and sharing my opinion has always been difficult for me because when you share your opinion, you share a part of yourself. You are not only asking others to trust that they will respect your opinion, even if it is different than theirs.

Speaking up is hard and it feels like you are the only person in the world that has the fears you do, but rationally you know that isn't true. I know I'm not the only kid that is afraid of being laughed at, or judged by the other kids. I know I am not the only kid that is worried about not being good enough. However, sometimes your brain and your heart don't work together and fear runs the show.

That is the reason, when I saw the topic for this essay, I wanted to swallow my fears and share my opinion. I wanted to write because it is scary for me but I know I am not alone and maybe this will help me or even someone else. I have to face my fears, raise my hand in class, speak up around my friends, and even share my opinion in an essay. I have to do all of this and more, because these things are just practice for the really important times we need to speak up.

I heard about a girl last year, not much older than I, that was being bullied. She ended up taking her own life because of the bullying. She must have felt so alone; she must have felt like no one could stop the bullying. I don't want anyone to feel like that, I don't want one of my classmates to feel so alone when I could speak up and help them. I won't say it would be easy because speaking against a bully makes you a target, but I know I have a strong support system at home and with my friends, the other kid might not.

To have integrity in how we show our opinion is not as easy as a magic key but it is not impossible either. First we have to know, love, and trust ourselves enough to have an opinion. Then we have to find the courage to share what we find. I think that courage like that is the kind that comes with experience. I know that I am more courageous this year than I was last year. Finally, we have to have compassion; we have to care about what is happening around us more than we care about being laughed at. With trust, courage, and compassion we can change the world.