**What is the hardest part of being a teenager now? What’s the best part? What advice would you give younger siblings or friends (assuming they would listen to you)?**

Teenage is not exactly how the movies like “High School Musical” portray it to be, kids out of nowhere coming out to sing and dance. Not even close to “Mean Girls”, where all girls worry about is clothes and gossip about other students. In real life there, is no singing and dancing in corridors and there is no “Burn Book”.

While I was in my mid-teens I had too many insecurities and a constant fear that I’ll be judged. The notion of “what would people think?” was running in my mind all time. Even before doing something simple, I usually had multiple questions running in my mind like “wait, what would they think about me?”, “Would they like me after this?”, “Will they talk to me or ostracize me?” Now when I look back I see how my younger self has struggled trying to fit amongst people, trying to get an identity for myself while working hard to attain good grades. I had to face the peer pressure, the body shaming which created psychological strains on me. I had to fight my own demons, waking up everyday with a dread to go to school and face hostile people. Now that I’m 18, I still have my insecurities but I’ve learnt to deal with them. I am not free from problems, but I understood that I need to accept the way I am and work for myself rather than trying to impress others.

Ironically, the worst things that happened to me, brought out the best in me. These circumstances made me a strong and independent person. Today, I have learnt to become self-sufficient, both emotionally as well mentally.

Given a chance, I would advise my younger siblings that it’s okay to let loose. It’s okay if not everyone accepts you the way you are. You shouldn’t expect that everybody should accept you. Most importantly, I would tell them NEVER to change themselves for others, rather, change should come if you feel that you need change yourself. Embrace the way you. This is you. If you can’t accept yourself, no one can accept you.