

Redefining my sense of self

By Isabella Boedeker
SECTION EDITOR
PHOTO | Josie Cueter

“This one test score does not define you.”

Words I never cared to listen to. They slip right through my restive mind, as I consistently tie my self-esteem to my grades.

My idea of perfection shattered during my sophomore year. I received my first B+ and thought the world was over. The sting of disappointment left me uneasy, prompting a firm resolve: “Never again.”

“A B+ is a great grade. Just relax,” my friends irritatingly repeat to me.

It wasn’t that I thought a B was a horrible letter, it was entirely that I based my identification on being a straight-A student. My success was measured by the letter, not how hard I worked.

However, looking back at this frustrating point, I feel sick to realize how much I let this one grade affect me. I became unbearably competitive. I always had to have a better score than someone else, or my mood would instantly decline. I would look fatigued and shorten all conversations, implying that I wanted to be left alone. I failed to understand that there is so much more to success than grades.

“You seem stressed. I am worried about the pressure you put on yourself,” my parents tensely expressed.

Little did I know this would be a turning point for me: fewer nights of frustrated tears, fewer nights of 3 hours of sleep and so much less of my previous habits. I also realized that people care more about who I am

than I do. This understanding allowed me to move forward with grace and know that people appreciate me for my work ethic and my perseverance, rather than the outcome.

I was told as a 5-year-old that if I worked hard and always tried my best, I’d achieve remarkable things - things like the letter A in fat black ink at the top of my test papers. My strong yearning to earn an A derives from long nights of studying and migraine after migraine during hours of memorization.

“Isabella, relax, you’re going to do good,” my teachers constantly emphasize before every test as they see my nerves escalate.

People just assume I’m smart, but never consider the effort I give. They overlook that I’m not inherently gifted and question my devotion to my grades. It’s perplexing why a mere letter can cause such intense stress, yet I’m aware of the extent to which I’m willing to sacrifice just to attain a sense of validation. My outer figure is so desperate for other people’s validation that I began to lose my self-validation.

While I would say that I still hold myself to a high standard to achieve A’s I acknowledge how far I’ve come as an individual. Now, I am proudly able to confront challenges with more composure.

“You are not defined by this test score.”

I hang on to these few words a few seconds longer as my AP English teacher has instilled her motto in my brain. From her message, I’ve learned that the essence lies in your individuality and the respect with which you treat others. I do know I am not merely judged on an assessment.



Your Turn: What is your favorite Girl Scout Cookie?

Elissa Singh
INTERN



FRESHMAN KEANAN MARTIN: “Trefoils because they look like little characters and animals.”



SOPHOMORE COLE MCLEAN: “Thin Mints because I feel like they are really refreshing.”



JUNIOR CAMI LYNN: “Probably Samoas because I think they’re just really good and I like coconut.”



SENIOR KRISTINE BONNELL: “My favorite Girl Scout Cookies are the Thin Mints because I like the minty flavor and the chocolate flavor as well and I think it pairs really nicely.”



TEACHER SARAH NEWTON: “My favorite Girl Scout Cookie is the Thin Mints and it’s because of the memories it brings back. I used to have Thin Mints and milk after school with my mom and my sister.”

