

DeWeese Smith - 10th Grade

Springfield Township High School; Erdenheim, PA

On March 12th, 2020, at 2:25 PM, Springfield Township Middle School was let out for a two-week quarantine due to the Covid-19 virus. Two weeks turned into a month, and one month turned into a year and a half. Throughout that dreadful year and a half, many things shaped me into who I am today. Not having any social interactions outside of your immediate family leads to major social anxiety when talking to other people. I didn't know how to manage when going back to in-person school for my 10th-grade year, especially when I had my first high school in-person IEP meeting.

One Year later... October 15th, 2021, I entered my IEP meeting, where I met with all of my teachers and discussed how I was doing in all my classes and what I could do to improve. I remember being visibly nervous, talking quietly, profusely sweating. You could even hear my legs repeatedly tapping the ground at 1,000 miles per hour. Each teacher shares their opinions, and everything is relatively good. Then Mr. Tengen walked in, my guidance counselor. I wasn't nervous at first because I thought nothing of it. But as he entered and finally sat down, he brought up the big questions. "What do you wanna do when you're older?" "Do you plan on going to college?" "If so, what would you major in?" I was shocked, and my stomach dropped to the floor. This was the last thing I expected out of all the things he could've said. I told them reluctantly, "I don't know," I kept repeating, feeling nervous and unsure. It felt as if I was in eighth grade yesterday. It felt so surreal they were already asking about college. "Do you want to go to college?" "I don't know" "Do you want to go to trade school?" "I don't know." The words felt heavy on my tongue. "How do you feel about...?" "I don't know," my heart started to beat faster. Almost every question Mr. Tengen asked concluded with I don't know.

Surprisingly, Mr. Tengen said, "it's okay that you don't know what you want to do." He said that it was normal for kids my age to be confused in life and not know what they want." I felt very relieved by this, knowing that I wasn't the only one feeling this way and that I can relate to other teenagers. He then said with reassurance, "it's okay to now know what you want in life! you can't figure out what you wanna do without knowing who you really are." It felt like a huge car was lifted off my chest at that moment. My meeting finally came to an end, and I said my regards to my teachers. As I walked out the door my counselor's words kept repeating in my head—as if I was back in the room right in front of him. Those words still repeat in my head. They remind me that "it's okay not to know what you want in life." Nowadays, I've taken that saying to heart. I'm not as nervous as I used to be about the future because most people my age are going through the same things, maybe even worse. So I learned to start taking things day by day and not thinking about the future all the time.