

India Stutman - 10th Grade

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As I woke up with extreme nausea and jitters, I noticed my whole body was cold from head to toe, but my stomach was warm from all the rumbling it was doing. I knew it would be a change in the system for what I was about to do today, but I still didn't like the feeling of that change. As I'm stumbling to get dressed, a thought pops in my head from the night before. It's of my mom telling me that everyone gets nervous on the first day of school, especially since we've been online for a year now. I can proudly say that my mom helped me get through the morning of the first day of school anxiety. The explicit taste of the dried-up toothpaste on my lips from the night before made nausea even worse. I knew I could push through this chaotic morning of emotions, but something kept me from going in-person to school. The constant fear keeps coming up of how my grades will be once I'm in person. Every student on the planet earth during the pandemic has successfully nailed the skill of cheating online. Now I notice... I'm not going to have that opportunity ever again. I finally have a moment to clear my mind, and I put my backpack on and get in the car with my dad. Looking at my dad with his eyes half shut, hands on the steering wheel—driving safely—I realized that he took time out of his day to wake up at 7 am and drive me to school.

Little did I know, I would be writing about this event on a Wednesday afternoon in my classroom, five months into school, with a completely different mindset from the first day of school. I never noticed what a strong impact school had on my mental state. Having something to stress about, look forward to hating, is oddly refreshing. On the other hand, when I was online, I had nothing to look forward to because it was basically like the same day was repeated over and over again. Wake up, get a computer, stay in bed for six hours, go downstairs for dinner, and do it again. The difference between this first day of school from all the other first days I've experienced over the years was that I was so much more thankful for this one.

Noticing that I shouldn't take school for granted, I walk into the building like it's my last day. My stomach continues to rumble as I walk down the hallway, confused about where my class is. The narrow hallway with identical doors on each side was an upgrade from my bedroom. All I was focusing on at that very moment was to walk into the right class and not embarrass myself as other kids did to themselves. Having all these emotions come back just from walking into a building was like fireworks just exploded on the entire planet. I finally found my class and walked in abruptly with my head held high. Stepping into that classroom was like stepping into my future. I have never looked back since.