

Accepting My Shyness

By Rachel Harris

Junior high was not an easy experience, and I wasn't expecting my first day of high school to be any better. All through junior high I was painfully shy. Terribly, awfully shy. I didn't feel comfortable talking to new people, because I didn't feel confident in who I was. In between classes I mostly kept to myself, walking quickly to and from my locker with my head down, trying to look busy. Most of my weekends were spent by myself, either reading books, doing homework, or re-watching beloved TV shows.

I wanted my experience that year to be different, but I wasn't sure how it was going to be. As I went to my first class, I looked around at the other students and felt a surge of terror. "I don't want to talk to any of these people," I thought. I didn't want to go through painful introductions and awkward silences. So instead I spent the hour staring firmly at my desk, not looking at or talking to anybody.

By the time homeroom came along, I was convinced that my freshman year was going to be just as lonely as junior high. Fighting back tears, I silently slid into my seat, once again determined not to look away from my desk.

"Hello," said a voice beside me. "My name is Taylor. What's yours?"

I looked up and saw a nervous-but-sincere-looking girl sitting across from me.

"Oh," I said, "hello. My name is Rachel."

After that Taylor mentioned that she had just moved into the area a couple weeks ago. She knew even fewer people than I did, and she was hoping to make new friends. Then we talked about the normal things—school, classes, and our hopes for high school. Our conversation was a little awkward, but overall, talking to Taylor was really nice. The next day in homeroom when I ran into her again, she invited me to sit by her and we talked more. The more I saw her and the more she casually said hello to me, the more comfortable I felt responding back. In the following weeks, Taylor became the one person I felt OK stopping to talk with between classes.

A few months later, I was feeling particularly down. I didn't feel confident in myself and found it hard to believe that anyone would want to be friends with me. This feeling lasted day after day, until one evening, after a week or so of this, my phone started to ring. I answered it.

"Hey," said the other person on the line. "This is Taylor. How's it going, Rachel? I just wanted to call and say hi."

Taylor and I talked for a while, and this time our conversation was a lot smoother. I really enjoyed talking with her—she showed genuine interest in getting to know me, and that helped me feel like I was worth being friends with. Later when our conversation ended, I began to realize something important. I felt as if Heavenly Father was trying to help me realize that I could be happy about who I am and what He has given me. Taylor's phone call and her continual invitations over time helped me realize that who I am is great and that I can make feel comfortable being my reserved self.

After that phone call, Taylor and I started spending a lot of time together as friends. She accepted me as I was, and we had many great adventures in high school.

I knew Taylor was a true friend because she was friendly in a way that was not superficial. She was genuinely interested in getting to know me and was consistent in her interest. When it comes to making friends with others, behaving as Christ would—with charity, understanding, and sincerity—makes all the difference. Taylor did that for me through her warm attitude and honest interest in me as a person.

I'm still a shy person, but now I know that even shy people like me can have great friends. **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.



Would my shyness keep me from having friends?