



# be(you)tiful

## senior opens up about her struggles with self harm

BY CASEY LEE

Most people don't understand. If I tried to explain it to you, I'm not sure I could because I don't even fully understand it myself. I don't really know how to say this: I am a part of the one percent of people in the United States that inflicts self-harm. I cut my wrists. I feel like this is an A.A. meeting where someone stands up and says "I'm blank, and I'm an alcoholic." Well, I'm Casey and I'm a cutter.

Why do I do it? I think I've been asked that question about a hundred times. I've asked it myself about a thousand. I guess the simple answer would be, it's how I cope. People cope by overeating, under eating, doing drugs, drinking etc. I cope by cutting. I know it's difficult for you to wrap your head around. When you get upset, you naturally feel the urge to do a certain thing, right? It's the same with me. I just naturally feel the need to cut myself. I know this sounds weird, but it's normal for me. I guess overall, the real answer is much more complicated, and hard to explain. Cutting gives me a sense of control. I know, it doesn't really make sense. But I get to choose when, where, and how much I cut, and somehow that comforts me.

I also cut because I feel extremely guilty for my past mistakes. I've struggled with forgiving myself. Forgiveness isn't something I feel I deserve. I'm trying to learn how to forgive: to forgive people that have hurt me, and most importantly myself. I hated who I was, and more than anything I hated the person I had been. Guilt is a strong emotion. I'm cutting because I feel guilty, and yet cutting makes me feel guilty. Makes sense right? I'm inflicting pain on myself on purpose. People are constantly trying to live, and I've been wanting to die. Crazy right?

I cannot say this enough: for the most part, people that cut are not crazy. We are not psychopathic, mentally ill, crazy people. And we do not need to be put in institutions. For the most part I'm just like you. I just have some slight imperfections, but who doesn't? Yes, people who cut need help, but no, I do not need to be put on medications, or be treated differently. I don't need to go into therapy to "talk about my feelings" and then have someone tell me what's wrong with me. I already know what's wrong with me.

You cannot define someone. I'm sick of being called "depressed" and "suicidal." What does that even mean? Do you think that it's really possible to define someone's life? To define who someone is? I am Casey. I'm not depressed. I'm not suicidal. I'm not crazy. I am Casey.

That's the issue with cutting. It's so

misunderstood and misinterpreted. What people assume about it is usually wrong. Believe it or not, most people who cut aren't suicidal. Some are, but most people don't cut because they want to die. According to society, dark-hair, dark makeup, and "emo" classify cutters, not a blonde hair, blue eyes, Johnson County girl.

So what has kept me going? What has stopped me from killing myself? How do you go from wanting to die, to wanting to live again? If it weren't for my family, friends, and God I wouldn't be here today. For a long time, I didn't tell anyone. I was terrified. I didn't want to be judged, and I didn't want to disappoint anyone. How would you react? Would you know what to say? Because "everything happens for a reason" doesn't really qualify. But what should I expect you to say? Nothing. I understand how hard it is to find the right words. I had support, and I had people that cared about me, but something was still missing.

January of my junior year, I found God. Well, I guess He found me. Sounds cliché, but let me rewind a little. Growing up I hated God. I hated Him and blamed Him for everything bad that had happened in my life. I was so angry with Him. Then the cutting got to a point where I was on the bathroom floor digging a knife into my wrists begging God to kill me. Begging Him. Telling myself, "You're not good enough. You're ugly. You're stupid. You're not worth anything. Nobody loves you. You don't even love yourself. You mean nothing. Your life means nothing." Taking your own life is a very scary thing. God has a funny way of coming into your life at just the right time. I needed Him. And I may be a mess, but I'm His mess. His beautiful, indescribable, yet perfect mess.

This has been the most changing time of my life. I have fully accepted God into my heart. I am a completely new person. However, cutting is a hard habit to break, and most cutters continue to cut throughout their entire lifetime. I think about it every single day. One step at a time, that's all it takes. It's something that I will continue to struggle with, but I am so much stronger. This past year has given me courage. I view life differently now. It is so precious to me. So many people take living for granted. There's the possibility that I couldn't be alive right now, and that amazes me. I am alive, and for the first time in so long, I am excited to live.

But something that I can guarantee you is that life is worth living. I know what it feels like to be lost, and alone. To feel numb. I know what it feels like to have no hope. And I promise you that you will never be alone. You matter, you mean

something to someone. I don't care what anyone says or what you tell yourself, you matter.

And don't be afraid to be you. For a long time I was ashamed to be me. I hid behind who I was; I hid behind my scars. Don't hide behind who you used to be, because it'll hold you back from the person you might become. Embrace your flaws and your imperfections and accept the things you can't change. Because your flaws and imperfections are what makes you, you. Look in the mirror every morning and realize how truly beautiful you are. Beauty can come in all forms. My scars may look ugly, but to me they are beautiful because they remind me of who I am and reveal my strength. They are a part of me. Don't ever be scared of what someone might think of you. Your strength and your courage, are things that other people admire. Strength lies in differences, not in similarities. It's something that others lack. Don't ever let someone tell you that you're not good enough. You know that you are. Don't let them tell you what you can and can't do. Don't let them tell you who you are. Remember, nobody can define you. Ugly, fat, stupid, beautiful, skinny, tall, crazy. They're just words.

So why am I telling you all of this? To make you be a Christian? To help you? For pity? Honestly, I fear your judgments, assumptions, and misunderstandings of it all. I would never want it to change the way you view me or look at me. I don't want you to look at my arms when you see me; I want you to look at my eyes. I would never want my scars to define who I am. They made me who I am, but they are not who I am.

I didn't kill myself. I choose to be alive. Suicide takes an average of 35,000 lives every year, and I refuse to be a statistic.

I hope that this changes your outlook on things, on life. I hope it decreases your judgment of people that you know nothing about. Keep in mind that the definition of judgment is the ability to judge, or to form an opinion, and that opinions aren't always true. Accept people who aren't like you. Learn how to love everyone, even yourself. I want you to cherish and enjoy life. Live your life with the intention of making an impact on someone else's. If you think about it, one person is so insignificant compared to the billions of people on this earth. But if sharing my story touches someone, helps one person, or saves one life, then it's worth telling. Dr. Seuss said it best, "a person's a person, no matter how small."