

For the fifteen years of my life, there have been many questions circulating in my brain. “Why do girls go to the bathroom together? Does everybody live on the same schedule? Are friends really that important? However, the biggest question I always had was this: **“Is solitude a negative thing?”** What do you think?

When people are young, being together with others is very important. Some people want to be one of the “cool kids”. Others want to keep a lower profile. The people in my elementary school were no different. As soon as school had begun, it seemed that the entire grade was a tree. Everyone was a leaf stuck to a branch. And every branch grew out of the same tree trunk. Everyone had friends and connections and they were all linked. Some people, however, don’t seem to fit on that enormous tree. They are one of those lonely leaves on the ground looking up at what they could have been part of. I was one of them.

I used to spend recess with my nose stuck in books while the rest of the class would explode in conversation. *I still do!* I was one of those people who walked along the paths home from school with their head down, trying to ignore all the laughing of other people walking together. Those were the hardest times of my life, and I thought I was the most unfortunate girl on the planet. However, from an early age, I tried to make good use of my solitude by immersing myself in English. I decided to make my solitude into something positive, something that would make me stronger or happier in some way. And English became my best friend. Now, I have been friends with English for about nine years and I have never looked back.

Why did I choose English? Actually, even now I’m not really sure. My parents are both Japanese and they don’t speak it. Also, I have never lived abroad – in fact, the first time I went to Canada was when I was around ten years old. I have also visited Australia and America. When I was six, I started reading and writing. I could take globs of English words I learned and mold them into any shape I wanted. When I was little, it was all a game and I made up stories using words that were floating in my head. Most of the time they never made sense, but I knew I was getting better and better at English. Soon, having conversations in English became a breeze for me. I was speaking and actually enjoyed it. And I made many friends with this new tool of mine.

Before I knew it, I was making speeches and entering English contests like this one, for example. English became a rope that tied me to many kinds of people- people who I can share my feelings with. And people who I can actually call friends. Yes, speaking isn’t my strong point. But I don’t feel so alone anymore. English allows me to come out of my steel shell and relax a little bit. And it has made school life easier in a way. I don’t have to learn to speak English- I just use it, thankfully.

So my friends, it took a while but now I know for sure that you can actually benefit from being alone. Solitude has taught me that it is okay to focus on something you like and go with it, like English. You can travel to foreign countries and meet lots of people. The thing you focus on can be a sport, an instrument or whatever you like.

In the end, I made friends and connections with people from other countries using my English skills which I learned while being alone in the first place. With English, I can go wherever I want. And I most certainly will.

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