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English

Turtola Period 2

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Highschool Pressure

Laura, a high school student from the short story “The Fan Club” is on the outside. Throughout the story Laura makes decisions that impact her friendships and even her social status among her peers. The choice Laura made is neither correct or incorrect. She had done something wrong that could be bullying, but there is a reason why. Numerous studies have been conducted to explain the reason behind adolescents making decision such as Laura's when in a group of peers or with friends. Laura wanted to feel included so she cracked under the pressure.

In the short story “The Fan Club” Laura believes that several students in what she deems the “in” clique are gossiping about her throughout the school day. Laura had longed to be a part of the group and to have more friends. Rachel, a student whose’ only friend is found in Laura has been bullied by other student about her appearance and her family but enjoys being with Laura, the only person who has treated her kindly and in a way that resembles a friend. When Laura decided to follow along with the “popular” crowd with their crude prank when Diane, a girl from the “in” group asked her to, even if she felt it was wrong of her to scrutinize someone who had called her a friend. Rachel felt that she lost the only friend she had in the school. What happened to Laura was peer pressure, she felt that the only way she could fit in was if she did

what everyone else in the group was doing without truly considering the consequences. A study from a clip of Alan Alda's "Brain On Fire" shows how much peer pressure can affect one's skills to comprehend what they are doing in a safe, rational way. One of the tests in the study was to operate a car on a computer game, the objective was to decide whether or not it was safe to pass through an intersection with a traffic light. If one made the wrong decision they would crash the car and fall the game.

Alex, a teenager who was a part of the study as a test subject, played the stoplight game, as it is called, while in an MRI machine to record his brain activity. While he was alone, Alex survived many more traffic lights than when he thought his friends were watching him play. The MRI scan of Alex's brain while playing the game show that when he played believing his friends were watching, the reward part of his brain was being activated. When he was doing something to impress his friends he felt rewarded hence the reason behind adolescents becoming more reckless when in groups. Scientifically there is no change in the behavior of adults when with their friends and when they are by themselves in the stoplight game adults drove the same way when around their friends whereas teenagers became less focused on traveling safely and sped through stops such as the way Alex did with his friends, not because they were a distraction as many people have thought for years but because of the peer pressure. Children have an objective to impress their peer even when it means committing a crime or risking the wellbeing of themselves or others, participating in activities such as these as a result of friends or other children asking one to can give a someone a sense of belonging and acceptance, something that many teenagers, children, and possibly even adults long for from friends and peers.

In the book “The Geeks Shall Inherit The Earth” written by Alexandra Robbins, she shadowed seven high school students, six outsiders and one popular cheerleader. Robbins found that the most successful people in the world had not been in the “inner circle”, J.K. Rowling and Tim Gunn were some of those people both having been bullied in high school, but despite that they became some of the most rich and successful people writing books or creating their own fashion television show. Even if the nerds, the new kids, and the geeks know how what could be their favorite wrighter was bullied or left out of the popular circle the way they are some may still want to be a part of the clique that gets all of the attention. Laura was one of the students who wanted to be a part of the “in” clique at her school, she was willing to do whatever she could similar to how an abundance of teenagers behave today all because they want to be seen and the want to be the name that everybody know. The kind of popularity Laura and numerous others strive for is perceived popularity. Perceived popularity is someone who is influential, visible to everyone, and recognizable, the level of their popularity is based on their reputation and are what some have considered the “mean popular”. In many teenage high school movies the antagonist is the student who is a perceived popular kid. Some movies focus on the second type of popularity called sociometric popularity, this is based on how much the student body truly enjoys them as a person, sociometric popularity could additionally be addressed as “nice popularity”.

Laura fell victim to the peer pressure of the social hierarchies. Feeling that the only way for her to become friends with the top of the high school food chain she needed to dispose of the

only thing weighing her down, Rachel, the weird girl who no one would be friends with aside from Laura. The decisions she made may have an explanation why Laura would participate in such a joke, but they do not validate them. All Laura wanted to do was be part of the “in” group even if her consequences cost her the only true friend she may have had. No matter what the reason pressuring someone to do something they don't want to participate in is inexcusable the same way that choosing to participate is, peer pressure is never an option and falling into it may be hard to avoid but it is still possible.