

Friday, July 29, 2022

## Making waves

Hi. My name is Maggie. I'm a 9th grader in a slightly unusual school. And I have hydrophobia.

For those of you who don't know what hydrophobia is, it's the fear of water. (cue video montage of surprise pool parties being ruined once I pass out.) For those who do, good job! You get a Twizzlers I dropped on the ground! Eat up.

And for those who have hydrophobia, I hope this story helps.

I guess it started when my teacher was explaining the group project.

"This activity is when I pick groups of a set number, (no trading!)" Mr. Brown said. "I give you a broad idea of your topic, you and your group choose a smaller idea inside the idea, and you give a presentation—together!"

After he was done going over the rules, Mr. Brown read names off of a piece of paper and paired up classmates. I was in with Seth, Josie, and Aaron. I wasn't really friends with them, even though I knew them, which, now that I think about it, that might have been Mr. Brown's goal. Huh.

We had gotten "water" for our broad idea—yeah, I know. Moving on.— and my group brainstormed about what should our main idea be.

"What about we think about not-that-popular-ideas concerning water?" Aaron asked. "Then we'd know that we'd have an original idea!" We all thought about water things, then rejected them as too popular.

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Then Josie popped up. “I know! What about... hydrophobia!” (yes, I know. ) Everyone thought about it and agreed! I went along, cause, what the heck.

I recited facts for Aaron about hydrophobia and some studies about it, while they all stared and tried to find the studies I talked about. “How do you know so much on hydrophobia?” Seth gawked. I cleared my throat. “Um, cause I’m the resident hydrophobic.” “Huh.” Josie said, then her eyes grew wide. “This might be too personal, but can we do the presentation on you? Like, hydrophobic?”

I thought about it, then said, “Sure, why not?” Aaron looked up from his phone and said, “It all checks out. We can use this in the project.” “Along with Maggie.” Seth put in. Aaron blinked, then: “Why’s Maggie our project?” We filled him in.

After school, over at Aaron’s house, the group interviewed me on how afraid I was— “Does a river seem scary?” “Getting in it, yeah.” “What about a glass of water?” “No, is broccoli scary to you?” — and Seth asked, “What about water is scary?” I answered all the questions, Aaron’s and Seth’s.

Once Aaron got the data he needed, he moved on to educating me. “We do not have to fear water just because it has bacteria in it, some bacteria is good! And it’s all filtered out in pools anyway-“

“All right, I think I get it,” I sighed. “I know some water is good, but I still freak out next to a pool! There’s nothing you can do about that!” Josie sat me down and said “Getting frustrated won’t help. You need to meditate.” “Meditate?” I asked. “Like humming and smelling candles?” “You

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could do that,” Josie said as she relaxed, “But I’m talking about thinking deeply. I want you to think deeply about water, and tell me everything.”

So that’s basically what I did. She sat cross-legged and eyes closed, while I tried to think deeply and not fall asleep. (Alexa, how do you spell “ohm”? “Arm is spelled A-R-M.” /sigh) Eventually, I gave up and reported back to Josie on my thoughts, “I’ve not liked water since I almost drowned” etc, etc.

“I have a feeling,” Josie mused, “that you aren’t actually scared of water.” “WHAT” I barked.

“That is so-“ “Hear me out!” Josie interrupted. “I think you are more scared of the memory of water!” I thought about that. “huh. ...maybe?”

After a few afternoons of that, we were at the eve of the presentation with only data and not a lot of success. I sighed. “This is so going to fail. Your whole grade counts on getting rid of my phobia!” Josie conferred with the guys, who were laying out the data to make the speech out of, then pulled me away.

“I may have some advice that might help,” Josie confided. “Sometimes, you can’t live in fear of when the next wave will come. You have to make waves. Practice that tonight, and we’ll see in the morning.”

The next morning, at my school’s front door, I met up with the group. Addressing Josie, I said “I tried it out last night, and I think it might work-“ then got cut off by the warning bell.

In class, me and my group finished up showing and explaining the data. I was feeling slightly adventurous, so I cleared my throat and started the story that had been playing out since our teacher spoke about a group project.

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“-and over these past few days, I’ve learned that sometimes, I have to make waves. And sometimes I need to remind myself that I make waves, not fall under them. Thank you. That’s all.

Josie, then Aaron and Seth, stood up and started clapping. The rest of the class got to their feet also and applauded.

So, that’s my story. I hope you learned something, or at least enjoyed it.

Signing off, Maddie.