

#16

Lauryn - who is excluded by her friends

Type: Covert

The following Monday I told the girls that I was good to go with my new phone and that they could start messaging me.

It was Casual Clothes Day and I always got a bit anxious on these days. I try to look my best and wear what I think looks right and okay.

When I got to school I kept an eye out on the cool group of girls to see what they were wearing. I figured that I didn't look so out of place. My jeans were okay, but they all seemed to be kind of matching with what they were wearing. Later that day I found out that they'd all texted each other and organised their outfits the night before. I figured that if I was able to text as well I'd be a part of the main group. So that night I begged Mum to let me get a phone so I could text and she promised that at the end of the month I could have one. I'd be able to hook up with the girls anytime, go to films with them and basically properly fit in with them, rather than be a bit on the outside, which is how I felt things were at the moment. It was hard but exciting counting down

the days. I was sure that once I got my new phone I'd be right in straight away with the popular girls. They all had smart phones; it was the only thing different about me and them.

Finally the day arrived for Mum and me to pick out my phone. The guy explained the plan and I promised Mum that I'd keep an eye on my account. She said she'd be keeping an eye on it too!

The following Monday I told the girls that I was good to go with my new phone and that they could start messaging me. I gave them all the details via the school email.

No messages came through for me that first night, which surprised me a little bit. I figured maybe the girls were doing homework or something. Tomorrow would be different.

Tuesday came and went and there were still no messages. Maybe I'd got the details of my account wrong, but I knew I hadn't. So I emailed my details through again. The following morning there was a message for me.

'Hey, Lauryn, we don't think you, well...like...you don't really fit with us.' And another with a name I didn't even know, 'Forget it, Lauryn, we don't have time for you.'

I stared at the phone feeling confused and a bit humiliated. Is this what they thought of me?

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It's important for Lauryn to feel that she fits in with a group and doesn't feel like an outsider, but the first step is for her to evaluate herself.

Is she a person that:

- ★ Has a passionate interest, or a creative way of seeing things that certain people would judge 'different' or 'unusual' since it falls outside of the narrow range of what they know?

- ★ Is able to connect with people that others don't seem to understand or appreciate?
- ★ Is more open than most people to exploring new ideas or trying out solutions that others are afraid of or consider too risky?
- ★ Is reluctant to partake in the pettiness, competitiveness, or mean-spirited comments that others engage in and which would keep her from fitting in?
- ★ Can look around and wonder how certain people know so easily how to be accepted, almost as if they got the instruction book that you never received?

If Lauryn answered 'yes' to any of the questions, she should feel proud of her individuality! Her uniqueness may actually be a strength that will guide her on a different (and perhaps more rewarding) pathway.

It is not uncommon to have the feeling 'I don't belong here', and the feeling is likely to be a trigger for us to evaluate what we are trying to achieve and to make some changes.

We need to be aware of what our intention or goals are. Why is it important that I belong to a particular group? What can I offer them? Do they have similar values and ethics as me? Do I want to be associated with them? Are they good people? It appears in this situation that the group is just not right for Lauryn. Does she really want to be associated with such girls?

After evaluating herself and what she stands for, the next step is to identify people who hold some of the same values and interests that Lauryn has and make a move to include them in her life in some way.

Remember, it's okay to be messy, out there, cool, loud, clumsy, fun, crazy, whatever you want to be - just be yourself.

Key points to remember

Not everyone is nice.

Get to know yourself and what you stand for.

Remember you are unique and you can strive to be the best you.