

Dear Natalie Babbitt,

Years ago I read a book in school called Tuck Everlasting. To me and a lot of the other kids in my class it was just a reading assignment. See, during this time, I was just starting to grow up and starting to see things differently. The way I looked started to matter, the friends I had were becoming closer to me, and boys were becoming cuter, to say the least. I was really starting to feel like I just knew it all. Then something happened that changed my life. I was diagnosed with metabolic syndrome.

Metabolic syndrome is characterized by a group of metabolic risk factors in one person. People with the metabolic syndrome are at increased risk of coronary heart disease and other diseases related to plaque buildups in artery walls, and type 2 diabetes. Risk factors for this syndrome appear to be abdominal obesity and insulin resistance. Insulin resistance is a generalized metabolic disorder, in which the body can't use insulin efficiently. This is why the metabolic syndrome is also called the insulin resistance syndrome. Other conditions associated with the syndrome include physical inactivity, aging, hormonal imbalance and genetic predisposition.

Now that's a lot to take in for a twelve year old. I was so confused about all of this. My school work and grades were falling downhill. The only thing I was keeping up with was reading the book my teacher had assigned us. It took my mind off of my troubles and my thoughts. Life seemed to be pointless. I just couldn't understand why a girl like me who had everything going for her could get her dreams shot down in one doctor's visit. So I just kept reading and taking my time at it. Taking in every word. Watching the characters in my head, seeing Winnie slowly fall in love and actually live her life. The kind of life I wished I could have back. Everything good in my life seemed to have vanished in my distress and all I could think about was my illness. I was aloof to everyone and everything.

Then it all hit me: what this book really meant, why I couldn't stop reading it, why I could so well relate to Winnie. I had allowed my fear of dying and my fear of never finding what I truly wanted in life get in the way of me living. I finished the last chapter and I realized that life is too short to let something I could hardly understand change me. To truly be living you can't fear dying, you have to fear not living. You just have to live your life the best way you can, and have fun doing it. There is a lot more to life than just time.

I'm sixteen years old now. I still have all my problems, but most of them I take medication for. I have my typical teen problems too, but I enjoy every minute of it. I am really good in art and someday I hope to be a cartoonist so I can make kids and maybe even adults laugh. Any day when I feel bad, I think back to the true meaning of that story. I think about how I would rather live a happy life where I don't worry, than live a life where I'm scared of dying. Your book helped me so much more than I ever expected it to. It was not just another school project for me.

Sincerely,

Lacy Bush