

Ann's letter to her mom:

"Since elementary school, if someone asked what superpower I wanted my answer was always the same, mind reading. I never liked the idea of how invasive such a power would be, but I was desperate for even just a little understanding of what others feel and think."

"Not really expressing myself didn't work well in elementary school. Peers and teachers would often ask if something was wrong because I wasn't smiling. I didn't like the struggle of answering these questions, so I started mimicking even more than I remember doing beforehand."

"My brother says I have specific and restricted interests that I'm always talking about...As a kid, it was dogs. The numbers of lists I've got of me categorizing dogs is high and the number of times I read dog breed books is even higher. The librarian eventually attempted to get me to take out other books, but dog breed books for Christmas solved that problem."

"Did you know I had my head in my arms on my desk a lot throughout my younger years at elementary school? At some point my teachers stopped letting me do that. It was so much easier to listen to them with my head in my arms though. That way I blocked out the bright light (that often flickered) and to some extent it helped me ignore my peers."

"After my teachers stopped allowing me to have my head down, I got into the habit of very frequently asking my peers or the teacher what had been said. I think this was because I wasn't sure I understood everything properly because I wasn't able to focus on the teacher so well. This probably also related to the fact I don't always interpret things the same way, so instructions can be confusing sometimes."

"I hated school. It was horribly overwhelming. Some parts of it were okay, but for the most part, I never wanted to be there. The only day I was rather keen on was pajama day, lights out, quiet peers, and reading. My being overwhelmed by middle school is what brought me to live with you. There was no way I could have finished grade 9 at that middle school. In my 20/10/2016 journal, I wrote that you asked me about anxiety stuff I shared on Facebook. According to my younger self, you said that at most I had mild anxiety because I still went to school. I wrote that you didn't understand. I couldn't explain what I felt back then though. But I do remember what I felt. I couldn't break the routine of school. I hated it. I didn't want to go. I can't break routines though, I need them. That why I willingly went to school."