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Getting the most out of high school

When I started high school I was terrified.

Almost every movie or television show creates a scary, yet false, perception of what it's like. The typical things you see on TV: being thrown into trash cans, stuffed in your own locker, band kids getting stuffed into their own tuba cases, or always avoiding one hall because the big 250-pound weightlifter is waiting to beat you senseless. Throughout high school I came to find that it's much different than the big or small screen makes it seem.

Here are some keys to getting the most out of the experience.

Get Involved

Get involved in clubs, sports, the arts, anything you can. I graduated from the International Baccalaureate program at Spruce Creek High School in Port Orange, but I lived in Ormond Beach. I wish I had gotten involved my freshman year because I really didn't find my true group of friends until I started getting involved as a sophomore and even into junior year. Sophomore year I joined drama club, Kiva club and gay straight alliance. Later in my junior year, I joined the marching band. I wish I had done this from the beginning because my freshman year was



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a little rocky due to the hard time making long term friends. This also makes school feel more like a second home because you're usually there a little longer than a normal school day.

As a freshman, I often sacrificed my studying for social events and extra curricular activities. It sounds typical but you need to have a happy medium. You need the social events to get you away so you don't feel trapped by school, but you also need to make sure your studying is done. I say this because colleges don't want to see that all you did was school, they want well-rounded individuals. Also, remember if you want to get into an arts/film/any special program a college

has to offer, you may be killer at that activity, but you need to get into the school academically to participate in that program.

Be yourself

Remember, this is not the time to be a rebel. In ninth grade I wanted to be a totally new person. I lost 15 pounds, dated someone my parents hated, and stopped caring about my school work. This is why I can personally deem ninth grade the worst year of my life. I was trying to be someone I wasn't. Always remember, you are you and there's only one you in this world. Why would you want to change that? Change in you personally comes slowly with experience, not all at once.

— Mariel Kitaif, 18, is a 2016 graduate of Spruce Creek High School. She will attend the University of Central Florida in the fall where she will pursue a degree in journalism.

