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I Believe in Risks
By: Audrey Dotson

In the words of Christie Mason, “Progress always involves risk; you can't progress to second base and also keep your foot on first”. I believe that people have to branch out of their comfort zone in order to obtain the highest level of happiness. A life without risk is a life without desire for greatness.

My sophomore year in high school was not the greatest. I wasn't sure of who I was or what my goals were in life. I was lost and confused. Then, as if fate felt my sorrow, a good friend of mine told me about her new high school she recently switched to and how incredible it was. She told me stories about how amazing the teaching staff, administrators, and people were. She made it seem as if the people there *actually* cared about you and that students weren't just a number or a test score.

However, being an insecure, young teenager, I was scared at the thought of going to a new school. I wasn't sure of what my friends were going to think about me, or if I could even make friends at the new school. Seeing as I already lacked confidence in myself, I wasn't sure I was going to be able to gather the courage to leave what I knew, and the people I've known my whole childhood, for a brand new school.

One day, as I was weighing my options about whether to switch to the new school or stay at the one I was already in, it hit me: I could not grow as a person in the school I was currently attending. How could I expect myself to do well in school if I didn't enjoy it? How was I supposed to make friends if I wasn't even friends with myself? I needed a new environment. An environment where I could expand and grow in a new way. But, in order to do this, I had to reach out of my comfort zone and take a risk.

Making the decision to switch schools was one of the most nerve-wracking and anxiety filled choices of my life. And yet, it was the greatest and most significant decision I have ever made. Without switching schools and taking a risk, I am one hundred percent confident that I would not be the person I am today. Currently, I am the happiest I have ever been, with a set of new friends and experiences that I would not trade for anything. I learned about myself in ways that I didn't think were possible, and I actually *like* going to school.

Looking back on the past four years, I wish I had made the decision to switch schools earlier. However, without the two years at my first school, I wouldn't have recognized the importance of stepping out of my comfort zone in order to achieve happiness. Ironically, taking a risk and being scared, has made me the happiest I have ever been.