Alyse

I lived a quite normal life growing up, until I hit 6th grade. It all started when I needed to go to see my pediatrician because I had a cold that was not getting better. He did the normal checking of the eyes and in my ears, but then he had me take a few deep breaths and noticed I was sitting crooked. I was confused when he asked me to stand up and reach for my toes. But it was because he could see my spine's abnormal shape and referred me to an orthopedic doctor.

That one moment where I just expected to get some antibiotics for a cold, changed my back’s history forever. Soon after, I went to my first orthopedic appointment with Dr. Beebe and he took x-rays to discover my back was worse then my parents and I thought. My curve started out at 30 degrees at the largest point. I then had to get fit for a brace (which I absolutely dreaded) and was told to wear it 23 hours a day. Of course I would do what any kid would, and try to sneak out of it and leave it in my locker at school, but for the most part I wore it as the doctor instructed. I went to a small private middle school and everyone there was nice about my whole situation and I'm very lucky to not have been made fun of. The students even decorated my brace, however, I knew my self-esteem dropped extremely along with the bracing. I became very self-conscience and I felt like I needed to hide something, when in reality my condition is quite common and nothing to be ashamed of.

When I was going into my 8th grade year, the doctor noticed that the brace was not really doing much for my curve. Since it went up to 60 degrees, he allowed me to go without the brace. I had my surgery scheduled for the summer going into 9th grade year and I was very excited. At that point I would do absolutely anything to avoid having to wear that torture contraption. However, there was a scheduling mishap and my surgery date was pushed back a year further.

Fast forward a year--- I was completely ready to have it all over with and to be an inch taller. Once the day finally came, I felt like a different person. I felt like I didn't have anything holding me back any longer and that I wouldn't have to worry about health issues I might of had to face without the surgery.

The healing process went smoothly (except for a few fainting episodes) and I was proud of myself for being able to push through having scoliosis. When I found out Lakeitha had scoliosis too, we immediately became closer, and I was happy to be able to share my experiences with her as she went through her surgery. When she was all healed, she had the idea of us partnering together to join Curvy Girls and bring it to central Ohio.

Looking back, I wish I would have been able to joke with other girls about the way the brace digs into your armpit or I would have been able to realize that having a different shaped spine doesn't mean that I should feel any less beautiful than a girl with a straight spine. I wish I could have known that scoliosis isn't a curse; its a way to set apart the fighters and is a way to test how strong you are as a person. This is what we would like to tell girls who may not be able to see the whole picture and feel they are trapped with scoliosis forever.

Lakeitha a.k.a Kiki

Sixth grade year was ending and I'd finally gotten the opportunity to participate in All-star/Competitive cheerleading. It was one of the greatest summers of my life considering I had been begging my mom to allow me to participate. Before I began cheering I needed to have a physical. It was at my annual physical where I was diagnosed with scoliosis and my doctor referred me to Dr. Klamar, my orthopedist. Dr. Klamar x- rayed me and it was discovered I had a double curve and both were significant. Strangely enough, I wasn't too shocked to hear the news considering my mother has scoliosis, as well as one of my aunts, who needed the surgery as a child. So I was fitted for my brace and received my brace the day before Christmas. My doctor instructed me to wear my brace 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week. That was rough for me considering I was wearing orthodontic braces and participating in a grueling sport. Soon after receiving my brace, I discovered a friend of mine had scoliosis and was also wearing a brace, which I thought was really cool and we even nicknamed each other "brace buddies." I wore my brace faithfully for the first couple of months but then I learned that my friend didn't have to wear her brace any longer. That's when my brace really started to affect me. Honestly, I hated the thing, it was bulky, it hurt, it made me sweaty and considering I had already been a victim of bullying, I didn't need anything else setting any more kids off. I went to a follow-up appointment and my brace was actually helping; my curves had decreased, which was motivating.

Seventh grade ended and so did cheerleading, but the brace was becoming a burden. I also was beginning to feel alone; I felt like I was the only person dealing with scoliosis. Later that year I attended a massage party and a chiropractor was there. He said, and I quote, “Your brace isn't helping fix your spine, so you really shouldn't have to wear it." Being the naive twelve year old I was, I stopped wearing my brace. It didn't help that the next year my mom and I fell under financial troubles and I wasn't able to go to my orthopedist to prove the chiropractors theory. I began eighth grade and I had completely stopped wearing my brace. I literally went into denial and began lying telling everyone " Oh I don't have to wear the brace anymore" or "my spine is actually better." I didn't want to deal with my scoliosis, I was tired of feeling like the odd ball. So I locked my scoliosis and my brace into the darkest part of my heart with the hopes of never dealing with scoliosis again. As a freshman in high school, Scoliosis had almost became a swear word in my mind.

Ninth grade ended and upon entering tenth grade I met Alyse, who would become one my closest friends. I didn't even know she had scoliosis until I saw her scar. In my eyes, she was almost a superhero the way she just pretended having scoliosis wasn't a big deal. It amazed me how she made jokes about it and had no shame.

January 2012, I was scheduled to meet with Dr. Klamar again. After taking my x-ray, I was asked to touch my toes. Dr. Klamar came into the room and spoke the words, "We recommend surgery." It was devastating, and I immediately started to cry. I began to blame myself and resent the chiropractor who "recommended" stretches. One of the first people I told was Alyse. I kept the surgery a secret for several weeks before telling my other friends or even family. Alyse immediately went into support mode. She and her parents have done a lot for my mom and I. Alyse even volunteered to attend doctor appointments. The night before my surgery she came over to sit with me and calm my anxiety. My surgery was scheduled June 19th, 2012. Where would I be without support?  Alyse played a huge role in my recovery by buying me small gifts, visiting me and sending me cards through email. She even came over my house and sat with me for almost a week and a half just so I wasn't bored. She even played as "bodyguard" while at school ensuring that no one bumped into me.

I believe every girl should have the support I had before and after surgery, and I don't want another girl to end up with results that I had because they couldn't find the motivation to wear their brace as instructed. No one wants to feel alone or as if they are the only person in the world dealing with scoliosis. Everyone needs a person in their corner and that's why it was so important for Alyse and I to bring Curvy Girls to Columbus, Ohio. We want to help other girls help themselves in their walk with Scoliosis.