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Leadership Reflection
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After being frequently teased in middle school, I started my freshman year of high school with the goal of fitting in. I participated in activities I had absolutely no interest in, put my social life ahead of my grades, and relished my perceived popularity. Five months into high school I began both getting harassed in classes as well as receiving anonymous death threats due to my ethnicity and heritage. The people around me, peers and administration alike, insisted that what I was experiencing was nothing to be upset about. I didn't want to draw negative attention to myself so I suppressed my fear and frustration and put on a happy face. As my depression and anxiety rose, so did my weight and I ended my junior year almost fifty pounds heavier than I had started high school.

The summer before my senior year I realized that I did not want to continue this trend. My weight gain was a constant reminder of how I'd let myself be battered around by the comments of others. After doing research on health and weight loss, I started making healthier food choices and logging every single calorie I consumed. The week before school started again I applied to the independent study program which would allow me to self teach my classes with weekly check ins with a teacher. Taking time away allowed me to focus on myself and my health and six months after my original decision to lose weight I had lost almost forty pounds. As William Deresiewicz said, "[solitude] means gathering yourself together into a single point rather than letting yourself be dispersed everywhere into a cloud of electronic and social input," [1]. Solitude allowed me to escape from the whirlwind of negativity at my high school and work on becoming a happier and healthier version of myself. I started pursuing my passions again and dual enrolled at a community college, taking a random assortment of classes just because they sounded fun.

"Leadership means finding a new direction, not simply putting yourself at the front of the herd that's heading toward the cliff," [1]. By deciding to focus on my health, I found a new direction in my life, which is to do what makes me happy without letting others' opinions (literally) weigh me down.

[1] William Deresiewicz. "Solitude and Leadership." United States Military Academy at West Point, 2010.