“Kind” can be defined as “having or showing a friendly, generous, or considerate nature.” It is helping a neighbor, holding the door open for a stranger, or smiling at a person that looks sad. To me, “kind” is everything. Sometimes it makes me late or takes away from my focus on pre-calculus, but the gratification of being a part of finding a lost dog or helping my dad piece together an endless maze of boxes for his job is more than satisfying. It is me.

I have struggled with trying to being too nice to a best friend. It was his first year at our school. Because I knew him prior, it felt right to introduce him to my friends and invite him to sit with us at lunch.  With prior experience changing schools, I know first-hand what it feels like to be new.  It’s never easy, but in this situation, it backfired. He was physically and emotionally abusive and after trying to work it out, I realized I had to just walk away from the relationship. It was hard, but afterward I knew that taking the high road and distancing myself from the situation was the right one for me.

This is why I volunteered to be a peer tutor at my school. As one of six students selected to help struggling students in their studies, I was elated to have a new focus, a freshman named Cayton. When we started, he was struggling to complete his homework and he did not know how to study for his tests and quizzes. We worked Together we could laser focus on his work for 30 minutes once a week. We used different strategies that I had learned to help with memorizing certain information. I taught him how to use repetitive writing on the white board to memorize be able and to recite an entire Shakespearean sonnet, how to break down the patterns of a unit circle, and how to locate specific geographical points on a map. I found myself wanting to help more as he began improving his grades. He began to show significant progress in his study habits and school mindset, and his grades went up considerably. Watching him be so happy with his success and over time looking excited to come into our sessions made it worth waking up extra early to come in to tutor before the school day.

When I help people is when I feel most proud of myself and the people I am helping. It brings me joy to know that my kindness and support are allowing others to be their best selves. I watched as an incoming Freshman baseball player walked tentatively onto our field, for his first high school practice. After practice, as a team captain, I pulled him aside to introduce him to some of his new teammates and offered for him to join us at a neighborhood field with a bunch of my friends so he could get some experience with the team. After a few days he started being more confident and I was proud that I was able to bring that out of him.

I spend most of my summer at the beach with my family, mainly my little cousins. I’m the oldest and have become a sort of summer camp counselor for the group. I organize Wiffle ball games, walks to the ice cream shop, surfing competitions, and more. The one rule I have made to be in the group is to always be kind to others and let anyone on the beach join in on the fun. We are always including kids who are there for just a week or a few on the team who are shyer than the rest. It always makes me feel good to see the smiles on everyone’s faces.

[Conclusion: explore WHY it is “just you” and where you think this might take you?]