



## Speaking from Experience Young People & Asthma

### Transcript for chapter 4 of 8: School & social life

**Michelle** – In the earlier years, asthma had a huge impact on my education. It was something that would keep me out of school for days and I just wouldn't be able to catch up. At the start of the year I would start at the top of the class, and then I would just gradually work my way down and really end up struggling. I just couldn't catch up and I didn't feel comfortable going to school when I felt such tightness in my chest and felt so sick from it. Now, I don't think it's as much of a problem at all. I barely miss any school from asthma. It's just something that is there, but I don't notice it as much anymore because of that preventative medication.

**Emily** – Asthma has impacted my schooling and probably sports the most. When I was younger and I used to have asthma a lot, I wouldn't be able to go to school. If I had asthma I wouldn't be able to play my sports or participate in physical education at school.

**Tamara** – In terms of my level of asthma, I would call it fairly mild. Even though it is mild, it did have an impact on my schooling and my schooling life, such as in subjects like sport in particular. I guess that was where keeping up with the other kids and doing the beep test at school – which I always dreaded, and if I could get out of it, I would. I did enjoy my sport though, so I didn't want to get out of that, I still wanted to be involved and be like everyone else. That's when I just had to learn that maybe I had to have a puff before the class, or that morning, just to be sure.

**Ben** – At school you've got to be a bit more careful, because usually at home your parents would help you and they know exactly what it is. But at school, teachers may not know what it is. So, you've just got to tell your teachers. If you go to a camp, I noticed that you have to tell your instructors and your teachers what your condition is and they'll know to have your puffer everywhere you go. If you're doing canoeing, or something, the instructor will always have it, so they help you out. You've just got to tell people so they know.

**Tamara** – It probably did affect me in some ways but probably not to the degree that some people's asthma might have. I guess I was quite lucky in that respect. But occasionally walking in between classes, especially in high school, often being so far away from each other, it took me a little longer to walk to the classes. Especially if I didn't have my asthma pump with me, I did find that I would be a little behind. Then it's like the domino effect, where you miss out on the first instructions from the teacher and miss out on the first bit of notes, and you might fall a bit behind. So, it is sort of like the domino effect, unfortunately. You had to just deal with it, and hopefully that person in the class who's your friend would take notes and you would be able to grab it later. You learn to deal with it, at the time.

**Ben** – I don't have too many of my friends that have asthma at school. I know that in other grades the teacher will have their puffers in a box at school. A lot of people have it at school, not many of my friends.



**Michelle** – My friends have helped me so much over the years, because they know what it is. Some of them who have it, know how to deal with it.

**Emily** – Talking to friends who do have asthma, they understand where you're coming from and they understand how you're feeling.

**Ben** – I've never been teased about having ventolin or anything like that. The same as you wouldn't tease someone with diabetes who has a needle in their arm. I hang around people who just wouldn't do that. It's not right to them or anyone else really.

**Tamara** – I tried to not let it affect my social life, but then again, I think it did have some sort of impact. But I found a friend who also had asthma, and we became really good friends.

**Michelle** - I couldn't go out with other girls and boys when I wanted to because I'd always have tightness in my chest, or wheezing. Especially in summer it got a lot worse. So, in the summer holidays when I was little, I couldn't go out much.

**Ben** – With my sport, I just stop or slow down. But it's hard when you're at a friend's house, if they have cats and stuff, because there's not much you can do. If there's fur and stuff around, that's what triggers it. Sometimes I just go home, and do it that way. Sometimes I can handle it.

**Michelle** – Now, I hardly notice my asthma. I think it's improved so much with relievers and preventative medication. I barely notice it when I go out.

**Ben** – I can still go out and have fun and do everything I normally do. I take my puffer with me sometimes, but mostly I just do what you normally do.

**Tamara** – I think asthma can't stop you doing anything that you want to do, just as long as you are mindful of how to control it and how to manage it.