

V. Excerpt from Current WIP

I was thirteen. I was sitting on my comforter which was thrown on the floor like a fluffy carpet. My eyes were heavy, the skin underneath them sagging like a paper bag holding water. My cheeks were flushed, my hair tangled, and my head pounding. I was going in between hyperventilation and not breathing at all. I'd catch my breath and hold it in for as long as possible, then let it out and take several shallow quick breaths. I could not understand the thoughts racing through my mind or the lack of emotions I was experiencing. I could only feel a putrid sadness followed by hollowness. My chest felt like an empty shell. It was my very first moment in the depths of depression, before I knew what it was and what it would do to me. Thirteen is a scarily young age to have gone through any kind of trauma in life. And there I was, torn and tattered, not sure of what I had experienced thus far but sure it had a negative effect. It wasn't until later into my teenage years that I came to realize all the bullshit I had been exposed to. All the moments I had been taken advantage of.

At this moment in time, I was really struggling with how to handle my school and home life while my hormones were playing pinball inside me. I had an immense amount of pressure on me to be the very best student, achieve the best grades, and not put any focus on anything outside of school. I was told time and time again, "you're at school to learn, not to make friends." I was expected to be the top of my class and only bring home A's. There was never the option to fail a test, not turn in homework, or miss an assignment. Typically, these rules seem like they would be for my betterment; parents pushing their child to do better. However, these rules were turned into a mantra and mixed with other intense rules.

At home, I was responsible for various house chores alongside my sister who shared the responsibility. I remember being responsible for sweeping the floors at one point. This task was never done to the satisfaction of my stepfather. The floors were not very dirty, there were random piles of crumbs or dirt, but they were otherwise pretty clean. This made sweeping simple. It wouldn't take me very long to do, even with my four-foot stature and short legs. I would sweep up my lacking dirt pile into the pan and dump the pan into the trash can. Yet every day, I was told I did not sweep the floors correctly. I was told I did not care. I was told I don't take chores seriously and would be punished if I didn't put more effort into it. These taunts were consistent across all my chores. I was doing the chores the best a nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen-year-old could do them. I never felt appreciated or like I could get the job done right because that is what I was told on a daily basis.

These thoughts carried over into my schooling. If I brought home a 'B', I didn't care about school. I wasn't studying enough, I was speaking to my friends too frequently, I wasn't paying enough attention during class. There were no other possible explanations for bringing home grades other than straight A's. It couldn't possibly have been due to the pressure I felt mixed with the lack of respect and appreciation I received at home. I wasn't being told I was smart, I was a hard-worker, I had passion. I was being told the opposite and it was getting in my head.

I don't believe my parents knew the effects these statements would have on me later on in life, or even at that time. I don't believe they were intentionally attempting to put me down or create self-doubt. Parenting is tricky and there is a fine line between pushing your children to be better and causing negative thinking patterns.

Unfortunately for me, the type of parenting I received caused almost all of my issues as a late teen and as an adult. After all, it began my downward spiral into depression.

Sitting on the floor at thirteen years old sounds like the typical scene. I was just entering my teenage years and was set to start high school the following school year. There were a lot of changes I was facing all at once. But I wasn't able to balance these changes in a healthy way. I felt stuck. I felt like I couldn't reach out to my parents and tell them how I was feeling. I felt a disconnect from my entire family and there didn't seem to be any way out of the pit I found myself in.