Overcoming Years of Doubt

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      I was always afraid of the unknown but also afraid to disappoint everyone around me. What I feared the most was failing and speaking up for myself. The first time I had felt I disappointed someone was when my father left. I remember when I was very young, I would blame myself because he left. He wanted a son, and I always thought to myself, "If I were born a boy, my dad wouldn't have left," though that wasn't true at all because eventually, my mom gave birth to my brother, and my father still left. I did not live the best life in the past, but I do know that whatever the circumstances were, I was blessed enough to have what I had at the moment.

      I felt insecure about how I did anything for anyone or even myself throughout most of my life. I was a self-doubter because I always wanted to try my best to satisfy everyone around me, getting the task done correctly. I grew up questioning so many of my decisions because other people's doubt over me started influencing my life. They questioned me, so I began to doubt myself instead of believing and genuinely knowing my capabilities. This is why I want to thank my mom for always believing in me when I couldn't. She taught me and helped shape me into the person I am today by encouraging me to always speak up for myself and never let anyone make me feel bad for not being "good enough" because if I did everything I could, that is what mattered the most. Feeling free and speaking my mind is almost like an eagle that soars in any direction that he wants, doing what he wants; to be free to fly anywhere he wishes without restrictions. I can relax and know that everything is OK and that *I am* OK and safe. My father was an obstacle in my life, and I wouldn't have grown as a person if I still lived with him. I know if it hadn't been for my mother's bravery and faith in our God, I wouldn't have gotten so far in my education or grown out of my insecurities.

      To me, having fear pushed me to move even further than I thought I could go. It is almost like when I'm in the ocean once I can't touch the sand anymore, I might not know where I'm going, but the tides will eventually push me in the right direction. I struggled a lot, emotionally and mentally, with many negative murmurs I would hear from people who surrounded me. There was a lot of doubt within myself caused by other people whom I was close to. The suspicion was about me graduating high school and getting into college. Someone I was close to would tell me that I would not graduate because I was not taking school seriously, which stuck with me for the rest of the year. I would think to myself, "what if I fail"? I did not want to disappoint my mother or the rest of my family. But that thought just pushed me to try harder. I know it sounds terrible what he assumed of

me, but I saw it as a source of motivation to keep moving forward and prove to him that I could do it. I know he didn't mean to assume those things, but I also know he was afraid for my future just as I was. He is proud of me just like the rest of my family.

Getting accepted into college was one of my most significant accomplishments though someone who was supposed to help me doubted me. I also knew deep down that my high school counselor was not the best at supporting me. Instead of him supporting, encouraging, and giving me hope, he made me feel small and dumb, that I would get nowhere. The way he broke me was by discouraging me, making me doubt myself, and made me fear my future too. He told me, "Good luck. Maybe at least one college will accept you," and I will never forget those words. I remember that day I told my best friend's mom what my counselor had told me, and she got outraged that she wanted to talk to him. I told her that it was OK; I was going to fight back by showing him I can do what I want and get what I set my mind to. I was afraid to speak up and tell him he was wrong about me and that it was also unprofessional to say that to a student. So instead of standing up to him, I decided to prove him wrong with my actions; trying harder and getting into college. Those words hurt me now that I look back, but soon enough, I started receiving my acceptances. I was also in awe because I couldn't believe that I had done it. Some people who may bring you down tell you that you can't do it, but others will tell you the opposite. I did not let my counselor define what I was capable of, and I refused to accept every negative word he said. I fought back with my intelligence and proved everyone wrong.

My biggest fear was also that I would end up doubting myself just as much as other people did, and that is precisely what happened. I did not care what people had to say about me anymore because it would just slide out of my brain and wouldn't have a massive effect on me like before. It was just a battle between myself and my thoughts that it got to a certain point that I doubted myself over everything I did. To me, nothing was wrong besides the fact that I always thought I was doing everything incorrectly. It was a constant battle with my mind every day, and it sucked because I couldn't escape from my thoughts even at night, thinking about what I could've done differently. I could easily escape other people's opinions, but I couldn't run away from how I thought of myself. I allowed other people's voices to become my own and my voice got trapped; I couldn't hear myself anymore. In my first year at college, I knew I had to do something about my self-doubt. I decided to finally speak to someone about how it was mentally, physically, and emotionally affecting me. She told me, "You need to walk away from the people who are constantly doubting you; walking away *is* good for you. You cannot let someone's opinion on you become your own because they don't know you the way you know yourself. It is OK to doubt yourself sometimes but not in everything you do". I knew everything she was

saying was true, and I truly wanted to walk away from all my self doubters, but how do I walk away from myself?

My first year of college was when I started to work on myself and my fear of disappointing someone somewhere; the constant doubt. I had a lot of help from my family and my counselor to overcome this fear and learn that I wouldn't always get it right the first time. I finally felt like I could breathe and be myself again without having to worry so much. But just my luck, one of the counselors from my department truly made me feel as if I wouldn't be able to get out of a hole I had dug myself into. Since my first year was tough, I did not have the best grades, and my GPA was not too good either, so I was on probation. I had to speak to my department counselor about an appeal that I wanted to make, and she explained to me what I had to do. I asked her a question, "How long will I be on probation for," and laughing she said, "Maybe four semesters or more. It just depends on you". It doesn't sound bad what she told me, but she laughed before saying it made me feel upset. I still don't understand why she told me I would be on probation for that long because now my GPA has increased. My grades are better than ever, and I even got on the dean's list, which I am so proud of. I knew I had overcome my fear of letting others' doubt take over me because when she told me that—I might've cried a lot and looked for my sister for more answers to my problem and reassurance—I did not feel the feeling of hopelessness or doubt anymore. I felt so sure I could do it and prove to myself that I was capable, and I did it. With the help of my sister, I know I was able to start listening to my voice and opinions of myself. Sometimes we need a little push and words of encouragement to get us going.

We are constantly faced with obstacles, whether people or specific situations that try to scare us put doubt in us and are constantly surrounded by negativity. Anything is possible if you put your mind to it; we need to be optimistic and always give it your all. Just because it's hard at the moment, that doesn't mean that it will stay like that forever. Good things come to those who have a positive mindset and never give up. It's OK to be afraid sometimes because sometimes it pushes us to do things we thought we were not capable of in the first place.