

“Acceptance and Growth”

By Roxy Kinzer

“I love you, goodnight. See you in the morning!”

-Dad

Relationships with parents are difficult to navigate, or at least in my case, the relationship with my father is. I did not move from South Carolina to this campus for no reason. When I moved here, I had the idea that this campus would be new beginnings, only positive energy and light. In a sense, I decided to run away from my father. I had the idea that since it was far enough away from everything I knew, I would not have to face the strenuous conversations with him.

In my father’s younger years, he was an addict. He clashed with his mother a lot, as she wanted to help him in every possible way she could. The problem was the fact that she would oftentimes only show this through money. She lacked the emotional aspects of parenting. Well, unfortunately, my father learned this behavior and began to show his love to me mainly in financial ways. I suppose many people call this a generational curse.

Since I was a very young girl, I struggled with multiple mental illnesses. I was diagnosed with many strange accumulations of letters that all meant complex things my little brain could barely understand. All I knew was the fact that I needed “a little extra help,” according to my family doctor. My father, of course, dealt with this in his younger years as well. He self-medicated to suppress the mental illnesses taking control of his mind. When I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, I think it shifted something in his fatherly mindset.

Slowly but surely, he became overbearing, always asking me how I was doing, asking me if I was still self-harming, and of course asking if I was hanging with the right crowds (even

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though I had one friend in high school, which he knew). His overbearing nature began to break me apart from him, as I have learned throughout the years that I tend to handle my depressive episodes alone. I don't want to be around anyone, talk to anyone, or show anyone how I'm really feeling. As I got a bit older, I began to snap on him. In turn, he would do the same. Like father, like daughter, we were argumentative. In the long run, I hurt my father. I did not understand at that age why my father was acting the way he was; however, now I do. He wanted to help me in a way that could actually save my ship from sinking, rather than continuously giving me monetary items to make me "feel better."

Moving forward, and especially today in class, I have realized the mistakes I have made. I moved to Pennsylvania for new beginnings, only positive energy and light. Now, I have realized my father is my light, my positive energy, and my number one cheerleader. Now that I am far away from him and no longer physically with him, I have noticed a significant improvement in our relationship. It's easier to talk to him about the harder things, such as talking about the boys I date, my bad grades, and most importantly, when I'm not okay, or in better words, when I need "a little extra help." Part of growing up is understanding that sometimes distance can mean growth. I am extremely thankful for deciding to go to Pitt-Brad, for completely different reasons now. Instead of "getting away" from him, I am thankful for the fact that this distance has rekindled our relationship.

I would like to think of these past few months as acceptance and growth. I cannot change the kind of man my father is, as his life experiences are what shaped him into the man he is today. However, every single day, I am learning to accept that. I now look within myself, and not only do I see the beauty within his flaws, but it is teaching me to accept the beauty with mine. Secondly, I want to continue the growth of the relationship between him and me. Growth is not

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always linear; it comes in waves. I am ready to take on these new experiences, each and every single wave as I go through the motions of young adulthood. I am also extremely grateful that I am able to continue sharing these experiences of growth with my dad.