

## Struggling but Never Giving Up

Every day I am inspired and encouraged by my mother to put my best efforts into everything I do and follow my dreams. Because of this, my mom is the most important person in my life. At seventeen, I should feel ambivalent about my mom, but that's not the case with us. Although there is a line that can never be crossed between mother and best friend, my mom is my lifelong friend and biggest supporter.

Perhaps the most important years of my upbringing were those that I spent in foster care. Before this time, I was a thriving and independent young lady. I was taking college classes with my high school classes, helping care for my siblings, and taking care of chores. I didn't need encouragement or reassurance to take care of my responsibilities at home or at school. However, when I faced this transition, it felt as though my world was caving in, and as though I had to age ten years in a month. My world collapsed as I was separated from my parents and youngest siblings while becoming aware of what was really happening at home. I didn't realize that my childhood was abnormal. I took the neglect that I faced during some of my life as my independence. Most importantly, I realized that my world was crashing because my parents were sick. They dealt with their addictions and though that didn't affect their parenting to a great extent, they were there and dictated how we lived. We struggled financially, not because of my father's income but because of how it was spent.

However, despite these struggles, my mom is the most important person in my life because she didn't give up. I couldn't imagine what it's like to spend almost half of your life struggling with addiction, but my mother inspires me because she took the steps, went to rehab, and recovered because of her love for us. She faced the trauma she dealt with in her youth after years of hiding her pain and struggles to be the best mother she could be.

She spent most of my childhood as a single mother on welfare but I have watched her grow after healing. Today, she is still a single mother of six, but she works full time to feed me and my siblings. She taught me to be kind and compassionate because you never know what others may be struggling with. She showed me the power that an education can have for an ambitious young adult like myself. Today, she encourages me to apply to every school that I have my heart on and follow my dreams. Most importantly, she has inspired me to use my education to help others. I have goals to further our country's goals of decriminalizing drugs and helping those who struggle with addiction seek help instead of facing criminal charges.