

## My Daughter and I

Another late night. I have to stay here in this tiny cubicle late every night working. It is unfair to me, and to my daughter. My husband left us alone when she was 8. The days are hard; I wake up early to go make us a nice breakfast before she goes to school. I have to take her an hour early so I can go to work.

On bright, lovely mornings at 6 am I awake to a singing blue jay. That is the second most beautiful thing I see every day. The most beautiful thing I see every day is my daughter. She is strong and lively. She is cheery, smiling every day although I know she is having a hard time in school. There is a daily sigh I spy from her, at 6 o'clock every evening when I stumble over the threshold.

This little sigh is just there in the corner of her mouth, none others can spy it. It twitches so, aching to be seen, heard, felt. She aches. I try to understand it, the soft breath stifling itself from collapsing out of her little mouth.

When her father left, she and I were both dumbfounded, speechless. We almost never have spoken about it. He gives us no help, no checks, no mail. Not even on her birthday. What kind of father does that? Not even a simple, two-dollar store-bought hallmark for his baby's eleventh birthday? She wasn't anxiously waiting at the window peering down 6 flights to the street when she got home from school to greet the mailman in hopes of her Hogwarts letter, no. She waited with great anticipation for one envelope written with scraggly script and a return address from her daddy. He does not work to help us along; he acknowledges even our very existence no longer. He is only for himself.

I am for us. My daughter and I.

Stumbling into the apartment one day my daughter was standing just beside the coat closet with her arms crossed, frowning. I was astounded when she slowly inhaled and let out the grandest gust to free itself from her lips.

“Mommy.” she started, and continued for a half an hour explaining why I need to take care of myself. That I did not exist solely to make sure *she* was always at her best, her happiest, her highest of being. I was thoroughly impressed with her monologue. I thought to myself “Wow, do I really not do *anything* for myself?” My angel must have read my mind because she then looked down and whispered, “You cannot live through my life, and you must still live and love your own.”

She realized better than I ever could have that if I was not happy, she was not happy. If something was not done soon, we would both break down.

Therefore, as soon as possible, she and I would sit down and spend time together every day and talk about everything on our minds. In addition, I went job searching. I found a job that started after her school started that I was happy in. I no longer have to waste away beautiful days at a desk. I can live my life outdoors at the local nature center, which happens to be one of my daughters’ favorite places to visit, making more than that secretarial job, if you can believe it.

The change in our lives was all for the better. There is no better time than the present when it comes to mental health and happiness.

It is amazing that two polar opposites can teach such an important lesson. None can be you but you, and be not for yourself alone; now is the time to make it right.