

*“I can be changed by what happens to me.
I refuse to be reduced by it.”*



When I was about fourteen years old, my mother started to show symptoms of dementia. Specifically her type of dementia shrinks the two frontal lobes in the brain, which causes impulsive or inappropriate behavior and difficulty in basic human functions, such as reading, writing and speaking. This type of dementia comes suddenly and progresses at a fast rate, so it takes a toll on not only the person, but their family as well.

My mother was my Wonder Woman; she was involved with me and my brother's extracurricular activities, did all the household chores and held a well-paying job in Boscov's accounts payable. After twenty years of service at Boscov's, she was laid off and ever since then, she was never the same. Being the young age that I was, I had no idea how to cook, clean or even do my own laundry; it did not help that my mother had not even shed a little light on how to prepare for these chores. And if one knew my father, they would know he did not have any idea on how to do them either, so he had to learn and I had to assist.

For the first two years, no one had a clue what was happening inside my mom's head because nothing she did was making sense. Throughout the short period of time, my whole family noticed significant changes that ranged from having trouble following basic instruction to difficulty in reading sentences. Everything was falling apart before our eyes and no one knew how to help. A lot of doctors threw out ideas and even misdiagnosed her, but she still was getting worse. During the third year of her sickness, our family finally had an answer; the disease is called Fronto-temporal dementia.

So what was our family to do? By this time, I already taught myself to cook dinner, but my dad needed more help that I could not necessarily give. I felt helpless that I could not help him pay the bills and I had to accept the fact I was too young to make a significant difference. Being forced into making dinner when I was fourteen was not something I was ready for, but I stepped up to the plate when my family needed me the most. I took on the household chores and was also looking out for my younger brother, while my dad was busying running a company and trying to support us.

My mom getting sick was such a drastic change for us all that it altered every aspect of our life. Some days it feels like a dream, but I snap back into reality and think '*wow, this is really happening*'. Learning that my mom developed dementia did not change my school work because I refused to think poorly about my family's situation. I stayed on top with my grades because I wanted everything to seem normal. I have grown to understand that life is filled with obstacles that are mostly out of my control, but I have to work with them.

I believe I would succeed in college because I have learned tough lessons in the past four years which has caused me to mature quicker than my peers. I have gained the determination and responsibility it takes to succeed, and continued to work on obstacles as they emerge. There is no doubt in my mind that I would take college by full force and reach my goals, because I have that attitude where I will not take failure as an answer. By going through this ongoing journey, I've worked hard and will continue to work hard at my studies and everything I want to accomplish because it is what my mom would have wanted.