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Dear, Parents

There are many things that American children share in common, whether that be in an interest in video games, sports, cooking, etc. An experience that many first-generation immigrants go through is fear. We go through fear of failure, fear of disappointment, fear of rejection. These fears are instilled in children because of the high expectations that are set from an early stage in our life. This is a tremendous problem in my discourse community because many children often freeze with the amount of pressure applied by their parents/peers. This can develop severe mental issues such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, PTSD, etc. Not only do we carry the weight of the issues in their former country, but they also deal with current issues further hindering their mental health. Researchers call it the “immigrant paradox”.

Author Jonathan Borge, brings up an amazing anecdote that perfectly describes how it is to be mentally ill in an immigrant family. “Yes, my parents, siblings, and Nicaraguan-American relatives suffer from their own mix of anxieties. However, I’ve always been singled out as the one whose a tad bit more...in their words, *sensitive*. How is it that immigrant folks who fled their native country appear to have better mental health than me, an American who was raised in

safety with comforts like Fruit Loops and Nickelodeon?” (Paragraph 5, *How Being a First-Generation American Affected My Mental Health*). This highlights the struggle with mental health in the household, parents do not fully grasp the idea that a roof, food and necessities does not equal a healthy mind. I suggest to all parents to fully hear out what your child has to say about their feelings and struggles. Really listen, don't find a solution, don't try to make them feel better, just listen. Your understanding will take your kids far in life, possibly even helping them accomplish the goal that was set. Not only do we have pressure from the parents, our peers at school are also a big stressor, there is a big problem with harassment and assault in schools. “In the U.S., first generation immigrant girls who were black adolescents or sexually active Hispanics experienced higher rates of sexual assault among age and ethnic/racial groups” (paragraph 16, *Do First Generation Immigrant Adolescents Face Higher Rates of Bullying, Violence and Suicidal Behaviours Than Do Third Generation and Native Born?*). Meanwhile when these issues are discreetly brought up they are shoved to the side and quickly “forgotten”. This is why I once again plead for parents to really listen to their kids, it can even potentially save a life.

Sincerely,

Luis Taveras