

This is the first time I've said it. This is the first time I've opened my mouth about something I've only been willing to tell to people that I know wouldn't care. That when I tell people that I have to walk backwards they don't bother to question why. Or when they run out of lettuce at chipotle, and I freeze and stutter, it's not filled with empathy, it's annoyance. An ignorance filled "uhhh" and lip smack. So, when I said it for the first time, it was a relief knocking on my door, but... my anxiety not allowing it to be opened.

My anxiety, the one thing that cripples my everyday life. My non-physical disability keeps plaguing me, and everytime it's brought up, it is brushed off as an overreaction. And exaggeration of not being able to "control my emotions". My mother has been the biggest cause of my anxiety and my biggest anxiety reliever. I know it doesn't ideally work that way but, our journey is long and rocky, and anxiety played the biggest role in where our relationship stands today. Which is why, when I told the doctor for the first time in my life that my anxiety was taking over a fraction of thinking I had left, she was the first person to recognize that this could be severe anxiety. And I wish I could tell this with a story of how I went to therapy and cured it all but, this isn't that kind of story. Because I haven't. But... I do want to tell you about the story of how this all came about, and you can see the journey of where I am now.

Being a child of 3 (then later 4) you start to become less intuitive with the connections between siblings. The other 2 have grown a bond and you just eventually become the outlier. So, you start to grow closer to the friends you have. But as every kid in elementary and middle school can tell you, kids are MEAN! So, I would always do what I can to morph myself into the person they wanted me to be, code switching from how I act at home vs. with my friends. I was pretending to be something i'm not, and that took a toll on finding out what my identity was and what that meant for me. That's when I say my anxiety started, at least formally. I was about 9, but it always felt like it was there before hand, lingering, waiting for its next attack.

So, for the next half a decade, I would continue to have an identity crisis. Assimilating to the culture of people around me. And everytime I would search for who I was, I had shoved my real identity so deep down, my anxiety attacks would start coming. It's almost as if I didn't want to allow myself to find myself or at least figure out where I belonged in this world. It wasn't until I was 13, that I allowed myself to feel something I hadn't felt before. Or at least, never obviously felt before. It was the time that I told myself I wasn't like everyone else. This heterosexual, hypermasculine version that my brothers forced upon me or wanted me to be. This when I turned to writing spoken word as an outlet to express my pain and worry I had been holding back for so long.