

# THE AGE OF PERSPECTIVE

EJ Jacobs



*Editor's Note:*

Growing up can be very isolating. I wanted so badly to have the "normal" childhood everyone else was seeming to have.

No one asks to get bullied as a child. It just sort of happens. I remember when I was a freshman in high school. I was making friends and coasting.

At this point in my school career, I was already getting bullied but it was manageable. One night before a theater show at my high school I got pushed and kicked to the ground and repeatedly kicked on the floor.

Originally, I was going to tell no one about this. Just keep it to myself and keep coasting. I went to the show after that with my friend, who is still my friend today, and she could tell I was uncomfortable. Eventually, I gave in and told her everything.

She immediately took it upon herself to advocate for me. At the time this seemed like the end of the world to me but looking back I am very grateful that she stood up for me. Even though I got bullied all of high school, it could have been a lot worse if nothing had ever been said to the administration. If it was not for my friend speaking up, I may not be here to write this the way I am able to now.

Everyone needs someone to make sure they don't feel alone.

I hope that you enjoy this magazine and are able to see yourself or someone you know in these stories. My goal is that we can make people feel seen and heard.

Thank you, Nicole, Megan and Luke for telling your stories. You are seen and heard.

Front and back cover done by Lee Pye.

*TW: Body Dysmorphia, Bulimia, Anorexia, Death, Suicide and Alcoholism*

## **Resources**

### **Alcoholism:**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)  
<https://www.samhsa.gov>  
National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
<https://www.aa.org>  
Al-Anon Family Groups  
<https://al-anon.org>

### **Eating Disorders:**

National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA)  
<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>  
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)  
<https://anad.org>  
Eating Disorder Helpline: 1 (888)-375-7767

### **Suicide:**

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline  
<https://988lifeline.org>  
New York State Office of Mental Health  
<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/bootstrap/crisis.html>  
Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors  
<https://allianceofhope.org>



# IN THE SPAN OF A MOMENT

By: EJ Jacobs

My memories start at the age of 11.

People may be confused by that statement but it makes perfect sense to me. Trauma has a deep connection with memory. When I was 11, my life changed forever.

Sept. 3, 2013

My siblings and I woke up eager. We were getting ready for the first day of school. Everything was normal. One brother was getting ready for their first day of high school, and the other eighth grade. For me, I was getting ready for the first day of middle school.

The day was going smoothly until I got to math class. I can't recall how far into math we were before the phone rang. Once my teacher picked up the receiver time stopped.

This phone call stopped time. Nothing will ever be the same again. I was sent to the office ... What I could possibly have done on the first day at a new school was beyond me. When I got to the office, my brother was there.

We sat next to each other in silence. Why were we there, we both wondered. The secretary brought us into a meeting room where our mother was standing with her back toward us, facing the window. She knew she was about to say words she could never take back. To force her children into adulthood. My mother turned around and she was bawling her eyes out. That was the moment my mom told me my father died ...

A year later, I walked into my mother's bedroom. After a year of being bullied, I felt completely defeated. My mother did not know until recently but I was bullied for not having a father, and if it wasn't for that, it was that I was lying that he even died in the first place.

I flat out asked my mom, "How did dad die?" She said that then I started to say, "Kids at school keep telling me a bunch of things and I just want to know what happened." That was the moment my mom told me my dad killed himself. I was the first child of hers to ask "How?" When he died no one cared how it happened — they just cared that it did.

I find it incredibly difficult to pick out what I learned from this experience. When something happens to a person in their formative years, it is hard to see what life could have been like without this tragedy. When talking about it with my family, to them it is incredible disappointing. For me, it is because I can't relate to my family. For my family, it is because I can't add to the conversation.

My memories start at the age of 11. Looking into the past makes this sad but when looking forward, I have 10 years of amazing memories.



# Nicole Thorson







Like most kids, I saw my dad as a superhero.



He was fun.

He was generous.



He would call us everyday, just to talk to us.



We only saw him every other weekend, but it was always my favorite time of the year.



It was like having superman for a dad, but the difference was...



He was human.

And he drank...

and he'd yell..

hiding drinks in any container...

and he'd hit...

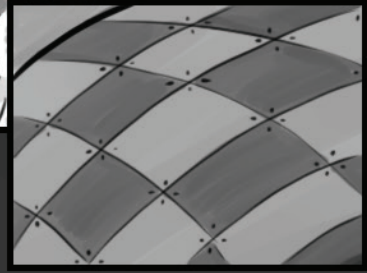
forgetting us..

doing things in the cover of night...





We knew it was going to happen for a while.



And I feel bad for hoping it would happen sooner.



But we all sat in that room.

Traveling long distances to see him in that state. Wanting to get any sort of closure.



Some got their apologies...



Others wanted him to repent...



I didn't want anything.

I knew he wouldn't give it to me.



So I told him my plans for the future.

Told him I loved him.

And left him for the final time.

# Growing Up in the Shadow of an Eating Disorder: A Child's Battle for Normalcy

by Megan Kidby

Step on, breathe, step off, repeat.

Those were the six words I gave to my high school English teacher. Our assignment was to write six words to describe our life so far, just like the six-word story Ernest Hemingway supposedly wrote. While others took their time and wrote about sports, acting or books, I wrote those words down immediately. It should not have been so natural, but it was.

Growing up I always knew I was the plus-sized friend of the group. While everyone in middle school was losing their baby weight, I was still packing on the pounds. No guys wanted to date me, I was self-conscious about photos and on top of all of that, I had to live in a diet culture home.

My mother lost a lot of weight when I was little. She started eating better and running more, which caused her to lose a lot of weight. Once she did that people started coming up to her and telling her how good she looked which boosted her confidence. She wanted the rest of the family to feel the same way so she would try to get us to eat healthier. Her way of doing this was banning most snacks from the house, keeping the snacks we did have on top of the closet so my sister and I couldn't get to them, and stocking our freezer with Lean Cuisine meals. One day, I was sick of the way I felt in my house. From that moment on I pledged to be skinny, using any means necessary.

The first time I threw up on purpose I hated it. I shoved my fingers down my throat and up came the lunch I had eaten. The second time I threw up it got easier, then the third time and fourth time it was so easy. Eventually, it got to a point where I could not stop. The worst part was that I could see the progress.

I started losing weight. Not much, but I could tell. So could my parents. My mother called me into her bedroom and sat me down. She told me she was worried about me. She said she didn't want to see me go down a path she had been so close to going down as well. So, I stopped until junior year.

The summer after my 16th birthday had been rough for me. My best friend and my great-grandmother died within a week of each other and I started to feel like I had no control over anything in my life. This caused me to isolate myself from everybody in order to find something that I could control. What I found was that I could control what I ate and what I kept down.

After every meal, every family dinner, every friend group hangout and every tiny snack I was throwing up. I kept losing weight. I went from 198 lbs to around 140 in my senior year of high school. I finally had people coming up to me and asking how I did it. I blamed it on my ADHD medications and marching band. It was believable until it wasn't.



After years of silently watching, my family told me they were concerned about me. They told me I should go to a therapist or a nutritionist. Anything to help myself. I did eventually give in but I didn't have any intention of stopping. My father tried to use tough love by saying I was wasting the money they used to buy the food I was throwing up. It didn't work. If anything it made me want to throw up more just to spite him. Deep down I knew my parents were worried about me, and I knew they were right, but what was I going to do? The choice was to be skinny or keep my parents happy and at the moment I cared more about being skinny.

I don't blame my parents for not stepping in sooner. If I were them, I'd have no clue what to do. Eating disorders affect not only the person with them but the family, too. My feelings to-

wards my family don't stop me from wondering though. Sometimes, I think about what could have happened if my parents didn't silently watch the second time. There's a part of me that hopes that I would've listened to them, but since they didn't talk to me earlier and I didn't listen to them when they did, I'll never know.

When you read this I don't want you to feel sorry for me, I want you to take this as a learning experience. Please reach out to your loved ones if you think you see them struggling. It's better to be safe than sorry. In my opinion, you can't reach out too early, but you can reach out too late. In 2022, I found that index card which I had written my six words on. I edited it to say this:

~~Step on~~, breathe, ~~step off~~, repeat.



Photo provided by Megan Kidby



From left to right: Luke Reesor, Megan Kidby and EJ Jacobs

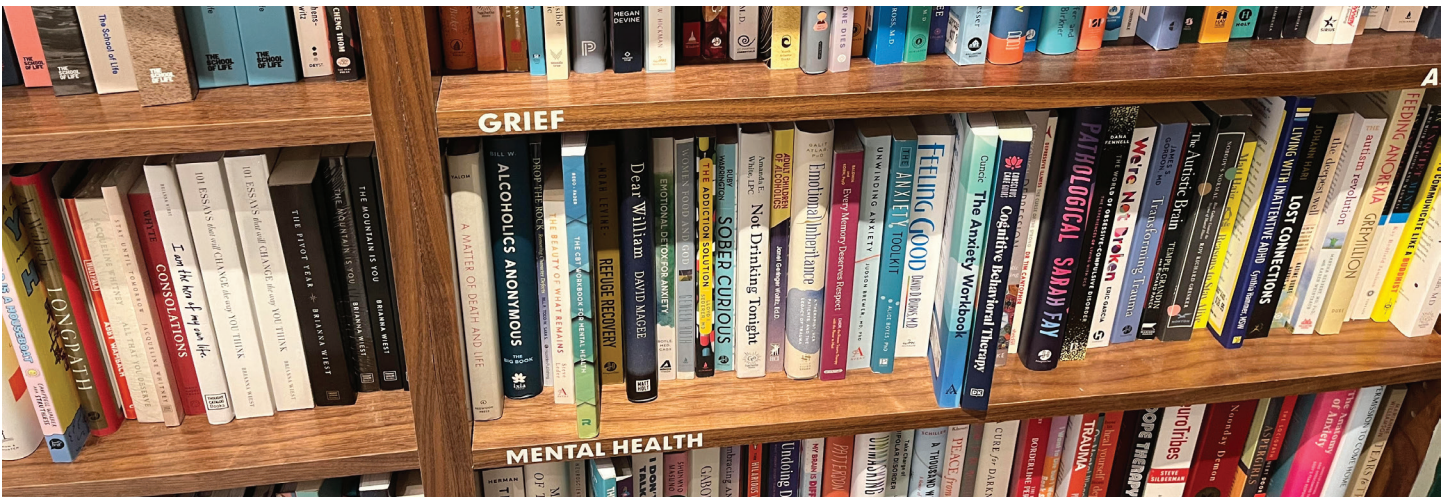


Photo provided by EJ Jacobs

# Perfect Grades, Imperfect Reality

By: Luke Reesor

Growing up as a “gifted child” may sound appealing in theory, but the reality was quite different for me. As a child, I didn’t have an intrinsic motivation to excel in school; it was just something I did without much effort. I never had to study because I consistently achieved high honor roll status, which became my norm.

I was the third child in my family, and my siblings had vastly different experiences in school. My academic success was a new phenomenon for my mother, and while I don’t want to sound arrogant, I felt like my accomplishments were sometimes taken for granted.

One vivid memory stands out from my school years. It was the year I was taking Algebra II/Trigonometry, and I received my first B. I came home with that report card, and my mother scolded me for not maintaining a straight-A record, especially in a challenging math class. It was then that I realized she was more concerned about her image of having a perfect child than recognizing that I might need help.

Given her desire to see her child succeed, I can understand her perspective, but I shouldn’t have been overlooked when facing a challenge. I was beginning to encounter the biggest struggle of my life.

My family had its own set of difficulties. I was meant to be born into a loving, happy family, but that wasn’t the reality. My parents were not in love, and my father was often absent due to his work as a train conductor. As a child, I didn’t understand why he was away so often, and I missed him immensely. However, when he did come home, he didn’t match the ideal image I had of him. He subjected my brother and me to physical and emotional abuse, but he never touched my sisters.

Having a broken home was challenging, and I did my best not to let my jumbled memories control my life. My B in Algebra II marked the beginning of a spiral into depression that I am still struggling to escape.



As I moved through high school, I stayed involved in numerous extracurricular activities and organizations, spreading myself too thin to distract myself from the turmoil within. I was on the board of almost every club and was involved in various music ensembles, with a strong focus on French, as I intended to pursue it in college. I even participated in musicals and maintained a full-time job. I didn't have the time to be the teenager I deserved to be.

Then, the pandemic hit, and everything came to a standstill. I had all the time in the world for myself, which was both a blessing and a curse. I found it challenging to be alone with my thoughts for the first time, as I had been running away from my inner struggles.

Fast forward to today, and I'm a senior in college. My life has transformed drastically from what it used to be. I've taken control of my life, cutting out the negative influences. While I'm not "cured" of the trauma I've experienced, I've learned that it's okay not to be perfect. I've come to accept that making mistakes is part of being human.

My message to parents is to remember that even successful children can face inner struggles. Children are new to life, just as adults are, and open communication and support are essential. Check in on them, even if they seem to be doing well. This journey has taught me the importance of understanding and compassion, and I hope it can inspire others to seek the same.



Photo provided by Luke Reesor



