

Andrew Mekhail Essay

It's hard to identify exactly who or what I am frustrated with. As a Catholic teenager, I am not sure about many things. If Facebook was a mood ring that updated automatically, my status would be "confused" around the clock. There is so much uncertainty in life, questions that have no clean answers. I believe that a lot of this uncertainty comes from my relationship with my mom. Many times, I wish I could restart everything. It's so easy for me to look at other relationships and long for them. But, instead of being mad at the world, or fate, or whatever else caused things to be the way they are, the most productive thing I do is accept that it is what it is.

My mom has battled severe depression since my childhood. Many days, I would foolishly resolve to cut myself off emotionally-to never speak to her again-so that her pain was not mine. But most days, I tried to talk her out of her pain, as if I could beat her depression. I never did.

Her depression took a turn for the worse when she had her first manic episode three years ago. She was not only a stranger, but an enemy. Medicine, therapy and grace have brought her to more stable ground, but it is clear that her mental health is still hanging in the balance; all I have to do is listen to her speak endlessly to remember that. It is excruciating, but I can never bring myself to walk away or ask her to stop. How could I? She kissed me on the forehead and thanked me once: "I always feel so special when you listen." It makes the suffering worthwhile. I love my mom, and she loves me with all her heart. Her mental health inhibits her ability to love all the time, but she fights hard to love me in spite of it. I have her to thank for who I am - her, at her best and at her worst. Her struggles give me the opportunity to realize myself in my care for her. Success is not about money or prestige for me -- success is in the people around me, and she has made that crystal-clear.

"Mom, Dad, would you still love me if I killed someone?" I didn't kill anyone, but I wanted to know where they stood one day. In more words than I was used to hearing from my father, he responded that if I was a murderer I'd have to repent and earn love. It was an answer full of logic, but I was left unsatisfied. It was devoid of the unconditional love I needed.

My mom said she would love me more.

Her reasoning is harder to follow than my dad's, but she believed that, upon being confronted with my humanity and my chaos, I would need and deserve more love. Tormented by her thoughts, she too deserves more love. Her suffering has brought me pain that I didn't think was possible, and it frustrates me so deeply and hurts so sharply sometimes. But mercy allows me to let go of any grudge I could hold. I cannot be made at the nurturing that made her bipolar or the nature that made her susceptible to it. I show mercy to the world, because it shows me mercy all the time. After all, this is not the worst it could be.