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Gender Roles

Growing up I always felt this immense amount of pressure to be “super successful.” Honestly whose definition am I expected to live by? Being the only girl out of five boys in my family all eyes seemed to be on me. Needless to say, anytime I did something “wrong” or “out of character” I was flooded with deep emotions of guilt. It wasn't until recently that I began to feel free to explore the type of success I wanted to see for myself. I have even felt opportunities to express myself in ways that are fulfilling to me, even if that means my family wouldn't fully support those decisions.

I remember from the time I was very young the type of dynamics my grandparents had in their household. My parents were divorced, so my grandmother and grandfather were the only consistent married couple I would see until I was much older. My grandma would arrive home after working all day, take off her heels, then roll up her sleeves and remained in the kitchen until dinner was ready. My grandfather would arrive home, head to his recliner, prop his feet up and begin watching television. I recall these memories so distinctly because all of the grandchildren would run to grandpa, untie his shoes, help him get comfy and bring him a beer. I mention this, not to say that my grandfather was not hardworking or that my grandmother did not enjoy being in the kitchen. In fact, I believe the roles that they played and still do worked for their relationship. My grandmother loves cooking and even taught me a thing or two. However, my grandfather maintains the home in different ways, by taking care of the cars, mowing the lawn, doing the laundry and for a while being the only one that worked. I have seen their roles change overtime, as my grandmother became often sick, I saw my grandfather in the kitchen more.

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Making sure her breakfast was ready and even being the one to take me to and from school.

Through watching their relationship evolve I learned a lot about what I wanted to see in myself. I quickly became aware of the notion that I would often need to rely on myself to do most things. With this lesson came the need or want rather to be perfect. Yes, I am a girl so I should know how to cook if I ever want to care for my family one day but also, I need to learn how to take care of myself, basic knowledge with cars for example. So, while I feel my grandparents supplied me with the tools to say that "I only ever need to rely on myself." I am still expected to fit into the picture of a young, nice girl that goes to church, and only does right by others. I compare this to what my mother taught me, a single parent, stubborn and a free spirit. I learned to be an advocate for myself, never allow yourself to be uncomfortable and the power I have to embrace all sides of myself. Whether, stereotypically feminine or masculine, they are all sides of me, Jasmine.

So, while I still sometimes feel the expectation to be the perfect child or grand-daughter I know that with the lessons I have learned I need not worry about the opinions of others, even if they are family. If I am able to find success and happiness in ways that they may not have picked for my future, all is well if I can say that I am fulfilled.