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What Drives Me

Hurled over the toilet, spiraling, the world fades between spinning stars and darkness. My anxious thoughts and worries spill out into the bowl. My anxiety disorder began earlier than I can remember, from sobbing over the fear of my parents dying, to OCD-like symptoms caused by anxiety, for example, turning on and off the shower three times, I undoubtedly have struggled with anxiety my entire life. I find myself shattered by small comments, destroyed by hypothetical thoughts, and feeling doomed over minute stressors. My anxiety derails every day of my life. It prevents me from awakening some mornings, handling conflict maturely, falling asleep, and controlling my feelings. My anxiety makes it hard for me to “drive” into uncomfortable situations, or even situations that feel minute to others.

While my Generalized Anxiety Disorder is severe, I failed to get diagnosed for years because my judgment was clouded by the severity of others' mental health conditions and the stereotype that children cannot suffer from mental health conditions. This disconnect kept me from acknowledging my anxiety as a serious issue, delaying the help I needed.

Staring at the pre-appointment anxiety questionnaire at my annual doctor's visit, I decided to mark the boxes truthfully for the first time. As a result, my doctor recommended I see a therapist, and once I spoke with her about my mental concerns, I got diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder and attended regular sessions to regulate my emotions. I've come to realize the importance of processing my emotions. My therapist pumped up my tires and showed me how to “drive.”

My anxiety disorder does not stop my drive anymore; it drives me to be the voice others do not have. Furthermore, I work with neurodiverse children, and that requires patience, empathy, and kindness to understand when they cannot explain. I can still picture the look of frustration on one of my students' faces from months ago. I handed over his headphones and relocated him to a safe, silent environment. While he struggled to explain his emotions, and maybe I will never understand, I know every child deserves a mentor who supports them regardless and advocates for their safety, and this drives me to make sure every child feels understood.

My goal is to become an elementary school teacher who provides a safe environment where children are validated in their struggles and feel confident enough to reach out for help. Struggling with Anxiety Disorder my whole life, and working with children on the autism spectrum has profoundly shaped how I see the world. Drive was the most important aspect in understanding these children, and this motivation to stay patient and help others will carry over to all my classrooms. I am ready to make a difference in the future generations by not letting any child suffer in the dark the way I did for so long.