Thirteen years later and I have learned that life must be taken one day at a time. I was around seven years old when my mother began to show signs of her parkinson's disease. It was a journey itself to figure out what was going on. With drug abuse involved and then many misdiagnoses, six years passed until it was known that she had parkinson's. Taking myself back to years ago I remember many days very clearly. I looked at my mother and saw a stranger. It was an unusual feeling but all I can remember is that I always felt confused and upset. I wanted this stranger to love me but my heart could only feel the cold sting as she continued to push me away. Her bottles, vidicon and bedroom was where she confound in. This was when we were all still in the unknown. My mother had spiralled into a depression after quitting her job. She lost herself in the opiates that continued to fill her diminishing dopamin the parkinson's had been stealing. From this point she had a choice, rehab or divorce. A few rehabs later and it was clear there was more issues than an abuse problem. As time continued this stranger became my best friend.

Going to the grocery store was comparable to walking out in public but forgetting to put on pants. As a child I wish I could put those pants over my face so I didn’t have to face all of the stares I received. My mom couldn't help it but her shuffling and swaying drew attention from the curious customers around us. She had her own special dance that I had often let embarrass me. With this dance came hands that couldn't grip anything but could knock over everything. I found myself in a position where I just wanted to run but I had to stay and pick up the trail that one could follow ending at my mother's feet. Even though the grocery store was a mile from our house, to us it was an embarrassing but accomplishing journey. My mother did not leave the
house often. Even at home she was embarrassed because she needed help using the restroom. It was an awkward situation but I tried not to make her feel bad about it.

I can't say I remember the exact moment I was told my mother had Parkinson's but I know that I really had no idea what that meant. I was around twelve years old at the point when my mother was diagnosed. Within a few years I felt as though I was forced to grow up fairly quickly. Life became a roller coaster and I hopped on the last cart, as far away from the point of collision as possible. I hid out in my room while my mom experience the testing of chemicals that changed her physically and mentally. We were warned it could be a few times before the correct dosing and medications suitable would be found; however, the side effects of the medications were not disclosed to us as well as they should have been. Side effect one: Compulsive online shopping, which made its way into the real world also. Side effect two: Gambling addiction, which blessed me with finding scratch offs everywhere. Side effect three: movements and emotions intensified. A combination of all of these, and my father's fear of bankruptcy, lead to my parents divorce.

Helpless, that is what I felt the majority of the time. I could see everything falling apart and had no way to stop it from happening. My brother was nowhere to be found most of the time and my mother decided to make friends with all the neighbors at our cottage so I didn’t see her often either. Thankfully I was able to escape to my best friends house but the times I was unable to was filled by the constant noise coming from my father's mouth about how my mother had abandoned us. I must admit he brainwashed me quite a bit because I began to believe it. Unfortunately during this period I wasn’t there for my mother like I should have been. When I was with her she cried and I could see the heartbreak across her face as my heartbreak was
forced behind my masked face. It took three years and too much fighting for the separation to be final. Over that period of time my perspective on life changed the greatest. I stopped blaming my family for how unhappy I was and used them to inspire independence within myself. No longer did I do things for everyone else but for myself instead. Growing as an individual I came to realize the truths and that I must forgive and let go of the past to move forward in my future.

During these years of growth was when I found many parts of myself that I guide my life by to this day. This was the time my mother became more than a stranger.

Resentfulness to forgiveness to empathy, these were the emotions that change my perspective points. Now when I walk into a store I’m often lying on the ground because that is the spot right next to my mother. When her legs hurt and she must sit, I could care less about the people who stare. She deserves to have someone by her side letting her know she is not alone. I learned how it feels when it’s as if it’s just you against all odds and how important it is to have someone there to help you get through it. Becoming best friends with the once businesswoman stranger of a mother has shown me the type of mother I would like to become one day. She has taught me to be kind and patient, to care about everyone no matter who they are. My mother is someone who has taught me the joys in the small details of life. Moments I may have not otherwise appreciated I now do. I appreciate that I am able to have good health and a loving family. I now am able to understand why people go through times that are so difficult. I don’t have to constantly ask why something hard is happening, I know it’s so I can grow and find myself with new perspectives. Even though death is inevitable, I have learned most that life is unfair but paired with a disadvantage is a different advantage. Any experience is a way for a person to grow and learn.