

Brynn W:

On May 13, 2013, my dad died, and my responsibilities as an individual and as a daughter shifted.

I started working as a babysitter when I was 12 years old, and I have continued to work ever since. When I was young, I used to use my money to pay for extracurricular activities and school trips, the things that all kids should get to experience.

My mom was left with no savings or life insurance, and three kids to raise on her own. She enrolled in several university courses to advance in her career. She took on other jobs and did everything that she could to keep us afloat.

If my dad had life insurance, our lives would have looked so much different. We would have been able to stay in our family home. We wouldn't have had to ask family and friends for financial support. And my life through adolescence and into adulthood would have looked so much different.

Truthfully, a lot of my university experience has been surrounded with feelings of fear and anxiety. I've always had to be conscious of my spendings and my decisions. I often sacrifice nights out with peers so I can afford groceries the following week. And I spend more time than most worrying about money and trying to budget.

If my dad had life insurance, I may not have to worry about such things as a 19-year-old. And I may not have to sacrifice making memories with my friends in order to put food on the table.

I know my mom did all she could to care for us but, unfortunately, education was just not in the budget. And so I paid for all of my schooling and school-associated costs.

This has made a major influence on my educational decisions. Originally, I accepted an offer at McMaster University because it was close to home. So I stayed at home, and I did my first semester online.

Although my dream had always been to attend school far away, I just couldn't figure out how to make it work. The math didn't add up; the costs between tuition in another province and travelling back and forth. So I settled for less. And I declined my offers at the other schools. And honestly, I was miserable. Going away and experiencing life outside of my home province was a dream. And I realized it was something I was going to have to fight for.

So I continued to work two jobs throughout my first semester at McMaster. And I took life into my own hands, as my mom had demonstrated firsthand. In December of my first year, I was accepted to St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, and within a month, I moved halfway across the country to a place I had never been, and where I didn't know a single person.

If I had come to St. Francis Xavier straight out of high school, I would have received a \$12,000 scholarship. Yet, because I was a transfer student, I received nothing. I knew this meant that throughout the summer months and the school year, I was going to have to work my hardest to make it last. So the summer I worked three jobs. I spent my days working at the marina, nights serving and bartending at a local pub, and my in-betweens doing small side jobs like car detailing and dog sitting.

Behind everything I do, and the endless hours I spend in a library or on shift, everything is done for my dad. He is my why. He's the reason I have not given up on myself or my dreams, and the reason I am in front of you today. I don't like admitting weakness, and the last thing I've ever wanted is to be pitied, but I know that I have fought very hard for where I am today. And this scholarship could quite literally change my life.

My earliest memory of my dad is him telling me, Brynn, it's okay to put yourself first sometimes too. So here I am, putting myself first, and asking for your help. Thank you.