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Pod 2

11/07/17

The Power Within - Alcohol vs. Mindfulness

Everyone has that one memory they try to erase from their mind. It claws at them, trying to one back but we don't want it to. The memory might be big, or it might be small.

I have one of those, it comes and goes sometimes, but I know it's one I will never forget.

The summer of 2017 was one special summer. My best friend left for college, I was going into Junior year and it was actually hot this year. Prior to school starting, almost a month before, I decided I was going to spend a week and a half at my grandparent's house in Tijuana. I hadn't spent time with them in a while, so why not go this summer?

My parents were all up for it, letting me go and stay with them as long as I promised to help out.

The days leading up to the visit seemed to go by fast, as it was finally the day I would go. We had driven to my uncle's house, in Bonita, where my grandma, grandpa and cousin were waiting for me. Loading my bags in their car, I said goodbye to my mom, dad and little brother, and headed off. With my grandma driving, and my cousin and I in the back, we made small talk, a couple sentences thrown in the air as we stopped at a gas station before heading straight to the San Ysidro border.

It took maybe half an hour to get over, and as soon as we made it to Playas de Tijuana and to their home, I took my bags to the guest room, my cousin following close behind. His curly blonde hair bounced as he walked behind me. For a couple minutes, I had forgotten his presence was even there, until he startled me, as he made it his mission to scare me and jump on the bed. As soon as my figure shook from his movement, he bursted into laughter, his curls shaking and swaying as he looking at me before turning his attention to the family dog now sitting on the bed next to him. My body bent down, as I reached to untie my shoes before slipping them off, and throwing my body onto the queen sized bed, right next to my cousin, and the puppy. As soon as she realized I was on the bed, she walked over, sitting on my stomach, begging to be given attention. My fingers raked through her fur, as she snuggled closer to by body. Out of the corner of my eye, my cousin's bright blue eyes were transfixed on the remote for the small tv, as he nudged me before I turned my gaze to him.

“Me pasas el control?” I nodded and placed the remote on his open palm before he turned on the tv and the outside world was tuned out by the sounds of laughter and skits.

The next few days consisted of almost the same routine. Every morning, I woke up early with my grandma and my cousin, eating breakfast around 10am, getting ready from 11am through 12pm and helping around throughout the rest of the day.

On Thursday, I had let my parents know that I was going to stay with my grandparents until Monday, which would be 4 days later. My mind had been made up about staying when my grandma asked for help in taking care of my younger cousins. I couldn't say no, my cousins were like my little siblings, and I held so much love for them. The rest of the day was spent cleaning with my grandma, spending time with her and my aunt picking me up around 12pm. We had driven to my aunt's house around 1pm, only to stay inside the rest of the day, ordering pizza and watching Netflix together. Since it had been a long time since I spent time with my aunt and cousin, this was exactly what I had missed when I was away.

This night went by fairly quickly, and the next day, Friday, my aunt dropped me off at my grandma's once more, little after 3pm. I headed inside, helping my grandma make dinner for my grandpa, a family guest and I.

Dinner consisted of talking and laughing, sharing jokes and thoughts between each other. The adults bonded and I was kinda.. there. My grandparents were talking to each other, sometimes their comments directed towards me, but I was in the background. Dinner went by fairly quickly for me, as I helped my grandma wash the dishes, and headed over to the guest room, where I found myself watching the same episodes of Criminal Minds once again.

Half an hour later, I decided I was going to see if my grandma needed anything, as I heard voices coming from the dinner table. As soon as I emerged from the hall, I saw my other baby cousin, in my uncle's arms as I smiled and picked her up, bouncing her on my hip before I placed her down

and she took off running, to the same room I had just come out of. I greeted my uncle, looking over at my grandpa with a smile, before I saw the bottle of wine on the table. Dismissing it, I headed back to the room and continued to watch tv, my cousin now sleeping on my lap.

Most of my time from 5pm through 8pm was spent watching tv and cradling my cousin in my arms, popcorn on the table in front of me. My cousin woke up once, just to turn her body on my lap before falling fast asleep. The second time she woke up, she rubbed her eyes, gazing at me before grabbing the bowl of popcorn and taking off towards the living room. The movie was still playing in the background, the only sounds heard were of superheroes fighting in a battle as I stood up and quickly washed my face in the next room, before applying a charcoal face mask. By this time, I had returned to the room, and my phone had started ringing. My mom was calling for a nightly facetime with all three of my family members, as I answered immediately and was greeted with the smiling face of my mom and little brother.

“Hola!” I smiled, before waving back and sitting down on the couch.

“Como estas?” my mom asked me, a smile evident on the static screen. She seemed happy to see me, even though we had only last seen each other on Sunday night. “Muy bien, aquí con la mascarilla en la cara.” I answered brightly, trying not to crack the mask on my face as I let it sit and dry.

Our conversation went on for a few minutes before my grandma walked in, her footsteps a little heavier as she saw me on my phone.

“Que haces en el teléfono?” My grandma asked, her eyes kinda drooping as she tried stumbling her way over to me. I stood up, heading to her instead so she wouldn’t hurt herself trying to reach me. “Mi mama me hablo.” My answer was brief and simple.

“Ah, dejame ver.” she said before grabbing my phone and starting a conversation.

She had her arm wrapped around my waist, holding me close to her. That’s when the stench became noticeable. I could smell it. Her breath stunk of wine as she leaned into me, making me shift my feet to adjust my balance. She was drunk, the alcohol already affecting her brain as I watched her talk to my mom.

“Esta no hace nada en casa! Siempre está en el ‘pinche’ teléfono y viendo la tele.” My grandma said, pulling me closer before she turned to me and smiled, “Pero todavía te quiero, mi niña.”

I pulled a fake smile, turning to my grandma before she turned back, and my lips turned into a frown. Since I’ve had so much confidence in my grandma and comfort in being with her, this moment, it seemed like all the trust in her had shattered. I no longer felt safe around her.

Her conversation kept going, as her arm stayed wrapped around my waist. Without listening to my mom as she talked back, she turned to me, several times, and started talking directly to my presence. “Tienes que empezar hacer ejercicio, estas engordando.” she said, her hand starting to pinch my abdomen before she moved lower, her hand now patting my “ass”. “No tienes nada

aquí! Ponte a comer mas, para que te pongas como tu mama.” Now, she was insulting my mom, and I wasn’t having any of it. I was sick of it. “Ok, ya para, abuela. Ya es suficiente.”

She repeated the phrase, “pero todavia te quiero” various times, along with an insult. I witnessed it, and through the phone screen, I could see my mom’s face of utter disbelief. Yet, we both stayed quiet, because my grandma would not take it well if we were to be honest with her. But it changed when my dad came into the picture. He had been listening the whole conversation in the background.

And now, it was time for my dad to confront her, through a facetime call.

“Déjala empaz. Ella no te hizo nada.” My dad said harshly, trying to prove his point as he talked to my grandma through the screen. “Y tú qué? Qué tienes contra mí, eh? No se que traumas tienes, mijo pero-“ She tried getting a sentence out before my dad cut her off with a simple phrase.

“No tengo nada, mamá! Tú eres la que tienes traumas.” That was the last thing he said before he handed the phone back to my mom, leaving sight of the camera.

By this time, my mom was crying, as she tried reasoning with my grandma. She wasn’t registering anything and I was hurt.

In this moment, my grandma had been affected by alcohol.

Alcohol suppresses the release of a neurotransmitter in your brain, which then, in turn, delays your memory and your energy, resulting in losing focus and feeling fatigue. My grandma wasn't thinking when she was talking, her brain missing her words and spilling them from her lips. Her eyes drooping, as it overtook her body, her brain slowly bringing her down into a state of pure bliss, before she could fall asleep.

The next day after the incident, my grandma approached me. Her face looked concerned, as I looked and felt like I did not sleep at all. Which, I didn't. The night was spent awake, the tv with the sound low, as I had locked the door before sitting on the fold-out bed. I tried keeping myself occupied, trying to forget last night's memories but nothing could take me away from what had happened. So when my grandma asked what had happened, I answered with a question.

"No te acuerdas que paso?" I asked my grandma the next morning.

"Si! Yo me acuerdo de todo!" She simply answered, with a small smile.

She told me she remembered everything, but a couple weeks later, I found out it was a lie.

When I had returned home, I had gotten into a long discussion with my parents, all about the situation I had been put in. It was difficult, and tears were shed. With tears in my eyes, I admitted to my parents that I was terrified after the incident. I had never seen my grandparents under the influence, so it being the first time, I felt truly uncomfortable. One of the reasons I had stayed up

that night was because I was terrified of what could have happened. I was terrified that my uncle or grandpa would have wandered into my room at night, with them under the influence, who knows what could have happened. Thankfully, nothing happened, but all the trust I had in my grandma was gone. I no longer felt safe in her presence.

I have always been told by my grandma that I needed to change, that I needed to alter my appearance, or lose weight. Those comments hurt, my emotions and self-confidence crumbling down as I just nervously smiled and nodded, sometimes rolling my eyes. After these incidents, however, my parents would always reassure me that I wasn't perfect, that I shouldn't listen to her. You were made just the way God wanted, and no one could change that. Don't listen to her, darling. My parents always said. Over the years, I've been able to build my confidence, building a wall around my thoughts and emotions, not letting people's comments get to me. Yes, I'm fragile. Yes, I'm not perfect, I'm not strong. But I'm also human. I have emotions, thoughts and opinions. Your thoughts or opinions might hurt, but I always have people I can come back to who will assure me over and over again that no one is perfect, and you shouldn't listen to them, because we love you, Ambahr.

A bond between family is sacred. Something that has been built over time. When that bond is shattered, the comfort built around that is gone. You no longer feel the same presence you once did, and their opinions are stronger towards you. Every single thing they tell you becomes a heavy weight on your shoulders, and sometimes it feels too heavy for you to handle. This bond is

sacred, and when it's broken, the connection with that person is shattered as well, and you no longer possess the same trust you used to have.