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ENGL 1121- 57,65

Identity Essay

### Mental Journeys

Waking up sometimes feels like I'm sinking, as if the ground beneath me is giving way, crumbling bit by bit. Every morning, I struggle to find my balance, kind of like how I felt when one of my parents became a stranger. People say divorce is just a temporary disruption, that kids adjust and move on without any real scars. But that's not true. Living through my parents' separation for the past two years has shown me just how deep the wounds really go. It's not just about them splitting up; it's about the confusion, the loss, and how it shakes everything you thought you knew about family. At first, I felt like I was drifting through a version of my life I didn't recognize. Over time, I started to see how those experiences were affecting me in ways I didn't know. Now, I want to share my story, and not just to reflect on what I've been through, but to help other kids that are going through the same thing, feel less alone.

People assume the hardest part of divorce is the initial shock, that once it fades, life moves on. But it doesn't work like that. I still remember the exact moment my parents told me. We were in the kitchen, in the same house where I had spent my whole childhood, yet in an instant, nothing felt familiar. My dad was talking, explaining things, but his words felt distant, like an echo in the background of a moment I couldn't fully grasp. It was like being hit by a wave so strong it left me numb. I didn't cry, didn't argue, didn't react. I remember it perfectly, I just said "okay", and walked out the door. I needed to get away, do something that would clear my head, so I went golfing. I focused on every swing, trying to get the bad thoughts that were in my mind. But no matter what I did to try to get rid of the thoughts, I could not get the bad thoughts out of my mind. It was the feeling that nothing would ever be the same again. That day didn't just change my daily routine, it completely made me question everything I believed about family, security, and the idea that some things are supposed to last forever. I want to share my story because divorce isn't something kids just "get over." It changes you in ways you never see coming.

People say time heals, but I've learned that healing isn't as simple as waiting for the pain to fade. Grief and confusion don't follow a straight path, and moving forward isn't something that just happens. Over the past two years, I've felt sadness, anger, frustration, and sometimes all at once. There were days I felt stuck, wondering if life would ever feel normal again. I struggled with trust, and even questioned my relationships with my friends, and wondered what my future might look like. One of the hardest things to accept was knowing that one day, my own kids wouldn't have the same childhood I did, like the holidays spent with both grandparents in one home, family traditions that stayed the same year after year. The weight of divorce doesn't disappear, it just lingers. I've realized that ignoring my emotions only makes them heavier, and the only way to really heal is to face them. I want other kids going through this to know that their

feelings are real, valid, and nothing to be ashamed of. Healing isn't about pretending you're fine, it's about learning how to carry the pain without letting it define you.

Some people think divorce only affects kids for a little while, but I've learned that its impact stays with you. Even after time has passed, I can still feel how it changed my family and how I see relationships. After my parents split, I became more shielded with my emotions, and not just with them, but with my friends too. I didn't open up as easily, and I started questioning things I never had before. I had to learn how to live this new version of my life. More than anything, I had to rebuild my sense of stability from the ground up. Divorce doesn't just happen and then fades into the background; it leaves a huge imprint. But as hard as it's been, I've also realized that even painful change can lead to growth. To anyone going through this: you will adjust, you will learn, and you will become stronger in ways you never expected.

A lot of people keep their emotions bottled up because they're afraid of being judged or just don't know how to put them into words. I used to think staying quiet was the best way to handle things, so that no one knew that I was down and sad, but I've learned that talking about what we go through is what actually helps us heal and forgive people. When I finally started opening up about my parents' divorce, I realized I wasn't as alone as I thought. Friends, family, even people I didn't expect, offered support that reached me in ways were staying quiet never would have. It didn't erase the pain, but it made me feel less alone with my emotions, and just in general. Being honest about my feelings not only helped me process them, but it also allowed me to be there for others who were struggling. Divorce can make you feel like you have to figure everything out on your own, but you don't. Talking about it takes away some of the fear that comes with it. No one should have to go through something this hard alone. Even in the most difficult moments, there's always hope for healing, growth, and a future that still holds good things.

In all, my parents' divorce was not just one painful thing, like there were many times when I was happy, but overall, throughout it, it was a big journey that changed the way I see everything, including family, relationships, and even myself. Like At first, I felt lost like I didn't even know what to do with these emotions, like it felt like nothing in my life was stable anymore because I didn't even have my parents to talk to about this. The initial shock was the most overwhelming, and for a long time, I didn't know how to process it. But I've learned that divorce doesn't just leave and take its pain with it, it stays, shaping you in ways you don't fully realize until later. More than anything, I now understand that talking about what I've been through doesn't just help me, and it helps others who are feeling the same things. For a long time, I thought showing emotion made me weak, so I buried everything. But now, I see that being open, sharing my story, and feeling my feelings have only made me stronger, and it definitely helped me heal. But most importantly, it reminded me that I am not alone. There are so many other kids out there going through the same situation, like sadness, frustration. Knowing you are not alone made the difference in my story. At first, it felt like my world was falling apart, like I had nothing steady to hold onto. But now I know that even when life feels uncertain, I have the strength to keep moving forward.

