

Not everyone gets a miracle in life. I am one of the lucky ones to have gotten my miracle. Growing up I did not have the easiest childhood, but I did not let that stop me from achieving my goals. When faced with an obstacle, we can choose to persevere, or do nothing. Every obstacle or challenge I have faced through my life has shown me there are always new opportunities that lie beneath it. It may have been hard at first, but I was able to persevere. The challenges I have faced throughout my life have shown me how strong I truly am, both emotionally and mentally.

One of the major changes in my life has been living, and adjusting through a pandemic. When COVID-19 hit the state of Hawaii, it significantly impacted my mental and emotional well-being. Transitioning from seeing family and friends everyday, to being isolated from everyone was difficult. I went from physically being in school, to being a distance learner my junior year of high school. Personally, attending school virtually was incredibly difficult, because I learn best when I am in the classroom interacting with my teacher and peers. Adjusting to this new way of living and learning, I also suffered the loss of my mother, who passed away in 2020 from heart failure. This was the hardest thing I have had to work through so far.

Overall I am a positive person. I like to see the good in things even when times get challenging. Usually I am strong mentally, but trying to stay mentally strong during these times was difficult, especially with being unable to see my extended family, or being able to do the things that helped with my mental health, like spending time with friends and going to the beach. Everything had been put on hold. I found myself feeling less like the person I truly was. One morning as I was passing an elderly woman in Walmart who randomly started a conversation with me. She asked me about my plans for after high school, so I briefly explained that I want to

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major in psychology and explore the mental health field to later become a mental health counselor for adolescents. When she asked why, I explained that I have a deep passion for helping people to pursue the life they want to live.

Later that night, the conversation I had with the lady kept replaying in my head. I started to realize how lost I had become, and was no longer the person I knew or wanted to be. I am the girl who loves the outdoors, the beauty of nature around us, and seeing the people around me happy, along with myself. I was unaware of how I was caring for my mental health and the people around me. From that day forward, I chose to prioritize my mental well-being and work through the feelings of being stuck. Paddling started back up which got me motivated and active again, I started spending more time with my family and friends and realized that there were ways to continue doing what makes me happy.

The truth is everyone has good and bad days, and everyone's mental health will be impacted through life. Whether it is being faced with challenges physically, mentally, or emotionally, it is important that we know it is ok to struggle from time to time, and it is healthy to let those feelings out. Your mental health is a reflection of your well-being, and it has an impact on how we interact with others. You should treat yourself kindly. I will continue to work towards my goals everyday and prioritize my mental and emotional health so I can help others do the same. Life is challenging and I hope to help others find their source of light within themselves. Day by day, I will work to make our world a better place.

