

College Essay by Duncan Sewall, Fall 2012

The basic relationship between a parent and child is exemplified by the relationship between my mother and me. After my mother was diagnosed with Stage II breast cancer in 2001, we became closer than ever. She was the person I could talk to about anything; she provided an always-loving outlet for all my troubles and worries. My mother exemplified selflessness, attention to detail, and perseverance, and in teaching me to value these things, she is one of the most influential people in my life.

Mom possessed an incredible desire to help others. When she was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2011, she elected to donate her tissue to the doctors for research. Even while faced with this unimaginable disease, her selflessness triumphed over her grief and despair. I have inherited her selflessness, and it has made me a better person. As an employee at Camp Dudley YMCA, my job is to foster an environment where campers from all over the country can live and learn together, becoming the best of friends. I attended Dudley as a youngster and knew how those in the community gave selflessly so that younger campers could thrive; I jumped at the opportunity to give back to the community that gave so much to me. I know what it feels like to have the urge to better the experience of others, and because of my mom, this selflessness is incredibly important to how I live.

Mom instilled in me the value of attention to detail. In every aspect of her life, she was organized beyond comprehension. In her work she had a folder for every possible scenario, and at home she also kept a cabinet that she filed to perfection, managing each and every detail of our family. My organization as a younger boy was terrible: my binders for schoolwork were always a mess! Yet my mom helped me find order in the chaos, and I have internalized that attention to detail. Because of my mother's influence, the chaos in my life seems simpler.

On September 1, 2012, my mother died from breast cancer. When she died, she finished an 18-month battle in which she never gave up. Strength and drive were her most inspirational aspects of her battle. Throughout this battle mom continued to complete triathlons; she continued to give every amount of energy to loving my father, my brother, and me; she continued to organize the entire family's daily schedule and keep us on point! Since her death, this image of her perseverance has become essential in my battle to keep moving on with my life. Going to school is hard some days, but I still go because my mom would not want her death to bring my life to a halt. She would want me to keep pushing through the tough times.

Selflessness, attention to detail, and perseverance - I see my mother's values shine through my own life. Our relationship has shaped who I am as a person and how I view the world, and I am incredibly thankful that she blessed the first eighteen years of my life as a loving and supportive mother. The more I reflect, the more I realize the extent of her influence on me, and that this "basic" relationship is not so basic after all.