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## Memories of Early Childhood

The first six years of my life were the best. I lived with my dad, my mom, and my younger brother in an apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan in New York City. Every season of every year is worth remembering. In the fall, Mom and I would go across the street to Central Park, stand among the scores of people, and cheer for Dad, who ran the New York City Marathon virtually every year. When my dad ran, he had self-satisfaction in his eyes and perseverance in his heart. In the winter, Dad would carry me on his shoulders through the snow-covered "Great Lawn" in the heart of Central Park. I remember one time when he took me ice-skating near there. In the spring, Dad would bike-ride through Central Park; I would be buckled in the seat behind him, loving every minute of our field trip. In the summer, we would all go to my cousins' house in New Jersey for a great family reunion full of kisses, hugs, games, and of course, barbeque. Every minute I spent with my Dad was a wonderful adventure that was always exciting especially the Harlem Globetrotters game that my best friend and I went to with our dads.

I remember when I was about four, I always wanted to ride the Merry-go-Round in Central Park. Dad accompanied me there and I couldn't wait to sit on the horse as if I was a little cowgirl. As we stood in line, I felt the excitement in my bones. Then, it was my turn. I got on the Merry-go-Round, sat on my horse, and the Merry-go-Round began to "go-round". I flipped out. I wanted to get off that horse, it was scaring me so much. Dad got me down off the horse and we sat together in one of the seats on the carousel and enjoyed the remainder of the ride.

Another time, when I was maybe in the third grade, my mom had to go away on business, so I had the benefit of spending the entire weekend with my dad and my brother. Dad allowed me to have a few friends over for a sleepover at the apartment [with my mother's approval, of course]. We all had a lot of fun playing barbies, watching the "sequel" to "The Wizard of Oz" and eating pizza. My friends and I stayed up all night jabbering away like little monkeys in a tree. My dad always brought out the exciting chatter box in me.

Sometimes, I have memories of my dad and me that were fun even if they lasted only a couple minutes. For example, I remember when I was no older than four years old and my dad and I went to get some pizza to bring home for dinner. I remember that he was riding his bicycle home and I was sitting in the backseat as usual. He let me hold the pizza and I recall that I was such a big responsible for me to hold the box and not let the pizza drop. A different short memory was even earlier than that, when I was about two years old. My parents were pushing me in the stroller about two blocks from our apartment. It was really overcast and it was drizzling. I remember the view from where I sat, with the plastic screen covering the stroller,

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making sure that I stayed dry. But, it was funny, because every now and again, a raindrop would strategically fall right through the one of the holes in the screen and splash onto my nose. I had a lot of fun when I was young, both with my parents and with all my friends.

But, when I was seven years old, everything changed. My dad past away after a year long battle with a form of cancer called Lymphoma. It ended all that was positive in my life. My dad had always been the person in my life that I felt the closest to. I always laughed and had fun when he was around. Now that he was gone, I couldn't find the humor in anything. Negativity appeared in everything I saw and did. I couldn't think of anything except the eternal loss of my father, who along with my mother, saw me through thick and thin. I never thought I'd be able to move on. I wasn't the laughing at people's jokes; I didn't talk as openly as I had. I shut myself out from all the people who I had once been so close with. As I grew up, centering my life less and less over the death of my father, I was still hesitant to speak up and get to know people. I now know that I used to shut people out because I was afraid of losing another person who I am close with. I also have learned through the years that grieving over a person is okay, because that means that I cared about them. Love and caring are very good emotions and even if the person has passed on, it doesn't mean I can't stop caring about them and it certainly doesn't mean that they have stopped loving me. If I can share those emotions somebody else then I know that I have more love and caring in my heart, not loss and loneliness.

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