

In a world that is constantly spinning, in a state that is always functioning, everything is always changing. Things are often measured in grand achievements, money, grades, job promotions, and recognition for something you have done. It's easy to overlook the small moments, it's easy to overlook your accomplishments and compare them to everyone else's - you tend to only see your failures. You miss out on the quiet you have on a Sunday morning, the sun shining through the school bus window, the sound of your dogs barking, you miss out on everything small the world has to offer.

I had a friend ask once, Are you living your life or are you just alive? There are moments in life when you truly see what resilience is and what being thankful truly means - It means being thankful to live your life, and having new opportunities every day. As I watched a close friend battle mental illness, I lived in constant fear that something might happen to her, that I would wake up one day with the sun shining through my window like any normal day, but she would be gone. I watched her fight through her darkest times with a smile on her face, ready to lend me a hand. I watched her take the smell of rain and gasoline, and jump in the pool fully clothed, for granted. I didn't understand at that time what all those things could mean to a person. Not enjoying something you did as a child anymore or having no motivation to get out of bed can destroy a person; just being able to look at yourself in the mirror is difficult.

When I got a bad grade on a math test or my parents got frustrated with me, I was able to brush it off and have a better day the next day; my friend couldn't. She couldn't just get ice cream spontaneously on a Tuesday night or go to the mall the me on the weekend. When she finally opened up, her honesty was both heartbreaking and inspiring. She spoke about feeling trapped in her own head, about the effort it took just to get out of bed and face the day. Yet despite all of it, she kept trying. She sought help, spoke to a counselor, and began the long

process of healing. There were setbacks—days when progress felt impossible—but she never gave up completely. Every small step forward became a quiet victory: going for a walk, talking openly about her feelings, laughing again without forcing it. She told me she did all of that for me. She made a promise to me that if she wasn't going to live for herself, she would live for me. I am forever grateful to have a friendship that became family.

We now take pictures together of every flower we see on the side of the road, and every bird that lands in the river. We now have family BBQs again and birthday celebrations. We spent the weeks before my prom planning every small detail of my look together.

She taught me that in a world that is constantly busy, constantly pushing others forward, you have to stop and breathe. You go on walks to clear your head, have a coffee date with yourself, and just relax, and get off social media. Just being able to wake up every morning is a blessing in itself, and you need to get up and just live. Every small and big moment you get in life is something you should be thankful for.