

Growing up wasn't very easy for me I grew up with a single mom for most of my childhood and even though my parents didn't split until I was 2 ½ since my father was never really there for me it was always just my mom and I. My dad being absent in my life soon became something that of the usual. Eventually as I said my parents split up and the judge saw that my mother was more fit to look after me, however the judge decided that I still needed to see my father so, the compromise was that I would get to spend Sundays with my dad. Not being able to see my dad really took a toll on me. Eventually my mom got married to my now stepdad and even though he's more of a father figure than my biological dad growing up I always knew that I would be grateful for my stepdad being there. However him being in the picture didn't change the fact that I missed and needed my dad. As a child my mother told me that I didn't have to call my stepdad "dad", and that she understood that nobody could ever replace my dad. Fast forward to today, I am currently 15 years old. My dad went back to Mexico when I was 10 years old, making it 5 years since I've heard anything from him. He once sent me a picture of a new tattoo that he got on his forearm with my name on it. Him getting that tattoo meant nothing to me, as if a tattoo could replace the sadness of a little girl growing up wondering why her father was never really there. As if a tattoo could give a good enough reason for an absent father. As if a tattoo could give me back the father who played with me and promised me nobody would ever hurt me as long as he was around. As if a tattoo justified me thinking that it was my fault he left. As if a tattoo could have been there for a young me when I needed my father the most. When he left I was convinced that it was my fault, maybe the love and admiration I felt towards my dad wasn't enough. That was a lie, my father simply decided he no longer wanted to have a daughter. When a person leaves their "loved" ones they leave them something that'll remind their loved ones of them. What'd my father leave me? A painting of a little girl crying in the corner of a room with her dog right beside her. Every girl dreams of having

their father daughter dance at their quinceañera. Now I know I could have had that dance with my grandfather or my stepfather but how was I supposed to explain to my friends that my father didn't love his daughter enough to stay and watch her turn into a young lady. For a while I let his absence define me but as I continued to grow I realized that he had made his decision and there was nothing I could do about it but move on and accept it as it was. I am currently 16 years old finishing my junior year of high school. I have met so many milestones with the help of my family and most importantly my mom. She has always taught me that by working hard, standing idle by what I believe in and helping others I can achieve whatever it is I want to accomplish. I finally forgave my dad for all he made me go through and I can say that when I forgave him it was like a weight was lifted off my shoulders.