Cheeseburgers or Froyo?

As I stared at the bland white wall, waiting on the hold line with the insurance company, my patience grew thin as the obnoxious music on the other line played over and over. Playing an adult role in these types of situations was one of the things I dreaded most. Sitting there, I remembered ordering a double cheeseburger from the back seat of our gray Nissan Frontier in the Burger King drive-thru for my parents. Feeling that cold evening breeze as I poked my six-year-old self out of the window so the lady in the speaker could hear my little squeaky voice, I looked back and forth between my parents and the speaker. “Dos doble hamburguesas con queso, sin mustard o pickles,” my dad said, leaving me to figure out how to say that in English. I remember sitting there on the checkered gray seat wondering why the worker gave my parents funny looks as they were handed the food. The worker’s stare made me uncomfortable because I never perceived that this dynamic with my parents was uncommon.

My parents are native Spanish speakers who immigrated to Oregon from Mexico, so speaking two languages has always been a huge part of my life. In a sense my parents and I were navigating the English language at the same time; however, my mom had not an inkling of the language, while my dad had the basics but struggled with confidence. As an only child, I was left to figure out everything my parents didn’t know. Therefore, everywhere we went I was the translator, no matter how scary and intimidating it was. From doctor’s offices, restaurants, taxes, and school conferences, I was always the person the worker spoke to.

Fast Forward to age sixteen. I had recently started a job at a frozen yogurt shop called Cuppa Yo. Refilling the toppings bar with sticky gooey candy, I walked over to a family ready to check out. As I approached, I glanced over and noticed a girl around fourteen, a twelve-year-old

boy, and a dad. “$14.32 es el total,” the girl told her dad. With those five words, I was sent back in time. I saw more than just a teenage girl in front of me; I saw my six-year-old self ordering food for my parents.

The uneasiness that I felt in many of these moments was one I couldn’t seem to shake. Ironically it’s that same feeling that has shaped me to be the person I am today. In most situations all I had was myself. Today it's still just me and my parents; therefore, that feeling lingered for a long time. High school brought more of those uneasy feelings but also helped push me out of my comfort zone. Wanting to be outgoing inspired me to join student government and speak during assemblies - something that used to make my stomach flutter, but led to my most thrilling moments of high school. It gave me the confidence to voice my opinions in classes. It brought me the simple skills of communication and conversation. But most importantly, it allowed me to set boundaries and be confident within myself.

Staring at this girl at Cuppa Yo, I realized that I was not the only one; I was filled with sadness and compassion. I looked back to that moment of sitting in the drive-thru and felt nothing but gratitude and respect. I’m forever grateful to my parents for allowing me to be independent and strong-minded, that from such a young age I was able to support them because they’d gone through millions of challenges just to give me the smallest ounce of happiness. Those moments developed the independence I now value so deeply.

This story has led me to realize that putting myself out of my comfort zone can truly lead to amazing outcomes. Picking a major has been a daunting experience. Just this past week I’ve thought about applying to nursing school to be an aesthetics nurse with a minor in advertising. A sentence I never thought I would have the confidence to say. If you would’ve told me a year ago that I wanted to apply to nursing school and get a minor on top of that I would’ve told you that

I’ve lost my own mind. But this is truly something I want to do and a challenge I want to face. I know I’ll be alright leaving and growing up, and for that I thank my parents and some cheeseburgers.