

For me, my grandparents live in another plane of existence from the other people who know me. They are ignorant of the lows of my life. They haven't seen the darkness that sometimes exists behind my smile. They love me for who I am, but they don't entirely know me. And if this separation wasn't enough, to me they still exist in a land where problems can be solved by cookies, hugs, dominoes, and stirring clarinet solos.

Afternoons at my grandparents are practically torn from the handbook on how to craft a family sitcom from the 1950s. I might cut the lawn or help my grandfather fix the car, but then we'd always enjoy some snacks (typically cookies with a glass of milk) and play dominoes or card games. And that's not some memory from the past either. We literally did this when I went back home last Christmas.

It's not that I feel that I can't talk to them. They've never presented themselves as anything aside from loving and supportive people. My grandmother even cut out every article I wrote in college and at my internship and saved them in a book. She might even do it for my column if she knew. But aside from the aforementioned gaps and concerns, it feels like we live in different worlds. It's like that time I tried to explain how email and viruses work. We'll talk ourselves in circles, get frustrated, give up, and play dominoes instead. The idea of explaining gradients of human sexuality to them, specifically, my sexuality, seems as simple as explaining how black holes work. And where do you even start with a conversation like that? And in the interest of being honest, I'd have to explain my previous detrimental behaviors. Just like with my parents, I'm tasked with shattering their ideal image of me and rebuilding it, and there's no simple way to do that.

Years ago, my grandmother once asked, "What happened to you?" Her voice strained with concern as she pointed at the scars on my forearm. I looked her in the eyes and replied, "Oh, you know me. I'm always so clumsy. I ... fell down that hill behind my apartment on the way back from class." I laughed and we accepted that as fact.

Of all the lessons I've learned in my life, none is more poignant than the lessons I've learned about the truth — the truth is simple. It's what comes after the truth that is difficult. §

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left to right: Corinne Anderson, DMD; Shella Bennett, DMD; Adrienne Fischl, DMD

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