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“Narrative Essay”

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Grade 6

When I was a fifth grader, my dad didn't give me a birthday gift.

This was strange because ever since I was little, he would visit me with a gift on my birthday.

My parents divorced a long time ago, and my birthday was one of the times during the year when I'd see my dad. When he picked me up, he always had something for me, like a balloon, and he would ask me where I'd like to eat and if I'd like to play mini-golf. The visits weren't frequent but everything about them was important, and this became our tradition.

For my eleventh birthday, I anticipated a gift, a meal, and maybe an activity before he would say goodbye. Instead, he took me out for burgers and talked mostly about school. I thought he was pretending to not care about my birthday so that he could surprise me later.

After dinner, he didn't give me a gift or even a card before leaving. He didn't say anything about my birthday or turning eleven. When he drove away, I realized he actually didn't care about my birthday. When my mom asked me how things went, I told her what happened and started crying. I was confused and hurt.

I was disappointed to not receive a gift, but honestly, the gift didn't matter. What mattered was feeling like he didn't care about me. If he had asked me about my birthday, I would've felt like he cared about me. If he had given me a gift, I would've known he thought about me. Even now, I feel sad that I didn't matter to him, and this still makes me really angry sometimes.

My mom and stepdad comforted me by reminding me of people in my life who obviously care about me— grandparents, aunties and uncles, friends and relatives. I realized that people who show me they're there for me are people who deserve my care and energy. I also realized that one person's behavior doesn't determine how loved I am.

This experience changed my perspective. I can choose who to focus on, and this helps make my life feel better. Although this experience was painful, I realized from it that I am cared for by many people, not just one. This different perspective kind of is like a gift from my dad from my eleventh birthday, and honestly, I'm grateful.