

At the age of 12 I was diagnosed with Moderate Idiopathic Scoliosis. This diagnosis turned my world upside down. A back brace became strapped to my body 23 hours a day for two years, chronic pain followed me everyday, and the shadow of anxiety and depression covered me for years to come. Doctors visits, needles, X-Rays, brace adjustments, cuts, bruises, everything was hard and heavy. At the age of 14 I underwent an Anterior Spinal Fusion placing screws and a titanium rod into T12 to L3. The surgery was miserable and the recovery even worse. I fell behind in school and struggled socially, my mental health felt like it had hit rock bottom. The only thing that got me through this time was my support system.

Eventually, I caught up in school and found myself surrounded by good friends. Then, COVID hit and everything shut down. I used this time to find my identity past my Scoliosis. I began dancing again competitively, enrolled in college level courses, and started a job at a local coffee shop. The next two years of high school, despite my chronic pain and struggles that came along, were incredibly memorable. I made dance team lead and volunteered at the studio twice a week, excelled in more college level classes, made manager at the coffee shop and later began interning at a center for domestic violence. I transformed from the small girl, riddled with anxiety, depression, and pain, to a strong woman succeeding in all areas of life. I set my mind to attending college for Psychology and becoming a Mental Health Therapist to help kids like myself.

Then, the universe threw me another curveball. My Scoliosis had worsened, so I needed another surgery. Three days after graduating high school I underwent a Posterior Spinal Fusion reinforcing L2 to L5 on both sides of my spine with screws and rods. This surgery, while incredibly painful, went much smoother than my first. We knew what to expect and I had a better, more positive mindset this time. I recovered quickly and moved to college. I needed to take it easy for a while but I poured myself into this new world. The schoolwork came easy to me and Psychology was my favorite class. I made the President's List and Dean's list every term. This continued through my Sophomore year when I realized that I would be graduating a year and one term early. My hardwork was paying off.

Although my circumstances weren't ideal, I never let my Scoliosis and my pain stop me from achieving my goals. I plan to use everything that I have experienced toward helping others through the field of Psychology and social work. My story is not over but I have learned how important it is to carry a positive mindset and never be afraid of accomplishing the impossible.