Dear Diary,

I am so glad that writing down my experiences this week are becoming cathartic and helping me work through everything that is being thrown my way and also everything that I am doing.

A *lot* has happened in the last 24 hours, so I’ll quickly write a list:

1. I had a **long** conversation with Mom. We had a heart to heart about everything that I’ve been wanting to talk with her about this summer. It was *hard.* But it felt so good afterwards. I could tell Mom felt a bit lighter too. In summary, here’s what we talked about:
   1. Mom and Dad’s relationship, and how marriage counseling is a *need*
   2. How Mom has leaned on me for years through the trials of her marriage and that isn’t fair to me if she isn’t planning on inciting some sort of change, because I can’t watch how detrimental this relationship is to her without saying something
   3. How Mom and Dad’s marriage has impacted the way that Wesley, Eric, and I have relationships and our opinions on marriage and children, and how it’s important for her and Dad to think of their marriage and how they go about it as an example to us
   4. How I will support Mom through everything and anything, even if the result of marriage counseling is that it will be best for her and Dad to get a divorce
   5. How I didn’t know if Mom still loved dad, and I honestly wasn’t sure some days if she actually hated him
   6. How I haven’t heard Mom say a single good thing about Dad that I can remember in years
   7. How toxic their comments and communication towards each other are
   8. Then we started segwaying into her work life, and we discussed how she is overworking herself
   9. I asked her if she was overworking to meet the actual expectations of her job or if they were just unrealistic expectations that had been set by herself and now she was letting her work be prioritized over herself
   10. We talked about self love, self care, body image issues, self-hate, the hardships of being a woman
   11. We talked about her alcohol addiction and my weed addiction
       1. We talked about how I’ve had difficulties this summer with finding a balance, and it's been even harder after feeling how amazing my body and mind were from complete sobriety at the beginning of the year
       2. Turns out she’s been having the same struggles, especially lately
       3. Mom’s plan is to go sober again on Labor day like she did last year and then stay sober through the winter and see what she thinks is best for her again on Memorial day (like this year)
       4. She and I agreed that finding non-drug and non-alcohol alternatives that are healthy coping mechanisms for emotions (like skiing or running) are so much more fulfilling
   12. I talked to her about the worst part of her alcohol abuse -- the hiding it. We dissected that Dad was a big reason for that, adding to her shame and guilt from not hiding it, and somewhat forcing her into a habit of hiding it.
       1. I told her about my tendencies to hide my weed smoking and how the only thing that felt unhealthy was the hiding of it
       2. She agreed that its better for her to not hide the drinking, and it seems like she might be finding a way to do that more often than not

We cried. We yelled. *We let it all out*. Nothing was left behind.

I told her I love her and that I’m here for her always. She told me that she never had that kind of relationship with her mother but she always wanted a close relationship with me. I told her she has that and always will, as long as we stay on the same page and communicate through everything -- the good *and* the bad.

We hugged.

And then, a weight was taken off of both of our shoulders.

We were lifted and free. We both had a wonderful night with the family (as Dad entered and exited the scene when he didn’t feel too much pain). We watched Michelle Obama give a kick-ass speech for the online Democractic Convention.

We went to bed.

Today we got massages and went to the DMV and got some amazing food and Kombucha after and talked for hours.

I love my mom so much. She is an incredible woman. I am lucky to have her as my mom.

So that’s the Mom part of the last 24 hours. It was interesting the mentality that I was in yesterday. I keep calling it a “burn it all down to the ground” mentality… because I genuinely stopped giving a fuck about keeping anything in anymore. I stopped hiding how I felt about Mom and Dad’s marriage, about secrecy and drugs and alcohol in the family, about things that go unsaid. That’s why I decided to bring up the alcohol with Mom (which I’m very glad I did, I would have regretted that if I hadn’t)-- because the opportunity was too perfect. We were already crying and talking about tough shit, I was in a “fuck it burn everything down” mood, and I was leaving in just over a day.

Why leave anything that needs to be said unsaid?

I truly believe through the good and through the bad, the ups, the downs, and everything in between -- this family has fucking *got each other’s backs*.

Thank god for this family.

The other big news is that today Wesley, Eric, and I went flying at the South Side.

Eric had a great day with awesome spot landings and killed it the whole time.

I however, struggled a lot.

It was my first time not being on radio with Jonathan, it was my first time back in over 2 weeks away, and now I had Dad’s injury looming in my head.

After my first flight, I had a bit of a panic attack and started crying. Wesley was so amazing in comforting me. He hugged me and told me it was okay and I never had to fly again if I didn’t want to and he was there for me. It was a really amazing moment.

I love Wesley.

I told him that I needed to do this. So I wiped away my tears and got my wing up and flew down the mountain quickly (because there was literally no wind) and made it to the bottom.

Then I did several more flights.

Wesley was struggling on the one flight that he did at the end. He was feeling super nervous and anxious and shaking… but he did it too.

We all did it.

Then I said goodbye to Jonathan, said goodbye to Eric at the top of the hill, and turned my radio off for my first truly solo flight.

I cried in the air.

I looked out at the Utah Lake with the dust and fog over the hills in the distance and I thought of what this summer has been.

I thought of all of the madness that our family has been put through.

I thought of Dad’s accident.

I thought of all of my flying lessons.

I thought of the incredible times with my brothers.

I thought of the difficult times throughout the last few months.

I thought of the goods, the bads, the ups, the downs, and everything in between.

And then I realized -- it was *just me up there.* I was flying. In the sky.

*Alone*.

I started crying. This summer has been so overwhelming in so many ways. There have been times where I’ve felt like it is close to the hardest time of my life (cough cough - this last week). There have been times where I have felt unbelievably happy (climbing, paragliding, spending time with the family and laughing and enjoying each other’s company in happiness).

Through it all though, I am so fucking grateful.

I’m grateful for it all.

I’m grateful for everything.

I am coming out of this summer **stronger**.

Our family is coming out of this summer **stronger**.

So there I was… alone, in the air, with nothing but a cloth and some string holding my life in its hands. I placed my trust in it. I took a few deep breaths. I smiled at the unbelievable view in front of me and the indescribable feeling of flying alone.

And I landed.

Wesley came up to me, Eric drove down and picked us up.

We got In and Out and talked through our emotions and feelings.

We drove home.

Paragliding isn’t a race.

Solving all of the deep-seeded drama in the family isn’t a race.

Figuring out what the future looks like for all of us isn’t a race.

It’s a journey.

And we’re all on it together.

Thank you, Universe. Really. Thank you.

~ Jess

Age: 23