

2025 Ben Strauss Youth Program
High School Essay Contest

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A Broken Heart on Valentine's Day

February 14th is the day of love, but for me, it is the day I dread the most. My grandmother had breast cancer three times. Thankfully, the treatment worked the first two times and temporarily the third. The third time she had breast cancer the medicine that healed her slowly paralyzed her arms and legs and eventually took away the basic human functions that the rest of us all take for granted. Unfortunately, she was taken too soon from me and before I got to say my goodbyes.

In 2012, I moved 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean for a better life and my grandmother supported my family and me every step of the way. However, the guilt that I hold in my heart is immense for not being by her side for her last few days on Earth. What could I do? I was only 10 years old.

February 14, 2019

“I love you, Daddy, I will miss you,” I say with a cheery smile on my face, as always.

“I love you too baby, see you tonight,” My dad says heading out the door for work.

I'm so glad we have school off today, at least I don't have to do cursive. I think with a grin forming on my face. I head up to my room ready to tuck back in for a little extra sleep.

*** 15 minutes later***

My eyes barely open, I hear the groan of the garage door.

Who could it be? My dad's gone to work, and I hear my mum downstairs.

It is eerily quiet for 5 minutes. I decided to stumble downstairs and investigate. As I open the door leading to the garage, I am confronted with my mum's face slick with tears and my dad, pale as a ghost, standing behind her. I run upstairs as fast as I can, tripping over myself, to my brother's room.

"She's dead, I just know it. Dad's back and mum's crying downstairs," I say with dread spreading throughout every inch of my body.

"Come on how do you know," my twin brother mutters with a blatant uninterested look on his face.

"I just know, come on. Let's go downstairs," I say as I feel the fear unfurl throughout my body.

As my brother and I slowly creep down the stairs, the garage door opens, and my parents enter the house again.

My brother and I are standing in the living room, while my parents are creeping closer and turning off any distractions.

“Listen kids we’ve got something to tell you. It’s okay to be sad. We will work it out,” My dad says barely keeping it together, but I can see the tears forming in his eyes.

“Granny has passed away.”

I drop to the floor. My mind viscously spins.

How could she be dead? We just visited her last month; she was fine then.

“No, no. She can’t be, she can’t mummy,” I say as it feels like my world is shattering. I fall into my mum’s shaking arms.

“I’m sorry baby,” My mum cried.

“We will get through this together, all of you come and get a hug,” My dad murmurs, his voice wavering.

I believe that everyone comes in and out of your life for a reason, and I have racked my brain for what reason or lesson I needed to learn for her to be taken from me so early. As I am writing this in the first few days of February, the anniversary of her death is coming up and I need to mend my relationship with the grief that I keep trapped in my heart. I hope by writing this essay and sharing the same story that so many people go through, I can find some closure. I have often felt an extensive amount of guilt for not spending enough time with her and not saying a true goodbye. So, I believe that my lesson is that every single second with your loved ones is precious, and you should never wait to say ‘I love you’ because you don’t know when you will be able to say it again.



To conclude, it has been 6 years now since my grandmother's death and I miss her very dearly. I hope in the future that I and many others will come to terms with the sacrifices we have to make to lead a better life. Though she is not with us anymore, I think about her every day. Her soul will be forever frozen on a day solely for the love people feel for one another, which is what I feel, only love for her.